Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr
Bridgend County Borough Council

Swyddfeydd Dinesig, Stryd yr Angel, Pen-y-bont, CF31 4WB / Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Rhowch wybod i ni os mai Cymraeg yw eich dewis iaith.
We welcome correspondence in Welsh. Please let us know if your language choice is Welsh.

Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate
Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513
Gofynnwch am / Ask for: Democratic Services

Ein cyf / Our ref:
Eich cyf / Your ref:

Dyddiad/Date: Monday, 17 November 2025

Dear Councillor,

EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (FORMERLY SUBJECT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1)

A meeting of the Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Formerly Subject Overview & Scrutiny Committee 1) will be held Hybrid in the Council Chamber - Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB / remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Monday, 24 November 2025** at **11:00**.

AGENDA

1   Apologies for Absence

    To receive apologies for absence from Members.

2   Declarations of Interest

    To receive declarations of personal and prejudicial interest (if any) from Members/Officers in accordance with the provisions of the Members Code of Conduct adopted by Council from 1 September 2008 (including whipping declarations)

3   Approval of Minutes

    5 - 10

    To receive for approval the minutes of the meeting of 15/09/25.

By receiving this Agenda Pack electronically you will save the Authority approx. £1.28 in printing costs

4   Online Safety and Digital Learning

Invitees:

Councillor Martyn Jones – Cabinet Member - Education and Youth Services

Gayle Shenton - Head of Learning
Darren Jones - Group Manager - School Improvement
Mathew Jones - Lead Officer Digital Learning
Neil Arbery - Lead Officer Strategic Development (Primary)
Sarah Humphreys - Lead Officer Strategic Development (Secondary)

Youth Council Representative

Headteachers:

Edward Jones – Headteacher, Pencoed Comprehensive School
Jeremy Evans – Headteacher, Heronsbridge School
Richard Bailey – Headteacher, Bryncethin Primary School
Adam Raymond – Acting Headteacher, Pencoed Primary School

5   Conclusions and Recommendations

6   Forward Work Programme Update

7   Urgent Items

To consider any item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Part 4 (paragraph 4) of the Council Procedure Rules and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should by reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

Note: This will be a Hybrid meeting and Members and Officers will be attending in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Angel Street Bridgend / Remotely via Microsoft Teams. The meeting will be recorded for subsequent transmission via the Council's internet site which will be available as soon as practicable after the meeting. If you would like to view this meeting live, please contact cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk or tel. 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513 / 643159.

Yours faithfully
K Watson
Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy

Councillors:

JPD Blundell
RJ Collins
HJ David
P Ford
H Griffiths
D M Hughes
J Llewellyn-Hopkins
R J Smith

I M Spiller
T Thomas
JH Tildesley MBE
A Wathan
AJ Williams
E D Winstanley

Registered Representatives:

Angela Clarke - Church in Wales Representative
Samantha Lambert-Worgan - Parent Governor - Special Schools

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EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (FORMERLY SUBJECT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1) - MONDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 2025

<u>MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (FORMERLY SUBJECT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1) HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON MONDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 11:00</u>

<u>Present</u>

Councillor H Griffiths – Chairperson

JPD Blundell   HJ David   E D Winstanley

<u>Present Virtually</u>

P Ford   J Llewellyn-Hopkins   R J Smith   T Thomas
A Wathan   AJ Williams

<u>Registered Representative:</u>

A Clarke - Church in Wales Representative

<u>Apologies for Absence:</u>

I Spiller

Robert Richards – Lead Nurse - CAMHS and Specialised Services

Youth Council Representative

<u>Declarations of Interest:</u>

H Griffiths – Personal - Chair of School Governors - CCYD and family member is the Headteacher of Mynydd Cynffig Primary School.
AJ Williams – Personal – Chair / Community Governor Coety Primary School.

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EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (FORMERLY SUBJECT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1) - MONDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 2025

Invitees:

Councillor Jane Gebbie	Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing
Councillor M Jones	Cabinet Member for Education and Youth Services
Lindsay Harvey	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years & Young People
Gayle Shenton	Head of Learning
Mark Lewis	Group Manager – Integrated Working
Kathryn Morgan	Principal Educational Psychologist
David Wright	Deputy Head of Children and Family Services
Jayde Barron	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
Gail Biggs	Group Manager – Inclusion
Megan Apsee	Education Engagement Team Manager
Clare Shears	Health and Well-being Promoting Educational Settings Programme Co-ordinator for Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Headteachers:

Ryan Davies	Headteacher, Brynteg Comprehensive School
Mike Stephens	Head, Porthcawl Comprehensive School
Nicola Kelly Fisher	Head, St Mary's & St Patrick's RC Primary School
Adele Thomas	Head, Nottage Primary School

Officers:

Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Manager
Jessica Mclellan	Scrutiny Officer

81. Approval of Minutes

Decision Made	RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting dated 3 July 2025 be approved as a true and accurate record.
Date Decision Made	15 September 2025

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Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for Learners

| Decision Made | **RESOLVED:**

Following consideration of the report and detailed discussion with Cabinet Members, Senior Officers and Invitees the Committee made the following recommendations and requests for additional information:

Recommendations

1. Given the evidence provided by Officers and Headteachers regarding the impact of any removal of grant funding for mental health support for pupils in schools, the latter referencing that any removal would potentially be 'catastrophic'; Members **recommended** that a letter be drafted to Welsh Government from the Chair to highlight their concerns and their support for the growth bid to ensure sustainable funding for mental health support services in schools.

2. Officers reported that in many cases pupils who moved schools often did so prior to any information regarding the pupil being shared between the schools, potentially affecting or delaying any necessary support these pupils might require to be put in place immediately. Officers reported that schools were bound by Welsh Government policy to accept a transfer immediately. The Committee therefore **recommended** that as part of the Chair's letter to Welsh Government a request be made to consider revising this policy, in order for schools to share information prior to a pupil moving to another school, so that any necessary support pupils might need can be planned for and put in place with no delay.

3. The Committee reiterated their **recommendation** made at their May 2025 meeting asking for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure that matters around the funding of mental health support services such as counselling and early intervention services are prioritised in the next budget round and not considered as areas for any potential savings. This was of particular concern given the information reported by Headteachers that many schools were already using part of their delegated budgets towards this support, in addition to the grant funding. Members further **recommended** that the Education Deep Dive Group formulated as part of the Scrutiny Budget Working Group consider this area as part of their remit, exploring the current costs, what grants are potentially at risk and what future funding would be required to continue providing the necessary support to pupils. |

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	Requests for Additional Information: a) It was agreed that any future research and data gathered in collaboration with Welsh Government on the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme, would be shared with members of the Committee. b) The Committee requested that a briefing session be held for the Committee Members to explore what support the Local Authority provide for pupils who are home schooled. c) The Committee requested clarification over how pupils are measured and classed as NEET (Not in Education, Employment of Training). d) The Committee requested information relating to the protocol for 'Managed Moves' as well as figures showing how these were being monitored to evaluate their success. e) Whilst acknowledging the development of the Family Commissioning Strategy, Members commented on the fact that this strategy very much focused on children of greatest need, who were the most vulnerable and requested clarification as to whether there was any such strategy that focused on the wider context and looked at, or picked up on, all children. **Further Scrutiny/Forward Work Programme** The Committee commented on the fact that the report referred to lots of activity and outputs relating to support for pupils with mental health issues, but there was little mention of outcomes and how these were being measured. Evidence received from head teachers also highlighted that the situation seemed to be getting worse with more pupils having mental health issues. Members queried how this was known and how it was being measured. Future consideration, therefore, by the Scrutiny Committee, should incorporate how the Authority and schools are measuring and monitoring the situation and how we are evaluating the effectiveness of any support provided.
Date Decision Made	15 September 2025

83. Information Report - Quarter 4 / Year End Performance 2024-25

Decision Made	**RESOLVED:** The Committee noted the content of the report and its appendices and made the following requests for

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	additional information:
	Additional Information
	a) Members referred to DEFS 156 in the report 'Number of schools judged by Estyn to be in 'significant improvement' or 'special measures' and requested clarification as to how exactly the Local Authority monitored schools and their performance so that if a school is placed in special measures it does not come as a big surprise.
	b) Members requested progress updates on the following:
	• WBO3.4.2 'Open Welsh-medium childcare in the Ogmore Valley and Bettws, with 32 full-time-equivalent childcare places'. • BO4.4.4 Provide a new two-form entry English-medium school to replace the existing Afon Y Felin and Corneli Primary Schools (EEYYP).
Date Decision Made	15 September 2025

84. Forward Work Programme Update

Decision Made	**RESOLVED:** The Committee considered the report, approved the Forward Work Programme in Appendix A, and **requested** that the Directorate be chased requesting urgent responses to the Committee's previous recommendations that were outstanding in Appendix B.
Date Decision Made	15 September 2025

85. Urgent Items

Decision Made	None
Date Decision Made	15 September 2025

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To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this link.

The meeting closed at 12:40.

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Meeting of:	**EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**
Date of Meeting:	**24 NOVEMBER 2025**
Report Title:	**ONLINE SAFETY AND DIGITAL LEARNING**
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	**CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES** **CORPORATE DIRECTOR - EDUCATION, EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG PEOPLE**
Responsible Officer:	**MAT JONES LEAD OFFICER, DIGITAL LEARNING - EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG PEOPLE**
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect on policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	Children and young people face growing challenges in navigating the online world. As technology becomes embedded in education and everyday life, the associated risks are increasing. Schools must not only keep pace with rapid technological change but also ensure that learners develop the skills to use digital tools safely and responsibly. The Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate supports a multi-layered approach to online safety, combining education, policy, technology strategy, and school-community engagement. This approach ensures schools can help children and young people navigate the online world safely and responsibly. The local authority has seen improvements in enhancing online safety across schools, including improved digital competence among learners, staff, and families, and greater awareness of online risks. However, disparities in digital environments and practices still exist between schools, highlighting the need for continued support and consistency. Support for schools includes professional learning, technology investment, and guidance on digital policy and research. Ongoing collaboration between the local authority and schools remains vital to strengthen digital competence, raise awareness, and ensure safe, inclusive online environments.

1.   Purpose of report

1.1   The purpose of this report is to update Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the current position relating to online safety and digital learning in Bridgend schools.

2.   Background

2.1   As children and young people increasingly use digital technologies for learning, communication, and entertainment, schools face the challenge of equipping them with the knowledge and skills to navigate online spaces safely and responsibly.

2.2   While the digital world offers valuable opportunities for learning and social interaction, it also brings a range of risks that can affect children and young people. These include harmful online behaviours, exposure to inappropriate content, and challenges linked to emerging technologies, all of which require ongoing attention and support from schools and families.

2.3   With the widespread use of technology and the increasing complexities associated with digital and online tools, online safety has become a priority within education in Wales, particularly with the implementation of Curriculum for Wales, which places a strong emphasis on developing learners' digital competence and resilience.

2.4   The range of online challenges not only carry implications for learner safety but can also negatively impact their mental health and wellbeing, affecting emotional and behavioural regulation, social interactions, and overall educational engagement. Such concerns now make online safety part of a whole-school safeguarding priority, requiring integrated policies, a curriculum focus, staff digital skills training, investment in technology that is 'fit for purpose' and proactive engagement with learners and parents to mitigate risks.

2.5   With mobile devices now widely used by children and young people in and outside of school, and easy access to Wi-Fi and mobile networks, actively engaging online has become constant and immediate. This makes it increasingly important to ensure that children access safe, age-appropriate, and developmentally suitable online tools, services, and content.

2.6   Recently published local and national data and research presented by The Children's Commissioner for Wales, The Senedd's Petitions Committee, Estyn and School Health Research Network (SHRN) has highlighted concerning trends in online behaviours of children and young people and their attitudes towards technology.

2.7   The findings from the research and these reviews place greater responsibility on schools to provide meaningful online safety learning opportunities for all stakeholders – staff, learners, and families. Many of the key online safety themes identified in these reviews include:

- addictive digital behaviours;
- excessive screen time habits;
- cyberbullying and online harassment;
- online peer-on-peer sexual harassment;
- sexting, inappropriate image and video sharing;

- exposure to harmful or inappropriate online content;
- problematic social media use;
- under-age use of social media;
- misinformation and disinformation;
- risks associated with gaming; and
- risks linked to emerging technologies (such as., artificial intelligence (AI)).

The Children's Commissioner for Wales

2.8   In June 2024, the Children's Commissioner for Wales gathered views from children and young people on how their online lives affect school. Many behaviours and outcomes were identified. The most common concerns included feeling tired due to excessive online screen time activity and struggling with motivation and concentration during lessons. Additionally, children noted that arguments or conflicts that began online often carried over into the classroom, disrupting learning environments and peer relationships.

2.9   Today, children and young people primarily get their information online by using search engines, educational websites, artificial intelligence tools and especially social media platforms. While schools, teachers, and books remain important, digital sources dominate because they are accessible, engaging, and influenced by peers. However, this shift raises concerns about misinformation, excessive screen time, and the need for improved critical thinking skills to identify credible sources.

2.10   In February 2025, the Children's Commissioner for Wales surveyed over 850 children and young people to understand their experiences with online misinformation. The findings showed that 67% of primary-aged children had seen something online they believed was not true, and 52% felt it was easy to believe fake content.

2.11   Among secondary-aged respondents, 49% of learners said they had come across something online that they later found out was fake, while 36% of learners were unsure. The most common types of misinformation included celebrity rumours and fake news stories. When asked how they would respond to suspicious online content, the majority (68%) said they would ignore it and keep scrolling. 37% of learners reported searching online to verify the information with only 25% of learners asking a trusted adult or friend.

2.12   These results highlight the need for strong digital literacy education and parent-carer support to help children develop the critical skills required to understand what they are experiencing online.

Estyn

2.13   Estyn, the education and training inspectorate for Wales, published a thematic review in December 2021 'We don't tell our teachers'– experiences of peer-on-peer sexual harassment among secondary school learners in Wales. By visiting 35 schools across Wales, surveying 1,250 learners and hosting learner-focus groups, the review found that online peer-on-peer sexual harassment is a widespread issue among secondary school learners in Wales.

2.14   Learners reported experiencing unsolicited messages, image-based abuse, and inappropriate comments and image sharing via social media and online messaging platforms.

2.15   Most learners across the secondary school-age range stated that hurtful comments by peers about appearance is one of the most common forms of sexual harassment they experience. It was reported that this type of sexual harassment often happens online with many incidents occurring outside school hours but had a direct impact on learners' wellbeing and behaviour in school.

2.16   The Estyn review suggests that children and young people have substantial experience of harassment by their peers via the mobile phone, social media and gaming sites. This includes, online bullying, posting hurtful comments – especially about appearance, asking for, sending and sharing nude or semi-nude photographs, catfishing, unsolicited friend requests or demands for nude photos by strangers or those with a fake social media profile. Participants also reported negative attitudes towards girls in digital games.

2.17   Many learners also experience pressure to maintain a high number of online 'friends', as well as to gain 'likes' and 'comments' on their digital profiles. This reflects the significant social pressures children and young people face to remain active online to preserve their status and friendships and is highlighted within the Estyn review.

2.18   Despite the fact that children and young people value owning a mobile phone, they also recognise that the problems associated with its use can negatively affect mental health and wellbeing. Common negative online behaviours identified in this thematic review include using digital features to facilitate bullying, posting hurtful comments – particularly about appearance, sexting, sending or receiving nude images, and sharing inappropriate content. While learners are often willing to confide in friends about these issues, they report being far less likely to disclose them to a trusted adult.

School Health Research Network (SHRN)

2.19   The School Health Research Network (SHRN) is a partnership between Cardiff University, Public Health Wales, and Welsh Government, working to improve the health and well-being of young people in Wales. SHRN conducts the Student Health and Well-being (SHW) Survey every two years in maintained secondary schools across Wales.

2.20   The survey is bilingual, electronic, and administered in schools to learners aged 11 to 16-years-old, covering topics such as mental health, physical activity, substance use, sexual health, and social relationships. Participation is high, with over 90% of secondary schools taking part and more than 100,000 students responding in each round.

2.21   In addition, SHRN now runs a Primary School Student Health and Well-being Survey for children aged 7 to 11-years, providing valuable insights into younger learners' health behaviours, including social media use, bullying, and well-being. This large-scale, school-based approach ensures robust, representative data that informs national policy and supports school health improvement.

2.22   All schools in Bridgend register for participation and both the primary and secondary SHW survey reveals some telling behaviours related to online safety.

2.23   The local authority shares the findings with schools through headteacher groups and professional networks, ensuring that leaders are fully informed and able to take appropriate action to address the issues identified.

Primary School Student Health and Wellbeing Survey 2022-2023 (key findings)

2.24   Overall, 354 schools took part in the study from 21 out of 22 local authorities in Wales and 32,606 learners completed the questionnaires across the year groups 3 to 6. The findings were presented as a national summary and not broken down to individual local authority data.

2.25   Bridgend was the second highest participating local authority by school percentage at 47.8% (22 primary schools).

Table 1   Primary School Student Health and Wellbeing Survey 2022-2023 participant responses https://www.shrn.org.uk/national-data-and-reports/

	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
All local authority participants	7,457	7,780	8,251	9,118	32,606

Bridgend participants	2,197 learners from Year 3 to Year 6	22 schools

Electronic devices (screen use) primary school learners – summary findings

Table 2   Percentage of Year 3 to Year 6 learners who reported owning a smartphone. Produced by Public Health Wales, using SHRN data.
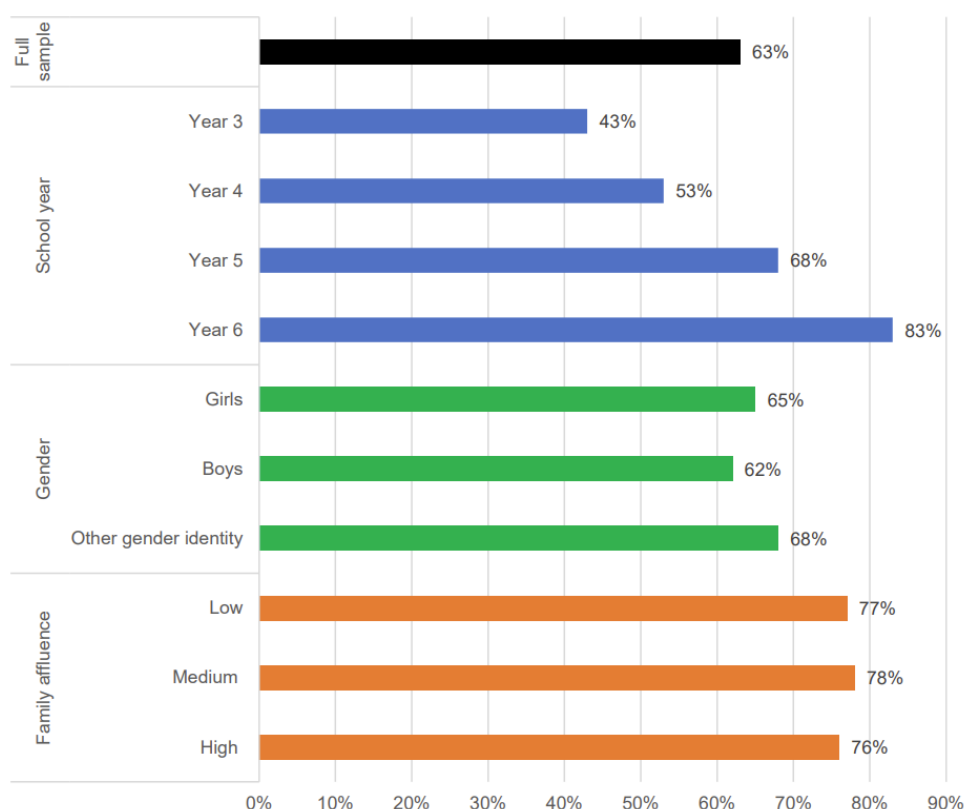
2.26   When asked about owning a smartphone, tablet and laptop device (by age, gender and family affluence) Table 2 shows:

- most learners reported owning a smartphone;
- girls were more likely to report owning a smartphone than boys;
- while a minority of Year 3 learners had their own smartphone, there is a steep increase in ownership by age, with five in six Year 6 learners owning a smartphone;
- half of learners reported owning their own computer or laptop;
- ownership increased as learners moved from Year 3 to Year 6;
- girls were less likely to own a computer or laptop compared to the other gender groups;
- laptop or computer ownership was highest among learners from more affluent families;
- over two thirds of learners reported owning a tablet;
- girls were more likely than boys to report owning a tablet; and
- there was evidence of a social gradient, with learners from more affluent families more likely to report owning a tablet.

Social media use and primary school learners – summary findings

Table 3   Percentage of Year 3 to Year 6 learners who reported using social media site or apps a few times a week or every day.
Produced by Public Health Wales, using SHRN data.
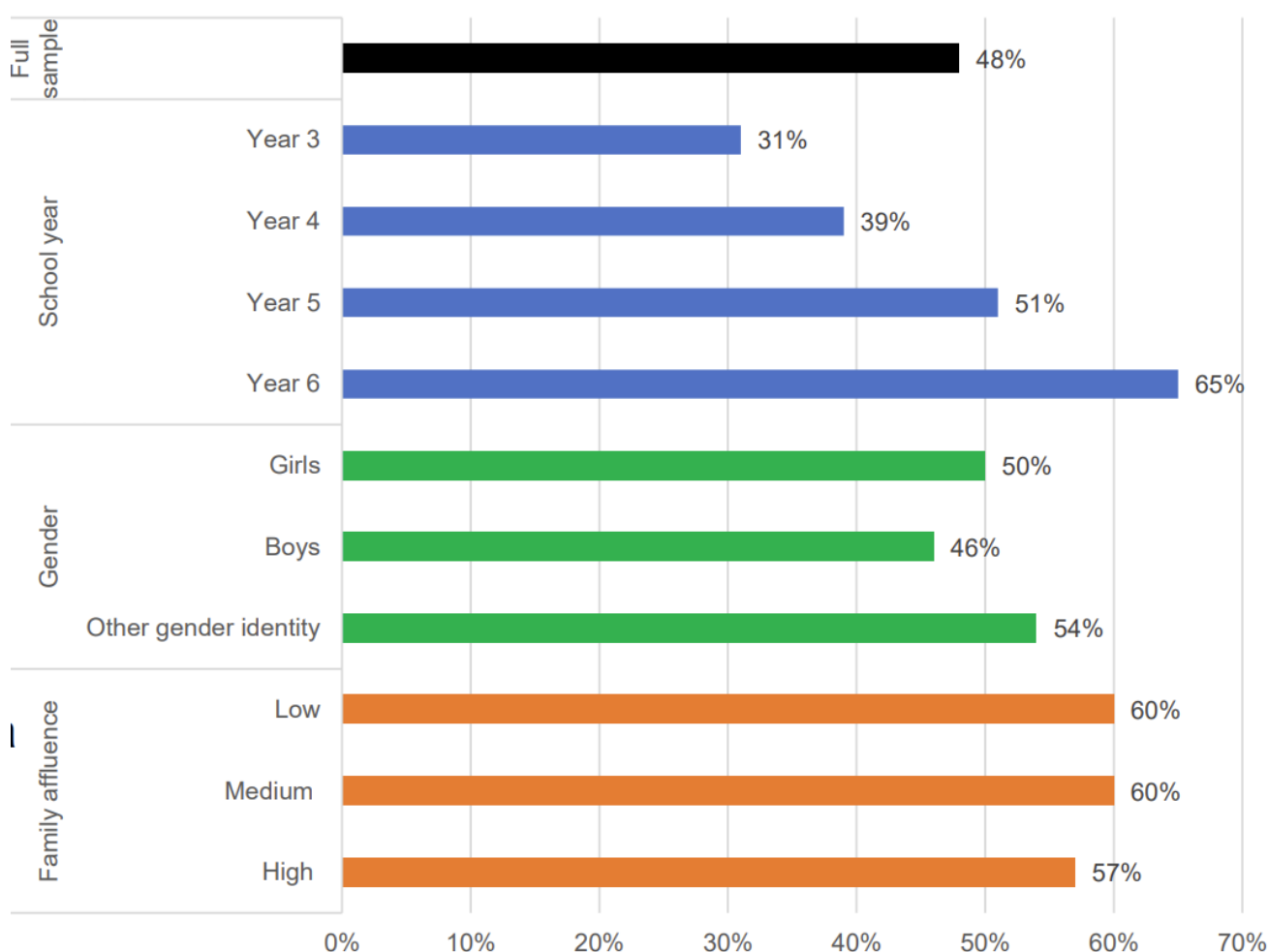
2.27   When asked about social media use (by age, gender and family affluence) Table 3 shows:

- nearly half of learners reported using social media sites or apps a few times a week or every day;
- there was a large age gradient, with regular social media use more than doubling between Year 3 and Year 6;
- girls were more likely to report using social media regularly than boys; and
- learners with high family affluence were least likely to report regular social media use.

2.28   The Primary School Student Health and Wellbeing Survey 2022-2023 also surveyed cyberbullying with Year 6 learners only. The findings in Table 4 show:

- a greater proportion of boys than girls said that they had cyberbullied others;
- cyberbullying perpetration showed evidence of a social gradient, with learners from less affluent families reporting higher rates than those from more affluent families; and
- nearly half of learners reported having been bullied at school in the past couple of months.

Table 4   Percentage of Year 6 learners who reported they had taken part in cyberbullying (by gender and family affluence).
Produced by Public Health Wales, using SHRN data.
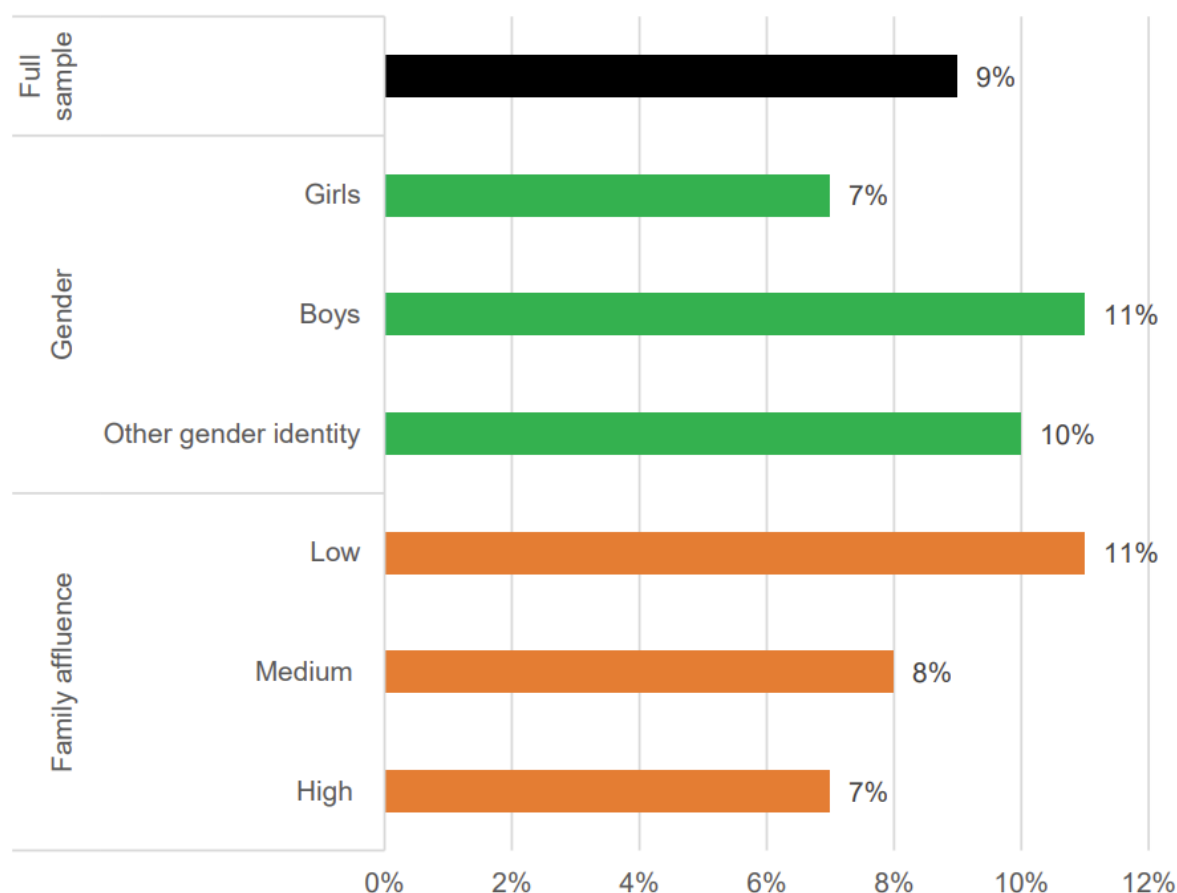
Secondary School Student Health and Wellbeing Survey 2022-2023 (key findings)

2.29   Public Health Wales has released an interactive dashboard presenting updated survey results on the health and well-being of secondary school-aged children in Wales. https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/observatory/data-and-analysis/shrn-data-dashboard/

2.30   The dashboard enables the ongoing assessment of young people's health in Wales, both nationally and regionally, and opportunities to understand trends in adolescent health and well-being, including online behaviours.

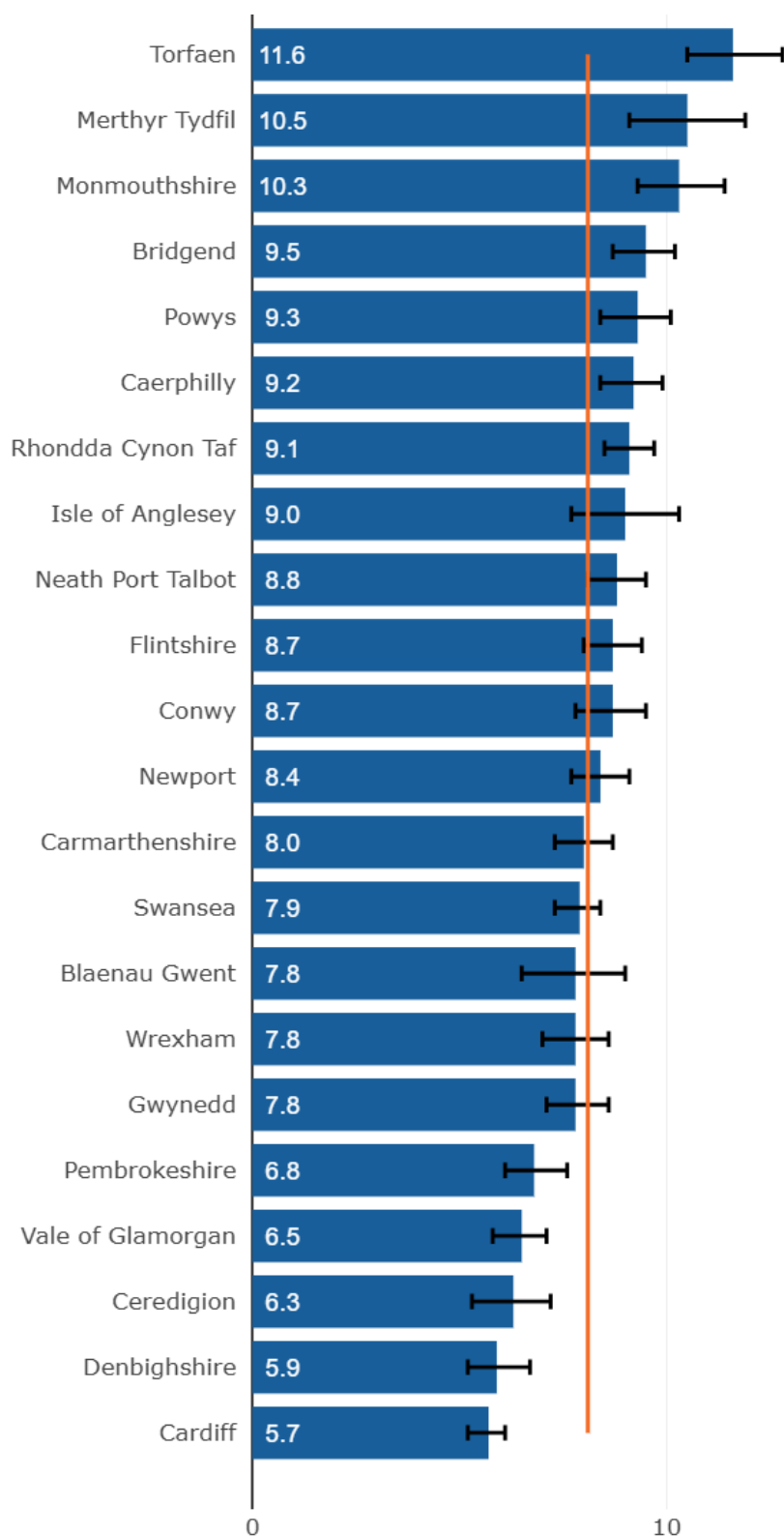2.31   Findings show that social media significantly influences children and young people's online attitudes and behaviours. According to SHW survey data, 10% of all boys and 18% of girls in Wales in 2023 were classified as a problematic user of social media.

2.32   Nationally, girls from low affluence households (21%) and middle affluence households (19%) were more likely to be classified as problematic users than those from high affluence households (16%).

2.33   Across Wales, over 1 in 5 girls (21%) in Year 9 and Year 10 were classified as problematic users of social media, double that of boys (10%) in the same year groups in 2023.

2.34   Connections between emotional health and social media use can also be drawn with more than half of girls (54%) in Wales reported experiencing feelings of low mood, irritability, nervousness, or trouble getting to sleep, while only about one-third of boys (32%) reported the same issues.

2.35   Cyberbullying has shown an upward trend across survey periods, rising from 18% in 2021 to 21% in 2023. Greater social media use, the ease of anonymous communication, and the pressure to maintain an online presence are often seen as factors that can amplify harmful behaviours, making it easier for negative interactions to spread quickly and widely, which in turn impacts young people's mental health and sense of safety.

2.36   One area the SHW survey highlights is around young people's attitudes to sharing explicit content online. In the survey, 11 to 16-year-old learners are asked if they have sent someone a sexually explicit image of themselves. In 2021 and 2023 Bridgend school learners were positioned fourth across all Welsh local authorities for engaging in this online activity.

2.37   In 2023, 9.5% (544) of 11 to 16-year-old learners in Bridgend reported having sent someone a sexually explicit image of themselves to someone. This places Bridgend above the Wales national average for learners engaging in this online behaviour.

Table 5   11 to 16-year-old learners (all Wales) reported having sent someone a sexually explicit image of themselves (by percentage, persons, multiple local authorities, Wales, 2023).

Produced by Public Health Wales, using SHRN data.

Local Authority	Percentage
Torfaen	11.6
Merthyr Tydfil	10.5
Monmouthshire	10.3
Bridgend	9.5
Powys	9.3
Caerphilly	9.2
Rhondda Cynon Taf	9.1
Isle of Anglesey	9.0
Neath Port Talbot	8.8
Flintshire	8.7
Conwy	8.7
Newport	8.4
Carmarthenshire	8.0
Swansea	7.9
Blaenau Gwent	7.8
Wrexham	7.8
Gwynedd	7.8
Pembrokeshire	6.8
Vale of Glamorgan	6.5
Ceredigion	6.3
Denbighshire	5.9
Cardiff	5.7

2.38   The data in 2023 (9.5% or 544 of 5,748 surveyed Bridgend learners aged 11 to 16-years-old), compared to the data in 2021 (10.3% or 503 of 4,896 surveyed Bridgend learners aged 11 to 16-years-old), indicates a small percentage decrease in this type of online behaviour over the survey period.

Table 6   11 to 16-year-old learners (all Wales) reported having sent someone a sexually explicit image of themselves (by percentage, persons, multiple local authorities, 2021 and 2023 comparison).

Produced by Public Health Wales, using SHRN data.

Local Authority	2023	2021
Isle of Anglesey	9.0	9.2
Gwynedd	7.8	8.9
Conwy	8.7	8.9
Denbighshire	5.9	6.4
Flintshire	8.7	10.2
Wrexham	7.8	8.6
Powys	9.3	9.6
Ceredigion	6.3	8.2
Pembrokeshire	6.8	8.4
Carmarthenshire	8.0	7.8
Swansea	7.9	9.3
Neath Port Talbot	8.8	10.3
Bridgend	9.5	10.3
Vale of Glamorgan	6.5	6.5
Cardiff	5.7	6.2
Rhondda Cynon Taf	9.1	8.7
Merthyr Tydfil	10.5	11.1
Caerphilly	9.2	9.2
Blaenau Gwent	7.8	7.3
Torfaen	11.6	10.4
Monmouthshire	10.3	8.5
Newport	8.4	7.2

2.39   When looking at this type of online behaviour across age brackets, overall, this behaviour increases with age (see Table 7).

2.40   When compared to 2021 results, the 2023 data show a decrease in this behaviour for learners aged 12, 14, 15 and 16-years-old, but show a small increase in this behaviour for learners aged 11 and 13-years-old (see Table 7).

Table 7   11 to 16-year-old learners (all Wales) by age reported having sent someone a sexually explicit image of themselves (by percentage, persons, multiple ages, Wales, 2021 and 2023).
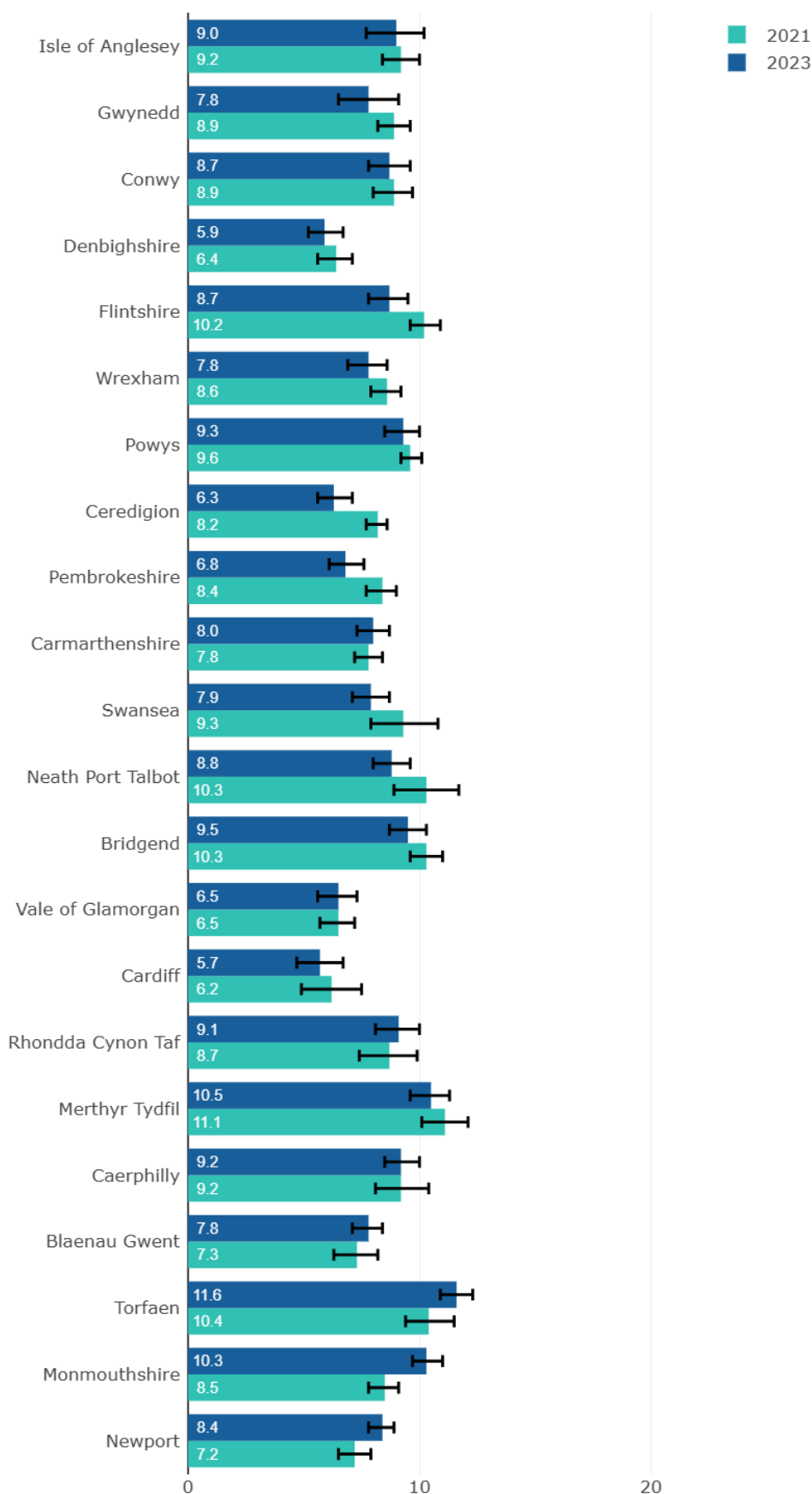
Produced by Public Health Wales, using SHRN data.
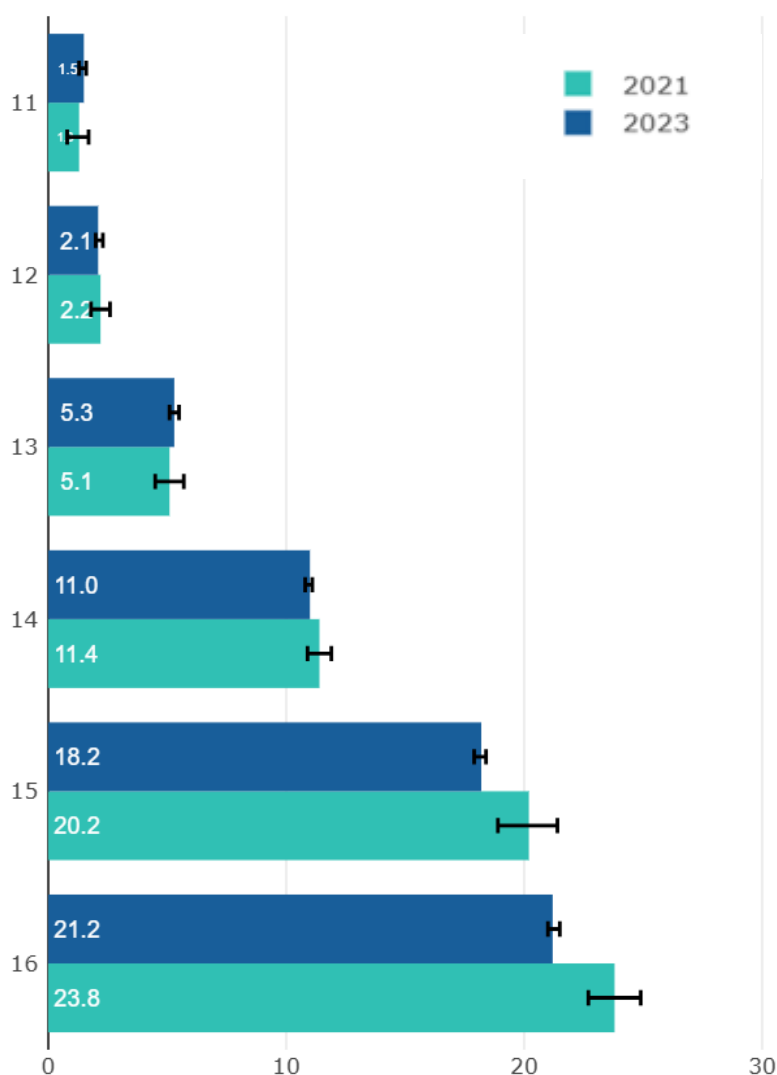
Age	2021 Count	2021 Survey Total	2023 Count	2023 Survey Total	% Proportion Increase
11	213	16,842	269	17,438	Yes
12	506	22,737	494	24,043	No
13	1,165	23,004	1,276	23,854	Yes
14	2,356	20,748	2,318	21,039	No
15	3,788	18,754	3,644	20,022	No
16	1,088	4,576	1,070	5,043	No

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2.41   When looking at this behaviour across secondary school year groups, overall, this behaviour increases from Year 7 to Year 11 (see Table 8).

2.42   When compared to 2021 results, the 2023 data show a decrease in this behaviour for Year 10 and 11 learners, with no change for Year 8 learners and increase in this behaviour for Year 7 and 9 learners (see Table 8).

Table 8   11 to 16-year-old learners (all Wales) reported having sent someone a sexually explicit image of themselves, percentage, persons, multiple year groups, Wales, 2021 and 2023.
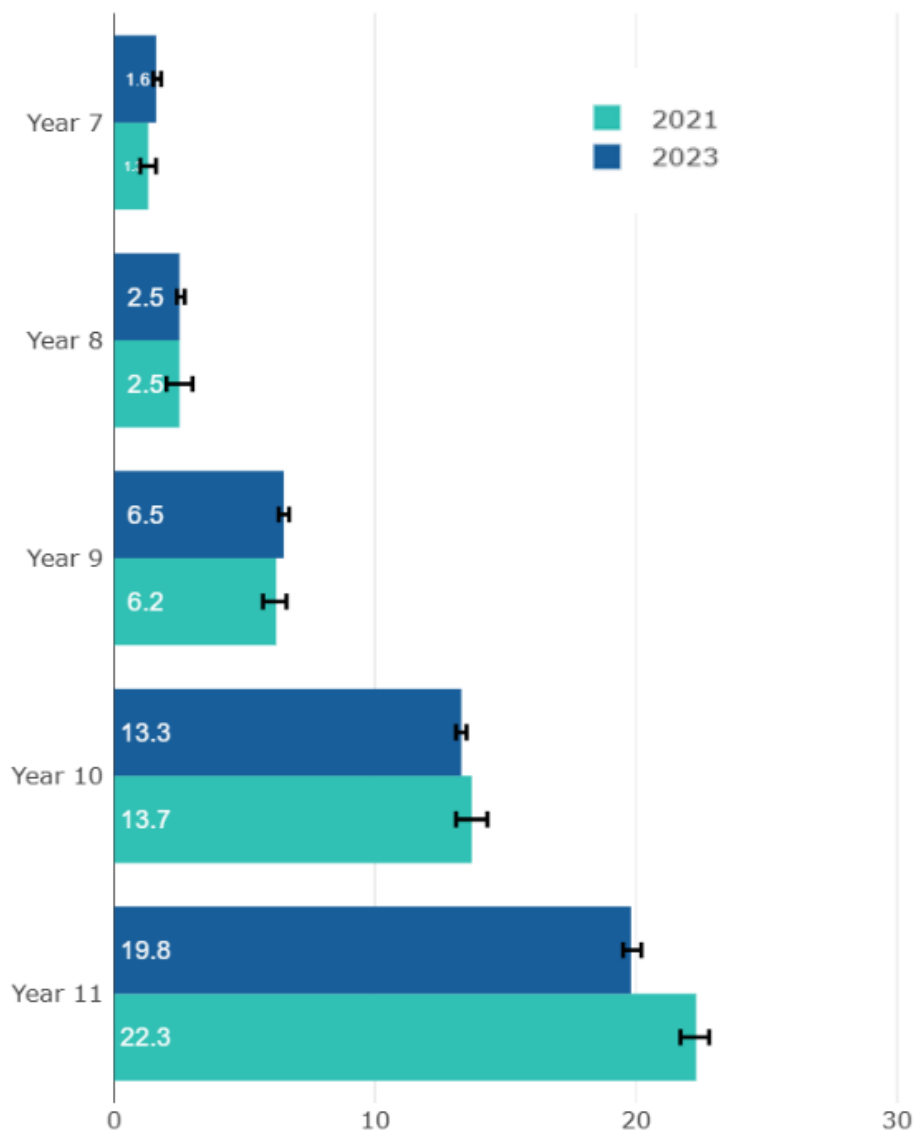
Produced by Public Health Wales, using SHRN data.

School Year Group	2021 Count	2021 Survey Total	2023 Count	2023 Survey Total	% Proportion Increase
7	306	22,754	390	23,987	Yes
8	579	22,768	597	24,096	No
9	1,426	22,842	1,512	23,316	Yes
10	2,772	20,227	2,755	20,739	No
11	4,033	18,070	3,817	19,301	No

2.43   Wider research from organisations such as Office of Communications (Ofcom), UK Safer Internet, Childnet and National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPPC) point to several reasons why children and young people may engage in sexting or sharing nude images. These include curiosity, exploring romantic relationships, seeking attention or validation, feeling pressured by peers or partners and behavioural normalisation.

2.44   The widespread access to the internet, use of smartphones (mobile phones) and social media can make this behavior seem normal, even though it carries significant emotional, social, and legal risks.

2.45   The local authority shares these findings extensively across schools in Bridgend to ensure staff, parents-carers and learners are aware of inappropriate image and video sharing, particularly those of a sexual nature, both digitally and online.

2.46   This behaviour is a growing concern among young people. Such actions can have serious and lasting consequences, including damaging future education and career prospects, harming personal relationships, and impacting mental health.

2.47   Curriculum for Wales highlights learning opportunities centred around 'sexting' and importantly draws attention towards needing to know that; creating, possessing, or distributing sexual images of anyone under 18 is a criminal offense under UK law, even if shared consensually.

2.48   The local authority provides guidance to schools through established school networks, sign-posting age and developmentally appropriate resources to support curriculum learning and promote online safety awareness and responsible digital behaviour among children and young people.

Table 9   Proportion of children who have their own mobile phone, by age. Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report, published by Ofcom, 7 May 2025.

Age Group	3 to 5 years	6 to 7 years	8 to 9 years	10 to 12 years	13 to 15 years	16 to 17 years
Smartphone Ownership	19%	30%	42%	82%	97%	99%

2.49   In 2024, 96% of children went online, underscoring the central role of the internet in their daily lives. As children grow older, their access to smartphones and connection to the online world increases significantly. This widespread access enables children to engage with a variety of online media sources and participate in diverse digital activities.

2.50   Online activities include viewing content, playing games, learning, and interacting with others, reflecting evolving behaviours and habits shaped by digital environments. The data highlights how smartphones are not just communication tools but gateways to broader online experiences that influence children's development, socialisation, and learning.

Table 10   Proportion of children who go online, by age.
Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report, published by
Ofcom, 7 May 2025.

Age Group	3 to 5 years	6 to 7 years	8 to 9 years	10 to 12 years	13 to 15 years	16 to 17 years
Active online	85%	96%	97%	100%	100%	100%

2.51   In the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 meeting on 8 May 2025, officers referred to a 'Pupil Behaviour National Behaviour Summit' being held in May 2025, with a section on online safety and digital learning. The final report, 'Behaviour in schools and colleges in Wales' was published in July 2025 and referenced the recommended enhanced guidance for schools on smartphone use established in advance of the 'Pupil Behaviour National Behaviour Summit' by the Senedd Petitions Committee in March 2025 – 'A ban on smartphones in schools in Wales' (March 2025).

2.52   In January 2025, Bridgend County Borough Council participated in the Senedd Petitions Committee debate that was triggered by a petition signed by over 3,300 people calling for a ban on smartphones in all Welsh schools, with exemptions for exceptional circumstances.

2.53   The Senedd's Petitions Committee launched an inquiry, gathering evidence from teachers, parents, learners, and organisations such as the Children's Commissioner, NSPCC, and Barnardo's.

2.54   The Committee acknowledged the growing concerns about smartphones causing classroom disruption, cyberbullying, addiction, and mental health issues. However, it also recognised benefits, such as supporting children with medical conditions and providing safety for travel.

2.55   The Senedd's Petitions Committee concluded that a blanket ban on smartphones in schools is not appropriate, given the complex relationship young people have with these devices.

2.56   While evidence highlighted harms such as distraction, anxiety and access to inappropriate content, it also showed that some learners rely on phones for health management and personal safety.

2.57   The Senedd's Petitions Committee recommended that Welsh Government develop a national framework to guide schools on restricting smartphone use, using inclusive language, considering learner needs, involving parents, and reviewing policies based on evidence.

2.58   Based on the evidence presented to the Senedd's Petitions Committee, five recommendations were put forward to Welsh Government for consideration.

2.59   Welsh Government broadly accepted these recommendations and will work with stakeholders to develop guidance as part of a wider behaviour strategy.

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Table 11   The Senedd Petitions Committee recommendations and Welsh Government's response.

Recommendations	Summary	Welsh Government response	Status
1. **National framework**	Develop national guidance for schools on smart device restrictions.	Will be developed with key partners as part of a wider behaviour strategy.	Accepted
2. **Inclusive language**	Use 'restrictions' instead of 'ban' and promote 'right time, right place'.	Language will reflect stakeholder and learner input.	Accepted
3. **Learner exemptions**	Provide clear guidance on exemptions for learners with additional needs.	Will be considered by key partners, expert groups (including school leaders); local flexibility needed.	Accepted in principle
4. **Parental engagement**	Encourage schools to involve parents and explain policy rationale.	Will explore how best to support parental engagement by schools.	Accepted in principle
5. **Evidence-based review**	Regularly update framework based on emerging research and data.	Expert group will use evidence to inform updates.	Accepted

2.60   Welsh Government emphasised the importance of balancing learner wellbeing with digital competence, ensuring alignment with Curriculum for Wales and an approach that reflects the need to equip learners with the skills to navigate technology responsibly while safeguarding their mental health and educational experience.

2.61   The Committee also highlighted significant variation in current school policies, which has created inconsistency across Wales. In response, Welsh Government acknowledged that an outright national ban would limit schools' ability to manage the specific needs of their learners, thereby impacting school autonomy.

2.62   In Bridgend, secondary schools have adopted smartphone restrictions during the school day, with some schools permitting restrictive use based on schoolwork-use only and specific permissions.

2.63   These policies based on wider recommendations aim to improve learner wellbeing,

reduce distractions, address issues such as cyberbullying and misuse of social media whilst maintaining school autonomy.

Table 12   Smartphone policies across Bridgend secondary schools.

School	School Policy (smartphone use in school)
Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School	Not permitted
Brynteg Comprehensive School	Not permitted
Bryntirion Comprehensive School	Limited use only (schoolwork related)
Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen	Not permitted
Cynffig Comprehensive School	Not permitted
Pencoed Comprehensive School	Not permitted
Porthcawl Comprehensive School	Not permitted
Ysgol Maesteg	Not permitted
Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd	Not permitted (Sixth Form learners only in designated areas).

2.64   There is no single solution to the online safety challenges faced by children and young people today. However, supporting schools, learners, and families to stay informed – through up-to-date research and accessible information – is essential for understanding how young people engage with technology. These insights are critical for shaping effective, balanced policies, supporting curriculum-based learning opportunities, engaging families, and promoting the safe, responsible, and purposeful use of digital and online tools in education.

3.   Current situation/proposal

3.1   The Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate recognises the online safety challenges schools face and is committed to ensuring schools are made aware of the latest information and research related to technology and online safety. Through collaboration the directorate ensures Bridgend schools and other local authority services are provided with insight and understanding needed to respond effectively to current online safety matters and can act in the best interests of all users of technology.

3.2   The local authority works closely with schools and has made significant progress in strengthening schools' capacity to deliver relevant and targeted online safety education, while ensuring that school technology meets the digital standards set by Welsh Government and is also reflective of the technology learners experience in their everyday lives.

3.3   Effective collaboration between schools and the local authority ensures that investments in technology – such as devices, networks, and infrastructure – provide safe, reliable, and robust digital tools for both learners and staff. This partnership also supports schools in adopting appropriate policies and practices related to technology and online safety, helping to maintain and continually enhance a secure digital environment across all educational settings.

3.4   The 'Team Bridgend' approach remains central to collaboration between the local authority and schools on education and online safety. Through collaborative groups and professional networks comprising of headteachers, school leaders, ICT Support and local authority officers, the local authority can support schools with informed guidance and strategy to improve online safety outcomes for learners and staff.

3.5   The Digital Leaders' Group is a Bridgend schools' practitioners' network that meets termly and plays a vital role in advancing the online safety and digital curriculum agenda. It provides school leaders and practitioners with professional learning opportunities, skills development, and access to key information on technology, curriculum priorities, and learner activities. Coordinated in partnership with schools, the network also hosts Welsh Government representatives and technology partners to ensure schools remain informed, supported, and aligned with national and local digital strategies.

3.6   School budgetary pressures and limited staff release time are increasingly affecting attendance and engagement with the Digital Leaders' Group network. This, in turn, impacts access to professional learning opportunities, underlining the need for sustained support and more flexible delivery models to ensure schools keep pace with technological and digital-behavioural change.

3.7   Additional local authority digital and online safety groups, such as Bridgend Schools' ICT Strategy Group and Bridgend Schools' Web Filtering Group provide schools with strategic guidance on digital infrastructure and device deployment. These groups also establish policies and standards for technology 'best practice', strengthening online safety measures for both learners and staff across schools.

Curriculum for Wales, Digital Competence Framework (DCF)

3.8   Schools play a vital role in helping children and young people develop the knowledge and skills needed to stay safe online and challenge their attitudes, behaviours and decisions through a wide range of online safety learning experiences and opportunities.

3.9   Curriculum for Wales embeds online safety learning within a mandatory cross-curricular framework of digital competencies and skills designed to support learners aged 3 to 16-years-old. Known as the Digital Competence Framework it places digital and online learning on equal footing with literacy, numeracy, and the Welsh language.

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3.10   The delivery of the Digital Competence Framework is a shared responsibility across all curriculum areas and for all school practitioners. It is essential that all educators provide meaningful and engaging learning experiences that equip learners to navigate a wide range of online safety challenges confidently and responsibly.

3.11   The Digital Competence Framework sets out clear national expectations for what learners should know and be able to do in a digital world. The Digital Competence Framework focuses on four key areas that align with the concepts, concerns and challenges identified in online safety research and is structured as follows:

- Citizenship – promoting safe, legal, and ethical behaviour online.
- Interacting and collaborating – using digital tools to communicate and work with others.
- Producing – creating digital content for different audiences and purposes.
- Data and computational thinking – understanding data, logic, and problem-solving through technology.

3.12   These four areas are broken down further by schools into progressive, age-appropriate and developmental learning steps to ensure comprehensive coverage of online safety topics, which include:

- identity, image and reputation;
- digital rights, licensing and ownership;
- online behaviour and cyberbullying;
- online identity and footprint;
- password security;
- age-appropriate content and media;
- plagiarism and copyright;
- appropriate online communication;
- metadata awareness;
- location sharing risks;
- secure websites and privacy seals;
- managing digital reputation;
- digital image editing and permissions;
- sexting and legal consequences;
- recognising offensive language online;
- collaborative online behaviour; and
- balancing screen time and well-being.

3.13   While the overarching Digital Competence Framework is national, decisions on how digital competence and online safety learning are embedded and developed within and across the curriculum are made at a local and school level, aligning with each school's individual approach and often addressing current local, national and global matters of concern for online safety.

3.14   It is important to recognise that digital and online safety education is no longer the sole responsibility of digital or technology specialists; it is a shared commitment across the whole school workforce. All educators, regardless of subject discipline, play a vital role in embedding digital resilience, promoting safe and responsible online behaviours, and equipping learners to navigate the complexities of digital life with confidence and critical awareness. This is a fundamental expectation of

Curriculum for Wales whereby promoting wider responsibility for online safety.

3.15   The Education Early Years and Young People Directorate provides continued support to schools to meet the requirements of Curriculum for Wales and the Digital Competence Framework to enhance delivery of meaningful, cross-curricular digital learning experiences. This includes supporting and providing schools with:

- professional support networks and links with technology partners;
- professional development for online safety;
- digital and technology skills training;
- innovative teaching and learning pedagogy;
- digital curriculum design;
- guidance and policy development for online safety and technology;
- sharing relevant information and research relating to technology; and
- supporting online safety and technology learner activities, events and resources.

3.16   With support from the local authority, schools offer a range of enriched digital learning opportunities to encourage learner engagement with online safety and digital skill development:

- The local authority supports schools with a Digital Competence Framework 'planning for progression' resource that suggest a range of innovative teaching and learning activities than can be applied across all curriculum areas (for example, podcast making, sound and music production, animation, photography, cyber security).

- Schools are being supported by the local authority with the introduction of generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) resources and schools are developing learning around responsible and ethical use of generative artificial intelligence to reflect the increased use of artificial intelligence in society.

- The local authority supports schools with enriched digital learning through emerging technologies, including gamified platforms like Minecraft Education and Scratch, and creative tools enhanced by artificial intelligence, such as those within Microsoft365, Google Workspace for Education and Adobe Creative Cloud. These innovative opportunities help learners develop computational thinking, creativity, and responsible digital skills.

- Through the Digital Leaders' Group network and the Bridgend Schools' ICT Strategy Group the local authority provides strategic guidance and promotes best practices to help schools ensure learners have access to modern, industry-standard digital tools and services via the Welsh Government's Hwb platform. This includes cloud-based technology, integrated artificial intelligence features, communication tools, online safety resources and a suite of creative and productivity resources that support both Curriculum for Wales and real-world digital learning experiences.

Online safety and digital learning: good practice across Bridgend schools

3.17   Bridgend schools continue to make strong progress in digital curriculum learning and online safety. By aligning with the Digital Competence Framework and

responding to emerging challenges, schools have created inclusive, forward-thinking environments where learners develop the skills, confidence, and awareness needed to thrive in a connected world. The following examples highlight how schools across Bridgend are embedding digital competence and promoting responsible, ethical use of technology.

- Afon-y-Felin Primary School has been recognised by Welsh Government for its inspirational use of Hwb. Staff and learners demonstrated confident and creative digital learning, showing a strong commitment to online safety and digital competence.

- Maes yr Haul Primary School provides a strong foundation in digital competence. Estyn recognised nearly all learners make good progress in digital skills, alongside literacy and numeracy, with a clear focus on safe and responsible technology use.

- Maes yr Haul Primary School participated in the Minecraft Education 'Club of the Future' competition, in partnership with the Welsh Rugby Union and supported by Hwb. Additionally, the school supported Hwb with the development of a new Hwb platform homepage that will include new artificial intelligence search features.

- Mynydd Cynffig Primary School was recognised by Estyn for supporting learners in developing strong communication and digital skills. Learners apply these skills across the curriculum, promoting safe and effective use of technology.

- Coychurch Primary School has earned 360 Safe Cymru accreditation. This reflects its proactive approach to online safety and its commitment to creating a secure digital learning environment.

- Brynteg School has been spotlighted by Estyn for its digital skills provision. Learners use devices responsibly and develop real-world digital skills through coding and data tasks.

- Bryntirion Comprehensive School has been spotlighted by Estyn for embedding digital skills and online safety across the curriculum. Learners explore ethical issues and develop multimedia projects that support informed digital behaviour.

- Pencoed Comprehensive School has received national recognition for its cybersecurity education. Through competitions, partnerships, and leadership programmes, learners gain real-world experience and develop strong digital and online safety skills.

- Bridgend schools are making significant progress in integrating artificial intelligence and online safety into education. Supported by national and local strategies, schools are adopting local authority-developed policies and practices, using artificial intelligence teaching and learning resources to enhance learning, and promoting safe, responsible online behaviour as part of a digitally secure learning environment.

- A 'Plagiarism and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Malpractice Guide', developed collaboratively with local schools and praised by Welsh Government, ensures a

consistent and proactive approach to AI-related challenges. This work reflects Bridgend's commitment to preparing learners for a future shaped by emerging technologies, while safeguarding integrity and promoting responsible digital behaviour.

- Welsh Government has recognised the strategic approach of Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen (CCYD) with mobile phone use in schools and invited representation from CCYD in the newly established Welsh Government Mobile Phone Use in Schools Forum.

Technology to support online safety

3.18   As technology continues to shape the way children and young people learn, it is essential that schools are equipped with digital systems that are robust, safe, and fit for purpose. These systems must support the delivery of Curriculum for Wales and reflect the tools and platforms learners use in their everyday lives.

3.19   To ensure safe and effective curriculum delivery, schools are advised to use modern, secure digital devices and network infrastructure that meet current performance standards. Guided by the Bridgend Schools' ICT Strategy Group, schools receive strategic advice on which technologies to adopt or avoid – those that are aligned with Welsh Government digital standards. This ensures users are protected from cyber threats, compromised data, inappropriate online content but also ensures compatibility with educational platforms and online tools.

3.20   Welsh Government has praised Bridgend Schools' Digital Learning Strategy 2025-2028 for its strong alignment with national priorities, including its Curriculum for Wales and the 'Hwb-first approach'. The strategy was recognised as comprehensive, with commendation for its robust governance structures, stakeholder engagement, online safety support and the detailed overview of digital tools in use across schools, which provides valuable insight into the local digital landscape.

The Hwb Programme

3.21   The Hwb Programme is Welsh Government's national initiative to transform digital education across all maintained schools in Wales. It provides a bilingual digital platform that supports Curriculum for Wales and aims to:

- equip learners to thrive in a global digital society.
- embed digital competencies, skills, and culture in education;
- deliver a sustainable digital infrastructure, treating digital as the 'fourth utility';
- reduce bureaucracy and support school leaders;
- enable a "Once for Wales" approach to digital transformation in education;
- enhance digital resilience and online safety;
- provide professional learning and support for educators; and
- ensure equitable access to bilingual digital services and content.

3.22   The programme is aligned with the Digital Strategy for Wales and works collaboratively with local authorities, school improvement partners, and technology suppliers to ensure effective procurement, infrastructure, and service delivery.

3.23   To meet the growing need for effective digital learning, the local authority is

committed to ensuring that all schools benefit fully from Welsh Government's Hwb programme. This strategic approach aims to provide schools with access to safe, modern, and cost-effective technology that supports the delivery of the Curriculum for Wales and reflects the digital tools and experiences familiar to children and young people.

3.24   As part of this commitment, the local authority is working towards becoming a Hwb-first local authority, focused on maximising the full potential of the national Hwb platform, ensuring schools can transition from 'own digital tenants' to Hwb to enhance all areas of learning, including digital citizenship and online safety and provide a safer more robust digital environment for all.

3.25   Bridgend Schools' Digital Learning Strategy 2025-2028 outlines this commitment to the Hwb programme which guides schools by promoting inclusive access to modern digital tools, supports staff development, and places secure infrastructure and online safety and at the heart of its approach ensuring learners can thrive safely in a connected, digital world.

Bridgend Schools' Hwb Migration Plan

3.26   Recent developments have seen the local authority, in collaboration with Welsh Government, develop a strategic Hwb migration plan to support all schools in transitioning from their individually owned digital systems ('own digital tenants') to Welsh Government's Hwb digital ecosystem.

3.27   This transition is designed to maximise equitable access to curriculum-aligned and nationally supported digital tools and services. It also strengthens digital security for all users, improves cost-effectiveness, and enhances teaching and learning opportunities across Bridgend schools.

3.28   Following consultation with Welsh Government and including Bridgend Schools' ICT Strategy Group, school leaders, IT support engineers and learners; the local authority is leading schools through this challenging yet successful Hwb digital tools and services migration plan.

3.29   This collaborative effort has resulted in significant progress to date, supporting schools in transitioning to the Hwb digital platform against an agreed timeline, thereby strengthening the school digital environment and means for delivering effective digital learning and online safety for all school technology users across Bridgend.

Table 13   Bridgend Schools' Hwb Migration Plan 2024-2025.

School Hwb Migration status (September 2025)	Complete	Not Complete
Primary schools	35	13
Secondary schools	2	7
Special schools and PRU	2	1

3.30 Transitioning to Welsh Government's Hwb platform enables schools to access a, 'fit for purpose', secure and comprehensive digital ecosystem designed to support teaching and learning. The local authority actively guides schools through this transition to ensure they can fully benefit from the wide range of tools and services available; many of which include:

- Microsoft 365 Education
- Google Workspace for Education
- Adobe Express for Education
- Adobe Creative Cloud
- Just2Easy
- Minecraft Education
- Britannica Education
- Britannica ImageQuest
- Live lessons and video conferencing
- Hwb resources and playlists
- Apple Regional Training Centre resources
- Artificial intelligence and online safety teaching and learning resources
- Generative AI guidance
- Artificial intelligence foundations training module
- Curriculum for Wales guidance and support
- Generative AI policy template
- 360 Safe Cymru school online safety self-review tool
- Guides for families and learners

Educational technology funding for schools (Hwb)

3.31 Bridgend County Borough Council continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to the Hwb programme, ensuring that schools across Bridgend benefit from ongoing national investment in digital technology through the All-Wales EdTech Commercial Service. This provides future technology licensing with device and infrastructure upgrade opportunities that enhance end-user security and promote safe online learning environments.

3.32 The local authority supports and advises schools in accessing the All-Wales EdTech Commercial Service funding and is responsible for maintaining Bridgend schools' digital estate, which includes:

Table 14 Bridgend schools' 'End Users'.

End User Type	Count
School Staff	3,000
Learners	22,500

Table 15   Bridgend Schools' digital estate as of 2025 (technology deployed in school).

Device Type	Primary school learners	Primary school staff	Secondary school learners	Secondary school staff	Special school learners	Special school staff
Windows desktops	2,282	950	2,127	716	38	95
Windows laptops	2,034	1,718	781	659	58	294
Apple desktops	77	27	15	16	2	1
Apple laptops	29	171	12	130	0	0
Apple iPads	4,707	683	1,311	158	95	67
Android tablets	126	63	126	47	0	0
Chromebooks	11,062	193	6,661	138	133	0
Chrome-enabled devices	11,856	10,492	40	0	0	0
Touch screen monitors/boards	907	–	362	–	82	–
Non-touch screen monitors/boards	1,582	–	1,431	–	10	–
Audio-Visual projectors	234	–	182	–	2	–

3.33   Bridgend's capital funding allocation through the EdTech Commercial Service for 2025 to 2026 was £576,058. This funding, part of the £200 million already invested in education technology across Wales, was directed entirely toward school equipment. It built on previous successful initiatives and supported the continued implementation of the Hwb and EdTech Programme – reinforcing sustainable digital learning aligned with Curriculum for Wales and online safety in schools.

Bridgend Schools' online web filtering

3.34   Bridgend schools' benefit from WebSafe filtering as part of their secure digital infrastructure, delivered through the Public Sector Broadband Aggregation (PSBA) network and supported by the Hwb EdTech Programme, this filtering system for all user is designed to:

- Authenticate users via Hwb credentials.
- Block inappropriate or harmful content.
- Support safeguarding policies and online safety education.

3.35   The local authority ensures that WebSafe filtering is consistently applied across school networks, aligning with national standards for digital resilience and cybersecurity. This forms a core part of Bridgend's commitment to creating safe, inclusive, and digitally secure learning environments for all learners.

3.36   To support safe and secure access to online content, resources, and digital environments, across all Bridgend school networks, the Bridgend Web Filtering Schools ICT Strategy Sub-Group was recently established.

3.37   This advisory group works in partnership with schools to develop and maintain

Bridgend's WebSafe filtering standards. Its core purpose is to agree on local digital filtering standards based on Welsh Government guidance. It advises schools on internet access requests, maintains an audit trail of filtering changes, and contributes to online safety and digital safeguarding across all school settings.

Online safety support and training for schools (staff, learners and families)

3.38   Online safety and digital learning can be complex, requiring continual skill and knowledge development. Bridgend schools are fully committed to promoting safe, responsible, and considerate behaviour online and support is provided to schools through a range of initiatives that ensure that learners, staff, and families can develop a better understanding of safe, responsible and considerate behaviour online.

3.39   There has been a significant increase in demand for school practitioner skills training support as the use and reliance on digital technology in education has increased over time.

3.40   To meet this demand the local authority's Lead Officer, Digital Learning, in collaboration with Hwb and technology partners now provides a range of skills-based training for school staff.

3.41   Throughout the 2024-2025 school year, Bridgend schools have been offered a comprehensive range of online safety and digital skills training.

3.42   Despite continued budgetary pressures impacting on staff release-time, many schools have engaged with the skills training offered by the local authority and receive regular communication through the Digital Leaders' Group school network.

3.43   The programme of skills training and professional learning support has significantly strengthened teachers' knowledge and understanding of children's behaviours and their interactions with technology, introduced practical curriculum tools and resources to support effective online safety and developed staff digital competence to enhance the delivery of digital learning across the curriculum.

Table 16   Number of schools attending local authority digital and online safety skills training through the school year (2024 to 2025).

Type of online safety and digital skills training	In school	Network events
Online Safety (teaching and learning)	27	60
Curriculum for Wales (DCF) Planning for Progression	18	41
Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technology	12	39
360 Safe Cymru (self-review)	2	41
Adobe Creative Cloud	11	39
Microsoft 365	9	43
Google Workspace for Education	2	41
Computer Science	4	-
School Health Research Network and Estyn Reviews	27	60
Digital Leaders' Group (school network representatives)	-	41

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Online safety support for learners and families

3.44   In collaboration with the local authority, throughout 2024-2025 schools have created opportunities for families to deepen their understanding and awareness of online safety, digital wellbeing, and the responsible use of technology through presentation and workshop-style online safety learning sessions.

3.45   A variety of online safety learning sessions for families have been held both in-person (in school) and online (via Teams link) across many Bridgend schools to ensure family members have the best opportunity to attend.

3.46   98% of family members that have attended the learning sessions have reported that the events have positively met their expectations with 87% of attendees reporting an improvement in the knowledge and information gained from the learning events.

3.47   Prior to the learning sessions delivered by the local authority (Lead Officer, Digital Learning) and schools, 70% reported having limited or poor knowledge and understanding of online safety issues relating to their children and technology.

3.48   Following the learning sessions delivered by the local authority (Lead Officer, Digital Learning) and schools, 95% reported improved knowledge and understanding of key online safety matters, with family members feeling more confident in supporting their children with the safer use of technology.

3.49   Parents and carers found the following themes the most informative from the 2024-2025 learning sessions and workshops:

- mobile apps: categories of apps and age-restriction;
- child development: are children ready for social media and over-aged apps?;
- monitoring apps: mobile apps to be aware of, restriction and device configuration;
- WhatsApp and YouTube: what parents and carers need to know, risks and advice;
- Bridgend online safety context: research studies highlighting online safety outcomes for learners in Bridgend; and
- family agreement: setting guidelines for online life in and out of the home.

3.50   Families reported that the online safety learning sessions provided by the local authority and schools have significantly improved their understanding and will guide their future actions, including:

- setting up age restrictions and parental controls on devices and apps;
- installing safety features on children's mobile phones and tablets;
- developing family agreements and clear guidelines for online behaviour;
- increasing awareness of app-related risks, including hidden or inappropriate apps;
- gaining confidence to delay device or social media use until an appropriate age;
- learning how to monitor app permissions, screen time, and online activity;
- improving their ability to start open conversations about online safety and risks;
- accessing trusted resources (such as., Hwb, school guidance) for ongoing

support; and

- strengthening understanding of digital wellbeing and social media maturity.

Table 17   Schools hosting online safety learning sessions in 2024-2025 (delivered by the Lead Officer, Digital Learning).

Online safety events	Count
Events for parents-carers only	20
Events and workshops for learners and family members	7
Series of learner workshops, lessons and assemblies	8

3.51   Families are encouraged within local authority-led online learning sessions and through school communications to visit the Welsh Government's Hwb 'Keeping Safe Online – In the Know' webpage https://hwb.gov.wales/keeping-safe-online/in-the-know/ for practical support and guidance. This comprehensive resource helps families understand and begin to manage the digital world their children engage with by offering:

- app guides for families – information on popular apps children and young people may be using;
- screen time advice –tips on managing healthy device use;
- online safety risks – guidance on identifying and responding to potential online harms;
- digital wellbeing – support for promoting balanced and positive technology use;
- privacy and security – advice on protecting personal information online; and
- social media awareness – insights into platform-use and potential risks.

3.52   The 'Keeping Safe Online' resource provides the latest training and guidance and supports schools, learners, and families in working together to create safer, more informed digital environments. Importantly, the guidance is always subject to change based on the latest information, research and technological changes.

3.53   All support, progress and developments in online safety and digital learning across schools in Bridgend are aligned with the Education Early Years and Young People Directorate Strategic Plan (2023-2028) and reported monthly within directorate's performance management system.

4.   Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1   The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts because of this report.

5.   **Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

5.1   The well-being goals and principles prescribed for within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 connect directly to the approach to supporting children, young people and their families. The approach is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle and more specifically as follows:

Long term   The approach to online safety and digital learning aims to develop digitally competent, resilient and safer online behaviours in learners, equipping them to thrive as ethical, informed, and confident citizens.

Prevention   The focus of online safety and digital learning is upon ensuring that there is appropriate curriculum provision in place to meet the needs of digital and online challenges.

Integration   The approach to online safety and digital learning addresses the need for a coherent delivery of digital and online safeguarding service.

Collaboration   A fundamental principal of the approach to online safety and digital learning focuses on collaboration to create a safer digital learning environment.

Involvement   Ensuring that all stakeholders are at the heart of the online safety and digital learning.

6.   **Climate Change and Nature Implications**

6.1   There are no climate change or nature implications resulting from this report. However, we are committed to supporting the implementation of the local authority's 'Bridgend 2030 – Net Zero Carbon Strategy' and Welsh Government's carbon reduction commitments.

7.   **Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1   The directorate has a robust approach to safeguarding, and this is detailed within the directorate's strategic plan. The Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate Strategic Plan 2023-2026 is aligned with Bridgend County Borough Council's (BCBC's) Corporate Parenting Strategy.

8.   **Financial Implications**

8.1   There are no financial implications specifically relating to this report.

9.   **Recommendations**

9.1   It is recommended that the Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the contents of the report and provides feedback.

Background documents None

Meeting of:	**EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**
Date of Meeting:	**24 NOVEMBER 2025**
Report Title:	**FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	**CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL & REGULATORY SERVICES, HR & ELECTORAL**
Responsible Officer:	**MERYL LAWRENCE SENIOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER – SCRUTINY**
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	**The work of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees relates to the review and development of plans, policy or strategy that form part of the Council's Policy Framework and consideration of plans, policy or strategy relating to the power to promote or improve economic, social or environmental wellbeing in the County Borough of Bridgend.**
Executive Summary:	**The Council's Constitution requires each Overview and Scrutiny Committee to develop and implement a Forward Work Programme for the Committee.** **The Committee is asked to consider and agree its Forward Work Programme, identify any specific information it wishes to be included in and any invitees they wish to attend for the reports for the next two Committee meetings, identify any further items for consideration on the Forward Work Programme having regard to the criteria set out in the report, and consider the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet for this Committee.** **The Committee is also asked to consider a referral from the Governance and Audit Committee.**

1.   Purpose of Report

1.1   The purpose of this report is to:

a) Present the Committee with the Forward Work Programme attached as (**Appendix A)** for consideration and approval;

b) Request any specific information the Committee identifies to be included in the items for the next two meetings, including invitees they wish to attend;

c) Request the Committee to identify whether there are presently any further items for consideration on the Forward Work Programme having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 3.5 of this report;

d) Present the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet (**Appendix B**) to track responses to the Committee's recommendations made at previous meetings;

e) Advise that the Committee's Forward Work Programme as approved will be reported to the next meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) for information, together with those from the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees, following their consideration in this cycle of Committee meetings.

f) Present a referral from the Governance and Audit Committee (GAC).

2.   Background

2.1   The Council's Constitution requires each Overview and Scrutiny Committee to develop and implement a Forward Work Programme for the Committee.

2.2   It also provides for the Committee to propose items for the Forward Work Programme having regard for the Council's Corporate Priorities and Risk Management framework. Where a matter for consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee also falls within the remit of one or more other Committees, the decision as to which Committee will consider it will be resolved by the respective Chairs or, if they fail to agree, the Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Best Practice / Guidance

2.3   The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's (CfGS) Good Scrutiny Guide recognises the importance of the Forward Work Programme. In order to 'lead and own the process', it states that Councillors should have ownership of their Committee's work programme, and be involved in developing, monitoring and evaluating it. The Good Scrutiny Guide also states that, in order to make an impact, the scrutiny workload should be coordinated and integrated into corporate processes, to ensure that it contributes to the delivery of corporate objectives, and that work can be undertaken in a timely and well-planned manner.

2.4   Forward Work Programmes need to be manageable to maximize the effective use of the limited time and resources of Scrutiny Committees. It is not possible to include every topic proposed. Successful Scrutiny is about looking at the right topic in the right way and Members need to be selective, while also being able to demonstrate clear arguments for including or excluding topics.

2.5   The CfGS's guide to effective work programming 'A Cunning Plan?' makes the following reference to the importance of good work programming:

'Effective work programming is the bedrock of an effective scrutiny function. Done well it can help lay the foundations for targeted, incisive and timely work on issues of local importance, where scrutiny can add value. Done badly, scrutiny can end up wasting time and resources on issues where the impact of any work done is likely to be minimal.'

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 Following the approval of the schedule of Scrutiny Committee meeting dates at the Annual Meeting of Council on 14 May 2025, the standing statutory reports to Scrutiny Committees of: the Corporate Plan, the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Budget, Performance and Budget Monitoring, etc. have been mapped to the appropriate timely meeting dates into a Forward Work Programme.

3.2 The Forward Work Programmes for each Scrutiny Committee have been prepared using a number of difference sources, including:

- Corporate Risk Assessment;
- Directorate Business Plans;
- Previous Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme report topics / minutes;
- Committee / Member proposed topics;
- Policy Framework;
- Cabinet Work Programme;
- Discussions with Corporate Directors;
- Performance Team regarding the timing of performance information.

3.3 There are items where there is a statutory duty for Policy Framework documents to be considered by Scrutiny, e.g., the MTFS including draft budget proposals scheduled for consideration in January 2026, following which COSC will make conclusions and recommendations in a report on the overall strategic overview of Cabinet's draft Budget proposals to the meeting of Cabinet in February 2026.

3.4 An effective Forward Work Programme will identify the issues that the Committee wishes to focus on during the year and provide a clear plan. However, at each meeting the Committee will have an opportunity to review this as the Forward Work Programme Update will be a standing item on the Agenda, detailing which items are scheduled for future meetings and be requested to clarify any information to be included in reports and the list of invitees. The Forward Work Programme will remain flexible and will be reported to each COSC meeting for information.

Identification of Further Items

3.5 The Committee are reminded that the Scrutiny selection criteria used by Scrutiny Committee Members to consider, select and prioritise items emphasises the need to consider issues such as impact, risk, performance, budget and community perception when identifying topics for investigation to maximise the impact scrutiny can have on a topic and the outcomes for people. The criteria which can help the Committee come to a decision on whether to include a referred topic, are set out below:

<u>Recommended Criteria for Selecting Scrutiny Topics:</u>

PUBLIC INTEREST: The concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen for scrutiny;

ABILITY TO CHANGE: Priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically influence, and add value to;

PERFORMANCE: Priority should be given to the areas in which the Council is not performing well;

EXTENT: Priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or large parts of the County Borough, or a large number of the Authority's service users or its population;

REPLICATION: Work programmes must take account of what else is happening in the areas being considered to avoid duplication or wasted effort.

<u>Reasons to Reject Scrutiny Topics:</u>

- The issue is already being addressed / being examined elsewhere and change is imminent.
- The topic would be better addressed elsewhere (and can be referred there).
- Scrutiny involvement would have limited / no impact upon outcomes.
- The topic may be sub-judice or prejudicial.
- The topic is too broad to make a review realistic and needs refining / scoping.
- New legislation or guidance relating to the topic is expected within the next year.
- The topic area is currently subject to inspection or has recently undergone substantial change / reconfiguration.

<u>Corporate Parenting</u>

3.6   Corporate Parenting is the term used to describe the responsibility of a local authority towards care experienced children and young people. This is a legal responsibility given to local authorities by the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004. The role of the Corporate Parent is to seek for children in public care the outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. The Council as a whole is the 'Corporate Parent', therefore all Members have a level of responsibility for care experienced children and young people in Bridgend.

3.7   In this role, it is suggested that Members consider how each item they consider affects care experienced children and young people, and in what way can the Committee assist in these areas.

3.8   Scrutiny Champions can greatly support the Committee in this by advising them of the ongoing work of the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting and particularly any decisions or changes which they should be aware of as Corporate Parents.

3.9   The Forward Work Programme for the Committee is attached as **Appendix A** for the Committee's consideration.

3.10   The Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet to track responses to the Committee's recommendations made at previous meetings is attached as **Appendix B**.

3.11   As agreed between the Chair of GAC and Scrutiny Chairs in order to develop collaborative working arrangements, the Committee is also asked to consider the referral from GAC as set out below:

<u>18 September 2025</u>
Governance and Audit Committee in September considered an update report in relation to Internal Audit Activity at Maesteg School and Penybont Primary School and one of the key issues identified during the audit was that some new members of staff in one of the schools had commenced their roles without Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance or appropriate risk assessments in place. The Committee therefore made the following referral to Scrutiny:

> The Committee requested that the system for Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks in schools be referred for consideration by the Education and Youth Services overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The referral was discussed at a meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs with the GAC Chair on 15 October and it was agreed that further information be requested and provided to this Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

Officers from Education have clarified that School Governing Bodies are legally responsible for the appointment and employment of staff, as well as volunteers and Governors (themselves volunteers), other than Local Authority Governors who are appointed by the Local Authority.

In respect of DBS processes for staff and volunteers, the Local Authority may act as the employer and offer suitable recruitment arrangements, but schools can determine whether to buy under service level agreement, the Authority's HR services, or to purchase those from a third party.

The Local Authority is unable to enforce any operational arrangements in schools. While the Local Authority manages DBS checks on behalf of schools, not all schools may have the same approach in terms of approving staff with or without DBS checks in place or via a risk assessment.

The Governing Body is therefore primarily responsible for ensuring staff have DBS checks and whilst the Local Authority may assist with the process, ultimate responsibility lies with the Governing Body / school.

Having regard to the above, the Committee may wish to consider the following options in response to the referral:

- Referring the concern to Safeguarding regarding staff potentially commencing their roles without DBS clearance or appropriate risk assessments in place;
- Referring the concern to Governors Support to request that they raise it with all Governing Bodies;
- Refer back to Internal Audit to request that this be looked at across all schools within the County Borough to assess the level of risk.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 The Protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The Act provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with 5 Ways of Working to guide how public services should work to deliver for people. The following is a summary to show how the 5 Ways of Working to achieve the well-being goals have been used to formulate the recommendations within this report:

- Long-term - The approval of this report will assist in the planning of Scrutiny business in both the short-term and in the long-term on its policies, budget and service delivery.

- Prevention - The early preparation of the Forward Work Programme allows for the advance planning of Scrutiny business where Members are provided an opportunity to influence and improve decisions before they are made by Cabinet.

- Integration - The report supports all the wellbeing objectives.

- Collaboration - Consultation on the content of the Forward Work Programme has taken place with the Corporate Management Board, Heads of Service and Elected Members.

- Involvement - Advanced publication of the Forward Work Programme ensures that stakeholders can view topics that will be discussed in Committee meetings and are provided with the opportunity to engage.

5.2 When setting its Forward Work Programme, the Committee should consider how each item they propose to scrutinise assists in the achievement of the Council's 4 Wellbeing Objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** as follows:

1. A prosperous place with thriving communities
2. Creating modern, seamless public services
3. Enabling people to meet their potential
4. Supporting our most vulnerable

6. Climate Change and Nature Implications

6.1 The Committee should consider how each item they scrutinise affects climate change, the Council's Net Zero Carbon 2030 target and how it meets the Council's commitments to protect and sustain the environment over the long term. There are no Climate Change or Nature Implications arising from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 The Committee should consider how each item they scrutinise affects care experienced children and young people, and in what way the Committee can assist in these areas. Safeguarding is everyone's business and means protecting peoples' health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. There are no Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications arising from this report.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

9.1 The Committee is recommended to:

a) Consider and approve the Forward Work Programme for the Committee in **Appendix A**.

b) Identify any specific information the Committee wishes to be included in the items for the next two meetings, including invitees they wish to attend;

c) Identify whether there are presently any further items for consideration on the Forward Work Programme having regard to the selection criteria in paragraph 3.5 of this report.

d) Note the Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet in **Appendix B** to track outstanding responses to the Committee's recommendations made at previous meetings;

e) Note that the Committee's Forward Work Programme as approved will be reported to the next meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information, together with those from the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees, following their consideration in this cycle of Committee meetings.

f) Consider the referral from GAC and the options set out in paragraph 3.11 regarding how to respond.

Background documents

None.

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**Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
2025-26 Forward Work Programme**

Thursday, 3 July 2025 at 11.00am		
Report Topic	**Information Required / Committee's Role**	**Invitees**
Bridgend Youth Justice Service and Bridgend Youth Support Service		**Cabinet Member** Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance **Officers** Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People; Strategic Manager – Youth Justice Service; Operational Managers - Youth Justice Service; Group Manager (Early Years and Young People); and Youth Support Services Manager (BYS) Youth Council Representative

Monday,15 September 2025 at 11.00am		
Report Topic	**Information Required / Committee's Role**	**Invitees**
Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for Learners	To include a holistic focus on the mental health and wellbeing support provided to learners to assist them to attend education, and information regarding any support regarding any support available from Social Services, General Practitioners, the Health Board and third sector.	**Cabinet Member** Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing; Cabinet Member for Education and Youth Services; **Officers** Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People; Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing; Head of Learning; Group Manager – Prevention and Wellbeing Youth Council Representative Representatives from Health Representatives from CAMHS Headteacher Nominees

Monday, 13 October 2025 at 11.00am CANCELLED Monday, 24 November 2025 at 11.00am		
Report Topic	**Information Required / Committee's Role**	**Invitees**
Online Safety and Digital Learning - To be rescheduled to 24 November 2025	Overview of the issues regarding online safety and key priorities and challenges. To include: Safeguarding/online safety Digital Learning Use of mobile phones/devices	**Cabinet Member** Cabinet Member for Education and Youth Services **Officers** Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People; Head of Learning; Group Manager – (Schools); Digital Lead Officer; Lead Officer – Strategic Development (Primary Sector) Lead Officer – Strategic Development (Secondary Sector) Youth Council Representative Headteacher Nominees

Date to be arranged		
Report Topic	**Information Required / Committee's Role**	**Invitees**
Teaching and Learning in Schools in Bridgend	Teacher and Learner Feedback Progress Update - Implementation Curriculum for Wales	**Cabinet Member** Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Wellbeing; Cabinet Member for Education and Youth Services; **Officers** Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People; Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing; Head of Learning; Group Manager – Prevention and Wellbeing Youth Council Representative Headteacher Nominees **External** Representatives from Health

Physical Health, Healthy Living and Wellbeing	To include an Update on the Universal Primary Free School Meals Implementation.	**Cabinet Member** Cabinet Member for Education and Youth Services **Officers** Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People; Head of Learning; Group Manager – (Schools) Youth Council Representative Headteacher Nominees

Monday, 9 February 2026 at 11.00am		
Report Topic	**Information Required / Committee's Role**	**Invitees**
Future School Modernisation **School Maintenance**	An audit of the condition of all schools in Bridgend County. An analysis of the lessons learned from the school modernisation projects that have happened or in the process of being planned and built, including the impact of wider political and economic forces. The report would need to consider such issues as the role and value of price caps; risk management and mitigation, including the impact of ecological ones on project timing and costs; procurement; land acquisition; the impact of design changes to projects; and project management and oversight, especially in terms of the contribution made by Cabinet and the Corporate Management Board. The future demography of the County Borough, and the impact of new and proposed housing developments, and the potential knock-on impact on school catchment areas and pupil numbers. The future of school modernisation and project finance in Wales. To include an on the progress of increasing specialist provision.	**Cabinet Member** Cabinet Member for Education and Youth Services; Cabinet Member for Finance & Performance; **Officers** Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People; Corporate Director - Communities; Head of Learning; Deputy Head of Finance; Accountant – Capital and Grants; Interim Head of Operations - Community Services; Manager (Sustainable Communities for Learning); Group Manager – Corporate Landlord; Senior Portfolio Surveyor, Education and Wellbeing; Youth Council Representative Headteacher Nominees

Monday, 16 March 2026 at 11.00am		
Report Topic	**Information Required / Committee's Role**	**Invitees**
Early Review of School Improvement Arrangements into the Local Authority		**Cabinet Member** Cabinet Member for Education and Youth Services **Officers** Corporate Director – Education, Early Years and Young People; Head of Learning; Group Manager – (Schools); and Youth Council Representative Headteacher Nominees

Briefings and Workshops:

Topic	Information Required / Committee's Role	Invitees and Date
New Estyn Inspection Framework / Local Government Education Services (LGES)		
Update on Effective School Governing Bodies – Appointment, Support and Funding	Invitation to be extended to Governors Association	
School Safeguarding Audits Summary		Autumn 2025
Pupil and Learner Attainment Outcomes	To include Validated Exam Results	January 2026
Support for Home-Educated Learners		**TBC**

Items to be Scheduled to the Committee's 2026-2027 Forward Work Programme

- May/June 2026 – Close Current 3 year Strategic Plan and Open New 3 Year Strategic Plan (possibly to include Review of Post Inspection Plan)

- September 2026 – Future School Improvement Arrangements
                    Home to School Transport Update Report

Information Report to be provided:

- Autumn 2025/Spring 2026 – English Language School Catchment Areas / Capacity

Research and Evaluation Panel

- From Autumn 2025 - School Improvement Research and Evaluation Panel (REP)

Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet for 2025-26

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
15 September 2025	Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for Learners	Given the evidence provided by Officers and Headteachers regarding the impact of any removal of grant funding for mental health support for pupils in schools, the latter referencing that any removal would potentially be 'catastrophic'; Members **recommended** that a letter be drafted to Welsh Government from the Chair to highlight their concerns and their support for the growth bid to ensure sustainable funding for mental health support services in schools.	Chair/ Scrutiny	Scrutiny Team actioning with Scrutiny Chair.	
15 September 2025	Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for Learners	Officers reported that in many cases pupils who moved schools often did so prior to any information regarding the pupil being shared between the schools, potentially affecting or delaying any necessary support these pupils might require to be put in place immediately. Officers reported that schools were bound by Welsh Government policy to accept a transfer immediately. The Committee therefore **recommended** that as part of the Chair's letter to Welsh Government a request be made to consider revising this policy, in order for schools to share information prior to a pupil moving to another school, so that any necessary support	Chair/ Scrutiny	Scrutiny Team actioning with Scrutiny Chair.	

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
		pupils might need can be planned for and put in place with no delay.			
15 September 2025	Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for Learners	The Committee reiterated their **recommendation** made at their May 2025 meeting asking for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure that matters around the funding of mental health support services such as counselling and early intervention services are prioritised in the next budget round and not considered as areas for any potential savings. This was of particular concern given the information reported by Headteachers that many schools were already using part of their delegated budgets towards this support, in addition to the grant funding. Members further **recommended** that the Education Deep Dive Group formulated as part of the Scrutiny Budget Working Group consider this area as part of their remit, exploring the current costs, what grants are potentially at risk and what future funding would be required to continue providing the necessary support to pupils.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People Scrutiny / Chair	Recommendation already referred to COSC Recommendation added to scope of EEYYP Deep Dive to be considered on 6 October.	Complete
15 September 2025	Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for Learners	It was agreed that any future research and data gathered in collaboration with Welsh Government on the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) programme, would be shared with members of the Committee	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	Follow link here.

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
15 September 2025	Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for Learners	The Committee requested that a briefing session be held for the Committee Members to explore what support the Local Authority provide for pupils who are home schooled.	Scrutiny/ Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	Scrutiny actioning in work planning meetings with Chair and Corporate Director.	Complete
15 September 2025	Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for Learners	The Committee requested clarification over how pupils are measured and classed as NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	Follow link here.
15 September 2025	Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for Learners	The Committee requested information relating to the protocol for 'Managed Moves' as well as figures showing how these were being monitored to evaluate their success.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	Follow link here.
15 September 2025	Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for Learners	Whilst acknowledging the development of the Family Commissioning Strategy, Members commented on the fact that this strategy very much focused on children of greatest need, who were the most vulnerable and requested clarification as to whether there was any such strategy that focused on the wider context and looked at, or picked up on, all children.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	Follow link here.

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
15 September 2025	Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for Learners	The Committee commented on the fact that the report referred to lots of activity and outputs relating to support for pupils with mental health issues, but there was little mention of outcomes and how these were being measured. Evidence received from head teachers also highlighted that the situation seemed to be getting worse with more pupils having mental health issues. Members queried how this was known and how it was being measured. Future consideration, therefore, by the Scrutiny Committee, should incorporate how the Authority and schools are measuring and monitoring the situation and how we are evaluating the effectiveness of any support provided.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	Follow link here.
15 September 2025	Information Report - Quarter 4 / Year End Performance 2024-25	Members referred to DEFS 156 in the report 'Number of schools judged by Estyn to be in 'significant improvement' or 'special measures' and requested clarification as to how exactly the Local Authority monitored schools and their performance so that if a school is placed in special measures, it does not come as a big surprise.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	Follow link here.
15 September 2025	Information Report - Quarter 4 / Year End	Members requested progress updates on the following:	Corporate Director - Education, Early	**ACTIONED -** Response and information	Follow link here.

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
	Performance 2024-25	- WBO3.4.2 'Open Welsh-medium childcare in the Ogmore Valley and Bettws, with 32 full-time-equivalent childcare places'. - BO4.4.4 Provide a new two-form entry English-medium school to replace the existing Afon Y Felin and Corneli Primary Schools.	Years and Young People	circulated 17 Nov 2025.	

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Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1

Recommendations Monitoring Action Sheet for 2024-25

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
31 March 2025	School Modernisation	The Committee recommended that given the significant challenges of the population growth in the County in line with the new developments within the Local Development Plan and that Bridgend is a strategic growth area equidistant between Cardiff and Swansea, there is a need to address issues of future school development with the Welsh Government, in particular in the first instance, issues about flexibility in planning for prospective pupil numbers, and the future of Welsh Government programmes and finance for school modernisation need to be raised and discussed.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED** – Response circulated to Members on 2 October 2025	Follow link here.

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
8 May 2025	Pupil Behaviour, Attendance and Exclusions	The Committee discussed the financial challenges for the local authority, the number of schools with deficit budgets and the impact these are having on the reduction of therapeutic and other support staff.			
		a. Members expressed concern regarding the impact the complex budgetary situation was having on counselling and early intervention services and recommended that a referral be made to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) to ensure that these matters are prioritised for funding in the next budget round and that if budgetary savings are required that these are found elsewhere.	Scrutiny / Chair of COSC	Scrutiny actioned referral to COSC / Scrutiny Budget Working Group.	Link to COSC Forward Work Programme
		b. In addition, given the adoption of a minimum operating model across all projects funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund, the directorate's Inspire+ projects, which provide vital support to vulnerable pupils and young people, many of whom face behavioural challenges and/or attendance issues in both school and community settings, Members requested the figures on how the fund is split between directorates be shared with COSC / Scrutiny Budget Working Group.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	Follow link here.

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
8 May 2025	Pupil Behaviour, Attendance and Exclusions	The Committee recommended that the local authority, through the Communication and Relationships Team, other agencies and schools to explore and share best practice in respect of pupil behaviour, attendance, and exclusions. In particular, Members expressed a need to embed trauma-informed practice in schools and to promote an understanding of boundaries, values, and what it means to be part of a good school community. Members highlighted that this should take account of findings in the latest Estyn thematic report, *"Fostering mutual respect – promoting positive behaviours in secondary school"*, that strong leadership, consistent behaviour management, and community engagement were key to helping improve pupil behaviour across secondary schools in Wales.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	Follow link here.
8 May 2025	Pupil Behaviour, Attendance and Exclusions	The Committee recommended that training in classroom management and conflict resolution be provided as part of a programme of continuous professional development for teachers including strategies and techniques to handle disruptions and to strengthen relationships and foster a positive culture.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	Follow link here.
8 May 2025	Pupil Behaviour, Attendance and Exclusions	Members expressed concern about the '*disparities across schools in Bridgend which suggests uneven implementation of*	Corporate Director - Education, Early	**ACTIONED -** Response and information	Follow link here.

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
		effectiveness of attendance strategies across different school settings' and heard from headteachers that a positive school culture was best built from within at each school and an example was provided of the 'Bryntirion Way' developed at Bryntirion Comprehensive. The Committee therefore recommended that consideration be given to providing schools with an opportunity to share best practice and strategies and to develop a 'Bridgend Way' to improve the consistency of implementation of attendance strategies across the borough.	Years and Young People	circulated 17 Nov 2025.	
8 May 2025	Pupil Behaviour, Attendance and Exclusions	The Committee expressed concern regarding the impact of the long waiting lists for specialist provision at Ysgol Bryn Castell and the Bridge on the mental health, safety and wellbeing of learners awaiting such provision and learners and staff in mainstream schools and recommended that this issue be added to the Corporate Risk Register.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	Follow link here.
8 May 2025	Pupil Behaviour, Attendance and Exclusions	The Committee expressed their disappointment that given the importance of integrated working, there was no attendance from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) at the meeting and recommended that correspondence be sent to the Health Board expressing their disappointment and requesting the following information:	Scrutiny	**ACTIONED –** Requested from CAMHS and chased.	

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
		a. The referral route and criteria for support from CAMHS, and; b. The current waiting lists and capacity.			
8 May 2025	Pupil Behaviour, Attendance and Exclusions	The Committee acknowledged that the number of fixed-term exclusions in relation to care-experienced children were disproportionately high for the year 2023-24 and recommended that a report be presented to the Cabinet Committee Corporate Parenting regarding the support and guidance to learners in this situation.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	Follow link here.
8 May 2025	Pupil Behaviour, Attendance and Exclusions	The Committee acknowledged that missing data in the Tables throughout the report were due to issues of General Data Protection Regulations and requested that the missing data be shared with Members of the Committee on a confidential basis. Members also requested that the data be broken down into year groups, to assist their understanding of the extent to which these issues were affecting younger and / or older pupils.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	**CONFIDENTIAL** response attached to the email sent to the Committee on 17 November 2025.
8 May 2025	Pupil Behaviour, Attendance and Exclusions	The Committee requested available data regarding the extent to which violent incidents are impacting on teaching staff sickness absence or leaving the profession.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	Recommendation circulated requesting response. Chased.	

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
8 May 2025	Pupil Behaviour, Attendance and Exclusions	The Committee requested written feedback be circulated to Members of the Committee on the outcomes from the National Behaviour Summit taking place on 22 May 2025.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	Follow link here.
8 May 2025	Pupil Behaviour, Attendance and Exclusions	The Committee expressed concern that despite Welsh Government guidance advocating for trauma-informed schools, only 22% of educators in Wales reported receiving related training and requested the corresponding percentage of Bridgend educators trained, highlighting the risk that untrained staff may misinterpret trauma symptoms as defiance; potentially triggering exclusionary procedures.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	Follow link here.
8 May 2025	Pupil Behaviour, Attendance and Exclusions	The Committee were advised that a new Managed Moves Protocol has recently been launched so there is little data available, however, a previous Protocol was in place and Members requested those historical figures.	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	Follow link here.
8 May 2025	Pupil Behaviour, Attendance and Exclusions	The Committee requested regular updates be provided on: a. The work of the Weapons-Related Incidents in Bridgend Educational Settings Strategy Group, and;	Corporate Director - Education, Early Years and Young People	**ACTIONED -** Response and information circulated 17 Nov 2025.	Follow link here.

Date of Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Outcome	Response
		b. Directorate-level management information on pupil behaviour, attendance and exclusions that is provided to monthly senior management team meetings.			

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