



CABINET - 23RD MARCH 2022

SUBJECT: EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE (EAS) BUSINESS PLAN 2022-2025

**REPORT BY: DEBBIE HARTEVELD, MANAGING DIRECTOR, EAS.
TO BE DELIVERED BY EDWARD PRYCE
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – POLICY AND STRATEGY**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan on an annual basis. This report asks for members to approve the final EAS Business Plan 2022-2025 following a regional consultation process, including consideration by Caerphilly CMT and Education Scrutiny, before submission of the final EAS Business Plan to Caerphilly Cabinet for approval.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This document contains the main priorities, following robust self-evaluation processes, that the EAS believe will be relevant to focus upon in the next iteration of the regional Business Plan for 2022-2025. The EAS delivers, through this agreed Business Plan, a wide range of school improvement services to all schools (all key stages, including all through schools and special schools), pupil referral units and funded non-maintained nursery settings on behalf of each LA. This plan supports the role Caerphilly LA has in delivering their statutory functions, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes.
- 2.2 This plan supports Caerphilly's Education Strategy which directly correlates with the Welsh Government plans to Renew and Reform. Welsh Government acknowledges the pandemic has had a significant impact on learners and disruption has been a significant challenge.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Ensure that the Business Plan enables appropriate support and challenge for schools and that it addresses the areas for improvement that have been identified within Caerphilly County Borough Council's Education Strategic Plans; and
- 3.2 Approve the EAS Business Plan 2022-2025.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The EAS are required to submit their Business Plan to Welsh Government and the Scrutiny committee asked for feedback before Cabinet are scheduled to approve it.

5. THE REPORT

Background

- 5.1 Following the consultation session with Caerphilly CMT, the table below captures the changes that will be implemented within the final version of the Business Plan:

Caerphilly CMT Feedback	What the EAS will change in response for the final version of Business Plan 2022-2025
<p>How do we measure your impact? We would expect to see this clearly in the Business Plan. The EAS needs to be explicit on how impact is measured.</p> <p>Caerphilly needs a clear narrative in school improvement progress, for example the fact that there are no secondary schools in a category. It was explained that engagement data / case studies were not sufficient.</p>	<p>The following changes will be made to enable CCBC to measure the impact of the EAS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the draft document there are four high level impact statements, detailing our expected impact by 2025. Following CMT feedback success criteria will be developed, aligned to the high-level activities. This has been agreed with CCBC Chief Education Officer. • We will continue to report on progress towards success criteria in a variety of ways, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly Partnership Meetings • Termly Overviews • Case studies • Scrutiny Reports, bespoke to LAs • EAS Governance Reports • In addition, in order to provide a clear narrative for schools' progress, the EAS will, report in addition to the case studies a succinct impact report: 'Stats and Stories.'
<p>Expressed the concern that the plan does not adequately address the Covid context?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EAS has now reviewed the high-level actions within the draft business plan to ensure they fully align with the Education Directorate's Re-ignite, Recover, Reform priorities. The Covid context is addressed through the Health, Wellbeing and Equity section of the plan. Internal detailed delivery plans will provide the specific actions required. • Welsh Government information related to the COVID context will be included.
<p>Asked how Caerphilly can hold the EAS to account?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The governance structure enables CCBC to hold the EAS to account. • EAS officers will continue to meet regularly with the Chief Education Officer to enable the Local Authority to undertake it's statutory functions. • EAS officers are always available to support officers present to and answer questions at scrutiny.

- 5.2 The EAS delivers, through an agreed Business Plan, a wide range of school improvement services to all schools (all key stages, including all through schools and special schools), pupil referral units and funded non-maintained nursery settings on behalf of each LA. This plan supports the role LAs have in delivering their statutory function, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes.
- 5.3 As an organisation we have reviewed how we have written the Business Plan and communicated this to our partners. We decided it was timely to review and adapt this process and to make it more accessible to a wider audience. We have used a new approach to help us articulate the changes and impact we want to make as the regional school improvement service for South East Wales and the connections and actions needed that will allow that change and impact to be successfully achieved. This Business Plan spans a three-year period and will receive annual reviews each year.
- 5.4 However, this plan also considers how schools and educational settings continue to face the challenges of the pandemic. The evidence suggests that the pandemic has affected some groups of learners more than others:
- Vulnerable or disadvantaged learners, and learners with ALN
 - Those learners whose circumstances have changed during the pandemic
 - Learners in early years education are at a critical stage for language, social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. Pupils risk missing key developmental milestones, which could impact on their emotional wellbeing, communication and learning development.
 - Learners in post-16 and transition and those moving into post-16 provision. These learners may have experienced particular pressures and uncertainty, and their confidence may be affected.
 - Specific challenges for Welsh immersion learners in English-speaking households, and learners transitioning from Year 6 to Year 7.
- 5.5 The EAS will remain sensitive and responsive to the needs of the workforce and will continue to be a highly supportive, reflective, and responsive organisation.
- 5.6 The EAS will build upon what has worked well during this period, particularly the aspects of our role that have been successful within the virtual environment. The support that the EAS will offer will fully align to the expectations set by local authorities, Welsh Government (WG) and links to emerging research. The pandemic has reminded us that positive change is and has been possible. Schools, settings and the EAS have seized opportunities to explore innovative ways of working and delivering meaningful learning experiences through a creative blended learning approach. These experiences should be built upon to avoid a 'snap back,' keeping the positive learning that has been developed during this time.
- 5.7 The EAS has rigorous processes for self-evaluation. Below is a strategic summary of the progress that has been made towards the priorities identified in the previous Business Plan, this has been systematically shared through our governance groups.

Additional information focussed on each local authority has been shared on a termly basis with our partners and a summary can be found in Appendix 1 of this plan. Our next steps and priorities for 2022-2023 are also captured in Section 2 of the Business Plan.

- 5.8 We will continue to research, refine, respond and reflect to school needs. Our established networks will continue to be the mechanism of communicating with schools and settings. The Supporting our Schools website will continue to be the 'go to place' for all resources and guidance materials.
- 5.9 The EAS understands the need to over communicate with clarity to provide reassurance regarding advice, guidance, support and expectations. As a result, the EAS will work with local authorities to minimise any unnecessary bureaucracy for schools and settings to ensure they are able to focus on their important priorities and their support for learners.
- 5.10 The timing, delivery and focus of the support will be carefully considered in respect of the challenges that are likely to continue.
- 5.11 The draft business plan was created following feedback provided in a broad range of 'Visioning Sessions'. These virtual and physical meetings were offered to a range of stakeholder groups including, headteachers, governors and elected member. Feedback has been incorporated within the plan.
- 5.12 In addition the specific list of consultees are noted below.
- EAS staff
 - Directors of Education (within South East Wales) and Diocesan Directors
 - Regional Joint Executive Group
 - EAS Company Board
 - EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
 - Individual local authority education scrutiny committees
 - All Headteachers from within the region
 - All Chairs of Governors from within the region
 - School Councils from within the region
 - All school based Professional Learning Leads
 - EAS Supporting School Trade Union Group (SSTU Group)
- 5.13 The submission deadline for this report was 11 February 2022. This is before the scheduled completion date for the final business plan, which will incorporate feedback from all consultees, but the final version will be shared with the committee as soon as it is available.
- 5.14 The final version of the Business Plan will be supported by a range of supporting documents:
- Detailed Business Plan 2022–2023

- Regional Grant Mapping Overview 2022–2023 (to follow once detailed received from WG)
- Regional Self-Evaluation Report (Executive Summary)
- EAS Risk Register (Executive Summary)
- Regional Professional Learning Offer 2022–2023
- Local Authority Strategic Education Plans

Our Approach

- 5.15 This approach begins with asking why we are doing what we do in the EAS (our vision). This reinforces the need to articulate, with our local authority partners, our ‘Statement of Intent’. This clearly describes what we are aiming to achieve as a collective partnership.

South East Wales Statement of Intent 2025

- 5.16 The five local authorities and the EAS are a mature and successful partnership that work collectively to deliver the highest standard of education for children and young people across the region. Through working in a trusting and transparent way we are able to both deliver national agendas but also local priorities; we do this through an honest tripartite relationship with schools. Our focus is the successful emergence from the most acute period of COVID response, supporting learners and ensuring that our schools are prepared for the national reform agenda. The success of our endeavours will see children and young people in Gwent as capable, confident and independent learners ready for the next period of their lives.’
- 5.17 In working towards the South East Wales Statement of Intent, a strong commitment of partnership working is critical. It is important to recognise that each local authority, school and educational setting will have their own strategic priorities that support the realisation of the regional vision. These will be documented in respective local authority Strategic Plans and School Development Plans.

Local Authority Priorities

- 5.18 These are the local authority strategic priorities as provided at the time of the completion of the Final EAS Business Plan (2022-2025). Please note that local authority planning annual planning cycles may be different from the EAS financial year cycle, so may change mid-Business Plan year. Individual LA Priorities are included in the Final version of the EAS Business Plan. The priorities identified by Caerphilly local authority are:

- Aim to reduce the impact of poverty within early years.
- Raise standards of attainment.
- Reduce the impact of poverty on attainment for both vocational and non-vocational qualifications to provide equality of opportunity.
- Help those who are not able to follow a traditional attainment path.

- Support learning that enables young and adult employment opportunities, including a focus on 'future skills'.
- Improve 'Digital Skills' for all ages.
- Improve the learning environment.
- Safeguard all children and young people in order to create a climate for learning, particularly for those most vulnerable.

EAS Vision 2025: What are we aiming to achieve?

- 5.19 'Supporting and enabling schools and education settings to thrive as effective learning organisation, learning from each other and the wider educational community.'
- 5.20 In working towards the EAS Vision, it is critical that the EAS Business Plan reflects regional and local needs.
- 5.21 Wales has an ambition that all schools develop as learning organisations, in keeping with Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) principles. Schools that are learning organisations are able to adapt more quickly and explore new approaches, with a means to improving learning and outcomes for all their learners.

EAS Vision 2025: What will the EAS do to achieve our vision?

- 5.22 All schools will be able to access a universal offer of professional learning support in each of the following areas: School Improvement, Leadership and Teaching, Curriculum for Wales, Health Wellbeing and Equity and School Governors which are intrinsically linked. As well as a holistic professional learning offer, this will include a set number of days to work with their School Improvement Partner (SIP) and a professional dialogue with the EAS and LA to agree and or amend improvement priorities and support requirements as part of an annual professional discussion.
- 5.23 In addition to the universal offer, schools will be able to access specific and targeted support as determined through ongoing professional discussion with their SIP and in line with their school improvement priorities. This professional learning support may be related to a task and finish activity, an option for further work with their SIP or an option for peer working.
- 5.24 Bespoke support will also be available for schools who require more intensive support. This could include more support from the SIP or the use of a Learning Network School to School Partnership. These activities are explained in detail in the full Business Plan.

<p>School Improvement: Bespoke support to schools and settings which is aligned to their needs. Create and facilitate collaborative networks of professional practice.</p>

<p>Leadership and teaching Provide professional learning and support for the development of leadership and teaching across the entire workforce.</p>	<p>Curriculum for Wales Provide professional learning and support for Curriculum for Wales.</p>	<p>Health, Wellbeing and Equity Provide professional learning and support to improve health and wellbeing, with a particular focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.</p>
<p>Governors: Provide a broad range of professional learning and support for Governors.</p>		

What are the foundations that enable activities to take place?

5.25 The EAS needs to have the following elements in place to enable the activities above. These are the foundations of the organisation:

- We are passionately committed to Wales, helping our staff, schools and education settings succeed.
- We support and value the wellbeing and professional learning of staff.
- We are an agile, timely and responsive organisation.
- We communicate clearly.
- We are sensitive, flexible, and empathetic to system needs.
- The way we work is informed, drawing on research from a global perspective.
- We welcome challenge and review and draw on expertise to improve our delivery.
- We have effective systems and processes for self-evaluation, risk, and financial management.
- We operate a clear and effective governance model.
- We have positive relationships with a wide range of partners.
- We adhere to all legislative requirements.
- Our work is well-planned and managed to deliver the best for our schools and education settings.

What will be the impact?

5.26 If schools and educational settings have the capacity to secure improvement and engage with the support available from the EAS this is the expected impact

- The support provided by the EAS has enabled leaders, governors and education practitioners to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours to positively impact practice, providing improved learner outcomes.
- Professional learning has been effective and appropriate to need.
- Professional learning has been effective and appropriate to need.
- The broad range of collaborative networks and activity have supported the development of a self-improving system.

How will we capture our work and share information with our partners?

- 5.27 There are many ways of capturing and sharing what the EAS does which are exemplified in this model as outputs.
- EAS Website
 - Regional policies and processes
 - Case studies
 - Regional meeting minutes
 - External research and review
 - Impact capture reports
 - Supporting Our Schools Site
 - Partnership documentation
 - Professional learning resources and guidance

How will we capture our work and share information with our partners?

- 5.28 There are many ways of capturing and sharing what the EAS does which are exemplified in this model as outputs. The progress on the implementation and impact of the Business Plan will be reported to the Joint Executive Group and Company Board. These reports, as in previous years, will be suitable for scrutiny activity at local authority and national level. In addition, the progress made towards the implementation of key actions will be reported at each meeting of the Joint Executive Group and Company Board. This approach will be aligned to the national changes in the accountability system.
- 5.29 We will continue to report on progress towards success criteria in a variety of ways, including:
- Monthly Partnership Meetings
 - Termly Overviews
 - Case studies
 - Scrutiny Reports, bespoke to LAs
 - EAS Governance Reports
- 5.30 In addition, in order to provide a clear narrative for schools' progress, the EAS will, report in addition to the case studies a succinct impact report focusing on the theme of key 'Stats and Stories' and the progress towards meeting success criteria.

Conclusion

- 5.31 The EAS is required to submit an annual overarching regional Business Plan on an annual basis. This report asks for members to consider the full contents of the draft EAS Business Plan as part of the regional consultation process.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1. In writing this plan we have made the following assumptions. If these are not in place, then they become a risk to the successful delivery of this plan. The EAS risk register will be reviewed and refined following the agreement of the final EAS Business Plan. These are:

- Operate with integrity, honesty and objectivity.
- Partners understand our role in the education system.
- Professional learning has a positive impact on practice and behaviour.
- We are one part of the much wider system.
- Schools / education settings positively engage with us.
- Schools / education settings use funding effectively.
- We have the capacity and resources to undertake our activity effectively.
- When the conditions in a school / education setting can secure improvement, readiness for support results in positive change.
- Our partners provide us with timely and appropriate information.
- We work with schools / education settings to ensure priorities for improvement are based on robust, accurate self-evaluation.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 This report is for information and consultation, however an EAS Fairness and Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken. This must take a long term view as part of its impact on life chances, employment and quality of life. Causes within attainment are complex although one of the main ones is deprivation. The measure that is commonly used to measure deprivation is a pupil's eligibility to receive Free School Meals. One of the Council's Well-being Objectives is to 'Improve outcomes for all learners but we want to particularly focus on those vulnerable to underachievement'.

7.2 Ensuring high quality education is fundamental to securing the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of future generations. The Business Plan focuses support for all schools appropriately schools. The school curriculum includes focus on social, environmental and cultural well-being, and these aspects are support as part of the plan. This plan supports the role LAs have in delivering their statutory function, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes.

7.3 The EAS have their own Equalities and Welsh Language plans in place. CCBC has therefore not undertaken any specific impact assessment on the EAS Business Plan. The EAS Welsh Language Policy (Updated September 2021) describes in full the ways in which the EAS complies with the Welsh Language Measure (2015), including accesses to all materials bilingually, actively promotes the use of the language and offers an ever a range of services and support through the medium of Welsh for those who require them.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Section 4 of the Business Plan details the EAS activities for 2022-2023 and Section 5 details the governance and financial arrangements. Indicative LA Core Contributions have been added into this section. The EAS is subject to a robust governance model that is underpinned by the Articles of Association and a Collaboration and Members Agreement (CAMA). These governance documents essentially link the five Local Authorities to the EAS both operationally and through the commissioning of regional school improvement services.
- 8.2 The EAS is funded on an annual basis from three sources: Local authority core contributions, regional school improvement grants and a service level agreement for governor support services. A spending plan accompanies this Business Plan which is intrinsically linked to all actions contained within it. A detailed overview of the regional distribution of all grants is available for all schools to view and compare allocations and rates of delegation through the regional grant monitoring tool. As recipients of public funding, it is important that budgets are allocated and spent wisely. The EAS will continually strive to provide value for money through the optimal use of resources to achieve intended outcomes.
- 8.3 The delegation rate to schools increased to 95.5% in 2021/22, whilst the EAS staff profile has reduced by 53.1% since 2012.
- 8.4 The local authority's indicative core contribution for 2022/23 are as follows: Caerphilly LA's contribution for 2022/23 is £980,663 compared to £985,591 in 2021/23, £1,005,705 in 2020/21 and £1,021,020 in 2019/20.
- 8.5 At the time of writing this report, there is uncertainty with regards to the regional grant funding from WG for 2022/2023. As a result of the pandemic, it is likely that there will continue to be reductions in the regional grant profile. When the grant position has been confirmed the EAS detailed delivery plan will be updated accordingly.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The Business Plan has been through a consultation process. The Consultees are noted below:
- EAS staff
 - Directors of Education (within South East Wales) and Diocesan Directors
 - Regional Joint Executive Group
 - EAS Company Board
 - EAS Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
 - Individual local authority education scrutiny committees
 - All Headteachers from within the region
 - All Chairs of Governors from within the region
 - School Councils from within the region
 - All school based Professional Learning Leads

- EAS Supporting School Trade Union Group (SSTU Group)

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000, Children's Act 2004, Standards and Framework Act 1998

Author: Debbie Hartevelde, Managing Director, Education Achievement Service

Consultees: In addition to the groups listed above
Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Dave Street, Corporate Director, Social Services
Councillor Ross Whiting, Cabinet Member for Learning and Achievement
Councillor Teresa Parry, Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Carol Andrews, Vice Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services & S151 Officer
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning & Strategy
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion & ALN
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer, Equalities, Welsh Language & Consultation)
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal Service and Monitoring Officer
Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Officer.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Education Achievement Service: Regional Business Plan 2022-2025 (Final)

Appendix 2 EAS Fairness and Equalities Impact Assessment (FEIA)

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