

Public Document Pack

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To:

Members of the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Co-opted Members:

Lisa Allen, Lynn Bartlett and Wendy White

4 May 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

NOTICE OF HYBRID MEETING
EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 11TH MAY, 2023 at 2.00 PM

Yours faithfully

Steven Goodrum
Democratic Services Manager

Please note: Attendance at this meeting is either in person in the Lord Barry Jones Council Chamber, Flintshire County Council, County Hall, Mold, Flintshire or on a virtual basis.

The meeting will be live streamed onto the Council's website. The live streaming will stop when any confidential items are considered. A recording of the meeting will also be available, shortly after the meeting at <https://flintshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact a member of the Democratic Services Team on 01352 702345.

A G E N D A

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Purpose: At the Annual Meeting, Council determined that the Labour Group will chair this Committee. The Committee is advised that Councillor Teresa Carberry is the Chair of the Committee for the municipal year.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Purpose: To appoint a Vice-Chair for the Committee.

3 APOLOGIES

Purpose: To receive any apologies.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Purpose: To receive any Declarations and advise Members accordingly.

5 MINUTES (Pages 5 - 14)

Purpose: To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2023.

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING (Pages 15 - 26)

Report of Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

Purpose: To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee and to inform the Committee of progress against actions from previous meetings.

7 ATTENDANCE & EXCLUSIONS (Pages 27 - 42)

Report of Chief Officer (Education and Youth) - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure

Purpose: To provide Members with an overview of school attendance and exclusions and the role of the Portfolio's support services in this area.

8 SUPPORTING SERVICE CHILDREN IN EDUCATION (Pages 43 - 48)

Report of Chief Officer (Education and Youth) - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure

Purpose: To provide an update report to outline the priority actions of schools following the audit.

9 TACKLING THE IMPACT OF INEQUALITY ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES (Pages 49 - 60)

Report of Chief Officer (Education and Youth) - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure

Purpose: To outline how the Council supporting early childhood education and care, primary and secondary education and all forms of post-16 education, training and lifelong learning to ensure an equitable education system for all.

Please note that there may be a 10 minute adjournment of this meeting if it lasts longer than two hours

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EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE **23 MARCH 2023**

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Thursday 23 March 2023.

PRESENT: Councillor Teresa Carberry (Chair)

Councillors: Paul Cunningham, Gladys Healey, Dave Mackie, Ryan McKeown, Andrew Parkhurst, Carolyn Preece, David Richardson and Jason Shallcross

CO-OPTEEs: Mrs Lynne Bartlett and Lisa Allen

SUBSTITUTIONS: Councillor Mel Buckley (for Councillor Gina Maddison), Councillor Ian Hodge (for Councillor Bill Crease)

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Ray Hughes and Arnold Woolley

MEMBERS OF THE ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

COMMITTEE IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors: Mike Allport, Chris Dolphin, Mared Eastwood, David Evans, Richard Lloyd, Mike Peers, Vicky Perfect, Dan Rose and Roy Wakelam

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: Marion Bateman, Helen Brown, Carol Ellis, Chrissy Gee, Paul Johnson, Richard Jones, Roz Mansell, Hilary McGuill, Debbie Owen and Antony Wren attended as observers

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Ian Roberts, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure; Chief Executive and Chief Officer (Education & Youth)

Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation); Transportation and Highway Strategy Manager; Regulatory Services Manager; Enforcement Manager and Enforcement Supervisor; Police & Crime Commissioner (for agenda item no 50)

Senior Manager School Improvement (for agenda item no 51)

Strategic Finance Manager(Commercial and Housing) and Libraries Development Manager (for agenda item no 52)

Corporate Manager (Corporate Property and Assets) and Mr Liam Evans-Ford, Executive Director, Theatr Clwyd (for agenda item no. 53)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator, Democratic Services Manager and Democratic Services Officer

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Councillor Carolyn Preece declared a personal and prejudicial interest for Agenda item 8 – Theatr Clwyd Business Plan and indicated that she would leave the meeting ahead of the discussion on this item.

Councillor Andrew Parkhurst declared a personal interest for Agenda item 8 – Theatr Clwyd Business Plan, as he was a member of Theatr Clwyd.

Members were advised that as School Governors they should ensure that this information is included in their Code of Conduct form and if not then they should declare a personal interest for Agenda Item 5. Councillor Roy Wakelam declared a personal interest as a family member had been appointed a School Governor.

48. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 2 February 2023 were approved as moved and seconded by Councillor Dave Mackie and Councillor Carolyn Preece.

Matters Arising

Councillor Andrew Parkhurst referred to his questions on the charging structure model for the school music service, shown on page 8 of the minutes. He said that the point he was making at the meeting was that the hourly charge of £38.20 being the same for group and individual sessions was true in respect to the cost to schools. This was not the situation for the cost to parents or others who fund their children's music lessons where there was a subsidy for group sessions but individual lessons were therefore more expensive and cost more than could be achieved by private lessons.

It was agreed that the minutes be amended to reflect the point made by Councillor Parkhurst.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

49. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

In presenting the report, the Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator confirmed that there were no proposed changes to the current Forward Work Programme and an overview of the items scheduled for the next committee meeting on the 11 May was provided.

Referring to the Actions from the last meeting, the Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator confirmed that an email notification had been sent to Members for the Workshop on Integrated Youth Provision to be held on the 26 July at 2.00 pm. A letter had also been sent to all Head Teachers on the School Music Service. Referring to the questions raised by Councillor Dave Mackie, it was confirmed that the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) had received a response from Aura clarifying that the performance indicators data was provided annually. The end of year quarterly performance reports would be presented to committee in July and the Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator agreed to check that this information was included within this report.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved by Councillor Carolyn Preece and seconded by Councillor Dave Mackie.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted;
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises; and
- (c) That the progress made in completing the outstanding actions be noted.

50. SCHOOL PARKING

Prior to consideration of the report, the Chair commented that every Member had, at some point, received concerns from residents regarding school parking. She said that this continued to be an ongoing issue, that could not rely on a single solution to resolve it. She thanked the Members who had emailed their concerns and points they wished to raise to the Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and welcomed Members of the Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee to the meeting, who had been invited due to the issue falling within the remit of both Committees. She thanked the authors of the report for the clarification of the roles and responsibilities of all the parties who worked to resolve this issue.

The Chair also welcomed Mr. Andrew Dunbobbin, Police & Crime Commissioner to the meeting, who is in attendance to provide information on the role of the Police where there were concerns of school parking.

The Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation) presented the report which provided Members with an overview of the problems currently experienced within the vicinity of the County's schools, whilst also outlining the roles and responsibilities of all parties with a view to seeking a collaborative approach and effective solution. She provided information on how the teams within the Streetscene and Transportation portfolio were organised, the resources which were available to support this, how the legislation worked and what could be achieved.

The Transportation Manager commented that parking near schools was an historical problem experienced by every local authority with the reasons for this being the location of schools, inconsiderate and dangerous driving and parking by individuals as more parents were driving to school rather than walking. Information on the Active Travel measures and improved infrastructure which included safer routes in community schemes, was given together with an overview of the constraints on what could be achieved at school sites. From a road safety prospective, parental behaviour caused many of the problems around schools, which also linked to the wider congestion on the road network, pollution, and emissions.

The Transportation Manager reported that a high volume of complaints were received around parking and traffic congestion together with requests for road safety reviews and the small Transport Traffic team who supporting this had to undertake assessments, design schemes and then bid for available grant funding. Referring to Enforcement he provided information on the small team of Civil Parking Officers who

were also required to undertake other enforcement duties. An outline of the areas of highway enforcement that were covered by North Wales Police and the Council and the hierarchy of responsibility regarding traffic management and parking was outlined within the report.

The Regulatory Services Manager provided an overview of the Civil Parking Enforcement Team, which consisted of 10 Officers, 1 Supervisor and 1 Manager. This team had a very broad remit, and she outlined the traffic, environmental and other areas of work they covered, with the demand on this team increasing. Information on the enforcement provided across the 78 schools, with 25 schools having active traffic restrictions in place and an explanation of the variation of traffic restrictions was given. Enforcement Officers were scheduled to attend schools daily especially where multiple or ongoing complaints had been received. They wore visible uniforms and confirmed that most parents complied with the traffic regulations in place when they were present, with the non-compliance happening when they were not present. The team tried to visit all schools, but because of the size of the team and number of schools it was not possible to attend every school every day as the resources were spread across the whole network.

The Transportation Manager explained that parking on clear ways was an instant fine, but double and single yellow lines allowed for a car to stop for up to 5 minutes. The process of Traffic Regulatory Orders (TROs) was a very complex, expensive process and could take between 6 months and 2 years to complete and once these restrictions were in place, they would also affect the local residents. The use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and CCTV was also explained but these were only effective when clear ways “school keep clear” zigzags and crossing points were present.

A number of questions and comments were made by Members which were attached at Appendix 1 of the minutes. The comments made by Members would be collated for the work of the Task & Finish Group to form a basis for their investigation for solutions to this issue.

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure said that this was an issue for all schools and that the cost of putting restrictions in place outside schools was also very expensive. This was an issue for parents, who by their actions, were causing these problems and he appealed to them to consider if it was necessary to park at the school gates or on pavements. He agreed with the proposal to set up a Task and Finish Group, which would enable local Members to highlight their individual concerns for their schools. He felt examples of good practice, such as walking buses, should also be considered as part of the work of the Task & Finish Group.

The Police & Crime Commissioner thanked the Committee for the invitation and outlined that he was the first Police & Crime Commissioner in North Wales to include road safety in his Police & Crime Plan. He said that he was pleased to work with the Authority and all Local Authorities across North Wales to tackle this issue outside of schools to ensure that children were kept safe. He reported on the research work his team had undertaken, looking at what schemes were available in Wales and England and commented on the School Streets Scheme in Redbridge, a London Borough

Council. The Scheme had designated zones which at specified times ensured that certain streets were blocked off or had traffic diverted to take the pressure from the school and enable children to get to school safely. Contact had been made with Redbridge Borough Council to gain a better understanding on how they undertook this work and he agreed to share the link to the website with Members for information following the meeting. Referring to the recommendations of the report, he said he would welcome the opportunity to work with the Task & Finish Group and said that he looked forward to seeing how this developed to ensure that children were as safe as they could be going to school.

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure said that many of the mitigation measures involved additional financial resources. He hoped that when the Task & Finish Group put forward its recommendations that Members from across the chamber supported any necessary increases for staffing costs and maintenance costs for highways. He hoped the Task & Finish Group would focus on educating or altering the perception of the small minority of parents who were causing these problems.

The Police and Crime Commissioner fully understood the challenges that all public services faced within their respective budgets and wished to offer some financial support to explore a pilot scheme identified through the Task & Finish Group. He would welcome the opportunity of working with the Task & Finish Group and said that there was the possibility of applying for funding through PACT and Innovate to Grow, which would then have to go through the application process.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved by Councillor Carolyn Preece and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee note the historical issues associated with parking within the vicinity of schools and recognise the responsibilities of highway users in accordance with the requirements of the Highway Code;
- (b) That the Committee note the hierarchy of responsibility in relation to the management of traffic within the vicinity of schools and acknowledges the role of enforcement as a reactive measure, rather than a means to prevent initial occurrence; and
- (c) That the Committee approves the creation of a joint Task & Finish Group in order to explore the issues in further detail and develop a collaborative and preventative approach with key stakeholders, which will involve:-
 - Elected Members from the Education, Youth & Culture OSC and Environment & Economy OSC;
 - Officers from both the Education & Youth and Streetscene & Transportation portfolios;
 - Head Teachers
 - Elected Members invited to attend as required;
 - Officers from North Wales Police invited to attend as required.

51. ANTI-RACIST WALES ACTION PLAN

Prior to consideration of the report, the Chair welcomed the report and said that as a former teacher she was aware of the work undertaken in schools to highlight this issue. As a member of Flintshire's City of Sanctuary she fully endorsed Wales being a Nation of Sanctuary and said that lives were enriched by diversity and enhanced by the experienced of additional cultures. Education was a means of bringing about societal change, dispelling stereotypes and untruths which was why she welcomed the report.

The Senior Manager (School Improvement) thanked the Chair for her comments and introduced the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan which had been developed in collaboration with a wide range of communities and organisation across all parts of Wales.

On the 20th of July 2022, the Welsh Government (WG) published the National Anti-racist Wales Action Plan which required the public sector, third sector and government funded private sector to work to the Actions set out in the Plan. The vision within the Plan was active, dynamic and allowed for change when required to ensure the Plan was appropriate to meet the 2030 vision set by WG. The Senior Manager outlined the policy areas covered within the plan which related to Education and Welsh Language and provided information on the goals and priorities for Education and schools especially within the new Curriculum with Wales being the first country to make a mandatory element within the Curriculum for pupils to learn about ethnic diversity within Wales and the wider world. Some of this work was already being undertaken within schools through specific workshops, professional development opportunities and e-Learning modules for practitioners in schools working with partners for Show Racism the Red Card, the North Wales Regional Equality Network and Victims Support Cymru. Schools were also signposted through Hwb to resources which could be used in the classroom.

The Senior Manager reported on the work carried out across the portfolio to support the Action Plan which included a wide range of activities and measures which could be used moving forward. The Council's response to the Action Plan sat with the Corporate Equalities Board which fed into the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee. In referring to the recommendations within the report, the Senior Manager sought the Committee's views on how often an update report should be presented to future meetings.

Councillor Paul Johnson welcomed the report and the Philosophy for Children, Colleagues and Communities (P4C) which he felt allowed for children to ask questions about what was fair, unfair, just and unjust. He referred to his time working as an Education Officer for UNICEF where children were told what their rights were in school which enabled them to understand not only what their rights were but the rights of other pupils and felt that understanding as a child what your rights were as a human being was part of that process.

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure agreed with the comments made. He felt Flintshire schools carried out excellent work in this area and he thanked the staff for the action they took ensuring that Flintshire was a racially fair County.

A number of Members spoke in support of the report and thanked Officers for the work undertaken.

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) thanked Members for their positive comments on the report and echoed the thanks to the Senior Manager and her team. Referring to the recommendation outlined within the report she felt it would be manageable to bring an annual report to the Committee which would include an overview of actions undertaken, evidence of the impacts of those actions and any appropriate data sets.

The Senior Manager (School Improvement) thanked Members for their support and recognition of the work undertaken with colleagues in schools. She thanked Claire Sinnott and the Healthy Schools Team as much of this work was already being undertaken in schools.

The Chair suggested that recommendation 3, as outlined within the report, be amended to reflect that the Committee receive annual update reports on the Anti-racist Action Plan. The recommendation, as outlined within the report, together with the suggested amendment from the Chair were moved by Councillor Gladys Healey and seconded by Carolyn Preece.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee support the vision of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and the actions set out for education;
- (b) That the Committee confirmed that it had received an appropriate level of assurance regarding the work of the Education & Youth Portfolio in meeting the requirement of the Anti-racist Action Plan for Wales;
- (c) That the Committee receive annual update reports on the Anti-racist Action Plan and that it be added to the Forward Work Programme.

52. COUNCIL PLAN 2023-28 DEVELOPMENT

The Chief Executive introduced the report on the Council Plan 2023-28. He reported that a full review had been undertaken to ensure the appropriateness and relevance of the well-being objectives, priorities and sub-priorities going forward. This included a review of the current Council Plan 2022-23 to determine:

- Priority actions that continue from 2023 onwards for sustained attention;
- Priority actions which could be removed as they have been completed or become operational (business as usual); and
- Emerging new priority areas, actions and measures for 2023-28

The Chief Executive advised that the priorities of the Council Plan 2023-28 relevant to the Committee were outlined and attached at Appendix 1 and 2 of the report.

Councillor Andrew Parkhurst referred to the measurement for a reduction in the number of permanent exclusions or fixed term exclusions as shown on page 50 of the

report and questioned that the target seemed to be an increase from the baseline data. In response the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) explained the difference between the baseline date and the target was because it was recorded in 2021/22 in a period when data was not collected because of the pandemic. As a result of the pandemic there had been a significant increase in the number of children and young people who were struggling to maintain their place in school.

Councillor Parkhurst asked what the numbers were being reduced from. If the baseline was not appropriate because of the pandemic what were the numbers of the current baseline. In response the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) reported that she did not have the current figures to hand but would be happy to provide the information following the meeting.

Councillor Dave Mackie commented that a report on school exclusions was due to be presented at the next Committee meeting. He asked if the report could include what schools were doing and what extra facilities were being provided. He felt that this was a wider issue because schools had changed how they worked to effect or reduce the number of permanent exclusions which highlighted how big this problem was.

In response the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) referred to the footnote which stated that this figure had considered the pre-Covid situation in terms of exclusion levels. She advised that a detailed report would be provided at the May Committee meeting which would outline the new approaches and systems which the local authority had adopted. Included in the report would be information on what the schools were undertaking such as modifications of the curriculum, their offers of alternative models and work across the Portfolio with the Youth Justice Service and Youth Services.

Councillor David Mackie commented that the extra provisions required were very costly for every school whose budgets were under such pressure. He asked if the extra facilities were likely to continue with schools looking at their budgets. In response, the Chief Officer recognised the challenges around school budgets and said that schools continued to put the needs of their learners at the forefront of their decision making. There was also a significant knock-on effect on the Portfolio because when young people were no longer in school there was still a statutory responsibility to make appropriate provision for them. These cost pressures were being managed within the Portfolio and she welcomed any grant funding from Welsh Government (WG) who recognised that there were still issues post pandemic and the Portfolio made effective use of that funding where possible.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Dave Mackie and seconded by Councillor Carolyn Preece.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee support the Council Plan 2023-28 Part 1 and Part 2 documents that outline the actions, measures and risks that underpin the Priorities, Sub-Priorities and Well-being objectives of the Council Plan 2023-28.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 – TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item as this was considered to contain exempt information by virtue of paragraph 14 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

53. THEATR CLWYD BUSINESS PLAN

The Chair welcomed Mr Liam Evans-Ford and the Corporate Manager to the meeting.

The Corporate Manager and Mr. Liam Evans-Ford jointly presented the report which outlined the trading accounts for the Theatr Clwyd Trust and a summary of the key elements of the Theatr Clwyd Business Plan 2023-2029.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved by Councillor Dave Mackie and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee commend the report to Cabinet.

54. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 p.m. and ended at 4.45 pm)

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Chair

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EDUCATION YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 11 th May, 2023
Report Subject	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking
Report Author	Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview & Scrutiny presents a unique opportunity for Members to determine the Forward Work programme of the Committee of which they are Members. By reviewing and prioritising the Forward Work Programme Members are able to ensure it is Member-led and includes the right issues. A copy of the Forward Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration which has been updated following the last meeting.

The Committee is asked to consider, and amend where necessary, the Forward Work Programme for the Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The report also shows actions arising from previous meetings of the Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the progress made in completing them. Any outstanding actions will be continued to be reported to the Committee as shown in Appendix 2.

RECOMMENDATION

1	That the Committee considers the draft Forward Work Programme and approve/amend as necessary.
2	That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.
3	That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING
1.01	Items feed into a Committee's Forward Work Programme from a number of sources. Members can suggest topics for review by Overview & Scrutiny Committees, members of the public can suggest topics, items can be referred by the Cabinet for consultation purposes, or by County Council or Chief Officers. Other possible items are identified from the Cabinet Work Programme and the Improvement Plan.
1.02	<p>In identifying topics for future consideration, it is useful for a 'test of significance' to be applied. This can be achieved by asking a range of questions as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Will the review contribute to the Council's priorities and/or objectives?2. Is it an area of major change or risk?3. Are there issues of concern in performance?4. Is there new Government guidance of legislation?5. Is it prompted by the work carried out by Regulators/Internal Audit?6. Is the issue of Public or Member concern?
1.03	In previous meetings, requests for information, reports or actions have been made. These have been summarised as action points. Following a meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee in July 2018, it was recognised that there was a need to formalise such reporting back to Overview & Scrutiny Committees, as 'Matters Arising' was not an item which can feature on an agenda.
1.04	It was suggested that the 'Action tracking' approach be trialled for the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Following a successful trial, it was agreed to extend the approach to all Overview & Scrutiny Committees.
1.05	The Action Tracking details including an update on progress is attached at Appendix 2.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None as a result of this report.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	In some cases, action owners have been contacted to provide an update on their actions.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None as a result of this report.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Draft Forward Work Programme Appendix 2 – Action Tracking for the Education Youth & Culture OSC.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Minutes of previous meetings of the Committee as identified in Appendix 2. Contact Officer: Ceri Shotton Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator Telephone: 01352 702305 E-mail: ceri.shotton@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Improvement Plan: the document which sets out the annual priorities of the Council. It is a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to set Improvement Objectives and publish an Improvement Plan.

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CURRENT FWP

Date of meeting	Subject	Purpose of Report	Scrutiny Focus	Responsible / Contact Officer
<p>Thursday 29th June, 2023</p> <p>Joint meeting with S&HC OSC - 2.00pm</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 19</p>	<p>Safeguarding in Education including Internet Safety and Social Media</p>	<p>To provide an update on the discharge of statutory safeguarding duties in schools and the Education portfolio. To include information on Relationship and Sexual Education and how this was contributing to reducing harm.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education & Youth) and Healthy Schools Practitioner</p>
	<p>Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018</p>	<p>To outline the approach to the identification and commissioning of post 16 education for Flintshire young people.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Senior Manager – Inclusion & Progression</p>
	<p>Looked After Children in Flintshire</p>	<p>To provide an update on the provision for Looked After Children. And to provide an update on the challenges, positive working and how young people were supported through the pilot to provide funding directly to looked after children leaving care.</p>	<p>Assurance Monitoring</p>	<p>Senior Manager – Inclusion & Progression</p>
	<p>Supporting Refugees in Schools</p>	<p>To provide information and an overview of support service provided to support refugees in schools.</p>	<p>Information Sharing</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Education & Youth)</p>

Thursday 13th July, 2023 2.00pm	Estyn Inspection of Adult Community Learning (ACL) within the North East Wales Adult Community Learning Partnership	To present the detailed action plan and next steps.	Assurance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
	Council Plan 2022-23 Year-End Performance	To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities and performance levels identified in the Council Plan.	Assurance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)

INFORMATION REPORTS/BRIEFING PAPERS TO BE CIRCULATED TO THE COMMITTEE

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Item	Purpose of information report	Month
Health & Safety in Schools	Information report on accidents during the academic year and the actions taken to support schools in achieving healthy and safe environment.	December
Parking Outside Schools	To provide information from the Highways Team on legislation around parking outside schools and the mechanism in place for joint working with the Police and Schools.	-
Policies for dealing with bullying in schools	To provide information on School Policies for dealing with instances of bullying.	-

Items to be scheduled

- Healthy Schools report - to include overview of Healthy Schools Programme, Challenges of Pandemic, Design to Smile and public health risk of Vape use by pupils – **As agreed during the July, 2022 meeting.**
- School Meals Service - to include overview of structural changes since moving across to NEWYDD, central production model, plans for universal roll out of Free School Meals and use of processed food in school meals - **As agreed during the July, 2022 meeting.**
- Update to be requested from IT on issues with PSPA, National infrastructure challenges in Flintshire - **As agreed during the July, 2022 meeting.**
- Recycling School Uniforms – **Referred to the Committee from the Environment & Economy OSC.**
- Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan – Annual update to be considered at the March 2024 meeting – **As agreed during the March 2023 meeting.**
- Annual Report from Regional School Improvement Service, GwE – moved from July to September 2023

REGULAR ITEMS

Month	Item	Purpose of Report	Responsible / Contact Officer
February/ March	School Modernisation	To update Members on the progress made with School Modernisation.	Senior Manager School Planning & Provision
May	Attendance & Exclusions	To provide Members with an overview of school attendance and exclusions and the role of the Portfolio's support services in this area.	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
September	Self-evaluation on education services & learner outcomes	To update Members on overall service performance including Learner Outcomes.	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
June	Additional Learning Needs	To update members on the implementation of national ALN reforms in schools and the role of the Portfolio's support services in this area.	Senior Manager – Inclusion & Progression
July	Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE)	To receive an update on progress with the development of the regional school effectiveness and improvement service, to include a presentation from the Chief Officer of GwE.	Chief Officer (Education & Youth) & GwE Senior Officers
September	School Balances	To provide the Committee with details of the closing balances held by Flintshire schools at the end of the financial year.	Finance Manager
Annually	Learning from the School Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG) -	To receive the annual report on progress and learning from the SPMG.	Senior Manager – School Improvement;
Annually	Social Media & Internet Safety - now part of Safeguarding Report to the Joint Scrutiny Committee	To receive an annual report assurance/monitoring.	Healthy Schools Practitioner

ACTION TRACKING FOR THE EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda item	Action Required	Action Officer(s)	Action taken	Timescale
23.03.2023	3. Minutes	Cllr Andrew Parkhurst referred to his questions on the charging structure model for the school music service, shown on page 8 of the minutes. He said that the point he was making at the meeting was that the hourly charge of £38.20 being the same for group and individual sessions was true in respect to the cost to schools but that this was not the situation for the cost to parent or others who fund the music lessons where there was a subsidy for group session and individual lessons were therefore more expensive and cost more than could be achieved by private lessons.	Janet Kelly	Minutes amended and published on the Council's website.	Completed.
23.03.2023	5. School Parking	Cllr Ryan McKeown asked if the following information could be provided and it was agreed that this be circulated following the meeting:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which schools were visited the most by Enforcement Officers over the last 12 month period; • How many penalty charge notices were issues outside schools in the last 12 month period; 	Katie Wilby / Ruth Tulley	Information circulated to Members via e-mail on 03.05.23.	Completed.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How much time is spent by Enforcement Officers outside schools in a typical week? 			
23.03.2023	5. School Parking	The Police and Crime Commissioner agreed to share with the Committee details of a scheme being introduced in the London Borough of Redbridge following the meeting.	Ceri Shotton	Information circulated to Members via e-mail on 23.03.2023	Completed
23.03.2023	5. School Parking	In line with recommendation (c), that Members of the Education, Youth & Culture OSC and Environment & Economy OSC be contacted to seek nominations to sit on the Task & Finish Group.	Ceri Shotton	E-mail seeking nominations sent on 24.04.2023	Ongoing
23.03.2023	6. Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan	In line with recommendation (c), that an annual report on the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan be added to the Forward Work Programme.	Ceri Shotton	Added to FWP as 'Items to be scheduled' once future meeting dates are agreed.	Completed
23.03.2023	7. Council Plan 2023-28 Development	<p>Councillor Andrew Parkhurst referred to Page 50 of the report and the achievement measures for the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in the number of permanent exclusions; and Reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions. <p>Cllr Parkhurst asked why the target seemed to be an increase from the</p>	Claire Homard	Information e-mailed to Members of the Committee on 02.05.2023.	Completed

		baseline data from 2021/22 and asked what the current baseline data was. It was agreed that this information be circulated to all Committee Members following the meeting.			
23.03.2023	7. Council Plan 2023-28 Development	Cllr Dave Mackie referred to the Attendance and Exclusions report being presented to the next meeting in May and asked if information on what schools were doing to tackle permanent exclusions and the extra facilities being set up could be included in the report. Claire Homard agreed to include this information and explained that the report would also outline new approaches and systems that the Local Authority had adopted and work schools were doing to modify the curriculum and offers of alternative models and also work being done across the portfolio.	Claire Homard	Request sent to Jeanette Rock in order for the information to be included in the narrative in the May report.	Completed

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EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 11 th May 2023
Report Subject	School Attendance and Exclusions
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education & Youth
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report provides information with regard to the levels of attendance and exclusion across Flintshire schools for the academic year 2021/22. The main reasons cited for pupil absence and exclusion have been included within the report.

The period reported on reflects the first full year following the COVID-19 pandemic and the legacy of this exceptional event continues to impact on the levels of attendance and exclusion. Schools across Wales have struggled to re-engage learners and families following the lengthy periods of isolation brought about by the pandemic. In addition, many of the learners returning to full time education have found it difficult to resume the routine and expectations of school life. This situation has once again prevented meaningful comparison with the data from years prior to the COVID pandemic for Flintshire, but it does provide an initial opportunity to provide some insight into its legacy.

Attendance across Flintshire schools remains lower than pre-pandemic levels, with illness accounting for the majority of absences. The levels of permanent and fixed-term exclusion remain on an increasing trend, particularly across the secondary sector. Meetings on a regional and national level suggest that similar trends with regards to attendance and exclusion are evident across other authorities and concerns continue to be flagged to Welsh Government. Comparative data had not yet been fully reinstated by Welsh Government during the period covered by this report and the use of COVID absence marks remained an option for use by schools, being finally withdrawn for use for 2022/23.

Services continue to review and develop in response to the need to support an improvement in attendance and overall reduction in exclusion as per the recommendation from the 2019 Estyn Inspection and the report outlines some of the changes implemented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members consider the attendance and exclusion data for Flintshire schools and the actions undertaken by officers to support increased engagement and the safety and wellbeing of our children and young people.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING ATTENDANCE AND EXCLUSIONS
1.01	Prior to the pandemic, school attendance and exclusion comparative data had been published by Welsh Government (WG) retrospectively on an annual basis. During the pandemic, data publication and performance measurement was suspended and has not fully resumed. This report, similar to last year, is once again constructed utilising Flintshire County Council unverified data extracted from local databases. The data covers both the primary and secondary sectors and relates to the academic year 2021/22.
1.02	Table 1 in Appendix 1 provides the overview of pupil attendance across both primary and secondary schools (mainstream and special) for the last 4 academic years. Primary attendance data, whilst below pre-pandemic levels is showing an improvement on the previous year at 92.4% indicating some signs of recovery. Attendance in secondary schools reduced to below 90% during the pandemic and this situation remained unchanged for 21/22 with overall attendance sitting at 87.8% for the year.
1.03	Headteachers have the discretion as to whether to authorise a child's absence or not based on the information provided by the parent/carer. The high levels of authorised absence outlined in Table 3 suggest that parents/carers were continuing in the main, to provide schools with acceptable reasons for absence. It is evident that illness remained the predominant reason for absence across the year in both sectors with this significantly surpassing all other reasons. The COVID absence code remained available for schools to use until August 2022 and the use of this reflects the continued impact of the COVID virus on school communities during 2021/22. Holiday absences increased significantly in the primary sector for 21/22 as travel restrictions eased. Once again this reflects the significant impact of the COVID-19 lockdown with many families keen to resume holiday bookings after the lockdown ceased.

1.04	<p>Parents/carers are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. Headteachers understand the importance of attendance on pupil engagement and attainment and implement a range of strategies to promote and secure attendance in collaboration with Council Services. The challenges of recent years have resulted in schools developing a range of alternative offers to re-engage those who are struggling to attend. These include the following examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site targeted KS3 small group provision offering a range of intervention to catch up and facilitate a supported phased return to mainstream provision. • On-site small group provision for KS4 providing an alternative curriculum offer to maintain interest and engagement. • On-site Community Hub created to facilitate multi-agency working. • Offsite community-based centres providing access to core subjects and more vocationally targeted opportunities and accreditation for those who are unable to access their education on the main school site. <p>In some cases, there have been collaborative approaches between the school and Council Services such as Youth Services to enhance the provision on offer. These options have also been utilised to support individuals either at risk of, or those who have been excluded and are being further enhanced this year by the Community Focused Schools Service which has recently been established following access to WG targeted grant funding.</p>
1.05	<p>Other services across the Education & Youth Portfolio have key roles to play in supporting improved attendance and reducing levels of exclusion. These include the Education Welfare Service (EWS) which has a statutory responsibility with regard to school attendance matters along with other teams such as Additional Learning Needs, Education Psychology, Young Person Counselling, Personal Support, TRAC (ceased Summer 2022), English as an Additional Language and Gypsy/Traveller services which offer specialist support to schools, families and individual learners to improve their engagement levels. Attendance and exclusion data at both school and individual level is now circulated to service managers on a half-termly basis to support and facilitate targeted intervention.</p>
1.06	<p>A particular focus has been on Year 6/7 transition data for the EWS. A review of the data during 21/22 suggested that transition from Year 6 to 7 was a potential area of opportunity to assess and engage pupils where attendance had fallen below an 85% threshold in Year 6. After an initial pilot in one of our secondary schools which resulted in overall increased attendance in Year 7, each school-based EWO were provided with an identified cohort of pupils at the close of Year 6 to prioritise in Year 7. The aim was to intervene proactively and at an early stage. This group will be monitored to see if the revised approach can improve the attendance of this particular cohort during 22/23.</p>

1.07	<p>During 2021/22, further changes were made to the practice of the Education Welfare Service (EWS). A small number of Education Support Officer (ESO) roles were created to provide specific expertise to schools regarding attendance management systems. The strategic aim of this activity was to provide a two-tier structure within the EWS. ESOs engage predominantly with primary schools to support attendance administration processes with Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) being targeted at secondary schools and the more complex cases. The role of the ESOs is to ensure that the graduated response to attendance management is applied consistently across Flintshire and requires them to target schools based on data review. A draft model Attendance Policy was shared with all Flintshire Schools in January 2022 to seek Headteacher feedback and was circulated for use later in the year. This provides schools with an appropriate framework in relation to attendance and clarifies roles and responsibilities to support a more consistent approach across the county. These actions are part of the revised strategic approach to attendance management process across Flintshire in response to the Estyn recommendations.</p>
1.08	<p>Two ESO staff have also been appointed to provide dedicated support for families that choose Elective Home Education (EHE) as a way to educate their children. This revised approach allows the authority to provide a dedicated point of contact with such families and to utilise additional funding provided by WG to support/safeguard such families in an enhanced manner. In addition a dedicated ESO has taken a lead role as Children Missing Education (CME) lead to ensure any pupils that fail to arrive in their school or leave the locality are placed on the central Lost Pupil Database. These service revisions ensure that the Local Authority meets its duty to work with other councils when children leave our schools and to promote safeguarding matters robustly.</p>
1.09	<p>The Education Welfare Service implements the legal challenge to parents/carers on behalf of the Council in collaboration with the FCC Legal Services Department where appropriate/necessary. The full range of legal powers that are usually available to support an improvement in attendance were suspended by Welsh Government during the lockdown period and have only been re-implemented during 2022. Such legal action is only applied in cases where there are significant levels of unauthorised absences and where all interventions have failed to improve the situation. As outlined in Table 1, the levels of unauthorised absence are gradually increasing. Whilst the percentages overall remain low, it does indicate that Headteachers are presenting an increasing level of challenge to parents/carers where they feel there is insufficient evidence to support learner absence.</p>
1.10	<p>In response to the increasing level of challenge and the re-instigation of the full powers by WG, a revised process has been established to record and issue the Fixed Penalty Notice applications from individual Headteachers. This process now ensures that Fixed Penalty Notices are delivered by hand and confirms if any payment of the notices has been</p>

	<p>received. Where payment has not been received and absences remain unauthorised, the case now progresses to court proceedings. In 21/22 an initial batch of 10 fines were issued. Of these, 7 were progressed and upheld by the Magistrates Court resulting in 1 conditional discharge and 6 considerable financial penalties. This confirmed that the process being implemented was secure and it continues to be implemented. The impact of these initial actions was monitored and Headteachers were made aware of the outcome. Information was also published by the Council more generally to promote awareness of possible consequences associated with non-attendance. The aim was to promote a range of options to support schools with unauthorised absences as part of a whole school approach. This action was in its early stages in 21/22 but will develop and evolve.</p>
1.11	<p>As stated, the main factor impacting on attendance continues to be illness with mental health issues a concern for learners particularly in the secondary sector. Whilst there is regular engagement with health colleagues to consider the range of services available to Flintshire children and young people, access to appropriate services and intervention remains a challenge. The school medical process was re-implemented in 21/22 to consider cases of persistent absence but resource deficits with partner Health Services meant that these appointments would take up to 6 months to secure. The Council's EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) services provide medical home tuition for learners with appropriate medical evidence to support this. Demand for this intervention increased greatly during the COVID and has continued to rise in 2021/22 resulting in significant expenditure for the Council with regards to individual tuition for those unable to engage in school.</p>
1.12	<p>The level of fixed term and permanent exclusion across our schools had generally been increasing in the period prior to the initial lockdown. The main reasons cited for exclusion were physical assault against a pupil, verbal/threatening behaviour against an adult, persistent and disruptive behaviour and 'other'. Council services work in partnership with individuals, schools and families to offer support and intervention to prevent exclusion. The increasing complexity of need and wider contributing factors such as children at risk of exploitation, substance misuse issues and anti-social behaviour continues to make this increasingly difficult. Levels of exclusion in 2021/22 increased with permanent exclusions and occasions of fixed term exclusion over five days in secondary being recorded at a significantly higher level.</p>
1.13	<p>The primary reasons for exclusion recorded during the period 21/22 remained within the categories stated earlier within this report. However, one noticeable increase recorded was in relation to substance related issues mainly associated with cannabis usage. A partnership approach has been developed in such cases to provide support with agencies such as the Drug and Alcohol service 'Sorted' being key to these interventions. North Wales Police are consulted or engaged as appropriate but this trend was recognised as a matter that required a revised strategic approach to meet this increasing trend with the locality during 21/22. The promotion of</p>

	<p>trauma informed practices remains a priority for the Education & Youth Portfolio to support a greater understanding of the presenting behaviours of some learners and the potential consequences of exclusion.</p>
1.14	<p>There has been an agreement this year to engage with Headteachers to explore the challenges that schools and experiencing with a view to reviewing and developing practices to reduce the levels of exclusion particularly within the secondary sector. Whilst the challenges remain, there is a willingness to engage with officers in some instances to secure an alternative outcome for the learner as outlined in the case study below.</p> <p>Case Study: A Year 9 learner (male) was permanently excluded for persistent and extreme aggression/defiance towards staff. A multi-agency meeting was held to discuss the exclusion. The parent was very supportive of the school and recognised the challenge placed on them by the learner's behaviour. When asked, the learner identified that he wanted to remain in the school. In response, an Earn Your Way Back plan was agreed and implemented which included an appropriate curriculum offer from the school, short term tuition provided by the Council along with regular monitoring of learner engagement and work output. At the end of the review period, there was evidence of full engagement from the learner and the permanent exclusion was suspended and the learner re-engaged fully in school. The placement has been maintained with the learner being fully entered for GCSEs.</p>
1.15	<p>The improvement of attendance and reduction in the levels of exclusion remain as Council priorities. The Senior Learning Advisor for Engagement (SLA) has undertaken a strategic revision of the Engagement services to implement a number of changes to improve both service consistency and accountability. As stated, an enhanced approach to data analysis was implemented in 21/22 to ensure all actions are evidence based and targeted. A regular internal audit update is also taking place to ensure the LA meets the terms of the Estyn recommendations of 2019. The data suggests that there is limited impact of the actions outlined in the report however, many of these were initiated in the reporting period thus providing limited time for effect. These have become more established into the current academic year and, whilst attendance and exclusion rates remain an area for improvement, there are examples of positive practice against a very challenging backdrop; recent WG data publications also places attendance across Flintshire schools in the upper quartile nationally.</p>
1.16	<p>A further part of the strategy being implemented in the current academic year is the promotion of the concept of 'Belonging' across our schools and services to support and promote engagement. Trauma informed practice is a key stone of our approach and fits in line with WG priorities. Senior officers and managers across the Portfolio have accessed training along with a number of Headteachers and further Flintshire specific training is planned for the Autumn Term. The short-term aim is to identify schools</p>

	where this is already a priority and support them to embed this within their practice, with the view that these can then become centres of effective practice and share/support others alongside officers and schools where this is already an integral part of their approach. It is hoped that by adopting 'Belonging' as an umbrella strategy, this will resonate with both schools and officers alike to bring about important changes for all.
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The increased level of demand for home tuition on medical grounds is placing an increasing financial pressure on the Council. This is currently being funded via a combination of school budgets, grant funding and Council service budgets and has been identified as a potential budget pressure going forward into the next financial year. There are also a small number of learners for whom more bespoke educational packages are required, either due to the lack of capacity within the specialist sector or the lack of suitable provision to meet their complex needs. The Council has a duty to provide education and this also brings with it an increased level of cost which is being subsidised by grant funding which will cease in 2 years' time.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	None undertaken as a result of this report.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	There are a number of risks associated with increased levels of disengagement and pupil exclusion, including safeguarding, pupil wellbeing, pupil outcomes and financial expenditure. The increased use of data across services along with the regular monitoring of the Council/Education & Youth Portfolio Business Plan and the annual reports on attendance and exclusion to the Overview and Scrutiny committee will ensure that progress is checked and action taken to mitigate the identified risks.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 FCC Attendance and Exclusion Data for 18/19 to 21/22
5.02	Appendix 2 Attendance Codes

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>WG All Wales Attendance Toolkit WG Guidance - Exclusion from schools and pupil referral units</p> <p>Contact Officer: John Grant, Senior Learning Adviser - Engagement Telephone: 07785695823 E-mail: john.grant@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>(1) Authorised absence - an absence with permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes instances of absence for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided (e.g. illness, family bereavement or religious observance).</p> <p>(2) Unauthorised absence - an absence without permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences.</p> <p>(3) Persistent absenteeism - absent for at least 20 per cent of the sessions that schools were open to pupils.</p>

Appendix 1

1.1 Attendance in Flintshire Schools

Pupil attendance is measured at local and national level using a number of different factors. The COVID – 19 pandemic has however resulted in the suspension of the regular Welsh Government statistical updates that would provide contextual information with regards to attendance trends across Wales. The information below utilises pre-existing WG statistical publications and is supplemented with data from within FCC for 2021/22.

Table 1 below contains information relating to the attendance of pupils within Flintshire’s mainstream and specialist schools. In the years preceding 2021/22, pupil attendance within the primary sector had remained fairly static. Attendance across secondary schools had seen a dip to below the Welsh average after 2017/18. Illness had been the main reason cited for absence in the years preceding 2021/22 and still accounts for the highest percentage of absence in both sectors.

Schools have generally maintained very low levels of unauthorised absence across Flintshire. There was a rise in authorised absence for the monitoring period in 2021/22. The overall picture for the monitoring period suggests that school attendance has not recovered following the Covid pandemic.

Table 1: Levels of attendance and unauthorised absence in Flintshire mainstream and specialist schools.

	Attendance (%)				Unauthorised Absence (%)			
	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20*	2018/19	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20*	2018/19
FCC Primary Schools	92.4	91.2	93.2	94.6	0.95	0.89	0.85	0.5
FCC Secondary Schools	87.8	88.5	91.6	93.3	3.19	2.56	1.87	1.7

**Figures for 1/09/19 to 20/03/20 when lock down commenced*

Table 2 shows the spread of attendance figures across primary and secondary mainstream schools from 2018/19 onwards. Secondary attendance has suffered the most significant impact from COVID. The data reflects the downward trend of attendance across our schools with a notable reduction in the primary sector of schools with regards to attendance levels above 95% and for the majority of secondary schools having attendance levels below 90%.

Table 2: Spread of attendance figures (Number of schools in each % bracket)

Attendance %	Primary				Secondary			
	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20*	2018-19	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20*	2018-19
<90	10	6	4	1	9	7	0	0
90.0-90.9	6	6	0	0	0	1	0	0
91.0-91.9	7	5	4	1	2	1	1	2
92.0-92.9	10	9	5	4	0	1	3	3
93.0-93.9	12	10	12	9	0	1	3	2
94.0-94.9	16	15	19	21	0	0	3	4
95.0-95.9	3	6	15	20	0	0	1	0
96.0-96.9	0	7	4	7	0	0	0	0
97.0-97.9	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
98.0-98.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
99.0-100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Figures for 1/09/19 to 20/03/20 when lock down commenced*

Table 3 provides a breakdown of the coding applied to authorise absence within Flintshire schools by percentages. The data clearly demonstrates that illness has remained the predominant reason for pupil absence from Flintshire schools up to and including the period reported for 2021/22.

Table 3: Reasons for authorised absence

Reason for Absence	Primary (%)				Secondary (%)			
	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20*	2018-19	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20*	2018-19
C	10.73	39.72	11.8	5.99	20.8	28.43	17.05	15.45
F	0	0	0.03	0	0	0	0.02	0
H	19.61	11.02	15.75	28.53	3.52	1.95	4.81	6.75
I	61.99	42.69	62.02	55.21	52.39	48.07	66.29	65.84
M	4.5	3.77	5.23	6.59	5.89	4.45	7.92	8.68
S	0	0	0	0.01	13.36	13.66	0.01	0.18
E	0.31	0.25	0.41	0.52	3.39	2.68	3.21	2.91
R	0.05	0.09	0.02	0.12	0.04	0.06	0	0.01
T	2.81	2.47	4.73	3.12	0.61	0.7	0.68	0.1

**Figures for 1/09/19 to 20/03/20 when lock down commenced*

Key:	C	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/ description)
	F	Agreed extended family holiday
	H	Agreed family holiday
	I	Illness
	M	Medical or dental appointment
	S	Study leave
	E	Excluded but no alternative provision made
	R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance
	T	Traveller absence

1.2 Exclusion of pupils from Flintshire schools

Welsh Government normally report annually on the national levels of fixed term and permanent exclusion. This is usually completed a year in arrears with a publication date in the month of October. As previously stated, WG data collection and publications have been suspended and internal data has been used to inform the report. On this occasion therefore, the data provided includes the academic year 2021/22.

The possible reasons for exclusion are recorded as follows:

- Physical assault against a pupil
- Physical assault against an adult
- Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against a pupil
- Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult
- Bullying
- Racist abuse
- Sexual misconduct
- Drug and alcohol related
- Damage
- Theft
- Persistent disruptive behaviour
- Other

The level of exclusion across Flintshire schools continues to rise. Schools are responding positively to the investment in Nurture and Trauma informed approaches and practices. A range of training opportunities have been offered to upskill staff to deliver targeted interventions and also raise awareness and understanding around the reasons for challenging behaviours and also the impact of exclusion. Despite this, the data indicates that there are still a number of learners who are struggling to re-engage and respond to the requirements across our schools.

Table 4: Number of Permanent Exclusions from Flintshire Schools

No of permanent Exclusions				
	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Primary	0	0	1	3
Secondary	27	10	19	24

Table 5 shows the levels of fixed-term exclusion across primary and secondary schools. The figure within the brackets indicates the number of pupils who received one or more exclusion.

Table 5: Fixed-Term Exclusions

Fixed Term Exclusions				
	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
	Number of incidents (Number of Pupils)	Number of incidents (Number of Pupils)	Number of incidents (Number of Pupils)	Number of incidents (Number of Pupils)
Primary 5 Days or Less	158 (18)	99 (55)	144 (70)	251 (102)
Primary Over 5 days	7 (7)	13 (12)	1 (1)	12 (10)
Secondary 5 Days or Less	1446 (716)	902 (490)	879 (405)	1188 (533)
Secondary Over 5 days	66 (53)	22 (20)	19 (18)	22 (19)
Rate of exclusion per 1000 pupils (Primary & Secondary Combined)	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
5 days or Less	73.4	54.5	43.4	61.2
Over 5 days	6	3.2	0.8	1.4

Reasons for exclusion.

The primary reasons for exclusion are documented in Table 6. As can be seen, the main reasons for exclusion remain Physical assault against a pupil, Verbal/threatening behaviour against an adult, Persistent disruptive behaviour and Other. The data suggests there is an increasing level of verbal/threatening behaviour against adults with a higher percentage of exclusion attributed to this. There is also a notable increase in the percentage of permanent exclusion attributed to substance misuse within the secondary sector.

Table 6: Reasons for exclusion (%)

Reason	2021/22							2020/21							2019/20							2018/19						
	Fixed ≤ 5 days		Fixed > 5 days		Permanent		T	Fixed ≤ 5 days		Fixed > 5 days		Permanent		T	Fixed ≤ 5 days		Fixed > 5 days		Permanent		T	Fixed ≤ 5 days		Fixed > 5 days		Permanent		T
	P	S	P	S	P	S		P	S	P	S	P	S		P	S	P	S	P	S		P	S	P	S	P	S	
Physical Assault against a Pupil	23	21	0	32	0	24	22	23	22	38	36	0	50	23	21	14	0	16	0	21	15	16	21	8	14	0	17	20
Physical Assault against an Adult	26	1	57	7	0	4	4	13	1	23	0	0	0	2	19	2	0	5	0	5	4	14	2	8	0	33	0	4
Verbal Abuse/Threatening Behaviour against a Pupil	3	5	0	5	0	8	5	3	6	8	9	0	0	6	6	4	0	5	0	0	5	4	4	0	0	0	4	4
Verbal Abuse/Threatening Behaviour against an Adult	15	24	0	16	0	4	23	16	19	0	5	0	20	18	16	19	0	21	0	5	18	14	20	8	18	67	4	19
Bullying	1	1	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	5	0	0	1
Racist Abuse	1	2	0	1	0	0	2	1	1	8	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Sexual Misconduct	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Drug & Alcohol Related	0	2	0	12	0	28	3	0	1	0	5	0	10	1	0	1	0	5	0	26	1	0	1	0	5	0	33	2
Damage	3	3	0	1	0	0	2	3	4	0	5	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	2
Theft	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Persistent Disruptive Behaviour	24	31	29	14	0	24	29	38	25	8	27	0	0	26	34	32	0	26	100	5	32	44	17	33	14	0	13	21
Other	3	10	14	8	0	8	9	3	20	15	14	0	10	18	1	23	100	21	0	37	20	4	29	42	45	0	29	25

Key: Fixed ≤5 days – Fixed term exclusion, 5 days or less
 Fixed >5 days – Fixed term Exclusion, over 5 days
 Perm – Permanent exclusion
 P – Primary
 S – Secondary
 T – Total of primary and secondary

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Appendix 2

Welsh Government Attendance Codes (excluding Temp Covid coding)

Code	Meaning	Statistical category
Λ	Present at registration	present
L	Late but arrived before the register closed	present
B	Educated off-site (not dual registration)	approved educational activity
D	Dual registered (ie present at another school or at a PRU)	approved educational activity
P	Approved sporting activity	approved educational activity
V	Educational visit or trip	approved educational activity
J	Interview	approved educational activity
W	Work experience (not work based training)	approved educational activity
C	Other authorised circumstances	authorised absence
F	Agreed extended family holiday	authorised absence
H	Agreed family holiday	authorised absence
I	Illness	authorised absence
M	Medical or dental appointment	authorised absence
S	Study leave	authorised absence
E	Excluded but no alternative provision made	authorised absence
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	authorised absence
N	No reason for the absence provided yet	unauthorised absence
O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	unauthorised absence
G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	unauthorised absence
U	Late and arrived after the register closed	unauthorised absence
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	unauthorised absence
Y	Partial and forced closure	not required to attend
Z	Pupil not on roll yet	not required to attend
#	School closed to all pupils	not required to attend

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EDUCATION, YOUTH AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 11 th May 2023
Report Subject	Supporting Service Children in Education
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been developed to provide an update report of how the Education and Youth Portfolio has continued to support schools who have pupils who are identified as Service children, since the last report presented in December 2021.

It outlines how funding for councils has been allocated during the academic year 2022-2023. The amount of funding allocated to each local authority is based on the number of service children identified.

Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru works with the 22 local authorities and with the independent school sector in Wales on data collection activity. This provides an annual snapshot of the number and location of Service children in Wales.

In March 2021, data collection identified a total of 2333 pupils across Wales as Service children. In March 2023, data collection identified a total of 2127 pupils across Wales. Flintshire had 69 pupils known to be Service children in March 2021 and that figure increased to 82 pupils in March 2023.

The amount allocated to the Council for 2022/2023 was £4500. We are currently awaiting confirmation of any grant funding for 2023 to 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members confirm they have received an appropriate level of assurance regarding the work of the Education & Youth Portfolio in supporting schools who have Service children.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE WORK OF SUPPORTING SERVICE CHILDREN IN EDUCATION
1.01	<p>Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru is a Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) programme, initially funded by the Ministry of Defence's Education Support Fund and funded by Welsh Government from 2019.</p> <p>Since the programme began in 2014, SSCE Cymru has worked with schools, children and young people, local authorities, Welsh Government, education professionals, Armed Forces families and support organisations to gather their views and experiences, build networks across Wales and raise awareness and understanding of the experiences of children of Armed Forces personnel.</p> <p>SSCE Cymru has developed guidance and digital resources for schools and families, hosted conferences and stakeholder days and commissioned research to better understand the needs of Service children in education.</p>
1.02	<p>The Welsh Government Definition (1) of a Service child is:</p> <p>1 A 'Service child' has parent(s) – or person(s) with exercising parental responsibility – who is/are Service personnel serving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in Her Majesty's Regular Armed Forces • in full commitment as part of the full-time Reserve service • is a veteran who has been in Service within the last two years • one of their parents died whilst serving in the Armed Forces and the pupil receives a pension under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme or the War Pensions Scheme. <p>SSCE Cymru also encourages schools and education settings to consider identifying and supporting Service children that fall outside of this definition by continuing to access and utilise the many resources available on the SSCE Cymru website and through the SSCE Cymru Network.</p> <p>The Service Children's Progression (SCIP) Alliance Hub Cymru is a partnership of organisations focused on improving outcomes for children from military families. SCIP Alliance Hub Cymru also uses an additional definition (2) as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person whose parent, or carer, serves in the regular armed forces, or as a reservist, or has done at any point during the first 25 years of that person's life - and does not meet the criteria of definition (1).
1.03	<p>Flintshire currently has 82 pupils known to be service children, of which 56 were reported as definition (1) and 26 were reported as definition (2).</p>
1.04	<p>Local authorities have again been required to develop and submit funding plans to SSCE Cymru for approval. The fund is administered and managed for the Welsh Government by the Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru Programme.</p>

	<p>This work has been supported by Regional School Liaison Officers (RSLO) for Service children. There are 4 RSLOs across Wales as part of a two-year funded project.</p> <p>The post of the RSLO for North Wales is hosted by Anglesey Council but supports all six North Wales local authorities. The role of the RSLO is to work collaboratively with other organisations and offer support to schools with Service children. They raise awareness of the experiences of Service children and look to embed long-lasting solutions across the education sector. The North Wales post was vacant for several months with support being provided by another regional RSLO in the interim. The post was successfully recruited to in September 2022 and there has been very positive engagement with local authority officers and schools. The North Wales RSLO is also a member of the Council's Armed Forces Forum.</p> <p>The Primary Learning Adviser has worked closely with the RSLO to ensure professional development opportunities focused on understanding the needs of Service children and their experiences are made available to appropriate staff. To date, 28 local authority staff from different teams have accessed professional development.</p> <p>SSCE Cymru's e-learning continuing professional development (CPD) package is being launched in September 2023 which will be available to local authority and school staff.</p>
1.05	<p>The focus for this academic year's local authority plan for Flintshire schools has been to support schools to work together and provide opportunities for Service children to meet Service children from other schools.</p> <p>Two activity days were held at Ty Calon in Deeside in March 2023 for primary aged pupils from across twelve primary schools. Almost 300 learners took part over the two days, including 45 service children. Pupils benefited from team fitness challenges that incorporated problem solving tasks, health and wellbeing advice, team building and communication challenges that look to build resilience and confidence. Feedback from pupils and staff was very positive. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All pupils said they wanted to do similar activities again • Nearly all pupils said they had fun. <p>A third day is due to be held in the summer term for secondary aged pupils and planning for this is currently underway.</p>
1.06	<p>April is the Month of the Military Child. In Flintshire schools, we were able to organise a drop- in session for teachers and start a pen pal project between some of the pupils that attended the activity days.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Flintshire has received total grant funding over three years of £13,000. This funding has been delegated to schools for school based professional development, resources, and engagement activities.</p> <p>The Senior Manager for School Improvement and the Primary Learning Adviser attend national and local meetings and develop and co-ordinate the work programme of the annual plan, supported by the Regional School Liaison Officer (RSLO) which is a grant funded post.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>The work of the Education and Youth Portfolio in supporting schools with Service children is reported to the Flintshire County Council Armed Forces Forum Strategic Group. The Forum works to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant in Flintshire and promote commitment to the Covenant through community benefits. It seeks to improve access to services to the serving personnel, veterans, and their families. The Forum reports to Cabinet and Public Service Board on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>As part of the Council's overall commitment to the Armed Forces community, work includes achievement of the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, Gold Award for ensuring the Armed Forces Community are not unfairly disadvantaged in the workplace.</p> <p>The Armed Forces community will be considered in any future education policy decisions to ensure they are not being disadvantaged.</p>
3.02	<p>SSCE Cymru collates evaluations from course participation accessed through the grant funding. This feeds into national planning for ongoing support and access to grant funding.</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	<p>In 2015, SSCE Cymru commissioned the report "<i>Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru: A Study of Data and Support Provision in Wales (2015)</i>". Conducted by the Data Unit Wales, this report involved interviews with schools from across Wales. It found that there was very little data available, indicating a need for more information and guidance to enable schools to collect data and access support.</p> <p>The Education and Youth portfolio carried out consultation meetings with schools who have Service children on roll – either face to face or via a short survey. All schools were subsequently able to target resources from their allocation of the grant but expressed interest in using the identified funding for 2022-23 to develop collaborative activities.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	There are no appendices to this report.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Fund to support service children in schools across Wales: https://gov.wales/250000-fund-support-service-children-schools-across-wales</p> <p>SSCE Cymru website: https://www.sscecymru.co.uk</p> <p>(SCIP) Alliance Hub Cymru: https://www.scipalliance.org/hubs/hub-cymru</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Vicky Barlow, Senior Manager for School Improvement Telephone: 01352 704054 Cymraeg/ Welsh 01267 224923 E-mail: vicky.barlow@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru; a Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) programme, initially funded by the MOD’s Education Support Fund and funded by Welsh Government from 2019.</p> <p>SSCE Cymru School toolkit; this resource was launched in March 2020. It provides schools, councils, and education professionals with information on the experiences of Service children and helps them to understand the support that is available to assist them with supporting Service children. Each section of the SSCE Cymru School Toolkit provides information on various support organisations and relevant links to resources, along with a list of suggested actions and activities for the school.</p> <p>The Armed Forces Covenant: The Armed Forces Covenant is designed to complement, at a local level, the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the nation, the government, and the Armed Forces. The aim of the Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the service community in their area and promote understanding and awareness among the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community.</p>

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EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 11 th May 2023
Report Subject	Tackling the impact of inequality on educational outcomes
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been developed to provide an overview of the national issue relating to the achievement gap between children who are from more affluent households and those who are from more disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly by the time learners take their GCSE examinations at the end of the statutory period of education.

The report has been developed in response to interest from members on this issue and focuses on some of the national research on the impacts of poverty. Closing the achievement gap is a high priority for national policy makers in Wales and across the UK. The report references aspects of Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy and how this is being delivered in our schools.

The report also outlines how the Council is taking a cross-portfolio approach to tackling poverty and disadvantage by having it as a key theme in its current Council Plan and its revised plan for 2023-2028. It describes how the Education and Youth Portfolio is contributing to those priorities through its operational activity and support for schools. The aim is to assist schools in tackling inequalities in educational outcomes because of poverty and disadvantage by promoting, first and foremost, high quality teaching and assessment in every class in every school to meet the needs of every learner. The other key area of focus is to ensure that schools are using targeted grant funding provided by the Welsh Government to remove barriers to learning and engagement and deliver additional interventions to enhance the knowledge and skills of learners who need extra support to make good progress and achieve their potential, which may be inhibited by the economic circumstances of their families.

It is important to recognise that schools, and the Council as a whole, cannot close the disadvantage gap on their own. The root causes of poverty are varied and complex and it will require a dedicated focus by government across a wide range of policy areas. However, by having poverty in its many forms as a key focus within the Council Plan, members should be reassured that all portfolios, including Education and Youth, are determined to make a positive difference on the lives of families in Flintshire and outcomes for learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members confirm they have received an appropriate level of assurance regarding the work of the Education & Youth Portfolio in supporting schools to tackle the impact of poverty and disadvantage on their learners.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES AS A CONSEQUENCE OF POVERTY AND DISADVANTAGE
1.01	<p>The key indicator of child poverty is the percentage of children living in households where income is below 60% of the median UK household income after housing costs have been deducted. Welsh Government uses a wider set of indicators to measure progress within its Child Poverty Strategy. Some of those related to education are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of children living in low-income households who are reaching health, social and cognitive development milestones when entering formal education • Percentage of learners aged 7 years achieving the expected level of educational outcomes • Percentage of learners achieving the expected level of educational outcomes at the end of statutory education (age 16). • Percentage of young people (16-18 and 19-24) who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) <p>The collection of data sets outlined above were not made in 2020 and 2021 as a result of the pandemic and school closures. Welsh Government notes that the latest reliable poverty statistics for Wales are for the three financial years 2018 to 2020. These show that an estimated 31% of children in Wales were living in income poverty. This equates to approximately 190,000 dependent children under the age of 19.</p>
1.02	<p>In July 2022, new research was published by the Education Policy Institute (EPI) into the impact of educational inequalities across England and Wales. The research focused on GCSE outcomes over the last 10 years as a measure of educational inequality.</p> <p>Whilst making comparisons across Wales and England can be challenging due to different reforms to examination and performance measures across the two nations over time, the report identified that Welsh learners suffer a</p>

	<p>wider disadvantage gap at GCSE than learners in England, but that both nations have made only modest progress in closing this gap. The “disadvantage gap” is used as the main measure for determining progress in reducing inequalities in education.</p> <p>EPI research found that Wales’ disadvantage gap in GCSEs in 2019 stood at 22-23 months of pupil progress, compared to England’s progress gap of 18 months. In 2011, corresponding figures were 24 months in Wales and 20 months in England. For pupils who are persistently disadvantaged, i.e. eligible for free school meals for 80% of their time in school, the gap is 29 months in Wales and 23 months in England. The report’s conclusions are stark – pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are much less likely to reach the top quintile of GCSE scores and are more likely to be in the bottom quintile in both England and Wales, but with less mobility in Wales.</p> <p>The report does not find any evidence that this difference is as a result of policy divergences between the two nations and concludes that “the drivers of a higher disadvantage gap in Wales predate 2010”. It also recognises that the effects of some policy changes are still to be felt, notably the implementation of the new curriculum in Wales and recent changes to assessment. Looking forward, the report points to clear lessons from academic research on the most effective ways to reduce educational inequalities in schools.</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target more funding at schools with higher levels of deprivation • Target more of that funding on pupils who experience persistent disadvantage • Focus on teacher quality and professional development to improve the quality of teaching overall • Develop strategies and funding mechanisms to deploy the highest quality teachers in the most deprived schools • High effectiveness of one-to-one and small group tutoring • Frequent teacher feedback, use of data to guide instruction, high-dosage tutoring, increased instructional time and establishing a culture of high expectations. <p>The report concludes by emphasising the importance of recognising that schools are “unlikely to be able to close the disadvantage gap on their own” and points to the need to have a wider focus on child poverty and the particular importance particularly of early years and children’s services.</p>
1.03	<p>A core aim for the Education Portfolio, in conjunction with its school improvement partner GwE, is to assist schools in tackling inequalities in educational outcomes as a result of poverty and disadvantage by promoting, first and foremost, high quality teaching and assessment in every class in every school to meet the needs of every learner. The mechanism for this to promote strong leadership at all levels within schools, which is focused on improving teaching and learning to improve outcomes for learners, and by providing high quality professional development for all staff working with learners so that their interventions are effective.</p>

	<p>The other key area of focus is to ensure that schools are using targeted grant funding provided by the Welsh Government to remove barriers to learning and engagement and deliver additional interventions to enhance the knowledge and skills of learners who need extra support to make good progress and achieve their potential, which may be inhibited by the economic circumstances of their families.</p> <p>Based on effective and regular evaluation of their performance in improving outcomes for learners, all schools will have priorities to continuously improve the quality of their provision, which in turn, should have a positive impact on mitigating the impacts of poverty and disadvantage on pupil achievement.</p>
1.04	<p>Objective 3 of the Welsh Government’s Child Poverty strategy focuses on reducing the inequalities which exist in health, education and economic outcomes for children and families. The strategy also includes a focus on the early years, recognising that investment in the early years of a child’s life not only can make an important impact on better health and developmental outcomes, but also positively influence outcomes later in life.</p> <p>Welsh Government commissioned the Wales Centre for Public Policy to undertake a review of what works in tackling poverty. Their report, <i>Poverty and social exclusion: A Way forward</i>, published in September 2022, identified 4 key areas of focus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reducing costs and maximising income for families 2. Developing pathways out of poverty by enabling wider socio-economic participation 3. Creating an enabling environment 4. Addressing the mental load and mental health affecting people living in poverty and social exclusion
1.05	<p>Flintshire County Council recognises the significant impact that poverty, in its many forms, has on its children, young people, families and communities. This provides the rationale for the major focus on poverty through the strategic improvement priorities in the current Council Plan and in the revised plan for 2023-2028.</p> <p>The Council Plan sets out the Council’s priorities under six themes: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Affordable and Accessible Housing • Green Society and Environment • Economy • Personal and Community Well-being • Education and Skills <p>The Well-being Objective for Poverty is defined as ‘Protecting people from poverty by supporting them to meet their basic needs’. The areas contributing to achieving this are contained within the following five priorities: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income Poverty • Child Poverty • Food Poverty

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuel Poverty • Digital Poverty <p>The Council Plan outlines the core activities being taken currently, and in the future, to deliver on these themes. A number of activities sit within the Education and Skills section of the plan. During the current reporting year, achievement against this priority are being measured through targets related to reducing the cost burden for families when their children are in school. Those achievement measures include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Making the processes for claiming free school meals as simple and straightforward as possible to increase the percentage of take-up against entitlement b) Encouraging take-up of the free school breakfast for year seven pupils eligible for free school meals c) Maximising take-up of the school uniform grant d) Developing a network of school uniform exchanges across the county supported by enhanced web and social media promotion <p>Progress against these priorities for 2022-23 are reported through the quarterly performance reports to Scrutiny and Cabinet with the annual summary report for 2022-23 due to be published in June. Officers and members are currently finalising the priorities and achievement measures for the next version of the Council Plan covering the period 2023-2028.</p>
1.06	<p>The most recent inspection by Estyn (2019) of the Council's education services was favourable and is available on the Estyn website. It notes that overall, pupils in Flintshire make sound progress during their time in statutory education.</p> <p>Estyn noted that pupils in Flintshire who are eligible for free school meals generally perform broadly in line with the same group of pupils across Wales. Estyn noted that the performance of other vulnerable groups of pupils had improved over the previous three years. In particular, the percentage of children who are 'looked after' who gain a recognised qualification had increased.</p> <p>However, when looking at attendance in 2019, Estyn noted that attendance of pupils in both primary and secondary schools did not compare well with levels in similar local authorities and the attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals was weaker in Flintshire schools than that of similar pupils across Wales. One of the recommendations, therefore, from that inspection was to increase attendance in both primary and secondary schools. Regular reports regarding pupil attendance are brought to this committee for members to consider and a detailed overview is included in the Annual Self-Evaluation report of the Education Portfolio, which is reviewed by this committee, the Cabinet and by Estyn.</p>
1.07	<p>It has been recognised that childrens' learning was significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Schools closed for long periods of time and children had to adapt to new ways of learning. Evidence is increasingly suggesting that learning and development has been set back by the pandemic and even more acutely for children from lower income households.</p>

	<p>In March of this year, the Minister for Education and Welsh Language set out a range of measures to tackle the impact of poverty on educational attainment. These involve investment in creating Community Focussed schools, teacher education programmes and the strengthening of teaching support staff through high quality professional learning programmes. The Minister’s statement reinforced the fact that research and inspection evidence “reveals that the single most important influence on learner success within the education system is the quality of learning and teaching”.</p>
1.08	<p>The Pupil Development Grant provided by Welsh Government continues to provide schools and settings with additional financial support in their efforts to tackle barriers created by poverty and disadvantage. Funding across Wales through this grant for 2022-2023 was over £130 million pounds.</p> <p>The number of school aged pupils entitled to Free School Meals (e-FSM) in Flintshire increased from 13.47% in 2019 (Wales 2019 average 15.96%) to 20.41% in 2022. This figure is now much closer to the current Welsh average of 20.52%.</p> <p>Individual schools are required to demonstrate how they spend their allocated Pupil Development Grant funding each year. The amount of funding for each school is calculated by Welsh Government and there is national and regional guidance for schools on the implementation of this grant. Each school is required to publish their Pupil Development Grant funds and priorities on a yearly basis. This can be done via the school’s website / school prospectus, or it can be sent to GwE and published on the regional website.</p> <p>The Supporting Improvement Adviser for each school quality assures the use of the grant and its impact on vulnerable learners. This information has been used to identify successful practice in schools locally and across the region and feeds into the business planning cycle of the region to ensure that interventions are put in place to address any identified areas of improvement.</p> <p>The Early Years element of the Pupil Development Grant (EYPDG) is administered by the Council and has been used by the Early Entitlement Team for the professional development of the non-maintained workforce. This has included using the grant to provide each non-maintained Early Entitlement (EE) setting with funding to be used specifically to support the engagement, well-being and performance of disadvantaged learners. Non-maintained EE setting staff are supported to consider the needs of disadvantaged learners in their own settings and to identify appropriate resources to develop the specific skills of those individual children.</p> <p>The School Essential Grant (previously the Pupil Access Grant) provides assistance through a grant for eligible families to help with the cost of school uniform, sports kit, kit for enrichment activities and other equipment. £225 is available for each eligible learner in each school year group, except for those entering Year 7 where the grant is increased to £300. In response to the cost-of-living crisis, an additional one-off payment in 2022-2023 of £100 was announced for eligible children.</p>

1.09	<p>Since the cycle of Estyn inspections in schools resumed last September, after the pause due to the pandemic, 10 Flintshire schools have been inspected and their reports published. In each of those reports, Estyn recognises the positive use of the Pupil Development Grant funding.</p> <p>For example, in one school, Estyn notes that the</p> <p><i>“School monitors and allocates the pupil development grant and other additional funding carefully, ensuring a range of valuable support programmes to help the emotional and social development of vulnerable pupils”</i></p> <p>and in another, that;</p> <p><i>“Leaders use the pupil development grant to put in place a range of measures to address the impact of poverty such as the use of additional adults to support learning through intervention groups and subsidising outdoor adventure visits.”</i></p>
1.10	<p>In early March 2020, the then Children’s Commissioner for Wales was the keynote speaker at the Flintshire Headteacher Conference where poverty and its impact on children in school was the main theme.</p> <p>During that conference, a commitment was made by the Council to promote resources provided by the Commissioner’s office to address issues of poverty with our schools. All schools signed a pledge at the conference to adopt this approach.</p> <p>The resource produced by the Commissioner, “Check with Ceri”, is an assessment tool for schools to consider the financial impact additional activities routinely undertaken in schools can have on families.</p> <p>Ceri is a fictional character who represents a child or young person whose family do not have enough money to afford the things they need, and who may miss out on their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) because of this. The resource encourages children, young people and adults at a school to take part in the “Check with Ceri” activity, which is designed to help them to think about what costs might be difficult for Ceri and their family to afford both over the course of the school day, and over the school year. The resource then encourages them to work together to come up with ideas for what more the school might be able to do to help. The resource is suitable for use in lessons with pupils and for use by the School Council.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the week after the conference the country went into lockdown as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic and statutory education was disrupted. It is likely that the use of this resource has not been well embedded in Flintshire schools because school leaders and teachers had to focus on managing the pandemic and delivering learning in different ways. Relaunching the ‘Ask Ceri’ resource, now that schools have settled back into normal operations is a priority through the revised Council Plan.</p>

1.11	<p>In Estyn’s Annual Report for 2021-2022 the Chief Inspector highlighted that that some providers were particularly effective at tackling the impact of poverty and disadvantage on their learners. The report notes</p> <p><i>“Even though these providers worked to alleviate the specific impact of poverty through provision such as free or affordable school uniform for all, food banks, affordable proms and so on, the main thrust of their work was on delivering high quality provision for all their learners, regardless of their backgrounds and on removing barriers to learning so that all learners had equitable experiences and chances”</i></p> <p>One of the case studies used by Estyn to exemplify this positive work was from the inspection of the Flintshire and Wrexham Adult Community Learning Partnership. The Annual Report noted that:</p> <p><i>“The providers offered comprehensive well-being provision that was tailored to the needs of individual learners and helped to remove barriers to learning. For example, the Wrexham and Flintshire adult learning in the community partnership provides a good balance and useful range of courses for adults who want to become re-engaged with education, to improve their job prospects, upgrade their English language skills (English for speakers of other languages – ESOL), develop their literacy, numeracy or digital skills or improve their health and well-being. Courses are provided in a variety of appropriate locations, including centres in community venues in rural and urban areas across the two local authority areas. The partnership uses non-accredited short courses well to attract hard-to-reach learners who are less confident about entering or returning to education and training. There is also a small but growing family learning provision, where parents and their children play and learn together, for example through learning the heritage skills of wool felting at the children’s schools.”</i></p> <p>Improving educational outcomes for adults, many of whom will be parents, is an effective way to increase their economic activity which then has a positive impact on their children, helping to break the cycle of poverty and underachievement.</p>
1.12	<p>Over the last two years, £11.5 million has been allocated for Adult Community Learning. Welsh Government are currently working with partners on the delivery of five new ‘Citizens Curriculum’ pilots that will look to tackle barriers that prevent wider adult learner participation. Flintshire’s Adult Community Learning (ACL) partnership with Wrexham (North East Wales ACL) was recently successful in bidding to deliver the North Wales pilot of this work.</p>
1.13	<p>As part of its commitment to addressing poverty, Welsh Government funds free period products in schools, colleges and communities across Wales. There is clear evidence that the unavailability of appropriate products to help learners manage menstruation because of poverty has an adverse impact on their attendance and subsequently their educational achievement. Through the Period Dignity Grant Flintshire, received an allocation of £143,786.00 for 2022-23.</p> <p>The Healthy Schools Team within the Education Portfolio commissioned an external company to deliver period product ‘home packs’ direct to homes of</p>

	<p>girls and young women aged 8-18 years that attend a Flintshire school. This also includes pupils who are in elective home education. This funding enables all female pupils in Flintshire schools to have access to a selection of sanitary products in school or delivered directly and discreetly to their homes and supports their engagement in learning.</p> <p>The grant also enables period products to be distributed through each of the nine foodbanks in Flintshire. Youth groups / projects are also provided with a selection of sanitary products. Through the Council's resettlement coordinator, the grant was also able to support the refugees from Ukraine, Afghanistan and Syria now based in Flintshire.</p>
1.14	<p>Children will not concentrate and learn if they are hungry. Persistent hunger has a negative impact on brain development which has long term consequences for educational achievement.</p> <p>As part of the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru, the Welsh Government is working closely with local authorities to meet the commitment for every primary school pupil to receive a free school meal by 2024. £225m has been committed to secure delivery of this over the next three years and the universal free school meals roll-out commenced in September 2022. Flintshire has met the Welsh Government's timetable for a phased introduction to all primary school pupils by 2024 with Reception pupils in September 2022 and Years 1 and 2 from April 2023. Work is continuing plans to ensure the continued roll out for years 3 to 6 is completed by the summer of 2024.</p> <p>Provision of free primary breakfast clubs and the Year 7 free breakfast scheme also provide opportunities for schools to mitigate against child poverty.</p>
1.15	<p>It is hoped that this report provides members with useful information about the impact of poverty on educational achievement, sets that within the wider context of the local and national approaches to addressing poverty and the work of the Education Portfolio to help schools support their disadvantaged learners more effectively.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>The WG Pupil Development Grant is currently distributed to schools via the regional consortia and is based on school's FSM levels. Support for schools ensure effective use of the PDG comes through the interaction between schools and their individual Supporting Improvement Provider, through professional learning events and via the national learning platform Hwb. There are no financial implications arising from this report.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>There are no specific risks arising from this report and subsequent actions.</p>

	<p>The Council undertook a review of its Well-being Objectives during the development of the Council Plan. This includes a theme of poverty which is woven through individual portfolios to ensure a cross-council approach.</p> <p>The Council's Education Portfolio has a detailed risk assessment which outlines key risks related to the delivery of education services and method statements which describe how these risks are managed. These are regularly reported to the Education, Youth and Culture Overview Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>GwE maintains its own risk register to identify and manage risks on a local, regional and national level which is regularly updated and reported upon to the Management Board and the Joint Committee.</p>
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4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	<p>Regular discussions are held between Education Officers and the Flintshire Headteacher Federations to ensure that tackling the impact of poverty remains a key focus for the Portfolio. This information is used to inform the Portfolio's ongoing cycle of self-evaluation and improvement.</p> <p>Information is also provided to the GwE Management Board which comprises of the Senior Management Team of GwE and the six Chief Education Officers of the North Wales authorities.</p> <p>GwE use a range of models and surveys to consider impact, based on national and international research, as well as working collaboratively with strategic Higher Education Institutes (HEI).</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	There are no appendices to this report.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Wales' Child Poverty Strategy; Progress Report 2022 https://www.gov.wales/child-poverty-strategy-2022-progress-report-html</p> <p>Inequalities in GCSE results across England and Wales September 2022 https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/inequalities-in-gcse-results-across-england-and-wales/</p> <p>Estyn Annual Report 2021 -2022 https://annual-report.estyn.gov.wales/annual_report/tackling-the-impact-of-poverty-and-disadvantage/</p> <p>Flintshire Inspection report 2019 https://www.estyn.gov.wales/provider/6649999</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Vicky Barlow, Senior Manager for School Improvement Telephone: 01352 704054 Cymraeg/ Welsh 01267 224923 E-mail: vicky.barlow@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Disadvantaged – Pupils are classed as disadvantage if they were eligible for free school meals in the past six years</p> <p>Persistently disadvantaged- Pupils considered persistently disadvantaged if they were eligible for free school meals for 80 per cent of their time in education.</p> <p>Pupil Development Grant (PDG)and Early Years Pupil Development Grant (EYPDG) – grant funding for schools and local authorities to improve outcomes for learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM), eligible learners in Early Years settings where Foundation Phase is delivered and children who are looked after by the local authority.</p> <p>School Essential Grant - help with uniform and school equipment costs for children whose families are on lower incomes and qualify for certain benefits. See www.gov.wales for further information.</p> <p>Council Plan: the document which sets out the annual priorities of the Council. It is a requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 for organisations to ‘set out any actions to increase the extent to which the council is meeting the performance requirements.’ Plans for organisations should be robust; be clear on where it wants to go; and how it will get there.</p>

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