

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	13 th April 2021
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Service Area	Additional Learning Needs
Committee Date	26 th April 2021

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Outreach Support across the Authority

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Scrutiny members with information regarding the local authority Outreach provision for ALN pupils from July 2020 to date.
- 1.2 It also provides information on how the local authority is preparing to meet its statutory duties under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The content of this report is discussed and noted.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The COVID pandemic has presented challenges to schools and schools' support staff. A series of lockdowns, social distancing, the introduction of teaching bubbles, staff and pupil self-isolation, limitations on school visits and adhering to risk assessments. These have been mitigated as far as possible by changes in practice, with the aim of reducing the impact on the learners we support which has been reported to Scrutiny previously.
- 3.2 Alongside this response, services supporting learners with additional learning needs have had to prepare themselves, and schools' staff, for Welsh Government's Additional Learning Needs Education Act (ALNET) which comes into effect from September 2021.
- 3.3 The local authority has 14 Learning Resource Classes across the Authority:
ASD/Social Communication (one Secondary, three Key Stage 2 and two Foundation Phase)
Complex Needs (four Key Stage 2 and two Foundation Phase)
Nurture (1 Key Stage 2 and 1 Foundation Phase)

4.0 WHERE WE WERE

- 4.1 Through the Regional Transformation Lead for the ALNET, considerable preparation for the ALN Reform has taken place, with numerous training events and regional meetings taking place between Education and Health to shape provision under the new ALNET. The ALN service has been represented on all working parties, including those with Health and continues to work alongside The College, Merthyr to help prepare for the ALN reform.
- 4.2 All schools across the County Borough have engaged in training in readiness for the new Act.
- 4.3 The Merthyr Additional Learning Needs Coordinator (ALNCo) Forum was established as an effective professional learning platform to meet the needs of the ALN Transformation agenda in all our schools and educational settings. The four Cluster Leads act as Pathfinders supported by the Regional Transformation Lead and local authority officers in a co-construction model of learning and developing professional practice.
- 4.4 Support for the Learning Resource Classes was provided by the Team Leader for ALN.

5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

5.1 ALN Reform

- 5.1.1 The Minister has recognised the significant impact of Covid and wrote to local authorities on 2nd February 2021 outlining the revised plans for the implementation of the new system based on what is reasonably deliverable in current circumstances.
- 5.1.2 The letter to local authorities advised:

‘From 1st September 2021, the ALN system will commence for children of compulsory school age and below who:

- attend maintained schools in Nursery Years 1 and 2 and Year 1, Year 3, Year 5, Year 7 and Year 10 who have special educational provision via School Action or School Action Plus;*
- are detained; and*
- do not have special educational needs on or before that date, regardless of their year group or setting – including those that may attend an EOTAS setting, an independent school or who are Electively Home Educated.*

This means that children who currently have special educational provision via a Statement, and those who are in any form of post-16 education, will not be included in the first year of implementation.’

- 5.1.3 Recruitment to the statutory role of Early Years Additional Learning Needs Officer (EYALNLO) has been completed and the postholder took up their role in January 2021.

- 5.1.4 All Primary, Secondary and Special school ALNCoS attend the half termly, one day training events, as well as Merthyr College, Early Years and Educational Psychology Service professionals. The focus is on leading whole school improvement in relation to the identification of ALN, the development of Individual Development Plans (IDPs), provision management, self-evaluation, accountability and systematic reporting to Governors.
- 5.1.5 100% of schools have participated fully in the Merthyr IDP Pilot. Merthyr LA has seconded an experienced ALNCo for three terms to lead the quality assurance process across all schools, provide support and keep Additional Learning Provision (ALP) under review. An additional part time ALN Lead Officer, took up appointment in January 2021 to support disagreement resolution and build capacity within the ALN Team to enable the local authority to meet its statutory duties under the ALNET Act.
- 5.1.6 The Learning Department has built capacity within its ALN Team and is well placed to meet the new statutory duty on local authorities of keeping ALP under review. The local authority needs to be in a position to make an informed judgement on ALP and able to report on the evidence of the extent to which the following is available in schools for learners with ALN:
- High quality differentiated teaching
 - Reasonable adjustments to enable access to the curriculum, environment and facilities
 - Targeted interventions and support
 - Effective systems for monitoring progress, achievement and inclusion
 - Involvement of specialists
 - Reviewing effectiveness of interventions, skill and expertise of staff
 - Involvement of children and their Parent/Carers
- 5.1.7 All schools were requested to re-submit an online ALN Transformation School Readiness survey to the Central South Consortium at the end of March.
- 5.1.8 It is important to recognise that ALN Transformation is integral to the current national education reform – see Appendix 1 (ALN Transformation and the wider educational reforms).

5.2 Outreach Support

- 5.2.1 From September 2020, the local authority commissioned Greenfield Special School to support staff within the Learning Resource Bases (LRBs). Greenfield have identified staff to work alongside LRB staff to provide them with regular, consistent, peer-peer support in relation to teaching and learning. Despite the restrictions of the pandemic, good working relationships have been developed with almost all teachers working within LRBs.
- 5.2.2 All LRBs have been provided with IRIS Connect – a video-enabled professional learning platform, giving teachers the opportunity to share classroom-based teaching and learning.
- 5.2.3 The support has varied from on-site visits to virtual meetings and has been able to support with teaching ideas, moving pupils on with specific skill development, moderation processes and will soon support with embedding the new assessment tool, B Squared.

- 5.2.4 Virtual termly support sessions were delivered for all LRB teachers, with an excellent attendance rate. These have focused on return to school arrangements, Autumn 2020 and sharing best practice regarding distance learning, Spring 2021.
- 5.2.5 The annual Instep audit was undertaken in LRBs during the Autumn term 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in pupils' education being disrupted since March 2020, however individualised programmes put in place to support pupils, have helped to reduce the impact on pupil progress.
- 5.2.6 Teachers reported that some pupils have struggled without the predictable class routine and, in some cases have not engaged with home learning despite their parents' best efforts, resulting in these pupils regressing.
- Foundation Phase pupils have made an average 13% increase in English (a 1% decrease compared to the previous three-year average progress); and 10% increase in maths (a 1% decrease compared to the previous three-year average progress).
 - At KS2, progress in English has been maintained at an average of 7% across KS2. An average 8% progress was made in maths (a 2.5% decrease compared to the previous three-year average progress).
- 5.2.7 Instep assessment is being replaced by B-Squared assessment across all LRBs from Spring 2021, with training commencing in February 2021 and baseline assessment planned to commence after February half-term. This will be supported by Greenfield Outreach.
- 5.2.8 LRB Moderation Project: Despite the restrictions from the pandemic, the moderation event continued in the Autumn term. Google Drive was used to upload and share submissions and the moderation process took place virtually via TEAMS. Three more LRBs submitted work to be moderated this term, which meant that all LRBs, except one provided work. The one school that did not submit work was still involved in the process and joined to moderate other schools' work. With the support of the Outreach more teachers had their work approved and the overall approval rate has increased from 44% approval last year to 64% approval this time.

6.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- 6.1 The Learning Department working effectively to meet the requirements of the ALNET.
- 6.2 All schools are working effectively to meet the requirements of the ALNET.
- 6.3 The Greenfield Outreach service for LRBs developed as an effective support for professional development, ensuring all staff deliver excellent teaching and learning activities for the children in their care.
- 6.4 All children within LRBs classes make at least the expected progress in their learning.

7.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT

- 7.1 Continue collaboration with Schools, regional partners and Health to prepare for and embed the requirement of the ALNET Act.
- 7.2 Continue to build capacity within the ALN Team in order for the local authority to meet its statutory duties under the ALNET Act 2018.
- 7.3 Appoint an IDP Officer to work across Children Services and the Learning Department to coordinate IDPs for Children Looked After pupils.
- 7.4 Embed the work of the LRB Outreach service.
- 7.5 Support LRB staff to complete baseline assessments and embed the new assessment tool, B Squared.
- 7.6 Continue to review specialist provisions to ensure that they meet the needs of our learners.

8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO RAISING ACHIEVEMENTS, RAISING STANDARDS STRATEGY

- Theme of Partnership & Collaboration
- Goals of Developing the Education Workforce, Supporting Learners Health and Wellbeing & Improving Achievement and Progression

9.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

- 9.1 The contents of this report relate to the following Wellbeing Objectives:
Best Start to Life
Living Well

SUE WALKER
CHIEF OFFICER, LEARNING

COUNCILLOR LISA MYTTON
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
PORTFOLIO LEAD

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		