

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Estyn's report into Local Government Education Services in Monmouthshire County Council</b>
<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> May 2020</b>
<b>DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>All of County</b>

## 1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members on the outcomes of the recently published Estyn inspection report and the actions planned to address its recommendations.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- i) Receive the report, published on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020.
  - ii) Note the areas of strength and recommendations contained within the report
  - iii) Agree the proposed timelines and approaches to address the report's recommendations

## 3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 Estyn is Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. They are responsible for the inspection of all schools, colleges and local authorities in Wales on a cyclical basis. Monmouthshire was last inspected in November 2012 (published February 2013). Estyn conducted in the most recent inspection the week commencing the 10<sup>th</sup> February, concluding on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2020. The report was published on the 21<sup>st</sup> April.
- 3.2 The new inspection framework (Local Government Education Services) has some noticeable differences to its predecessors. The inspection is broken down into three inspection areas (IA). IA1 is concerned with the standards achieved in schools, the standards of specific groups of learners and wellbeing and attitudes to learning (which includes attendance and exclusions). IA2 is a series of locally themed questions that are determined by Estyn. These are set drawing on intelligence about the situation in a local authority and what the key risks facing the authority. This evidence is drawn from termly Local Authority Link Inspector (LALI) visits, national data and findings from Estyn thematic reviews. Monmouthshire's four 'local' questions were:
- i) How effectively does the local authority work with the regional school improvement service in order to support, challenge, monitor and intervene in schools?

- ii) How well does Monmouthshire identify and support children and young people with SEN to help them achieve better outcomes?
- iii) How successful is the local authority at ensuring that pupils' eligible for free school meals make good progress in their learning?
- iv) How well does the youth service support the needs of young people, particularly those who are vulnerable?

The final area, IA3, is concerned with the quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers, self-evaluation and improvement planning, professional learning, safeguarding arrangements and the use of resources (this final part of the review is undertaken by the Wales Audit Office).

- 3.3 In this round of Estyn inspections there are no summative judgements against each of the inspection areas there is only one key judgement and that is whether the authority is a cause of significant concern.
- 3.4 The inspection has three elements, the first part is a citizens' survey followed by the second, which is a preliminary visit where the lead and deputy lead inspector undertake a range of stakeholder interviews. In Monmouthshire, this included focus groups of Headteachers, Governors, Special Educational Needs (SEN) coordinators, other partners (The Police, Aneurin Bevan, housing associations and other PSB partners) and a group of young people. The final part of the inspection involves the full inspection team of ten inspectors (including two peer inspectors from other Welsh local authorities and two members of the Wales Audit Office). This week involves a series of meetings with politicians, senior officers and partners, such as the Education Achievement Service.
- 3.5 The inspection in Monmouthshire concluded that the authority's education service does not give cause for significant concern and there are a number of positives within the report and the summary of the report (p.2 of appendix 1) draws these out. In particular, it recognises the vision and focus of leaders in ensuring the 'best possible start in life' alongside high expectations for all learners. It also identifies the commitment to partnership that has resulted in a good track record of improvement. Furthermore, it recognises the distance travelled since 2012 particularly regarding safeguarding where it notes the authority's exemplar safeguarding procedures. Estyn has asked the authority produce a case study in this area, for publication, setting out its safeguarding processes and the impact these have had.
- 3.6 There are, of course, areas for development and the report clearly identifies these. The report identifies the lack of 'excellent' judgements for standards, the performance of children eligible for free school meals and a lack of clarity in how we plan to strengthen further our services for learners with special educational needs. The report identifies that at times the self-evaluation undertaken needs to be diagnostic and more detailed to help inform improvements.
- 3.7 These areas for development led Estyn to include four recommendations for the authority:
  - R1 Improve outcomes for pupils eligible for free school meals
  - R2 Further strengthen the focus on increasing the number of pupils achieving excellent standards
  - R3 Articulate a clear strategy for SEN provision

R4 Strengthen the use of information gathered through self-evaluation to better inform improvement planning

3.8 These recommendations are very clear and align very well to the authority's own self-evaluation. They will be the key focus of activity through the next period and will be captured and reflected in the service improvement plans and the Chief Officer's report. There is much work ongoing in these areas but we recognise that this needs to be sharper and we need to better articulate the impact we expect changes to have. Colleagues in the directorate and in the EAS are developing further detail required by these plans.

**4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):**

4.1 As specific plans are developed these will be included in future reports to Cabinet and Council.

**5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

5.1 This is not applicable in this report.

**6. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

6.1 This is not applicable at this stage.

**7. REASONS:**

7.1 The formal acceptance of this report by Cabinet is a key step in the organisational acceptance of its findings and the recommendations. Officers have started to develop detailed responses to the four recommendations and these will be subject to further agreement (where necessary) by cabinet and scrutiny by the Children and Young people Select Committee. The responses to the recommendations will be incorporated into existing planning and monitoring processes and cycles.

**8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

8.1 There are no resource implications at this time and changes are expected to remain within existing budgets. If specific changes and developments require additional funding in the future these will be brought through the normal decision making channels.

**9. CONSULTEES:**

9.1 Cabinet Member: Cllr. Richard John  
Children and Young People directorate management team

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

10.1 The Estyn Report can be found: [here](#) and a copy is attached as appendix 1.

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