

Meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1

26 May 2023

Recommendations/Actions

EFS Strategic Plan 2023-2026

Following detailed consideration and discussion with Cabinet Members and Officers, the Committee made the following Recommendations:

Recommendations

1. Members expressed concern regarding the retention of school staff and their wellbeing. They discussed the importance of the support pupils received for their wellbeing and felt that staff wellbeing should be of equal priority. Members recommended that the narrative regarding the support for staff in **T1 Pupil and staff wellbeing** be strengthened to reflect this.

Officer's Response

- The Education and Family Support Directorate Strategic Plan 2023-2026 ('the plan') contains several objectives to support the wellbeing and retention of school staff.
 - These objectives are supported by senior leaders within the Education and Family Support Directorate ('the directorate') and colleagues from Human Resources (HR).
 - There are also several network groups in place to support staff these include Key Stage 4 leaders and deputy headteacher groups.
 - These network groups provide an effective mechanism for concerns to be shared and for peer support.
2. During discussions regarding pupil attendance and levels of absence, Members requested a breakdown of the reasons for and the numbers of absence and recommended that these be included in the Plan.

Officer's Response

- There are many reasons why a pupil may be unable to attend school (including medical appointments, sickness, and family bereavements).
 - This data is dynamic and would be difficult to include in a strategic plan as the information would very quickly become out of date.
 - Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 (SOSC1) members can be assured that schools, the Education Welfare Service and the local authority's Attendance Leads Forum monitor the absence data including reasons for absence on an ongoing basis.
 - Officers would welcome the opportunity to provide a further update in respect of school attendance/absence at a future SOSC1 meeting.
3. Members considered the success indicators relating to **T2 Support for pupil behaviour, attendance, and exclusions** and highlighted that assessing progress towards the achievement of the objective 'a reduction in fixed term and permanent exclusions' would only be meaningful if all schools were following the School Attendance Policy to ensure consistency. Members recommended there be a standardised Exclusion Policy referenced in the Plan to ensure assurance in the data provided and accurate measurement of the improvements.

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- A local authority behaviour strategy is currently being developed. This is being co-constructed with stakeholders including schools.
 - This strategy is due to be completed by December 2023. This strategy is focused on preventative work as opposed to reactive processes.
 - In relation to exclusions, each case is considered on its own merits by each of the schools' governing bodies. This process is supported by Welsh Government guidance and individual school policies.
4. Members recommended that there be more granular detail in the Plan on how the ambition for completion of the statutory training modules by School Governors could be measured annually and that a baseline be provided in the Plan to demonstrate the target to be achieved.

Officer's Response

- Central South Consortium partners monitor the uptake of the statutory training modules for school governors.
 - This data is reported to both the local authority and to the respective governing bodies.
 - Officers would be happy to present a summary of this information to SOSC1 at a future meeting.
 - It would not be appropriate to include this level of detail in a strategic plan.
5. Members noted the plan to increase the support for parents with vulnerable children under ***T3 Support for vulnerable children and young people*** and recommended that there be more detail in the Plan to include how this was to be achieved, how the current support could be measured and how to ensure that the support increases in the future.

Officer's Response

- It would not be appropriate to include this level operational detail in a strategic plan. However, the following information is provided to support SOSC1 members' understanding of this issue.
- The directorate's Early Help Screening Team has been engaging with third sector and other external agencies to learn more about available services available to better identify the most appropriate support pathways to best meet the needs of families. Outcomes will be monitored by the number of referrals progressing to external agencies for direct support and no longer requiring family support intervention.
- The Early Help Screening Team is also currently working closely with local a Police Community Support Officer as part of the Early Action Together Programme to determine if the referral process and timeliness of support can be improved for families resulting in improved outcomes. Outcomes will be monitored by the number of referrals receiving earlier invention from Police colleagues and no longer requiring family support intervention.

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6. Members discussed how a video produced by Brynteg Comprehensive School in relation to ***T5 Curriculum for Wales and assessment*** gave a better understanding of the new curriculum and recommended that this be made available to other schools and to the Members themselves.

Officer's Response

Scrutiny can be assured the link to the video has been widely shared within Bridgend education services (including schools) as requested.

7. Members discussed the importance of the safeguarding training module for School Governors and made a recommendation to support the Directorate in advocating Welsh Government to consider making it a statutory requirement.

Officer's Response

- We are unable to make this training statutory as this is not covered by law.
- We do however strongly encourage attendance at this training.
- The importance and availability of this safeguarding training is also publicised each term.

8. Members expressed concern regarding potential increased utility bills and impact on pupils, due to outdated facilities in existing older schools. Whilst Members noted that refurbishment and maintenance of older schools was within the remit of the Property Team and not the EFS Directorate, it was recommended that this should still be referenced in the Plan.

Officer's Response

- This issue has been discussed at School Budget Forum and finance officers assist schools in their management of this area.
- As stated, this is not within the control of the Education and Family Support Directorate.

9. Members discussed ***T14 Effective Welsh in Education Strategic Plan to promote the Welsh language and Welsh-medium education*** and felt that the objective appeared to be tailored towards younger learners and improving Welsh speakers and recommended the objective be expanded to include what was being done to promote and improve the use of the Welsh language in secondary schools.

Officer's Response

- Within each outcome of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan, there are effective ways in which to promote the Welsh language within secondary schools for example Siarter Iaith.
- Many Bridgend schools have received awards for their Siarter Iaith involvement.

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- Blended learning opportunities have also been used to support A level Welsh availability with schools collaborating to offer this qualification.
10. Members expressed concern that without definitions of the three numbered parts in each stage of the RAYG (Red (unsatisfactory), Amber (adequate), Yellow (good) and Green (excellent)) statuses, it was difficult to understand the criteria for the top, middle and bottom score in each RAYG status. Members recommended that the RAYG Self-evaluation guidelines be revisited and that a discussion take place with partners to ensure that the targets set were achievable, for example an ambition to achieve a rating of 8 by August 2026 from a current rating of 4 in **T2 Support for pupil behaviour, attendance, and exclusions** and 9 by August 2026 with the current rating of 6 in **T5 Curriculum for Wales and assessment** and other examples in the Plan.

Officer's Response

- Extensive consultation took place with all stakeholders to develop the plan.
- Each rating was actively debated with stakeholders before a rating was agreed.
- Senior leaders within the directorate complete progress trackers on a quarterly basis to monitor the progress of each of the individual objectives.
- This ensures all objectives are all being monitored and progressed effectively.

Additional Information

Following detailed consideration and discussions with Officers and the Cabinet Member, the Committee requested:

11. A detailed breakdown of the individual grants once all grants were consolidated and available which was offered by Officers, in response to Members questions regarding the financial implications of the report including what external grants and capital funding were expected for 2023-24.

Officer's Response

Spreadsheet of EFSS Grants 23-24 provided attached as Appendix A.

12. The anonymised data for the Food for Fun Programme collated from the previous year and the available data from this year, when available, for the Members of the Committee to compare, which Officers offered to provide to Members in response to Members' questions whether records had been kept of the participants of the Food and Fun programme within the 'Successes to date' and 'Improvement objectives' of **T1 Pupil and staff wellbeing**, and what the plans were going forward.

Officer's Response

Food and Fun, previously known as SHEP (School Holiday Enrichment Programme), is a Welsh Government national funded school-based programme that provides healthy meals,

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food, and nutrition education, physical activity, and enrichment sessions to children in areas of deprivation during the school summer holidays.

The programme is led by Wales Local Government Association (WLGA) and is developed on a set of nationally agreed targets. In previous years, the Bridgend programme has targeted children in years 4, 5 and 6.

The core elements of Food and Fun, as set out by WLGA are:

- A school-based programme delivered by school staff and partners.
- A minimum of 12 days over the school summer holidays.
- Healthy breakfast and lunch.
- A minimum of one hour of structured physical activity per day.
- All Wales Food and Fun Food and Nutrition Education Sessions.
- Family breakfast or lunch offered at least once per week (informed by COVID-19 risk assessments).
- Enrichment sessions provided by school staff and/or partners.

Bridgend has delivered the Food and Fun initiative since 2018 (no programme was delivered in 2020 due to the pandemic).

2022 Programme delivery

In the financial year 2022-2023, a decision was made to expand the Bridgend programme to deliver from four school settings in Cynffig Comprehensive School, Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen (CCYD), Plasnewydd Primary School and Ysgol Calon y Cymoedd (Betws), each with a potential cohort of up to 40 children. Unfortunately, due to recruitment challenges, the programme was only able to be delivered in CCYD and Cynffig Comprehensive School.

The budget for Food and Fun comes from WLGA with a £10k spend for each cohort. There was also an additional budget for co-ordinators salary (£1k per cohort), a small Covid response budget and an Additional Learning Needs (ALN) budget.

The data used to direct the programme is based on free school meals (FSM) data for the local authority. However, from September 2022 all schools will be offering a staggered FSM for all children in Wales as set out by Welsh Government.

A total of one hundred and nine children applied for a place on the programme, with sixty-nine children attending over the twelve-day period, (an increase of eight children on the previous year). Due to the number of applicants, CCYD ran a waiting list of twenty-eight. A total of eighteen children (25%) accessed the full twelve days of the programme.

Children attended CCYD from a wide catchment area of primary schools including:

- Nantymoel
- Ogmere Vale
- Bryncethin
- Brynmenyn
- Trelales
- Tondu
- Betws

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Children attended Cynffig Comprehensive School from the following primary schools:

- Mynydd Cynffig
- Cefn Cribwr
- Pyle
- Afon Y Felin
- Corneli
- Ysgol Y Ferch o'r Sger

2023 Programme delivery

The Food and Fun lead for Bridgend has taken up a secondment opportunity elsewhere in the Early Years' Service, and this has led to capacity issues within the Childcare Team to commit to running the project in 2023. Identified in September 2022 as a challenge, a decision was made to engage with local schools and support them to run the projects themselves. Funding was secured for a Food and Fun Support and Admin Officer to oversee the support to schools, but the post remains vacant, (re-advertised late June 2023).

Four schools have signed up to deliver the programme within their schools, targeting pupils within Year 4 to Year 7;

- Litchard
- Abercerdin
- Ffaldau
- Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen

Details of numbers of children to be targeted have not been made available at this date, although the maximum for each cohort is 40 children. Schools will be able to use their own discretion on whether the programme is targeted or open to all.

The summer 2023 Food and Fun programme will be running from 24 July to 10 August 2023.

13. Figures and data regarding the length of waiting times for school-based counsellors, that Officers offered to provide in response to Members' concerns regarding the length of waiting list times for school-based counsellors, although Officers were not aware of the lists being significant.

Officer's Response

School Based Counselling waiting lists – July 2023

School	Locality hub	Number on waiting list
Brynteg Comprehensive School	East	1
Bryntirion Comprehensive School	East	15
Pencoed Comprehensive School	East	14
Archbishop McGrath RC Comprehensive School	North	10
Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen	North	5
Maesteg School	North	10

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Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd	North	14
Ysgol Bryn Castell	North	0
The Bridge	North	0
Héronsbridge School	North	0
Cynffig Comprehensive School	West	10
Porthcawl Comprehensive School	West	6

14. Recent data from the annual monitoring undertaken by the Educational Psychology Service that Officers offered to provide in response to Members' referring to **T1 Pupil and staff wellbeing** in the report which outlined the well-established support from the Educational Psychology Service and highlighted the emotional and social wellbeing support role of Learning Support Assistants and their continued training, asking whether the roles were undertaken by dedicated staff and if every school had them.

Officer's Response

Emotional Learning Support Assistants (ELSAs). These are dedicated staff who have undertaken specific ELSA training. They help children recognise, understand and manage emotions to increase success and they plan and deliver individual (and small group) support programmes.

The ELSA project is an initiative designed to help schools meet the needs of emotionally vulnerable pupils from within their own resources, as we know children learn better and are happier in school if their emotional needs are met. It is an initiative developed and supported by educational psychologists, who apply psychological knowledge of children's social and emotional development to particular areas of need and to specific casework.

The training has been developed and is delivered over six days by educational psychologists (EPs); the ELSAs are then provided with regular, ongoing supervision to develop their understanding, skills and practice.

Bridgend was the first local authority in Wales to introduce ELSA training into schools (in 2008) and now all local authorities across Wales have active ELSA training and ELSAs in their schools.

Only one school in Bridgend (Oldcastle Primary School) has chosen to not use this intervention. Most of our schools have multiple ELSAs trained and are actively delivering programmes, supported through cluster supervision sessions by their link educational psychologist.

Attached as Appendix B is the current Bridgend ELSA register 2023 which is active and almost complete. We are awaiting the names from some of our schools with newly-trained ELSAs. Some schools have ELSAs trained but are delivering alternative interventions and are seen as inactive at this time.

15. Links from Central South Consortium regarding the staff wellbeing service funded by Welsh Government.

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Links below:

[Welsh Education Consortia - Wellbeing Partnership Programme \(google.com\)](#)

[Education Support, supporting teachers and education staff](#)

16. More information on when Officers expected to meet the objective in **T4 Support for children and young people with additional learning needs**, that 60 Additional Learning Needs Co-Ordinators would receive bespoke training to meet the needs of pupils.

Officer's Response

Additional learning needs co-ordinators (ALNCOs) attend the ALNCo Forum and as part of that forum training is received. Information is cascaded from Health colleagues during that Forum. All ALNCOs have received dispute resolution training.

17. In relation to **T11 Effective childcare and early years offer**, a timeline in relation to the Flying Start roll out and which childcare providers are included across the County Borough.

Officer's Response

Phase one of the Flying Start expansion programme commenced in September 2022, with an additional 144 children aged 0–3 years in the areas of Maesteg, Pyle and Kenfig Hill in receipt of the programme by March 2023.

Welsh Government announced further expansion of the programme for 2023-2024. The entitlement was for all two-year-olds in Wales to receive funded childcare provision, to be delivered through the Flying Start programme, on a phased basis. This childcare only entitlement differs from the Flying Start programme, whereby four core elements are provided, of which the childcare provision is one.

Phase two of the expansion programme was split into phase 2A (target 116 children) and phase 2B (target 99 children), as further funding was allocated following the initial announcement of the expansion. Phase 2A and phase 2B commenced in April 2023 with the following lower super output areas (LSOAs) being targeted:

Phase 2A

- Maesteg East (LSOA 1)
- Blaengarw, Pontycymmer (LSOAs 1 and 2)
- Ogmores Vale (LSOAs 1 and 2)
- Nantymoel (LSOAs 1 and 2)
- Caerau (LSOAs 4 and 5)

Phase 2B

- Llangwydd and Brynhyfryd (LSOA 1)

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- Pyle 4, Cornelly (LSOAs 1 and 3)
- Ynysawdre (LSOA 1)
- Hendre (LSOA 2)

The Flying Start team engaged with existing providers in the expansion areas and most have become Flying Start providers. We are currently working with the following childcare providers as part of the phase two expansion:

- Village playgroup, Pontycymer and Tondu
- Standing to Grow playgroup
- Cylch Meithrin Cynwyd Sant
- Cylch Meithrin Gwdihw
- Bizzi Day Nursery
- Selca Day Nursery
- Cylch Meithrin Pencoed
- North Cornelly playgroup
- Little Footsteps
- Little Acorns
- Cylch Meithrin Sger
- Cylch Meithrin Plant Bach Sarn
- Little Squirrels playgroup
- Fastrack Childcare Solutions

Welsh Government guidance is awaited for the roll out of the expansion and the timescale for future phases.

18. An update on recruitment of staff for school breakfast clubs and kitchens.

Officer's response

Officers continue to work hard to recruit to vacant positions to deliver free breakfast provision, using a range of initiatives.