



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 28TH MARCH 2023

SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

REPORT BY: JONATHAN KEOHANE, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, EAS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform members of the school improvement work undertaken in Caerphilly schools from September 2022 – December 2023
- 1.2 To seek members' views on the school improvement work.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Education Achievement Service provides school improvement support, on behalf of Caerphilly Local Authority. The information included in this report outlines the key aspects of the EAS work, along with key actions and responsibilities that of the Local Authority to support schools in Caerphilly. This work contributes to the Local Authority's Strategic plans and the contribution of the EAS through their regional Business Plan (2022-2025).

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to consider the contents of the report and raise any questions or comments they may have of officers about the information contained within.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Members should be made aware of the support available to Caerphilly schools.

5. THE REPORT

Professional Discussions

- 5.1 During an academic year, the Local Authority (LA) and Educational Achievement Service (EAS) engage with schools through a professional discussion with each school. This is one of the key processes that enables the LA to know their schools well,

using an increasing range of first-hand evidence. Discussions focus on school priorities for improvement and the progress the school is making towards them. This process is cyclical and supports schools to determine and/or review their priorities in line with their self-evaluation processes. The discussion also helps to determine the ongoing support needs of the school from both the LA and EAS and identify where practice is worth sharing.

- 5.2 Since September 2022, 19 professional discussions have taken place.

Progress against School Development Priorities

- 5.3 On a termly basis, School Improvement Partners (SIPs) provide a commentary for all schools on the progress that they are making towards their school development plan priorities.
- 5.4 In the Autumn Term, most schools in Caerphilly are on track towards meeting their priorities. Where schools are not on track, the School Improvement Partner will provide, or broker additional support as required and these schools will be closely monitored by the LA.
- 5.5 There are currently 3 schools in Caerphilly who are working on a Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP). The PIAP addresses recommendations from an Estyn inspection and replaces the School Development Plan as the main driver for school improvement.

EAS Supported self-evaluation activity (SSE): Autumn Term 2022

- 5.6 Central to the School Improvement Partners (SIP) work is supporting leaders to develop processes for effective self-evaluation. This involves working alongside the Headteacher and senior leaders, as part of the school's established monitoring cycle, to help with any activities which the school uses to collect first-hand evidence to evaluate quality and impact. The approach provides a sounding board, quality assurance and moderation of evaluations made. The SIP will also help the school to use the outcomes of self-evaluation to develop priorities for improvement in the form of their School Development Plan (SDP) or to provide/broker bespoke professional learning based on the needs of whole school or individual staff.

Celebrate, Share, Support, Refine (CSSR) Teaching Approach

- 5.7 The Celebrate, Share, Support, Refine (CSSR) teaching approach is an extension of the supported self-evaluation activity. The CSSR has been designed to understand the key strengths and areas for development of teaching and learning, to enable the realisation of Curriculum for Wales. The process is voluntary and is led by schools.
- 5.8 During this period, 4 schools in Caerphilly volunteered and completed a CSSR activity.
- 5.9 A further 6 schools have come forward to undertake a CSSR activity in the Spring or Summer term.
- 5.10 More schools would benefit from engaging in this approach to enable a greater focus on improving the forensic elements of teaching. A number of schools have indicated

they would be willing to participate when the current period of industrial action has finished.

Team Around the School meetings (TAS)

- 5.11 Where a school requires targeted or intensive support to accelerate progress a Team Around the School meeting (TAS) is convened.
- 5.12 During the TAS meetings the LA holds the schools and the EAS to account for the progress that is being made and the effectiveness of the support that is being provided.
- 5.13 There are currently 13 schools who benefit from the TAS process in Caerphilly.

LA thematic focus for the Autumn Term 2022

- 5.14 At Caerphilly LA's request, in autumn 2022, wherever a supported self-evaluation activity was taking place in school, a specific focus was given to Digital Learning: Provision and Skills.
- 5.15 Nearly all schools in Caerphilly have an appropriate Information Communication Technology (ICT) / digital policy and a majority of schools have developed a digital vision. Where this is effective, the head teacher and senior leaders share a clear strategic digital vision which is well-known to all stakeholders, links with the whole-school vision and reflects Curriculum for Wales.
- 5.16 Many schools have referred to digital skills in their current school development plan. Many schools in Caerphilly have built the progressive application of digital skills into their Monitoring, Evaluation and Review (MER) cycle. Reviews involve a range of personnel including senior leaders, the digital lead, teachers, governors and pupils. Where effective practice was identified, in addition to tracking and monitoring digital provision and skills, learner progress is also tracked.
- 5.17 Where leaders have prioritised the development of digital provision and skills, regular professional learning opportunities are provided for staff, enabling them to share their digital expertise and supporting them to develop their digital knowledge and skills. Leaders have also given high priority to resourcing IT, investing in hardware and software.
- 5.18 A majority of schools in Caerphilly have identified that they use Hwb (the Welsh Government's online learning platform) as their main platform for delivering online provision. This is in-line with the average findings across the region. Where schools use Hwb they benefit from being aligned to the national platform and they are able to access a wide range of valuable resources to inform leadership, teaching and learning. Where schools were not using Hwb they indicated an alternative preferred platform
- 5.19 In the schools where good practice was identified, staff have high expectations of learners and they have the knowledge and understanding of the Digital Competency Framework (DCF) and the progressive development of digital skills to plan appropriate tasks and activities which use IT to enrich the curriculum e.g. in one school sampled, staff are also developing a digital planning tool with examples of activities in each progression step.

Curriculum for Wales Cluster Working

- 5.20 The Curriculum for Wales places an emphasis on clusters of schools working together effectively to meet the needs of their learners by developing a cluster approach to curriculum provision.
- 5.21 During the autumn term 2022, nearly all schools began implementing Curriculum for Wales. The EAS provides significant support, professional learning and advice to all schools and to the LA on this key aspect of reform.
- 5.22 The EAS has commissioned Professor Mick Waters to work alongside clusters to complete an action research project focussing on securing a shared understanding of learner progress on a cluster basis. The long-term aspiration for this work is to develop approaches that support clusters to work collaboratively to support learner progress in key areas identified within their transition plan. This may include developing common approaches to planning and curriculum design and/or teaching in some Areas of Learning. The overall aim being to support progression in pupils' knowledge and skills as they move across the 3-16 learning continuum.
- 6 clusters are currently working with Professor Mick Waters on their curriculum offer.
 - 4 clusters are on tranche 3 and will begin their work with Professor Mick Waters on 21st March 2023.
 - 1 school is currently engaged in similar work with a group of Catholic schools in a neighbouring Local Authority
 - 1 school opted out of the Professional Learning offer to work alongside Professor Mick Waters.
- 5.23 Clusters will have the opportunity to share their work with other clusters across the region during the Summer Term.

EAS 'Stats and Stories'

- 5.24 The EAS has provided two versions of the Stats and Stories over the past few terms (September 2022 and January 2023). These documents draw out the impact of The EAS' work in schools across Caerphilly and highlight where interventions have led to improvement and added capacity to build schools as learning organisations.

Conclusion

- 5.25 This report describes the agreed regional approach to supporting schools to meet the needs of the Local Authority's 'Pursuing Excellence Together' education strategy'.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1. There are no specific assumptions.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 This report is for information only, therefore no Integrated Impact Assessment is required.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This work is funded through the EAS Business Plan, therefore there are no specific financial implications.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personnel implications.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The Consultees are noted below:

11. STATUTORY POWER

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

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Consultees:

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Councillor Jo Rao, Vice Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
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