



# EAS

Education Achievement Service  
for South East Wales  
Gwasanaeth Cyflawni Addysg  
i Dde Ddwyrain Cymru

## Submission to The National Assembly for Wales: Children Young People and Education Committee / School improvement and raising standards

December 2019

## Education Achievement Service for South East Wales (EAS)

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This report has been compiled jointly by the EAS and each of the five local authority Directors of Education from within the South East Wales Consortium.

#### 1. A brief summary of:

##### 1.1. Your approach to school improvement in your region, including how this is informed by the school categorisation process.

Regional investment in building the capacity of schools and educational settings over the last five years have enabled more collaborative ways of working and a move towards the creation of a self-improving school system. This approach is enabling teachers and leaders to learn from each other, to try out new approaches and to engage with educational research as the backdrop for improvement. Across the region the ways in which the EAS supports and challenges school improvement has developed over the past 6 years. The impact, effectiveness and value for money of regional strategies are reviewed regularly through both internal and external processes. The region has commissioned several external reviews over the past 3 years that have helped to shape future direction based upon effective principles of a self-improving system.

A summary of the school improvement strategies that are utilised across the region are noted below:

- The role of the challenge adviser in supporting, brokering and challenging the pace of progress schools make in addressing their identified school priorities;
- The role of EAS officers (including subject specific support, support for governors, wellbeing and equity) in supporting, brokering and challenging the pace of progress schools make in addressing their identified school priorities;
- Access to funded school networks that support all aspects of professional development and school improvement focused on improving the quality of leadership and teaching and learning;
- Access to a wide range of professional learning, some with accreditation options, for teaching assistants, teachers, school leaders and governors;
- Peer working and peer reviews;
- The use of trained and accredited coaches and mentors for teachers and leaders, sourced from within and beyond; and
- Access to eLearning materials and high-quality resources.

The EAS offers a comprehensive Professional Learning Offer (PLO) to all schools and settings across the region. For the past three years the region has funded schools to deliver a large proportion of the professional learning activity much of which is offered on a cluster basis. Each cluster has an assigned lead for professional learning who organises and co-ordinates support for, and access to professional learning across each of the clusters. In addition, each school has a regionally funded professional learning lead who co-ordinates this work at school level. Support via the numerous funded learning network schools is also organised on a geographical basis to support this delivery model.

The cluster-based professional learning lead also provides schools within the cluster with updates and development materials to support all key priorities within the National Mission, to include: Schools as Learning Organisations, Professional standards for teaching and leadership/Excellence in Teaching and Leadership Framework. This work is disseminated to all schools / practitioners through their nominated professional learning leads.

Each cluster also has a linked curriculum pioneer school, that supports regional delivery of key information and latest drafts/key messaging with regards to the new Curriculum for Wales. EAS organises regular briefing sessions with professional learning leads, headteachers, chairs of governors and local authority partners to ensure consistency of messaging, understanding and respective roles and responsibilities in key areas of work.

All schools are provided with a bespoke support package that compliments the priorities identified within their own School Development Plans (SDPs) in line with the levels of support they require. The support levels are informed by the national categorisation process, Estyn inspection outcomes or local intelligence. There is a degree of flexibility within the deployment model to allow for in-year changes in circumstances. The progress schools are making towards their priorities within their SDPs and against their local targets are captured on a termly basis are reported to local authorities.

Through a series of workshops, surgeries and professional panels during the summer and autumn terms 2019, the regional review and evaluation process supported all schools in ensuring that their processes for school improvement planning were effective. This approach supports the national reform and the interim target setting arrangements at key stage 4. It aims to ensure greater rigour and support in self-evaluation and development planning through the joint review and evaluation of school development plans with schools, local authorities and the EAS.

## **1.2. How you work with your member local authorities to ensure synergy and no duplication in your school improvement work.**

There is no duplication between the work of the EAS and each of the local authorities in South East Wales. The Business Plan addresses each local authorities' strategic priorities that fall within the remit of the work of the EAS. The EAS works in partnership with local authorities to support additional local priorities, as appropriate. It is fully recognised that the improvements that are required at regional and local authority level require a strong commitment of partnership-working to be successful. Where local authorities and the EAS work in close partnership, there is evidence, particularly with regards to schools causing concern, that rapid and sustainable school improvement can be achieved.

The EAS is a not for profit limited company that is owned by the five local authorities in South East Wales. The EAS delivers, through a democratically agreed EAS Business Plan, a wide range of school improvement services to all schools (all key stages), pupil referral units and funded non-maintained nursery settings on behalf of each local authority. The EAS Business Plan supports the role that local authorities have in delivering their statutory function, addressing their individual improvement priorities and promoting improved pupil outcomes.

The Business Plan encompasses delivery across the following aspects: Monitor, challenge, support and intervention; Curriculum, assessment and accountability reform; Data collation, analysis and support (school, local authority, region); Professional learning: teaching and leadership; Professional learning: Teaching assistants / Higher Level Teaching Assistants;

Equity and wellbeing; Literacy, numeracy and digital; Welsh language development; Core and non-core subjects; support for governing bodies including professional learning; national strategies, to include: Lead Creative Schools, Global Futures , Specialist HR support, Initial Teacher Education / Graduate Teacher Programme

## 2. Details of funding you are responsible for spending in 2019-2020, to include:

### 2.1. How much funding you are receiving in 2019-20 from each local authority for your school improvement services.

The EAS is subject to a robust governance model that is underpinned by the Collaboration and Members Agreement (CAMA). The EAS is funded on an annual basis from three sources: Local authority core contributions, grants and service level agreements. A detailed spending plan accompanies the 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.

#### Financial contribution from each of the Local Authorities to the EAS

Local Authority	EAS 'As Is' Model Aug 2012	2013/14	2014/15 (funding levels set by WG, based on RSG formula to LA)	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018-19	2019-20
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Blaenau Gwent CBC	454,853	423,953	417,511	403,316	391,216	379,480	371,890	364,452
Caerphilly CBC	1,187,541	1,133,580	1,169,666	1,129,897	1,096,000	1,063,120	1,041,858	1,021,020
Monmouthshire CC	591,619	468,403	481,642	465,266	451,308	437,769	429,014	420,433
Newport CC	1,095,407	926,421	934,254	902,489	875,415	849,152	832,169	815,526
Torfaen CBC	940,858	760,016	600,536	580,118	562,714	545,833	534,916	524,218
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,270,278</b>	<b>3,712,371</b>	<b>3,603,609</b>	<b>3,481,086</b>	<b>3,376,654</b>	<b>3,275,354</b>	<b>3,209,847</b>	<b>3,145,650</b>

Total Efficiencies		-1,124,628
Total Staff FTE	135	71

### 2.2. How much in Welsh Government grants you are responsible for distributing in 2019-2020, including a breakdown between the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant and the Pupil Development Grant, as well as details of how much is delegated to schools and how much is administered / spent on a regional basis.

There is a legal agreement in place between the local authorities and the EAS that details the process that must be followed for the agreement and distribution of all regional grants. The Education Improvement Grant is distributed on a common regional formula across each local authority.

## Overview of grants 2019/2020

Grant Name	Grant Total	Amount delegated** to schools	Delegation** Rate (to date)
	£	£	
School Improvement Grant (SIG) - Education Improvement Grant (EIG)*	24,360,007	22,544,570	93%
- Other grant initiatives	4,582,685	3,718,863	81%
Pupil Development Grant (PDG)	19,735,125	19,674,189	100%
PDG (Lead Regional PDG Adviser)	100,000	0	0%
Seren Pre 16	98,400	98,400	100%
Seren Post 16	55,000	50,000	91%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48,931,217</b>	<b>46,086,022</b>	<b>94%</b>

\*Includes the match funding requirement £1,910,832

\*\* Delegation: This refers to funding which gives freedom of choice to a school in how it is used. It must however be spent in accordance with, and in the spirit of, the core purpose of the grant and the individual school development plan priorities. The following circumstances are not classed as delegation:

- Staff seconded from the local authority or the consortium to a school(s) or a cluster(s);
- Staff working wholly or partly in schools and paid for from a local authority or consortium retained budget;
- Staff or services that form part of a service level agreement, this type of activity will be classed as non delegated;
- Monies delegated from the consortium to a local authority.

### 3. A summary of Key Stage 4 and A/AS Level examination data for 2019 and previous years in your region, plus any analysis you wish to provide.

The Welsh Government alongside several partners and experts has undertaken a fundamental review of the accountability system for schools in Wales. Findings highlighted that the existing system and its use of performance measures has many negative unintended consequences, such as:

- narrowing curriculum choice;
- disproportionate focus on particular groups of learners;
- the way in which benchmarking is used driving competition between schools rather than encouraging collaboration;
- an increased and unnecessary workload for teachers and others in the system, without the necessary impact or benefit for learners; and
- an aggregation of data for accountability purposes where it was designed for improvement purposes.

As a result, schools have heard conflicting messages from the various parts of the system about what matters. This has often diverted effort from learning and teaching and moved us towards a culture of compliance and bureaucracy. A joint communication from Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Estyn to Chairs of Scrutiny, Cabinet Members, Directors of Education, Chief Executive Officers, and Managing Directors of Regional Education Consortia, published on 16 July 2019 stated that:

*“It is counter-productive for schools to be placed under disproportionate pressure on the basis of individual measures. It is not in the interest of school improvement and risks undermining the ongoing change in culture that we are working together to achieve. We expect local authorities and regional consortia to support schools to make appropriate decisions about their curriculum to avoid narrowing choice for learners.*

*Collectively, we have agreed that this is the right approach to take and strongly advise you to use a broad range of un-aggregated data and information to enable you to discharge your duties when reporting on school performance. Evaluating the performance of individual schools rather than generating aggregated data at local authority level will be more helpful to supporting and challenging individual schools with their improvement.”*

Consortia will adhere to this guidance when reporting on performance .

### 3.1. Reporting on key stage 4 results

New interim key stage 4 measures have been introduced for 2019 as part of the significant education reform programme in Wales. National data capture for individual schools will be based on first entry results. The data provided regionally for individual school and LAs will also be based on first entry results. JCQ/WJEC have published their data and press release based on the ‘best outcome’ obtained by 16 year olds across both the November and summer series. There will be differences between first entry and best outcome data.

As a result, across several indicators, it will not be possible to compare 2019 figures with previous performance. The table below shows the new interim measures and the methodology used for calculating. It also demonstrates the key differences with previous years.

Interim Measure	How it is calculated	Differences from previous years, and why comparisons cannot be made
<b>Capped 9</b>	<p>The Capped 9 Points Score is a performance measure calculating the average of the scores for the best awards for all individual pupils in the cohort, capped at a specified volume of GCSEs or equivalent qualifications.</p> <p>Three of the nine slots require the awards of specific subjects and qualifications in order to contribute any points towards the measure. These slots are each</p>	<p>✓ Only a pupil’s first entry will count</p> <p>✓ WJEC Science GCSE only</p>

Interim Measure	How it is calculated	Differences from previous years, and why comparisons cannot be made
	<p>one GCSE in size, specifying requirements in literacy, numeracy and science GCSEs only.</p> <p>The best grade from any of the literature or first language Welsh or English GCSEs can contribute towards the literacy slot.</p> <p>The best grade from either of the mathematics or mathematics – numeracy GCSEs can contribute towards the numeracy slot.</p> <p>The best grade from a science GCSE can contribute towards the science slot (currently this is limited to awards in the WJEC suite of science GCSE qualifications currently available to learners: biology, chemistry, physics, science (double award) applied science (double award) and applied science (single award).</p> <p>The remaining six qualifications will include the pupil's best performance in either GCSE and/or vocational equivalent.</p>	
<b>Literacy measure</b>	Calculating the average of the scores for all individual pupils in the cohort, taking the best grade from any of the literature or first language Welsh or English GCSEs awarded to a pupil.	New 2019 measure, first entry only will count, with Literature also accepted within this measure.
<b>Numeracy measure</b>	Calculating the average of the scores for all individual pupils in the cohort, taking the best grade from either of the mathematics or mathematics – numeracy GCSEs awarded to a pupil	New 2019 measure, first entry only will count.
<b>Science measure</b>	Calculating the average of the scores for all individual pupils in the cohort, taking the best grade from a science GCSE awarded to a learner. Currently this is limited to awards in the WJEC suite of science GCSE qualifications available to learners: biology, chemistry, physics, science (double award) applied science (double award) and applied science (single award) - these are identified as being able to contribute towards science measures.	New 2019 measure, first entry only will count.
<b>The Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate measure</b>	Calculates the average of the scores for the Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate awards for all individual learners in the cohort, whether it is the Foundation (Level 1) or the National (Level 2) award.	Reported separately as a main indicator for the first time in 2019.

In this context, the data should be analysed on a local level and as a starting point to question local priorities. Although 2019 data is now available on historical performance measures (L1, L2, L2+ and 5A\*-A), comparison with previous years is not valid because of the first entry counting rather than best outcome.

<https://gov.wales/examination-results-september-2018-august-2019>

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-12/examination-results-september-2018-august-2019-080.pdf>

### 3.2. A / AS Level

This commentary reflects performance for schools across the region, rather than any provision in any colleges. Currently all Blaenau-Gwent learners, along with approximately one third of Caerphilly learners are offered sixth form provision delivered by Coleg Gwent. Torfaen will follow this model for first assessment in 2021.

Post-16 performance is heavily influenced by the context of the cohort, which in turn can be influenced by the entry policies of individual institutions. In addition to comparing raw outcomes, over the last three years the EAS has commissioned ALPs (a company who measure and compare progress from GCSE to A level across over 2,000 providers in England and Wales). Progress is graded on a nine-point scale with 1 being the greatest progress and 9 the lowest. The overall progress grade for the region has remained stable at 5 since 2016, which places regional performance in the middle of the potential range. At AS level this score is also a 5, and for BTEC the grade has improved from 7 to 6 since 2016. A very strong area of performance at post-16 is History at both AS and A level, with the region's value added for this subject at a grade 2 for the past 2 years, putting performance across the region in the top 10% of learners across England and Wales.

The Level 3 Threshold for the region has increased overall since 2017 and improved by 1.1pp from 2018 to 97.3%. Since 2017, of the four local authorities in the region with 6th form provision, two have improved performance and two have remained stable. The 0.9pp improvement in the region since 2017 compares against a 0.8pp improvement nationally over the same period. The Average Wider Points score has improved by 5 points in the most recent year, but due to a decline in 2018 overall performance remains stable in the region since 2017. In this time the national average has improved by almost 11 points, regional performance remains below that of Wales and the gap has widened slightly. Since 2017, only Monmouthshire has seen an improvement at this measure, where performance exceeds the national average (797.7 compared to 741.3).

### 3.3. Training for Elected Members

The EAS in partnership with local authorities has provided workshops for Elected Members to support their understanding and role in the scrutiny of performance data as part of the changes in the accountability system. Welsh Government, WLGA and Estyn have also hosted workshops for Chairs of Scrutiny Committees and Executive Members for Education within the region with further training planned for the spring term. The outcome of this session was that there would be a joint scrutiny session for all five local authorities to share learning and best practice.

#### 4. A summary of PISA 2018 results in your region (if available), plus any analysis you wish to provide.

Regional data is not available at the time of writing the report. However, Wales has seen its performance improve in international tests in reading, maths and science. The biggest improvement was in maths, while science is also now close to the international average. The number of high-performing students in Wales rose from 4% to 7%. There was also no significant gender gap for the first time.

#### 5. An update on progress to tackle the attainment gap in your region:

There are effective links between the work of each of the local authorities and the EAS to ensure synergy and no duplication of efforts when providing support and challenge to schools in this aspect of work. The work of the region is to promote improved outcomes for all groups of learners and the focus is very much on the quality of teaching and learning to ensure all learners make appropriate progress overtime.

Each of the improvement strands within the current EAS Business Plan has a specific emphasis on the work of the EAS in promoting improved outcomes for vulnerable learners, in particular, those in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM). These strategies are based on a wide range of research evidence. It is important that all other stakeholders, including schools and local authorities, have their own specific strategies to support and promote improved outcomes for vulnerable learners. The EAS endeavours, as appropriate, and within available resources to support local authority strategic plans to maximise the impact on learner outcomes.

There is a regional Equity and Wellbeing Strategy which encompasses all the approaches that are being implemented across the region to support schools in promoting improved outcomes for vulnerable learners. The strategy has been formulated with a wide range of partners (including local authorities, Health Board, Gwent Police) and continues to be reviewed and updated. A summary of some of the areas contained within the regional strategy is noted below:

- A regional professional panel (including local authorities and EAS) that discusses and approves school grant plans (Pupil Development Grant (PDG), Looked After Children (LAC), Educated other than at school (EOTAS)) with headteachers and chairs of governors. In addition, this encompasses midyear reviews of grant plans and impact capture.
- A regional professional learning offer for schools and settings that covers all aspects of the wellbeing and equity agenda, grant planning and interventions.
- Support for schools to interrogate data on groups of learners to assist with planning for improvement.
- Regional delivery schools for wellbeing and equity, a cluster that delivers professional learning to support the LAC agenda and a Lead Pupil Referral Unit that offers support and professional learning across the region.
- The delivery of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) professional learning with nearly all schools having completed Unit 1 with a target of all schools competing Unit 2 (Emotion Coaching) by July 2020.
- Pilot programme working in partnership with Children's Commissioner on the Rights to Education due to be rolled out to all schools.
- Working in partnership with Young Carers Wales to design lessons for both primary and secondary phases to raise awareness of young carers.

- Created a regional 'Wellbeing Toolkit' which has been used across schools to audit provision and engagement in learning for all vulnerable learners. In addition, all clusters of schools have developed 'Wellbeing Plans' that are bespoke to the priorities within their community.

### 5.1. Between eligible for free school meals (eFSM) pupils and other pupils:

In addition to the information provided above the region has:

- Completed regional based research on provision and performance of FSM learners which has been shared with all schools to support PDG planning and the provision for pupils eligible for FSM.
- Introduced Professional Panels (including LA and EAS) to discuss with headteachers and chairs of governors their PDG and LAC grant plans. These sessions afford the opportunity to align support needs and apply rigour to the approval and impact capture of grant plans.
- Provided termly sessions, in collaboration with the regional Additional Learning Needs Transformation Lead for governors to assist them in scrutinising school grant plans and to be cognisant of the latest research and effective practice.
- Partially funded a vulnerable learner lead practitioner in every secondary school to engage in a 12-month professional learning programme. Schools will engage in research on the engagement and provision for FSM learners within their own school context enabling them to review and refine their own school strategy for improving the provision for FSM learners.
- Introduced the RADY (Raising attainment of disadvantaged youngsters) programme that has been implemented in 6 secondary schools, this is now running into the 2nd year.
- Engaged with 'Children in Wales' and 'Poverty Proofing' to support schools to review the 'cost of the school day'.
- Engaged with Education Endowment Foundation to host regional research events.

### 5.2. Between ethnic minority groups at risk of underachieving and other pupils;

Gwent Education Minority-ethnic Service (GEMS) works to provide strategic support and intervention for minority-ethnic pupils who have English as an Additional Language (EAL) across the South East Wales Consortia (SEWC). A referral process ensures that all new arrivals are known to the service and initial assessments carried out in home language or English. GEMS has the flexibility to assess pupils in a range of languages. GEMS support is provided to pupils in cohorts from Year 2 to Year 11 who may be at risk of underachieving at school and who have a Welsh Government language acquisition stage of A/B. Pupils below Year 2 can be supported if there is capacity and support available.

All supported pupils are assigned a Language Acquisition Record to track their language development. These records are available to all schools and local authority officers. The Language Acquisition Record allows early identification of pupils who are not making the expected rate of language acquisition and allows for allocation of additional intervention. To ensure practice is consistent, training in identifying the correct Language Acquisition stages was carried out across the region in 2018 and will again be offered to all schools in 2019.

Across the South East Wales region in 2018, Key Stage 4 outcomes for all EAL pupils continued to improve with 55.8% of EAL pupils achieving the Level 2 threshold including English and



mathematics. This represents a 4.9 percentage points improvement on performance in 2017. In 2018, the attainment of EAL pupils exceeded that of their non EAL counterparts by 2.9 percentage points.

Pupils who have been categorised within the Category A Welsh Government Language Acquisition Stage can be disapplied from end of key stage assessments. However, the GEMS team has prioritised raising standards for all EAL pupils in Key Stage 4. To support with this aim and increase the chances of their leaving school with a qualification, EAL pupils can sit a qualification in their home language. For those who are new to the UK education system it is vital that they are able to take a GCSE examination. For some EAL pupils, this may be their only exam they are able to pass. GEMS has produced a booklet for schools to promote these exams to students and links with heads of MFL departments and Headteachers to maximise the number of eligible candidates. GEMS staff support schools to deliver the oral element of the GCSE exam and help pupils to prepare for their written examination. Across the South East Wales region in 2018-2019, 102 EAL pupils were entered for qualifications in a home language. 67 were entered for GCSE examination, 15 pupils were entered for AS level examinations and 20 pupils were entered for A2 qualifications. Analysis of these results indicates that nearly all pupils achieved grade A\*-C grades in their chosen examination.

To ensure there is strong monitoring of the work of the GEMS service, each authority provides a link officer who meets each term with the Head of GEMS at Gwent Achievement Progress (GAP) meetings. In addition, link officers attend termly Greater Gwent team meetings to discuss the progress of supported pupils. The GEMS teams offer training opportunities to staff in all schools in a range of key areas including: Effective EAL strategies; Gypsy Roma Traveller support and Supporting Refugees and Asylum Seekers. Training is followed up by GEMS staff to evaluate the impact of their work. In the 2020-2021 academic year training will be offered on a cluster basis to enable the work of the GEMS team to impact more widely on a larger number of schools.

In the 2018-2019 academic year, a regional conference was held as a way of sharing best practice for EAL pupils and was run by schools for schools across the region. The conference began to focus the work of schools on developing a strategic action plan to support EAL pupils. A second conference is planned for March 2020. The EAS has worked collaboratively with schools and GEMS to write a toolkit to support schools who are new to receiving ethnic minority and new to English learners.

### **5.3. Between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children, and other pupils;**

Newport City Council hosts the GEMS service. Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Monmouthshire local authorities access support from GEMS through established Service Level Agreements (SLAs). GEMS provides support to schools across the region with the aim of building their capacity to meet the needs of Gypsy, Roma Traveller (GRT) pupils. However, as Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent run their own Traveller Services, GRT does not form part of their SLA.

GEMS employ a full time GRT teaching assistant who mainly supports learners in schools across Newport. The funding for this post come directly from the Minority Ethnic Achievement Grant (MEAG). In addition, a GEMS teacher co-ordinates support for GRT learners and engages with GRT families through home visits.



The GEMS Senior Achievement Leader oversees the strategic support for GRT across the region and chairs a regional GRT forum. The forum works collaboratively with a range of organisations on issues affecting education, health, housing, community cohesion, holistic development and wellbeing of the GRT community. Links are also made with the Traveller Service in Torfaen and visits are carried out to see how Gypsy Traveller (GT) learners are supported in secondary education. Sharing practice is vital to ensure a consistent approach to supporting GT learners.

15 GT learners are currently supported in 5 schools in Newport. Referrals for GEMS support were made by schools with parental permission in all cases. GT learners are most frequently referred to GEMS because their levels of literacy are lower than that expected for their age. The reading attainment of these learners is tracked, and appropriate intervention implemented. In 2018-2019, nearly all GT learners who accessed GEMS support made improvements in their reading levels. GEMS bilingual teaching assistants also provide support for Roma learners who have EAL. There are very few Roma learners across the region, with the majority of pupils residing in Newport. The progress Roma pupils make with language skills is tracked using the GEMS Language Acquisition Record (LAR). The tracker identifies underachievement and the support that is needed by learners in specific skill areas.

The Torfaen Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) Education Service and the Blaenau Gwent GRT Education Service are both local authority teams. The Torfaen Service has 5 members of staff and the Blaenau Gwent Service 1.2 FTE members of staff. Each Service provides task focused, school-based additional support to GRT pupils. The teams work on an outreach basis working with pupils, families and school staff using a personal centred approach to plan for GRT pupils and ensure they are fully included and accessing mainstream education to break down the barriers to engagement and learning. Both teams are part grant and part core funded. In the 2019/20 academic year there were 115 GRT pupils on roll across eight Torfaen schools and 82 GRT pupils on roll across nine Blaenau Gwent schools who received support from the teams. The teams work with key partners to offer an enhanced, flexible curriculum with wide range of opportunities to engage students in a range of school based and vocational qualifications.

Types of support provided by Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Gypsy Roma Traveller Education Services include:

- Support the transition and admission of Gypsy and Traveller pupils into school.
- Provide task focused support to small groups or individual pupils to raise attainment and support pupil wellbeing in addition to existing schools support for GRT learners.
- Support schools/colleges to develop Learning Pathways for KS4 and post-16 GRT learners
- Provide advice and guidance for families to break down the barriers to engagement with learning.
- Engaging with pre-school pupils and their families to support the transition into early year's settings.
- Support GRT pupils with ALN as part of their IEP/IDP in conjunction with school support and other LA service intervention.
- Liaising with school, parents and other agencies in order to maximise engagement, attainment and progression of Gypsy Traveller young people within their schools.

- Raise awareness of Gypsy Traveller culture providing resources and guidance to schools.
- Monitoring attendance, exclusions, achievement and attainment levels for all GRT pupils.
- Support schools to facilitate links between home and schools
- Provide support to the Education Welfare service when attendance issues for GRT pupils arise.
- Support GRT pupils during examination periods to meet course work deadlines and access examinations.

**5.4. Between Looked After Children and other pupils (and any work to identify and improve the attainment of adopted children compared to other pupils).**

The regional strategy for promoting improved outcomes for LAC and known adopted pupils is well understood and embedded across all local authorities. There are effective working practices between EAS, local authority LACEs, the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transformation Officer and the regional Social Care Transformation Officer to align support and roles and responsibilities. In line with the recommendations within the terms and conditions of the grant funding, funding is distributed on a cluster basis, this has been the case for the past three financial years. Each cluster across the region has submitted a plan noting their priorities for PDG LAC funding, the plans have been approved via a regional professional panel.

The focus has been to build capacity within clusters of schools to support professional learning, improve provision and access to regional funding (including an application process for LAC being educated in England) with the aim of improving the outcomes for LAC and adopted children.

There is a regional professional learning programme available to schools and settings that focuses on ACEs, trauma, attachment and creating safe spaces within schools to support the provision for LAC and known adopted children. In addition, the EAS is working in partnership with 'New Pathways' to design and deliver a five-module professional learning programme for wellbeing leads in schools to upskill staff on trauma attachment and relationships. The current EAS Business Plan has a focus on developing links with Adoption UK. The plan also focuses upon the National Nurturing Schools Programme with 42 schools across the region nearing completion.

**6. An update on how you are challenging and supporting schools that participated in schools challenge Cymru. We would be particularly grateful to know how you have ensured that, where schools' performance improved during the programme, this positive momentum has continued.**

Since the end of Schools Challenge Cymru (SCC) programme the region has continued to learn from the most effective elements from within the programme and has integrated these into regional protocols. Use continues to be made of regional externally commissioned research to assist decision making in how the region approaches school improvement activity. The regional focus is firmly on building capacity within secondary schools, improving the quality of teaching and learning (at all key stages), building a collective ownership of pupil outcomes within each cluster of schools and developing leaders who can sustain improvement.

Many lessons were learnt through the engagement in the SCC programme and the impact this had on school improvement at school level, building capacity at a regional level and ensuring local accountability is secured. A summary of these are noted below:



- There needs to be effective line management and clear lines of accountability for Challenge Advisers.
- The use of Accelerated Improvement Board to hold schools to account regularly for progress are effective and have been utilised across the region.
- The focus for school improvement needs to be on all aspects of leadership and provision and not solely on the end of key stage 4.
- More focus needs to be placed on the quality of school improvement planning, the processes for self-evaluation and the accuracy of self-evaluation judgements made by school leaders.
- Effective links need to be made into local authority wider services to ensure that schools make effective progress. The region has strong links with each of the local authorities to ensure this is the case.
- Cabinet Members for Education, local authorities and regional consortia need to have clear roles in holding schools to account.

Across the region 14 schools (2 schools closed and a new one opened during the programme) were engaged in the SCC programme. As a result of changes in performance measures and specifications across several indicators at key stage 4, it has not been possible to compare 2019 figures with previous years performance (as noted in 3.1). It is however possible to make a number of other statements about the progress the schools have made overtime:

- Of the schools in the programme who had previously been in receipt of the highest support levels, 5 are now in receipt of the lowest levels of support (Green or Yellow).
- Out of the 14 schools, 9 have had changes in headteachers since the end of the programme.
- 7 of the schools have been in receipt of Statutory Warning Notices either during the SCC programme or after. 3 schools that were previously in the programme are currently in receipt of a Statutory Warning Notice.
- Of those schools inspected during or immediately after the SCC programme 9 schools were placed in statutory categories (either significant improvement or special measures), 6 of these have now been removed from these categories and are making good progress.
- Of those schools inspected during or immediately after the SCC programme 3 schools were placed in the category of Estyn monitoring, all 3 have since been removed from this category and are making good progress.
- An Interim Executive Board has been implemented in one of the schools.

## 7. Any comments you have on current and future school accountability arrangements and the impact of these on school improvement.

There is strong support for the current regional model for school improvement from all five councils, with all agreeing the EAS Business Plan and contributing fully to the priorities and actions within in.

Open and transparent regional funding processes (both core and grant) are essential to enable schools to have confidence within the processes so they can utilise this to support their school improvement priorities.

As a region we welcome the changes to the accountability arrangements, the focus on a broader range of performance measures, the focus on self-evaluation and improvement planning and the increased support and resources for wellbeing.

The region knows its schools well, we believe that the current national model for school categorisation could now be refined to reflect the progress that has been made.

**8. Any other comments you wish to make on the school improvement and raising standards agenda.**

It is pleasing that there is a strong feeling of collaboration between other partners within the middle tier. This is particularly important when it comes to determining roles and responsibilities to ensure that there is limited duplication of effort. It is essential that schools are clear about who does what and where to access support and resources.

We welcome the enhanced working practices with colleagues from Estyn, particularly around the support for curriculum for Wales, the national resource for school improvement and through the pilot model for schools causing concern.

