

**Strategic Director,
Children, Learning,
Skills and Economy**
Annual Report 2024/25

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Strategic Context

Purpose of the Report

This report offers members a strategic overview of the status and performance of Monmouthshire's education system. It presents my, hopefully, informed perspective on our system's key strengths, areas for development, emerging risks, and opportunities for development.

There are features in the report that Members will recognise and that I hope provide reassurance as to the position and performance of Monmouthshire's services. These include a summary of the performance of our learners at the end of their statutory schooling, the outcomes of last year's Estyn inspections, and detailed analysis of the attendance data for the last year.

This report allows me to present my perspective and view on the position of the Welsh education system to members more broadly and in the early parts of this report I will seek to do this.

Over the course of last year, the Children and Young People's Directorate has developed and following the last report to Council by the Chief Executive (June 2025) is now the Children, Learning, Skills and Economy Directorate. This new directorate offers an exciting opportunity to develop strategic services that will expand and promote opportunities for our children and young people while simultaneously developing our understanding of the economy in Monmouthshire and what it needs to thrive. Given the timeframes for the re-organisation of the Directorate Members will note that this report predominately talks to the activities of the previous directorate. The new Directorate's work will be more fully evaluated in next year's report.

While the primary reporting period of this report is the administrative year 2024/25, I have also included significant developments in the last term of the academic year.

Introduction and Reflections from the Chief Officer

This time of year, naturally, presents an opportunity to pause, take a breath and consider where we are, what has been achieved and what remains to be done. Our learners and their schools and settings are reaching the end of another year. For some it will be the end of their first year in school, for others it will be their last year and final days of school.

I am approaching the end of my ninth year as the senior officer responsible for education in Monmouthshire. In some ways, compared to the year 2016/17 it is unrecognisable, yet in other ways familiar patterns and issues remain.

Our core purpose remains the same; to advocate for our children and to create a system which gives them the very best start in life. In those nine years, what is important has changed significantly because of the global pandemic. How we create, nurture and support those systems has evolved, and the demands we make of that system have increased.

2024/25 has been a year of further reform. In the last two years the Middle Tier Review has prompted scrutiny of the roles and responsibilities of local authorities, regional consortia, and national bodies, raising questions about coherence, accountability, and the sustainability of support structures. In the last year, the structures that we have developed and invested in supporting our schools have been challenged. I am, however, proud of the work that we have undertaken with partners in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Newport City Council and Torfaen County Borough Council to secure the continuation of an overarching school improvement partnership that has a strong record in creating a highly effective school improvement system. This regional partnership is strengthened by the emergence of a purposeful and localised school improvement ambition within Monmouthshire. The new Cabinet Secretary for Education has provided schools and local authorities with a clear set of priorities; literacy, numeracy and supporting the wellbeing of our learners. These align strongly with the priorities of our own strategic plans.

The schools in Monmouthshire have demonstrated a positive approach to greater collaboration. As this academic year closes, we have started to see the emergence of systemic structural collaboration across several areas. The Caldicot cluster of schools has undertaken a year-long developmental project looking at how they can become anti-racist, three of the four primary clusters have commenced a peer review project led by the EAS and the four secondary schools have committed themselves to a formalized partnership to address shared challenges. These locally initiated collaborations provide the local dimension to the school improvement agendas that are being developed at a national and regional level.

As we approach the end of the academic year, it is worth remembering that the set of GCSEs discussed in this report are the first set of results that have not been statistically supported in the post-pandemic period. There is now a theoretical ability to compare learners' outcomes with the class of 2019. In 2024, the Welsh Government reintroduced the All-Wales Core Data Sets (AWCDS), enabling more consistent school-level comparisons.

Monmouthshire's secondary schools are situated in less disadvantaged family groups, reflecting (relatively) favourable socio-economic conditions. In September 2025, our secondary schools will start teaching the new Welsh GCSEs – change in education is relentless.

Monmouthshire has rightly earned a reputation in education for being a forward-thinking service when providing support for learners who have additional learning needs or who face barriers to learning. Our schools are now working with children with far higher demands than has previously been the case. The demands placed on teaching assistants, teachers, and school leaders should not be underestimated.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Cllr. Groucutt for all his work and support as the Cabinet member for Education. His term in office concluded at the same time as the reporting period for this report.

I have structured this year's report around the ambitions of the Community and Corporate Plan.

Monmouthshire's educational landscape

Monmouthshire has 27 English medium and 3 Welsh medium primary schools, the majority of which are single form entry (a single class). There are three secondary schools, one located in each of the county's main towns and a 3-19 all through-school located in Abergavenny. There is also a Pupil Referral Service (PRS), based north and south of the County, that supports learners who have been excluded, or are at risk of exclusion from their mainstream school, or those unable to attend school.

Across the whole county there are 94¹ settings; schools, non-maintained nurseries, independent schools, and independent special schools who we are responsible for supporting within various elements of legislation such as *Keeping Learners Safe* which sets out our safeguarding responsibilities.

Everyday Monmouthshire's Schools (last year's numbers are in the):

- educate 11,005 (11,024) pupils across the county, of those learners:
- of which 48.5% are female (49%)
- 11.4% (12.1%) of the population are eligible for free school meals (eFSM)
- 11.7% (12%) of the population have an identified additional learning need (ALN) or Special Educational Need (SEN).
- employ 1,074 members of staff (1,148)

The central CYP directorate employs 89 (88) members of staff.

¹ There are currently 44 pre-school settings, 22 out of school clubs and 28 childminders

Alongside the work of our schools, we provide early education for 600 three and four-year-old learners in 25 non-maintained settings.

The recent past has seen an increase in learners who chose to be home educated. We know this population as electively home educated (EHE), and there are currently 162 children who are educated in this way. We have one full-time EHE Officer who meets regularly with these families through home visits and engagement activities such as creative sessions and outdoor experiences in Gilwern. As a result, we have established strong relationships with these families to the extent that our EHE Officer received a gold award from Education Otherwise, voted by parents, for her work during the year.

Our education system, in the broadest sense, operates within the context of both high expectations of all and for all. To achieve those expectations, we always seek to offer 'high challenge and high support' to our schools and settings. We believe fundamentally in the value of strong partnerships at local, regional, and national level.

The core of our work is the statutory role that we hold in monitoring school performance and ensuring high-quality provision to ensure that learners make at least appropriate progress overtime.

In external examinations our schools continue to perform above national averages across most key indicators, including the Capped 9 measure, literacy, numeracy, and science. However, performance among the lower-attaining learners shows greater levels of variability, highlighting a continuing need for targeted support.

The work that is being undertaken in all our schools and the PRS give us assurance that our judgements are made using a wide range of firsthand evidence that is focused on the progress made by learners in all year groups.

More broadly the Welsh education system is navigating a period of significant reform and complexity. One of the foremost challenges remains the implementation of the new Curriculum for Wales, which requires our schools to redesign teaching and learning approaches while maintaining standards and securing equity. This shift demands sustained professional learning and leadership capacity, which can be uneven across schools.

Finally, the whole public service system must respond to increasing demands for inclusive education and mental health support, requiring cross-sector collaboration and investment to ensure all learners thrive. This report will refer to children who experience Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). To paraphrase another Director of Education, the issue is often not school avoidance but 'life' avoidance. This is not a challenge that can be resolved by schools or Local Authorities alone.

A note on the writing style of this report

The purpose of this report is to provide members with an evaluative view of the performance of our systems, the schools, setting and services that work within it. To offer a view of *'how much has been done and how well it has been done'* the following words are used to describe proportions.

- nearly all = with very few exceptions
- most = 90% or more
- many = 70% or more
- a majority = over 60%
- half = 50%
- around half = close to 50%
- a minority = below 40%
- few = below 20%
- very few = less than 10%

In past iterations of this report Members have asked for a glossary of terms and abbreviations used in education services; this is in Appendix 1.

What are we seeking to achieve?

We have reviewed and considered the strategic goals for our services and how they link to the ambitions of the Community and Corporate Plan. We have also considered a range of evidence that has emerged from our work with schools through supported self-evaluations (SSEs) and Estyn inspections.

The table in Appendix 2 analyses a range of sources of information about our schools and draws them into themes for improvement. The emergent priorities for school-based work were:

- a. **Improving the quality and consistency of teaching and learning**, *focusing on providing appropriate challenge, effective feedback, assessment practices, and fostering pupils' independent learning skills.*
- b. **Strengthening self-evaluation, improvement planning, and assessment processes** *to accurately identify key development areas and evaluate their impact on pupil outcomes and progress.*
- c. **Enhancing pupils' skills development**, *focusing on application across the curriculum, progressive skill-building, and improving skills in key areas such as Welsh language, literacy, numeracy, and digital competency.*
- d. **Developing leadership capacity** *at all levels, including middle leaders and governors, to effectively drive school improvement and monitor provision.*
- e. **Improving pupils' Welsh language skills** *and confidence, particularly in spoken Welsh, and ensuring statutory requirements are met.*
- f. **Enhancing Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Provision** *Strengthening provision for pupils with ALN is a focus, including meeting statutory obligations, tracking progress, and ensuring appropriate support and resources and ensuring a skilled and confident workforce to meet the broad range of barriers to learning and ALN we are facing.*

Aligning the evidence from our schools with the ambition of the Community and Corporate Plan and the residual areas of focus from our last Estyn report has resulted in the following strategic goals. These have been shared with our Headteachers and will be further refined by the Headteacher Leadership Group in the early weeks of the next academic year.

1. Raise Standards and Ensure Excellence for all

Ensure all learners make strong progress and achieve high standards, with a relentless focus on improving teaching, leadership, and learner outcomes.

- Strengthening school improvement partnerships and leadership capacity.
- Use evidence and data to drive excellence in learning and teaching.
- Embed the Four Purposes of the Curriculum for Wales.

- Access to modern school environments that are for purpose.

2. Deliver Equity by Closing Gaps in Outcomes and Opportunities

Ensure that every learner—regardless of background, need, or ability—has access to high-quality education and the support required to thrive.

- Target support for vulnerable learners (ALN, EAL, FSM, CLA).
- Ensure early identification and intervention.
- Promote inclusive, accessible learning environments.

3. Promote Well-being, Inclusion, and Learner Voice

Prioritise the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of learners, staff, and families, ensuring safe, inclusive, and nurturing environments.

- Reduce exclusions and improve attendance through early support.
- Champion learner voice and active participation.
- Strengthen safeguarding and well-being systems.

4. Empower School and System Leadership

Build the capacity of school leaders, governors, and teachers to innovate and lead continuous improvement within a collaborative system.

- Support leadership development at all levels.
- Enable shared practice across schools and clusters.
- Work with regional partners to deliver impactful professional learning.

5. Celebrate Welsh Language, Culture, and Global Citizenship

Promote bilingualism, celebrate Welsh culture, and prepare learners to engage confidently in a changing Wales and global society.

- Deliver the WESP effectively to increase Welsh-medium provision.
- Promote the Cymraeg 2050 ambition.
- Integrate global citizenship and sustainability education
- Develop a RSE and RVE curriculum that meets the diverse needs of all our learners

Improved school attendance and reduced levels of exclusion which remove barriers to learning for vulnerable pupils.

Attendance

Attendance of all pupils – Primary and Secondary

The overall attendance of pupils in Monmouthshire schools, post-pandemic, has improved. In primary schools, improvement has been strong and is moving rapidly towards pre-pandemic levels. However, attendance in secondary schools is slower to recover.

All Pupils	2022/23	2023/24	Rate of increase
Monmouthshire	89.50%	90.00%	+ 0.5pp
Wales	88.50%	89.00%	+0.5pp

Data source: WG Attendance Data September to July 2022/23 and 2023/24

Primary Pupils	2022/23	2023/24	Rate of increase
Monmouthshire	92.90%	93.60%	+0.7pp
Wales	91.50%	92.20%	+0.7pp
Secondary Pupils	2022/23	2023/24	Rate of increase
Monmouthshire	88.10%	88.20%	+0.1pp
Wales	87.50%	88.10%	+0.6pp

(Welsh Government Attendance data source)

Despite the drop in attendance levels since the pandemic, overall attendance levels in Monmouthshire have remained amongst the highest in Wales, above the average across Wales as a whole, and significantly above attendance across the south east Wales region.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) supports efforts to improve school attendance and reduce persistent absence. Over the past year, the EWS updated its policies to align with recent Welsh Government guidance and created a handbook to clarify roles and responsibilities for schools and families. This has helped schools develop enhanced strategies to improve attendance.

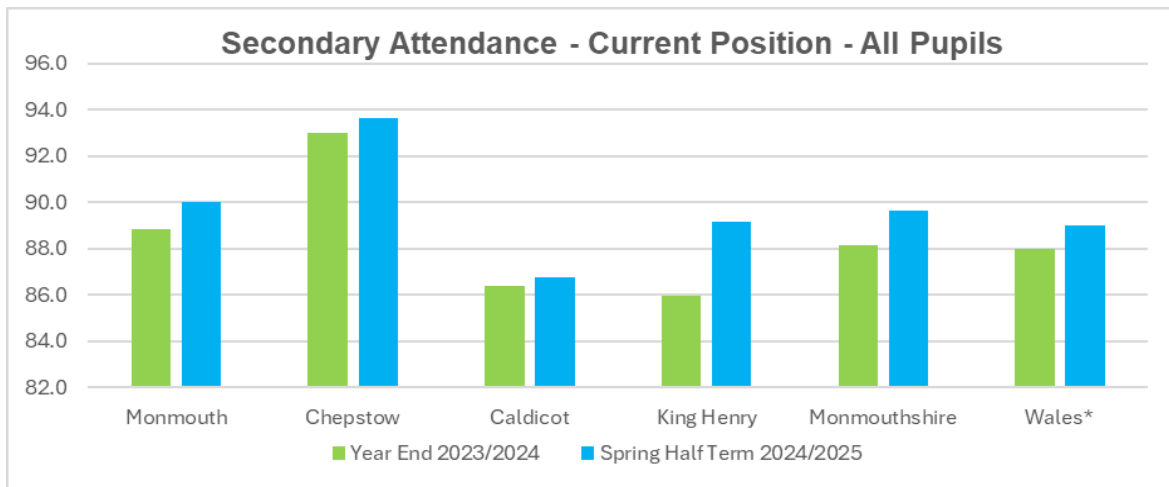
The service offers holistic support to schools, pupils, and parents to address non-attendance issues. It focuses on building positive relationships and connecting with other relevant agencies. In Monmouthshire, formal prosecution is rarely used. Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) meet with schools to discuss attendance, perform register checks, and support tracking and monitoring approaches. Schools can refer to the EWS when they have

exhausted their resources and the graduated response². The EWS team meets regularly to allocate support to families and schools as needed.

Secondary School Attendance

All Pupils

By the end of 2023/24, secondary attendance showed a very small improvement of 0.1pp. However, the rate of improvement is 0.5pp below the average rate of improvement across Wales. During the current academic year 24/25, secondary school attendance is beginning to show improvement. However, secondary school attendance remains well below pre-pandemic levels and our corporate target of 94%.



Pupils eligible for Free School Meals - Secondary Attendance

Although there is some improvement in eFSM attendance data, the rate of recovery for this group is slower than for non eFSM pupils. This means that in 2023/24, the attendance of FSM pupils in Monmouthshire secondary schools continued to be significantly below that of non-FSM pupils (14.4pp) and is below where this should be. This is a significant risk to a cohort of vulnerable learners and has a direct impact on their ability to access high quality teaching and learning, which will aid their future opportunities.

However, we recognise that there are many underlying factors which can have an adverse impact on attendance for this group of pupils. For example, they are more likely to need higher levels of support to overcome their barriers to school so that they can achieve regular levels of attendance.

At the end of the academic year 23/24, secondary FSM attendance was 75.8% and 4.4pp lower than the national average across Wales of 79.9%.

Primary School Attendance

Attendance at Monmouthshire primary schools is consistently amongst the highest in Wales. Although there was a decline in primary attendance during the pandemic, it

² This is set out in Appendix 3

recovered steadily, reaching 1.4pp above the Wales average at the end of the academic year 23/24.

Many primary schools have well-established and effective processes in place to support and sustain high levels of attendance. Leaders monitor attendance effectively and work closely with parents and a wide range of external agencies to improve their attendance. As a result, attendance in all primary schools is now over 90% and attendance in almost a third of schools is over 95%. The performance of primary schools in the current year is set out in Appendix 3.

Pupils eligible for Free School Meals - Primary Attendance

The attendance of FSM pupils is over 90% in around half of primary schools, over 88% in 7 schools, and 87% or below in the remainder. Lower levels of attendance may be due to a range of circumstances, and in some schools the very low level of FSM pupils can have an impact.

The Impact of the Education Welfare Service and Family Liaison Officer

The introduction of Family Liaison Officers (FLO) to the team during the last year has strengthened the work of the EWS team and is enabling the service to provide high quality support at an earlier stage to minimise longer term disruption to learning and engagement. The FLOs work closely with Community Focused Schools officers and Acorn staff to establish positive relationships with parents at the earliest opportunity. This enables them to provide advice and support for families, whilst removing barriers to school and setting high expectations for attendance.

Exclusions

Unfortunately, the data currently shows that rates of fixed term exclusions remain high and are on an upward trend. With regards to permanent exclusions the number has fallen significantly in the last year. The increasing presentation of behaviour that challenges in our schools and settings is also seen in authorities across Wales.

In the last academic year (23-24) 518 learners received fixed term exclusions from Monmouthshire schools. There were 285 (55%) learners who received repeat exclusions (249 Secondary, 36 Primary). Nearly all exclusions (98%) were for 5 days or fewer, with an average length of 1.5 days. Whilst 59% of schools issued more exclusions in 2023/24 than the previous academic year, of our 30 primary schools, 13 (43%) issued no exclusions.

The rise in the use of fixed term exclusion in secondary schools is predominantly linked to the rise in persistent disruptive behaviour. In primary schools a significant rise in the number of fixed term exclusions is for damage to property and causing injury to pupils and staff.

In the current academic year (2024-25) there have been no permanent exclusions upheld at a Pupil Disciplinary Committee (PDC), although 20 have been issued. This is due to the

improved operation and effectiveness of the Inclusion Panel to consider acceptable alternatives to permanent exclusion where the threshold is met. This has enabled the Inclusion Service to work with schools and other agencies, to offer viable and suitably risk-managed alternatives. This has involved provision from the Pupil Referral Service or the use of a Managed Move.

It is a core ambition to reduce the number of 'days lost' by learners to exclusions, especially for those from vulnerable groups. The Welsh Government's statutory guidance states that the LA should do all it can to avoid the permanent exclusion of these learners. Data shows that despite a range of efforts to support the inclusion of these learners, the use of exclusions for learners with an ALN and those who are eFSM is still too high.

We address these issues on a case-by-case basis by responding to parental representations, attending PDC hearings, and liaising with colleagues in EWS, social workers, and external advocates. The team also works at a school level through the established Team Around the School (TAS) approach, monitoring data and proactively developing bespoke training offers. Some of the areas where we have focused our work in the last year include managing risks around Harmful Sexual Behaviours (HSB) and minimising the risks of weaponised objects. These training sessions and briefings are offered through Headteacher meetings, the CLA forums, the Monmouthshire Inclusion Network, and promoting good practices from Estyn thematic reports. We have also held one-off events such as the Exclusion Summit, which brought a range of school-based professionals, local authority teams and other agencies together.

Emerging themes and areas of risk

As set out above there can be many reasons for exclusions in schools but there are two areas that I feel are worthy of attention. Peer on peer HSB is an increasing reason for the issue of FTE as shown in the table below. Managing these risks to safeguard all learners is a priority for the authority. This may mean increased use of PRS provision pending further understanding of the risks and management of these through multi-agency processes. Officers have worked across education and social care to promote greater understanding and the use of a shared language. Furthermore, they have developed the understanding of risk using *Assess, Intervene, Monitor* (AIM) HSB risk assessments, these will seek to enable the safe management of learners returning to, or staying in, mainstream settings when appropriate.

Primary:				
Academic Year to Summer Half Term	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Sexual misconduct	0	0	0	2
Secondary:				
Academic Year to Summer Half Term	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Sexual misconduct	1	1	5	10

A second area of concern is the use of threatened or actual violence and the misuse of items to weaponise them or the presence of bladed items in schools. A multi-agency approach continues to make use of Home Office grants to reduce violence in schools and to enhance the advice and guidance to schools regarding managing such risks whilst ensuring safety to staff and learners. This work is ongoing and reflects Wales wide patterns.

PRIMARY: Academic Year to Summer Half Term	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against a pupil	2	1	13	10
Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult	12	14	13	14
Physical assault against a pupil	15	27	37	57
Physical assault against an adult	17	15	42	51
SECONDARY: Academic Year to Summer Half Term	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against a pupil	25	38	51	40
Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult	85	117	180	194
Physical assault against a pupil	66	98	129	100
Physical assault against an adult	7	8	18	37

Primary FTE for reasons of actual or threatened behaviour to peers or staff has risen from 105 to 132 this academic year. For secondary the number dropped slightly from 378 to 371 but concerningly, the number of FTE for staff assault rose from 18 to 37.

Pupil Referral Service capacity and interventions

An emerging theme from this part of the report is the weight placed on the Pupil Referral Service to provide support and provision for learners who have been at risk of permanent exclusion or whose presence in a mainstream setting presents too great a risk to staff or peers. Following an extensive review undertaken by Monmouthshire and EAS staff, the Pupil Referral Service has undergone a period of intense and significant change which has enhanced the capacity to provide education for children and young people who, because of illness, exclusion or otherwise, may not receive education in a mainstream school. The opening of two new, refurbished Pupil Referral Units in the North and the South of the county this academic year has significantly broadened the breadth and depth of the curriculum offer and intervention available from the service. Alongside an increased, refreshed leadership structure, the service finds itself in a better position to meet the growing numbers and complexity of the pupils needing the service.

The benefits of the new curriculum in Wales are maximised through excellent teaching and learning.

System Performance and Improvement

Through our close work with schools and our partners in the EAS we have a strong understanding of our schools and settings, and we effectively monitor teaching quality and leadership to ensure positive pupil outcomes and wellbeing. The team maintains constructive relationships with schools and fosters a culture of trust where support is valued, and challenge is welcomed. We can use a broad range of data and intelligence from various services to identify strengths and areas for improvement, enabling targeted support and intervention.

This strategic approach has led to a reduction in the level of support required by schools over time. Most primary and many secondary schools show suitable progress among pupils, including vulnerable groups. One secondary school is in a statutory category following an Estyn inspection. The collaboration between School Improvement Partners (SIPs), Principal SIPs (PSIPs), and our officers across all parts of the directorate enhances the use of local knowledge and systems to drive improvement.

The close working relationship with the EAS has been invaluable, but it is a relationship where, as the school improvement partner, it is held to account for its impact on pupil progress. Strong communication and shared analysis between both parties ensures timely and effective support. Partner SIPs, from schools across the region, are well-informed about our strategic priorities, particularly in supporting vulnerable pupils, and thematic reports provide clear insights into strengths and areas for development.

Alongside the wider school improvement work to ensure that ongoing focus on vulnerable learners we also monitor the use of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) through SIPs and thematic reviews, gaining a clear understanding of how schools use the funding to address poverty-related challenges to ensure that it impacts positively on the wellbeing and progress made by learners. Most schools have submitted their 2024/25 PDG plans using approved templates.

We have developed the use of Professional Discussions (PDs) with schools to help identify support needs and share good practice. The TAS model offers early, tailored intervention, often preventing issues from escalating. As the legally responsible body we have used our statutory powers, such as warning notices and appointing additional governors, to address urgent performance concerns.

Professional learning is widely accessed, focusing on teaching, curriculum, and leadership. Networks support the sharing of effective practice. An area for development, especially considering the new more localised school improvement approaches, is to ensure that more

than a minority of headteachers contribute to system leadership. More positively many middle and senior leaders engage in national development programmes.

We have successfully implemented school reorganisation through federations and executive headship, enhancing leadership capacity and resource sharing. Governors receive strong support, including through the Monmouthshire Association of School Governors.

Inspection outcomes align with national averages, and nearly all pre-inspection commentaries match actual outcomes. Attendance has improved post-pandemic, supported by the LA's strategy and Education Welfare Service. Inclusion services and partnerships are well-established and effective.

Estyn Inspection Outcomes

The time frame for this report is 2024/25. However, to allow the full view of MCC's experiences of Estyn since the return to inspecting post-pandemic is referenced to allow trends overtime to be seen

Non-maintained Settings

Across Wales and Monmouthshire non-maintained settings are inspected jointly by Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) against the following six areas:

- Wellbeing
- Learning (three and four-year-olds)
- Care and development
- Teaching and assessment (three and four-year-olds that do not receive education in a maintained (school) setting)
- Environment
- Leadership and management

There have been seventeen non-maintained settings inspected by Estyn since May 2022. Appendix 4 shows that there has been no Estyn follow-up in any of these settings, and five have been asked to submit a case study to Estyn for publication. In four of the settings, all inspection areas were judged to be excellent. This is a particularly strong area of our work, giving many of our children the best start to school life.

Schools

Estyn made initial adjustments to the common inspection framework in 2022, moving away from grades such as 'excellent' and reducing the notice period schools receive ahead of a core inspection. More recently, Estyn introduced interim visits where schools are visited a second time in the six-year inspection cycle to ensure that their standards remain high, and any recommendations made are being addressed. The amendments to Estyn's approach also saw the removal of Estyn monitoring as a follow-up category. This means there are

now only two follow-up categories, Significant Improvement and Special Measures. Estyn also streamlined the framework to focus on three key areas; Teaching and Learning; Well-being, care, support and guidance; and Leading and improving.

Inspection reports from September 2024 onwards do not report on each area separately. Instead, they reflect on the effectiveness of the school and its impact on pupils' progress and well-being across all areas.

Estyn has inspected twenty-two Monmouthshire schools since May 2022, and ten of these in the period April 2024 to the end of March 2025. During this time, Estyn inspected four of these schools using the previous framework, and six under new arrangements.

Interim visits

Estyn has carried out an interim visit in four Monmouthshire schools since their introduction in September 2024.

In all four schools the focus was on two recommendations from their last inspection. The period between the inspection and the interim visited varied from eight months to two years and one month and inevitably, this has an impact on the amount of progress a school can reasonably be expected to make. Interim visit reports indicated that all schools have made strong progress in one area and are working well towards addressing the second. Schools have welcomed the interim visits, reporting them helpful and supportive in continuing their improvement journey.

Primary Schools

Since 2022, Estyn inspected eighteen Monmouthshire primary schools. As part of this process, Estyn judged that two schools required follow-up, one Estyn review and the other special measures. The remaining sixteen schools were not placed in any form of follow-up. Six schools were asked to prepare a case study, or where an area of strength was noted by inspectors, it was highlighted within the report, in the form of a spotlight.

The table in Appendix 6 shows the level of follow-up for all Monmouthshire schools inspected since May 2022 and those that were asked to submit a case study to Estyn or had a spotlight on an area of strong practice.

Secondary Schools

All four secondary schools have been inspected in the last three years. Monmouth and Chepstow schools did not require any follow-up. Monmouth was asked to prepare two case studies in relation to its work and Chepstow had two spotlights on strong aspects of its work highlighted within the written report. Estyn judged both King Henry VIII School and Caldicot School in need of significant improvement.

Recommendations vary from school to school, however, improvements in self-evaluation processes are a consistent theme across all four schools. Attendance, teaching and learning, and the development of pupils' skills are common themes in Monmouthshire's secondary schools.

Estyn has not inspected the PRS since 2018.

A School's Recovery Journey

When a school has been placed into a category, the time it takes to improve it is a key measurement. It acts as a proxy for the quality and caliber of support that the local authority can bring together to support the school. The table below shows the time schools remained in a follow-up category. On average, schools in Estyn review which are highlighted as yellow, (schools needing Significant Improvement are Amber and those in Special Measures Red) were in this category for between 18 to 20 months. However, schools in need of significant improvement or special measures remained in this category for up to 24 months as they had more areas to improve. These timescales reflect the expectations of the local authority so that they can ensure schools address the concerns, embed practice, and are able to continue their journey of sustained improvement with minimal external support.

Schools marked with * remained in a category for longer than expected because the local authority and Estyn were unable to determine the level of progress until after the first wave of the pandemic at the end of 2020.

School	Date in follow up	Date out of follow up	Time taken
PRS	April 2018	December 2019	20 months
Llantillio Pertholey	September 2016	April 2018	19 months
Raglan	November 2016	June 2018	19 months
Magor	May 2017	December 2018	18 months
Chepstow	September 2017	December 2020	39 months*
Deri View	October 2018	February 2020	16 months
Caldicot	October 2018	December 2020	26 months*
Goytre	May 2019	December 2020	19 months*
Dewstow	May 2022	April 2024	24 months
Gilwern	October 2022	December 2023	14 months
King Henry VIII	November 2022	School closed	NA
Caldicot	October 2024	Not applicable	NA

Strengths identified in Monmouthshire schools inspected by Estyn since May 2022.

The following themes have been identified in feedback, and Estyn inspection notes for the twenty-two schools inspected since summer 2022. This extended period of reference has been included to ensure that any trends can be identified.

- Many leaders know their school well; they provide strong leadership; they are clear about the strengths and areas for improvement, and they work effectively with partners to fulfil the vision for the school.
- Provision for wellbeing and its impact on pupils and staff is a strong feature in nearly all schools.
- Most schools have a clear vision for the curriculum and are making good progress towards developing a curriculum that reflects the aspirations of the new Curriculum for Wales.
- Most schools provide an increasingly broad and interesting range of learning experiences.
- Many schools ensure pupils have worthwhile opportunities to develop a range of skills. As a result, most pupils make good progress during their time in school with a minority making strong progress.
- Behaviour in many schools is good and supports learning well.
- Schools promote pupils' moral and social development effectively
- There are positive relationships between staff and pupils in many schools which contribute well to effective learning and good behaviour in nearly all schools. The positive ethos in many schools enables pupils to develop confidence and self-assurance well.
- Pupils of all ages have beneficial opportunities to develop leaderships skills in most schools.
- Overall, schools provide a welcoming environment where pupils feel safe and secure.
- Most schools provide a stimulating and rich environment for pupils both inside and outdoors.
- Pupil's attitudes to learning are good, pupil voice is strong, and wellbeing is good. As a result, many children enjoy going to school.
- In a few primary schools, the development of Welsh language and culture is a strength.
- Schools make effective use of grants to support pupils' progress and wellbeing.
- Many governors have a good understanding of their role and discharge their duties effectively.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in Monmouthshire schools.
- Children from all socio-economic backgrounds make good progress in their learning and well-being.

This information is based on the 65% of Monmouthshire schools inspected since 2022 and aligns well with our monitoring across the remaining schools.

Areas for Improvement

Whilst there are many strengths across our schools, there are also areas in need of improvement. Estyn captures the most significant of these in the form of recommendations for the school to address.

Monmouthshire schools showed both strengths and areas for development compared to national trends.

In Monmouthshire, 44% of primary schools were advised to improve opportunities for pupils to develop or apply their skills, this was higher than the national average of 32%. Similarly, 33% were encouraged to enhance pupils' independent skills, nearly double the national figure of 17.6%. Positively, only 5.5% of Monmouthshire schools were advised to improve how teaching challenges all pupils, significantly lower than the 18.2% seen nationally. Notably, no Monmouthshire schools were flagged for attendance issues, compared to 10% nationally.

Half of Monmouthshire primary schools were advised to improve self-evaluation processes—substantially higher than the 17% national average. Health and safety concerns were raised in 5.5% of Monmouthshire schools, slightly above the 3.5% national rate. No safeguarding concerns were reported in Monmouthshire, whereas 2.7% of schools across Wales received such recommendations.

In the academic year 2023/24, 28 secondary schools across Wales were inspected. When comparing this national picture to the local outcomes all four Monmouthshire schools received recommendations to strengthen and refine their self-evaluation processes, compared to about two thirds nationally. This is an ongoing focus of the local authority's work with schools and the PRS.

However, only one Monmouthshire school was advised to improve the progressive development of pupils' skills through teaching, provision, planning, and coordination—well below the national figure of 65%. The quality of teaching was flagged in 50% of Monmouthshire schools, closely aligning with the 52% national average.

Attendance emerged as a more prominent concern locally, with three of the four Monmouthshire schools receiving recommendations to improve it, compared to 48% across Wales. Welsh language provision was also highlighted more frequently in Monmouthshire.

Overall, Monmouthshire's secondary schools face challenges in self-evaluation, attendance and Welsh language provision, with fewer concerns raised around governance and curriculum planning than the national average. There remains, of course, an ongoing focus on the quality of teaching and learning.

Key Stage 4 Outcomes: Summer 2024

The report provides an overview of Key Stage 4 outcomes for our three secondary schools and the through school in Abergavenny in the summer of 2024. They are contextualised against national benchmarks, family groupings, and Welsh Government modelled expectations. Whilst national outcomes have declined to pre-2020 levels, Monmouthshire schools generally outperform both family and national averages across most indicators.

Notably, two schools exceed their family averages in the Capped 9 measure, with Chepstow and King Henry VIII schools showing particularly strong performances. Literacy and numeracy outcomes are robust, with three schools above family averages in each, although one school underperforms in both domains. Science and Welsh Baccalaureate results are more mixed, with modest gains in most schools but one notable underperformance in science.

The analysis by attainment thirds reveals strong outcomes for higher and middle achievers but concerning underperformance among the lowest third in two schools—one significantly so. This suggests a need for targeted intervention to support lower-attaining learners.

At the authority level Monmouthshire exceeds Welsh averages in all key measures, with particularly strong performance among FSM and non-FSM learners. However, the literacy score slightly underperforms against modelled expectations. Members should note that our expectations for our schools should be significantly higher than the Welsh average and arguably the modelled expectation because these are predicated on the performance of the whole Welsh cohort.

For 2024 Monmouthshire secondary schools are in the 2nd, 3rd and 5th least disadvantaged families.

If members would like more details regarding the Key Stage 4 outcomes there was a substantive item at the Performance and Overview Committee on the 29th April 2025.

Reviewing and using the data:

For all GCSE subjects the difference between each grade is 6 points. For example, a B is worth 6 more points than a C. The one exception to this is the difference between a 'U' grade and a 'G' where the difference is 16 points.

This means that, for example, for the Capped 9, a difference of 54 points indicates that on average, every learner in a school is performing above or below the family by a whole GCSE grade in every subject. (6 points x 9 subjects=54 points).

For reference if a student were to achieve 9 A* (or equivalents) they would achieve a Capped 9 of 522, a student achieving all Cs would score 360.

In last year's examinations Chepstow school learners, on average, performed approximately half a grade better in every subject compared with their peers in the family, and King Henry VIII by approximately one third of a grade.

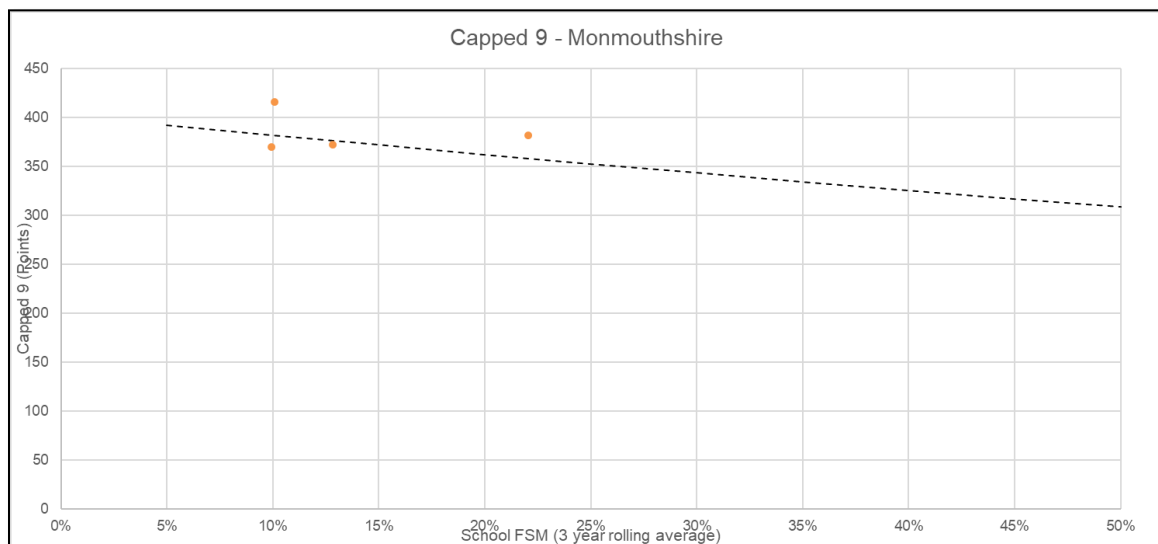
Capped 9 – all pupils – compared with the family average³

The table below shows the Capped 9 performance of all learners in each school compared with their individual family. Two schools are above their family, significantly so, and two below, but both by small margins.

School Name	FSM	Capped 9	Family Capped 9	Capped 9 - School-Family difference
Caldicot School	12.8%	372.8	379.1	-6.3
Chepstow Comprehensive School	10.1%	416.3	380.5	35.8
King Henry VIII 3-19 School	22.1%	382.0	359.3	22.6
Monmouth Comprehensive School	9.9%	369.9	380.5	-10.7

Capped 9 – all pupils – compared with WG ‘Modelled Outcome’ line

The chart below does not compare with the family, but rather the Welsh Government ‘Modelled outcome’.



Two schools in Monmouthshire are above the modelled outcome line and two below.

Capped 9 – Comparison by ‘Thirds’ with WG ‘Modelled Outcome’ line

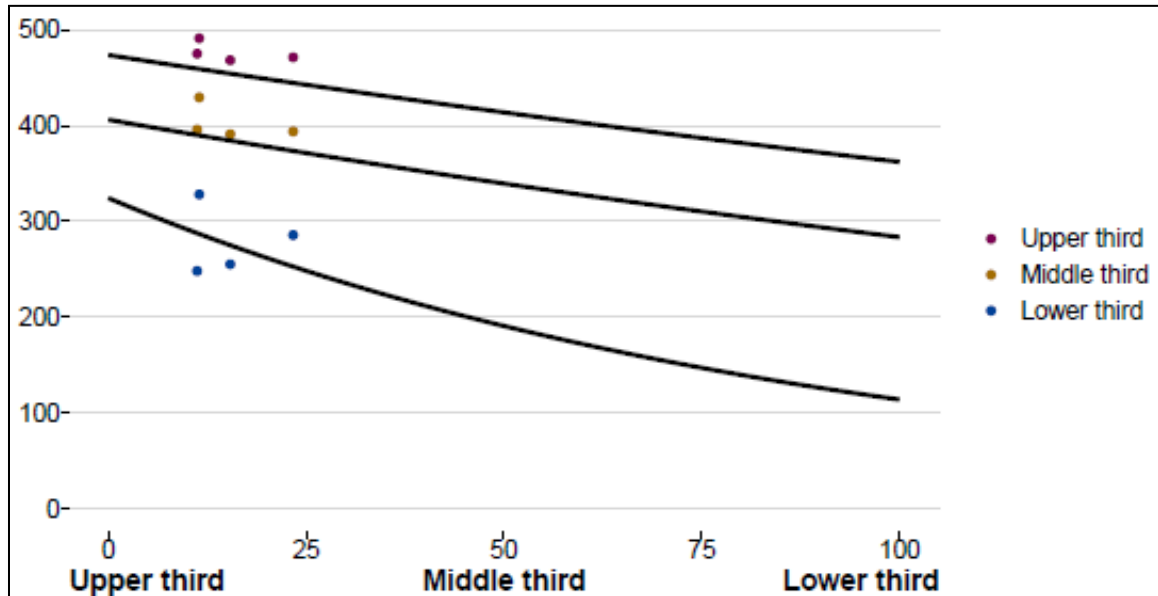
The chart below groups learners in each individual school into ‘thirds. For example, if 120 learners in a cohort, they would be split into three groups of 40 by their Capped 9 scores. Three averages would then be calculated for each of these groups. The table below gives the average of each third. The differences are in effect contextualised.

³ Please note that the indicative bars on the right for this table and all below are adjusted to the minimum (negative) and maximum (positive) values for each table individually and automatically. Therefore, a bar ‘35.8 points’ long will not be consistent across each chart.

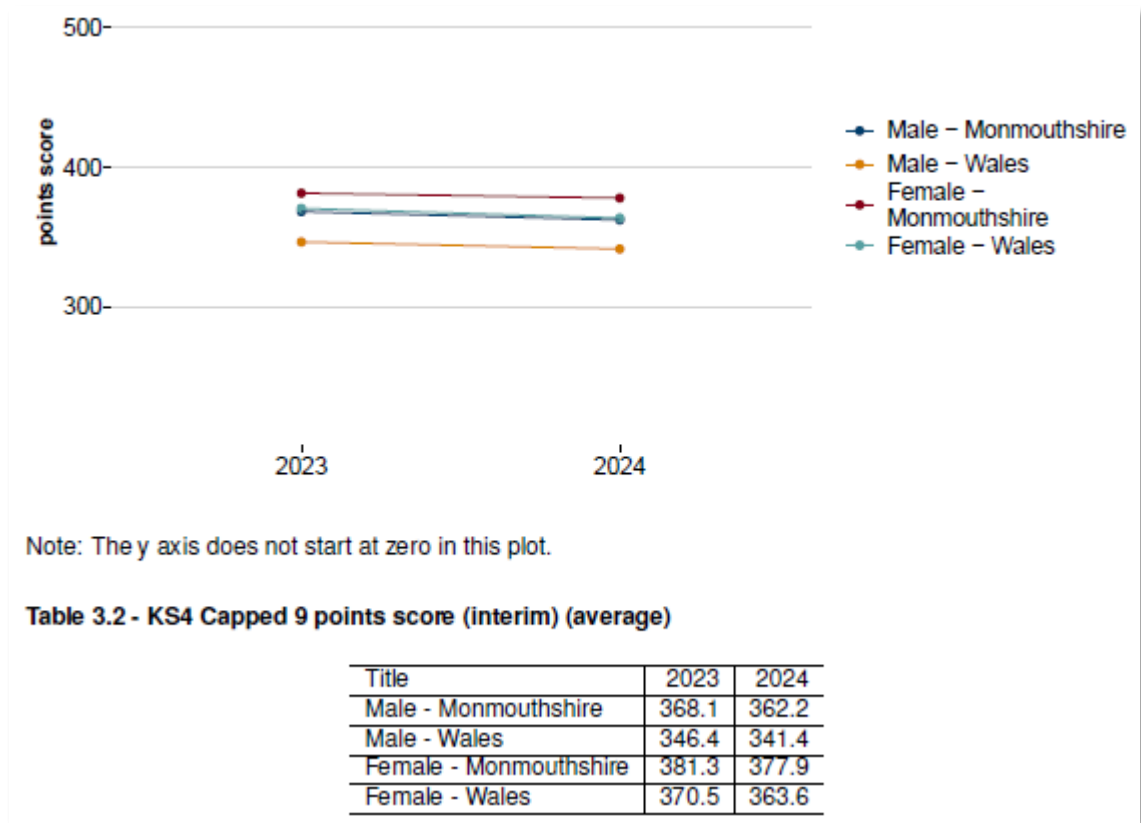
School Name	Upper Third			Middle Third			Lower Third		
	Achieved	Modelled	+/-	Achieved	Modelled	+/-	Achieved	Modelled	+/-
Caldicot School	468	456	13	391	384	7	255	271	-16
Chepstow Comprehensive School	491	461	30	430	389	41	328	283	45
King Henry VIII 3-19 School	472	445	27	394	373	21	286	248	37
Monmouth Comprehensive School	475	461	14	396	389	7	248	284	-36

For the highest and middle achieving thirds, all schools are above expectation. In the lowest third two schools are well above expectation, but two are below, one significantly (The equivalent of half a GCSE grade per learner, per subject).

The same data represented by three dots (one per third) in each school and 3 regression lines based on eligibility. This shows the relatively low level of variance for Monmouthshire schools, in both the upper third and middle third, but more variance for the lower third.

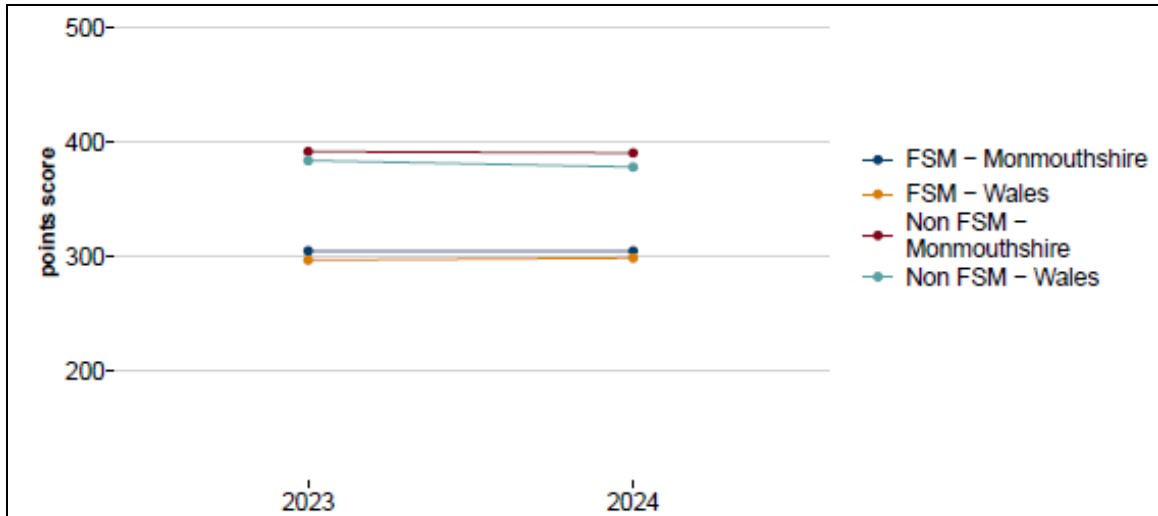


The Capped 9 score is also analysed by comparing the performance of males and female students.



Both Males and Females in Monmouthshire have higher scores than their peers in Wales, however the difference is approximately double for males as it is for females.

It is also analysed comparing the performance of those students eligible for free school meals and those who are ineligible.



Note: The y axis does not start at zero in this plot.

Table 6.2 - KS4 Capped 9 points score (interim) (average)

Title	2023	2024
FSM - Monmouthshire	304.7	304.7
FSM - Wales	296.7	298.6
Non FSM - Monmouthshire	391.7	390.4
Non FSM - Wales	383.8	378.2

Both FSM and non-FSM learners in Monmouthshire have higher Capped 9 scores than their peers in Wales.

Literacy Measure – compared with the Family average

To put all these charts in perspective a difference of +/- 6 points is the equivalent of a GCSE grade difference for every learner. +/- 3 points would therefore be a half a grade difference.

School Name	FSM	Literacy Measure	Literacy Measure - Family	Literacy Measure - Difference
Caldicot School	12.8%	38.9	42.0	-3.0
Chepstow Comprehensive School	10.1%	45.2	41.8	3.4
King Henry VIII 3-19 School	22.1%	41.0	39.3	1.8
Monmouth Comprehensive School	9.9%	41.6	41.8	-0.3

Two schools are above the family average for the literacy measure, one approximately inline and one below by approximately 1/3rd of a GCSE grade per learner.

All schools have a higher contribution made by literature rather than language.

Numeracy Measure – compared with the Family average

School Name	FSM	Numeracy Measure	Numeracy Measure - Family	Numeracy Measure - Difference
Caldicot School	12.8%	36.2	40.5	-4.3
Chepstow Comprehensive School	10.1%	45.9	40.5	5.4
King Henry VIII 3-19 School	22.1%	40.3	37.3	3.1
Monmouth Comprehensive School	9.9%	42.6	40.5	2.1

For the numeracy measure three schools are above the family average, above by between approximately a third of a grade and whole grade per learner, but one below the family average, by approximately two thirds of a grade per learner.

Science Measure – compared with the Family average

School Name	FSM	Science Measure	Science Measure - Family	Science Measure - Difference
Caldicot School	12.8%	36.4	41.2	-4.8
Chepstow Comprehensive School	10.1%	42.7	40.9	1.8
King Henry VIII 3-19 School	22.1%	38.3	37.4	0.9
Monmouth Comprehensive School	9.9%	41.0	40.9	0.1

For the science measure three schools are above their respective families, but by smaller margins than literacy and numeracy, but with one below, by almost one GCSE grade per learner.

No Qualifications – compared with the Family average

Please note the reversed colour coding on the bars to indicate that a negative difference from the family is positive.

School Name	FSM	No Qualifications (%)	No Qualifications (%) Family	No Qualifications (%) Difference
Caldicot School	12.8%	0.0	0.5	-0.5
Chepstow Comprehensive School	10.1%	0.0	0.7	-0.7
King Henry VIII 3-19 School	22.1%	0.6	0.5	0.0
Monmouth Comprehensive School	9.9%	1.1	0.7	0.4

Two schools have no learners leaving without a qualification. One school however has 1.1% of learners not achieving a qualification which is 50% higher than their family average.

5+ A*-A – compared with the Family average

School Name	FSM	5+ A*-A (%)	5+ A*-A (%) Family	5+ A*-A (%) Difference
Caldicot School	12.8%	25.5	26.2	-0.7
Chepstow Comprehensive School	10.1%	41.9	25.1	16.8
King Henry VIII 3-19 School	22.1%	25.6	18.8	6.8
Monmouth Comprehensive School	9.9%	28.1	25.1	3.0

Three schools 5+ A*-A percentage are above the family average, one significantly so. One school's rate is slightly less than the family average.

Since the re-introduction of the AWCDs in 2024 local authority level data has been produced. However, there are no comparative positions with other local authorities instead there is a comparison to modelled outcomes. The full details of Monmouthshire's performance can be found in Appendix 7. Monmouthshire outperforms its expected level in every measure apart from the science indicator that is 0.1 points below the expected level.

The impact of teaching and leadership on pupils' standards and progress

Overall, based on inspection outcomes since May 2022 and the review of a range of first-hand evidence by School Improvement Partners (SIPs) many primary schools within Monmouthshire consistently ensure that there is sufficient challenge for learners through high quality teaching which impacts positively on pupils' learning, sustaining high standards. In these schools, many pupils take responsibility for their own learning and make strong and steady progress. Within these schools, most pupils eligible for free school meals make good progress from their starting point.

In a minority of schools, practice to further ensure challenge and effective differentiation to meet the needs of learners is developing appropriately. In most of these schools, the SDP has identified these elements of teaching as a priority for further improvement. This is either being suitably addressed this year or is planned for the new academic year.

In a few schools, improvements in the quality of teaching that provides suitable challenge and meets the needs of all learners still requires attention to secure improved outcomes for all pupils. In nearly all cases, these schools are currently accessing targeted or intensive support through the Team Around the School approach and are being well supported by the authority and partners to secure improvements in the key areas of leadership, and teaching and learning.

First-hand evidence from SIPs indicate that many Monmouthshire schools provide consistently strong digital learning experiences. Pupils are making good progress in applying digital skills, supported by well-planned curricula that integrate technology across Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLEs). Learners confidently use a range of digital tools, understand their purpose, and take pride in their work.

Where practice is strongest, digital leadership is strategic and well-coordinated. Schools map digital skills across the curriculum, evaluate progress through Monitoring, Evaluation and Review (MER) processes, and use data to inform staff development. However, around half of schools report staff confidence and knowledge as barriers to digital development. These are being addressed through targeted professional learning. In a few schools, tracking of digital skills remains underdeveloped. Overall, the system reflects a growing maturity in digital provision, with strong examples of pupil leadership, inclusive practice, and curriculum innovation.

Youth Employment and Skills -STEM Programme

This has been implemented with funding from the Welsh Government and UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund and will further develop collaboration between schools, community and local businesses. The programme will develop excitement in STEM and benefit our children and young people's curriculum and learning opportunities and future pathways. In the past year funding has been secured to appoint a STEM Coordinator alongside a significant investment of £625k for STEM Equipment for our Primary and Secondary Schools and Pupil Referral Service. Currently rolling out equipment alongside an exciting package of training, with competitions, engagement events and activities planned across the next year.

Post-16 pathways

Monmouthshire's post-16 Network has engaged with E-sgol, the Welsh Government's collaborative learning partner, to support the more equitable availability of post-16 academic courses across our schools. Our collaborative post-16 Network approaches the end of its first year with the successful delivery of four courses, not previously consistently available across all four of our sixth forms. As these courses move into their A2 year we look forward to welcoming a new cohort in September 2025.

We have engaged with directorates across the council, our schools and further stakeholders, to develop post-16 Pathways to Employment programmes in Sport, Leisure, Play and Childcare. These innovative courses, based both in schools and in the workplace, have been offered as part of the sixth form curriculum for 2025-26. A Childcare course will be in place in the north of the county for the 2025/26 academic year, based in King Henry VIII 3-19 School. Students following the Childcare programme will have the opportunity to be placed in a range of provisions, including Welsh speaking settings, as part of their course. Several learners have expressed an interest in taking up placements in these settings.

NEET Prevention Strategy November 2024

We have developed a new NEET Prevention Strategy to prevent young people ending up without education, training or employment, ensuring better outcomes and opportunities for our young people. The strategy demonstrates our commitment as a Council to address NEET prevention in the county to create better opportunities and outcomes for our young people, through collaborative work with our valued stakeholders. We have supported 10 NEET young people into employment, which is fewer than our target. There is reduced capacity across the NEET Prevention team, funded by SPF, to support all young people at risk of NEET. The team is reliant on referrals from those most in need of support. There have been increases in the number of Year 11 and Year 13 leavers, not in education, employment or training. Whilst we have low numbers of young people with unknown destinations (Tier 1), the sharp increase in Year 11 leavers who are NEET to 3.1% is

concerning. Provision at Post 16 remains a key priority alongside early intervention for young people identified as at risk of NEET. Following the publication of the data, work is currently ongoing to track journeys and identify potential areas of improvement with partners. This work will be a priority for the wider Children, Learning, Skills and Economy team in the coming year. The integration of the Youth Service alongside the developmental work to include more Level 2 qualifications at post-16 stage will allow for more learning pathways to be developed.

Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP)

We have made steady progress in expanding Welsh-medium education. Early years provision increased, with 3-year-old participation rising from 6.45% to 8.58%, and a new Welsh-medium school, Ysgol Gymraeg Trefynwy, opened in 2024. Reception and Year 1 learners in Welsh-medium education also grew, with projections showing continued upward trends.

We are working with childcare providers to expand the availability of Welsh medium childcare provision. The development of an additional Cylch Meithrin has not progressed as planned which has limited access to childcare, through the medium of Welsh.

Late immersion support reached seven primary pupils, including two from minority ethnic backgrounds. Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni is enhancing its provision ahead of relocating in 2025, which will increase capacity to 420. Plans for a Welsh-medium secondary school are under discussion with neighbouring local authorities.

Arrangements to develop and track linguistic progression within Monmouthshire schools and at transition from Year 6 to Year 7 has strengthened significantly during the year through bespoke support from the EAS. Transition rates from Year 6 to Year 7 improved from 50% to 62%, supported by cluster planning, youth engagement, and immersion support. The Year 11 uptake of GCSE Welsh Second Language in Monmouthshire's secondary schools was 84%. The introduction of E-ysgol is supporting the expansion of A Level Welsh Second Language provision well, and post-16 pathways now include Welsh-medium childcare placements.

All primary schools and 50% of secondary schools participate in Cymraeg Campus. Siarter Iaith is active in three Welsh-medium primaries. Schools engage in Welsh-language activities through Urdd events, residentials, and cultural celebrations. The Youth Service made over 1,200 youth contacts made through Urdd-led clubs and trips, with new clubs launched in Caldicot and Abergavenny.

ALN provision was reviewed, identifying resource gaps and leading to investment in Welsh-language materials. Autism training is now available in Welsh, with more resources launching in autumn 2025. Regional collaboration continues to strengthen provision.

Workforce planning identified the need for one headteacher, three teachers, and three teaching assistants. Development is supported through leadership training, sabbatical schemes, and collaboration with ITE providers and the National Centre for Learning Welsh. All clusters have sabbatical-trained staff, and SWAC data is used to monitor progress.

A truly inclusive educational system that recognises learners' starting points, strengths and educational needs

As a local authority we have an overarching responsibility to be inclusive and support all of our learners, but we also have a clear ambition to provide additional support to those who need it – for whatever reason. Before setting out our actions to support learners in some specific groups there are two areas of activity for all learners: safeguarding and developing a whole school approach to emotional and mental health.

Supporting Vulnerable Learners

Safeguarding

This has been an intensive period of activity. Currently, working with colleagues in the Safeguarding Unit, we are implementing The National Safeguarding Training Standards and Framework across all areas. This has included a review of all school and corporate education posts to determine which level of safeguarding training is necessary. As identified above reported incidents of HSB continue to increase. Consequently, Children's Services are now undertaking HSB strategy meetings, which provide a helpful multi-agency platform to understand and manage risk factors. Training needs were considered and a tiered approach to training around HSB, child sexual abuse and how education practitioners can work with and support children who are harmed and children who harm was developed and cascaded across education settings and CLSE colleagues. The feedback has been positive, the aim being to ensure that school and corporate colleagues can develop the knowledge and skills to identify and support these risk factors appropriately.

School Health Research Network (SHRN)

Collaborative approaches to use of the School Health Research Network (SHRN) data continue to impact positively on health and wellbeing provision in schools. For example, introduction of C Card scheme (condom distribution scheme) in all 4 secondary schools with support from ABUHB, increased collaboration with Monmouthshire's Sports Development Team and an increase in cluster physical activity opportunities in one cluster and development of effective practice in transition guidance for early years and school settings. The impact of these will be reviewed when the primary authority wide SHRN data is received in Autumn 2025 and secondary SHRN data in Spring 2026.

The use of SHRN data to review health and wellbeing curriculum planning is embedded within primary and secondary schools. Cluster approaches to collaborative working have been a focus during this academic year, cluster action plans have driven this work, and this approach will continue into 2025/6. The healthy settings team have shared effective practice during a national SHRN webinar and have provided a case study for the SHRN website. [Case Studies - The School Health Research Network](#)

Additional Learning Needs

Monmouthshire continues to prioritise inclusive education for children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), aiming to support learners within mainstream schools and local communities wherever possible. We have maintained our commitment to equipping both mainstream schools and Specialist Resource Bases (SRBs) with the necessary training and resources to meet diverse learner needs.

Annual reports presented to the Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee in 2024 and 2025 highlighted progress in the Additional Learning Provision (ALP) review and the effectiveness of support for vulnerable learners. A well-attended Members Seminar in September 2024 further reinforced the importance of ALN and SRB development.

In line with the Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal Act 2018, Monmouthshire is on track to transition all learners from the previous SEN system to the new ALN framework by August 2025. A key achievement has been the reduction in the number of pupils placed in out-of-county specialist provision, saving over £1.1 million since 2022.

A bi-annual review employs a self-evaluation model to review ALP sufficiency, supported by ongoing quality assurance at school, cluster, and authority levels. ALN Coordinators (ALNCos) participate in termly forums and cluster meetings, supported by a new training programme and the Inclusion Service's professional learning offer. The SPOT (Specialist Provision and Outreach Team) Network continues to support SRBs, including the development of the King Henry VIII 3–19 SRB and planned primary satellite provision in the Caldicot cluster.

SRB action plans, reviewed termly, show progress toward consistent, equitable provision across the county. A Partnership Agreement between the LA and host schools clarifies roles and responsibilities, enhancing collaboration. A second ALP review in spring 2025 confirmed SRBs' alignment with inclusion goals and integration into whole-school development. SRBs offer tailored, multi-sensory curricula, strong community engagement, and successful post-16 pathways that promote independence and functional skills.

Future plans include reviewing SRB funding models; refining curriculum offers and strengthening collaboration with health-based therapy services. SRBs will also embed good autism practice using the Autism Education Trust (AET) frameworks and support transitions at post-16, 18, and 19 stages in line with the emerging Post-16 Strategy.

Mainstream ALN provision is underpinned by a continuous cycle of quality assurance. Cluster collaboration has led to consistent practices, including exemplar Individual Development Plans (IDPs), annual review templates, and provision pyramids. Twelve primary schools have undergone supported self-evaluation reviews, with all expected to participate over two years. Feedback has been positive, highlighting the value of focusing on ALN within broader school improvement.

Most schools have implemented the ALNET Act effectively, with ALNCos in place and tracking systems established. However, variation remains in IDP quality and ALNCo release time. Staff demonstrate strong knowledge of pupil needs and provide reasonable adjustments despite budget constraints. Recommendations include embedding ALN in school improvement processes, aligning ALN and wellbeing strategies, and enhancing evidence-based interventions.

In secondary schools, self-evaluation reviews show strong understanding of ALN systems. Most schools produce high-quality IDPs and use ALN budgets effectively. Key areas for development include paperwork consistency, clarity of ALNCo roles, and ongoing professional learning. Headteachers have responded by reviewing ALNCo roles and remission, and ALNCos continue to collaborate through half-termly meetings.

A review of Welsh-medium ALN provision in 2024 identified a national shortfall in Welsh-language resources. In response, targeted investment and the formation of a Welsh-medium ALNCo group have been initiated. The Monmouthshire Autism in Schools and Settings (MASS) Programme ensures training materials and frameworks are available in Welsh, supporting inclusive practice.

Overall, Monmouthshire's statutory review process has identified a need to strengthen provision for primary-aged pupils with social, emotional, and mental health needs, particularly those with neurodivergence. These insights will guide future planning, professional learning, and resource allocation to ensure all learners receive the support they need to thrive.

The partnership with the Autism Education Trust

The partnership with the Autism Education Trust has led to the creation of Monmouthshire Autism in Schools and Settings (MASS), focusing on training delivery, autism champions, and pupil panels. Pupil panels in secondary schools share their views to shape provision and practice, embedding lived experience messages into training and resources. Each school and setting has an identified autism champion, with termly network meetings to embed good autism practice through standards and competencies frameworks.

During 2024/25, the 'Making Sense of Autism' module was delivered to 27 schools, the Pupil Referral Service, and 38 out of 44 childcare settings. Training was also provided to various services and senior LA officers. Feedback highlights the impact and opportunities to refine practice for autistic children and young people:

94% agreed the training was appropriate to the Welsh education system.

95% gained a higher understanding of autistic children's strengths and needs.

95% felt more confident supporting autistic children.

92% gained a more extensive range of strategies to support autistic children.

Reflections on the training include understanding autistic perspectives, learning new terminology, and considering barriers to learning. Staff plan to celebrate differences, consider the class environment from the pupil's perspective, and celebrate autism strengths. The focus for 2025/26 is to refine the Good Autism Practice training and roll it out to staff in schools and settings.

Addressing Poverty and Supporting Learners Eligible for Free School Meals

Monmouthshire schools have made significant strides in addressing the impact of poverty through tailored, community-focused approaches. Nearly all schools have revised their vision, policies, and curriculum to better meet the needs of their pupils and families. Following TAP training, most schools conducted parent surveys to identify local needs, leading to initiatives such as on-site food banks, cookery workshops, and parent engagement groups.

There is a shared commitment across schools to raise aspirations and support wellbeing, with poverty reduction embedded in school development plans. Schools increasingly collaborate with external agencies like CAMHS, EBSA, and local charities to provide holistic support. Many have adapted policies to reduce financial strain, including uniform recycling, low-cost trips, and simplified fundraising.

Curriculum adaptations reflect pupil needs, with pupil voice and learning reviews informing planning. Schools like Osbaston VC Primary have empowered vulnerable groups through leadership roles, while others, such as Usk Church in Wales Primary, have embedded financial literacy into the curriculum.

Many Monmouthshire schools are taking strategic, inclusive, and community-focused approaches to mitigate the impact of poverty on learners. A majority of primary and secondary schools have embedded planning to support socio-economically disadvantaged pupils, with many demonstrating good or better progress among these learners. Schools that have engaged with the TAP training and resources such as “Supporting Vulnerable Learners” and “Thinking Differently” have adopted holistic strategies that integrate curriculum, extracurricular activities, family engagement, and financial support.

King Henry VIII 3-19 School exemplifies this approach, working with the Child Poverty Action Group to identify cost-related barriers and implementing changes such as free trips, uniform support, and financial signposting. Similarly, Castle Park Primary uses the RADY programme to identify and support disadvantaged learners through tailored interventions.

Estyn reports since 2022 highlight effective use of the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) across many schools, funding initiatives that enhance wellbeing, basic skills, and engagement. Examples include musical tuition, literacy and numeracy interventions, and nurture activities for young carers. Schools like Gilwern Primary have improved financial efficiency through shared bursar roles, while others like Trellech and Kymin View have introduced uniform swap shops and free breakfast schemes.

Strong parental and community engagement is a hallmark of many schools. Initiatives include family learning events, workshops, and community hubs like Castle Park’s “Community Cwtch.” Schools such as Kymin View and Llandogo Primary foster inclusive environments by understanding and responding to local needs.

Attendance remains a key focus, with schools implementing both direct and indirect strategies to improve it, particularly among disadvantaged pupils. King Henry VIII 3-19 School has seen a 6% improvement in Year 7 attendance. Schools are also evaluating their impact through data on attendance, wellbeing, and academic progress.

Overall, Monmouthshire schools are increasingly recognising the importance of a coordinated, strategic approach to tackling poverty, with leadership playing a critical role in driving positive change.

Children Looked After (CLA) learners

By June 2025 all 35 schools had received the 'CLA Friendly, CLA Ready' whole school awareness training. This training highlights the ways in which these learners can achieve their potential if their TrACE (Trauma and Adverse childhood experiences) history is understood. It also covers awareness raising of the cross directorate *Eliminate* agenda around profit and not for profit foster carers and our wider corporate parent obligations and aspirations to support care experienced learners into adulthood. Positive feedback analysis shows that participants welcomed the training and felt it covered new and important topics for them to be better placed to support both current and former CLA learners but also those learners with vulnerabilities but not formally in care.

Since August 2024, the additional capacity to support the Looked After Children Education Coordinator (LACE) role has meant improved compliance in relation to the number of CLA learners with suitable and up to date Personal Education Plans (PEP).

The continued half termly online forum for Designated CLA Leads helps to promote and prioritise the needs of CLA learners, provides relevant updates from the Welsh Government and shares good practice.

Developing Anti-Racism in Caldicot

The Caldicot cluster of schools recognised a gap in their understanding of what it means to be an anti-racist school. This prompted a collective decision to use their cluster grant to engage work collaboratively with an external consultant to deepen their understanding of anti-racism—clarifying what it is, what it isn't, and how to embed it meaningfully in their schools.

Each school approached the review differently: some began with pupil engagement, others examined existing school practices or involved parents. A shared realisation emerged—true change would require substantial shifts and courageous conversations across the entire school community. This insight became a powerful motivator for action.

The collaborative nature of the project fostered openness and mutual support. Staff shared their experiences, challenges, and learning at a county hall event, reinforcing a collective commitment to long-term change. The initiative has empowered individuals and school communities, acting as a catalyst for broader transformation within the local authority.

This work marks a pivotal step in embedding anti-racism into education, ensuring future generations benefit from inclusive, globally aware learning environments.

Trauma-Informed and EBSA Approaches

Monmouthshire has prioritised the development of whole-school systems to support young people through universal, preventative EBSA strategies and trauma-informed practices. A key focus has been building a confident, skilled education workforce, particularly in supporting autistic learners, through initiatives like the MASS programme and the Trauma Informed Practice Skills and Strategies (TIPSS) professional learning programme. TIPSS, developed in collaboration with Traumatic Stress Wales and ACEs Hub Wales, aligns with the national Trauma-Informed Wales Framework.

TIPSS training has been delivered to four primary schools and the Education Welfare Service, with enhanced training offered to ELSAs and professionals already trained in trauma-informed practice. Supervision is now available for all TIPSS-trained staff. Tools such as the EBSA Provision Pyramid and Graduated Response Flow Diagram have been introduced to promote consistent support for pupils experiencing EBSA. The rollout of EBSA guidance and professional learning has improved schools' ability to identify and respond to EBSA.

Schools and services are increasingly adopting trauma-informed approaches and language, as seen in Inclusion Panel submissions. Evaluation of the TIPSS pilot showed significant improvements in staff confidence and understanding, with 93% of participants reaching the highest confidence level in understanding trauma's impact.

Next steps include refining TIPSS programmes, refreshing and updating our guidance and resources, and expanding training access. The rollout of EBSA guidance and professional

learning has improved schools' ability to identify and respond to EBSA. The newly formed Inclusion Network will support the sharing of best practice, including EBSA and trauma informed pathways and processes.

Overall, Monmouthshire's integrated approach is fostering a more responsive, informed, and supportive educational environment for children and young people.

Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA)

The ELSA programme continues to be led and delivered by Educational Psychologists.

Currently Monmouthshire has around 78 active ELSAs across schools, settings and services. In Autumn 2024, a further ELSA Initial Training course was offered and fourteen new ELSAs were trained. In December 2024 (on completion of this Initial ELSA training course) all MCC schools, and the PRS had at least one active ELSA.

Feedback from Headteachers (summer 2024) showed that all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ELSAs positively impacted the wellbeing of targeted pupils.

High quality Initial ELSA Training and ongoing supervision will continue to be offered by the Education Psychology Service(EPS) with the aim of maintaining at least one ELSA in each school; Schools have indicated that there is a need for further ELSAs to be trained in 2025-26, therefore initial ELSA training will take place in Autumn 2025, alongside an ELSA professional learning event.

Continue our programme of school modernisation.

King Henry VIII 3-19 School progress

The new King Henry VIII 3-19 school opened in September 2023 and for the first 18 months operated on two different sites which was challenging especially when establishing a new school. Phase 1 of the construction project was completed in April 2025 and the school moved into the new building, on one site, at the start of the summer term 2025.

The new school building is approximately 15,800 m² and consists of two buildings connected by a 'street' enabling pupils and staff to share resources as well as exclusive areas ensuring safeguarding of all pupils.

Phase 2 of the project commenced immediately after the original schools were vacated and involves demolition of the old secondary building and construction of new 3G pitches, hockey pitch, Multi Use Games Area, and playing fields.

The total cost of the project is £63m and has been funded in partnership with Welsh Government Sustainable Communities for Learning grant funding.

The primary phase building (formally Deri View primary school) is being repurposed, and Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni will relocate to the site as part of the Council's plan to increase Welsh medium education in the north of the County. Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni will occupy their new building from September 2025. This project is also funded under the Sustainable Communities for Learning Funding

Welsh-medium expansion (Ysgol Gymraeg Trefynwy)

Ysgol Gymraeg Trefynwy was established and opened in September 2024. The school shares a site with Overmonnow Primary School in Monmouth. They have exclusive classrooms; however, they have a shared hall, dining room, and external play facilities.

The school has a capacity of 60 and currently has 24 on roll, including 15 in nursery. The school continues to grow and the anticipated number on roll for September 2025 is 29, including 9 in the nursery. This increased number on roll for September has meant that the school needs to expand into a second classroom.

The school also provides nursery education and wraparound childcare.

Chepstow area review

Following the completion of Phase 1 of King Henry 3-19 School, a member working group is being established to look at education provision in the Chepstow area.

Currently there are a significant number of surplus places within the Chepstow cluster. The primary sector has 249 surplus places within the primary schools (18%) and is projected to

increase. Whilst the secondary school has 418 surplus places (32.6%). And this level of surplus places is likely to increase further over the next 6 years.

Welsh Government recommend that “where there are more than 10% surplus places in an area, local authorities should review their provision and should make proposals for school re-organisation if this will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of provision.

Some work has been undertaken to look at various options for the Chepstow school site and the opportunities for the development of the site, taking into consideration the well-used Leisure Centre which is currently attached to the existing school.

An educational review has been undertaken with Chepstow School and the cluster of primary schools. The purpose of the review was to capture the current journey and future aspirations of Chepstow school in areas such as culture, ethos, curriculum and pedagogy, inclusion and wellbeing, sustainability and community.

Both pieces of work mentioned above will inform part of the determinations of the working group.

Early years and childcare developments

Busy Bodies Playgroup moved into their purpose-built accommodation in February 2025. The construction of a new nursery on the Trellech Primary School site was funded by the Welsh Government Childcare & Early Years Capital Grant. The investment has provided the nursery with a more certain future and provides them with a fit for purpose building to deliver high quality early education and wrap around childcare. It also enables them to have a closer working relationship with their feeder school and provides a smoother transition process for the children moving from the playgroup into the reception class.

Flying Start has consistently provides high-quality, fully funded childcare in deprived areas. Attendance for Monmouthshire's most deprived two-year-olds rose from 80% to 89% in 2025. Regular attendance offers intensive developmental support, enhancing cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Activities boost language, motor skills, and social interactions early on. This early intervention helps identify and address developmental delays, promoting school readiness and better long-term outcomes. Improved attendance at childcare may also lead to better school attendance when children start school.

We have worked with childcare providers to increase the number of Flying Start childcare places available. This ensures that families in disadvantaged areas can access free childcare, giving children access to key foundational learning and providing parents with the opportunity to return to work. Having a positive early years education ensures strong foundations for young people. Despite increased efforts to expand the number of childcare places, due to the closure of a nursery setting and the cancellation or suspension of the registration of some childminding settings, the number of places has reduced. We will continue to work with existing providers to develop new settings and promote a career in childcare to encourage more individuals to join the childcare workforce.

We have undertaken feasibility studies for childcare provision on the site of Archbishop Rowan Williams Primary School; a Business Justification Case will be submitted to the Welsh Government in Summer 2025. The development of an additional Cylch Meithrin has not progressed as planned due to a lack of suitable accommodation in Monmouth. This has meant that families in Monmouth and Chepstow are unable to access childcare, including Flying Start, through the medium of Welsh. We will continue to work closely with partners to develop Welsh medium provision in these communities.

Financial and Operational Risks

Budget pressures and school deficits

The 2024-25 outturn for schools has an overall deficit balance of £4.1m, with 15 schools in deficit. This is an improvement of £2m from month 9 forecast; the improvement is due to several grants from the Welsh Government being received in the last quarter.

Where schools are in a deficit, a recovery plan is agreed with the Local Authority and dependent on the level of deficit these plans may allow up to 10 years to recover. All significant deficits are discussed and agreed with the cabinet members for both education and resources.

School budgets are a significant concern, during the 2025-26 budget process £1m was invested in schools above pay and non-pay inflation, however even after this, it is projected that the collective deficit will increase to £6.8m with 20 schools in deficit.

In the recent 2024/25 statistic release from the Welsh Government, Monmouthshire's funding per pupil was the lowest in Wales at £5,157, the average being £5,736. However, in the latest Welsh Government statistics⁴ the decision to increase schools' funding for the 2025/26 year sees Monmouthshire move above the average for the first time in eight years. There will remain pressures on all schools' budgets in the coming period as inflationary pressures in pay and non-pay expenditure continue. We will work closely with schools and corporate colleagues to manage these pressures and to provide support to schools to manage their costs more effectively.

Central cost centres reported an underspend of £26k, an improvement of £322k on month 9, again this is due to the number of Welsh Government grants received in the final quarter.

ALN remains the highest risk area, with the level of need and support increasing. The work set above means that we have a well-developed tracking system to identify future needs and to ensure that our provision is matched to these. However, as seen across Wales (and the recent developments in England) the pressures in the ALN arena are likely to remain in the long term as higher levels of need are identified.

⁴ [Local authority budgeted expenditure on schools: April 2025 to March 2026 \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

School places

We continue to monitor the numbers on roll across our primary and secondary schools and respond appropriately to ensure our that our provision of school places is sufficient and sustainable. Secondary school numbers collectively show a stable position over the last 5 years, recording 4801 in mainstream provision in the January 2025 PLASC submission. Unfortunately, we do not anticipate this trend to continue over coming years with year 6 cohort numbers decreasing over the next 5 years which will undoubtedly impact on the numbers attending our three secondary schools and the secondary phase of the through school in Abergavenny.

The January 2025 PLASC recorded 6,021 young people on roll in our primary schools, which is a 3% reduction from the 6250 recorded in January 2020. The live birth data supplied by Aneurin Bevan University Health Board suggests that we can expect a continued fall in primary intake numbers over the next 3 years, which will be challenging for our schools.

The proposals outlined within the Council's proposed Replacement Local Development Plan are likely to have a positive impact on the numbers on roll across our schools, and we are working closely with planning colleagues, schools and the community to ensure that our provision over the coming years is appropriate.

Grant dependency

Grant funding is a significant area for the directorate with over half the posts funded via a grant. This can lead to funding being withdrawn at short notice with the directorate either having to lose the posts or find alternate funding. In addition to this, some service areas are put at risk where grant funding is withdrawn, leaving funding shortfalls for community projects supporting residents.

Transport

The home-to-school transport service and budget are managed in the Infrastructure Directorate. The Children, Learning, Skills and Economy Directorate is responsible for the management of the ALN Transport budget. Given the rurality of Monmouthshire this is significant, the current budget for ALN transport is £2.5m and there is a pressure added each year to support the service. Monmouthshire's strategy to try to meet pupils' needs close to their communities has helped to minimise these costs, however it remains an area of risk.

Management of the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund

In the course of the year the directorate has taken on responsibility for the management of the final transitionary year of the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). This is highlighted in this report because there are natural alignments to the skills agenda and the work with young people. It is also noted because this work was significant for the team in year as they had to manage a significant funding reduction.

Shared Prosperity Funding 2024/25

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a national funding programme to replace EU Structural Funds, administered at a local level as part of a 'regional investment plan' for the Cardiff Capital Region. The scope of the fund is wide range, but broadly covers community and place-based interventions, support to local businesses and economic development, and employability and skills growth. The original programme commenced in January 2023 and concluded at the end of March 2025 with 45 schemes supported to deliver local interventions of varying scales. Delivery was undertaken by a combination of in-house projects and working with local partners. The fund recorded over 100,000 "reaches", supported 507 organisations and 894 enterprises with non-financial support, engaged over 1000 people in life skills or basic skills courses, and supported almost 500 people to gain new qualifications, licenses or skills, amongst a range of other defined outputs and outcomes. Alongside this, the fund facilitated delivery of a range of non-measurable benefits to communities, businesses and residents.

The local authority experienced a real-terms reduction to its UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) allocation of 46%, when comparing 2024/25 to the 2025/26 "Transition Year", and an increased capital spend requirement of 27% of the fund total. The timing of the announcement of the funding, along with delays to the release of technical information for the transition year, meant that there was an incredibly condensed window within which a local investment plan could be developed towards the end of the financial year. A draft plan was produced following consideration of continuation proposals from within the existing programme, avoiding the cessation of all existing activity at the end of March 2025. In addition, a small amount of funding was retained to deliver a "call-out" for funding proposals to deliver short-term interventions during the 2025/26 financial year.

UK government Shared Prosperity Funding 2022 -2025

Coordination of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was a key strategic priority for 2024/25, ensuring the opportunity for the fund presented was maximised. Effective utilisation of the grant was essential in demonstrating both the need for and capacity to deliver local priorities through this type of funding ahead of wider funding reform in 2025. The fund supported over 40 projects during the year and was embedded within project and service delivery across a range of local authority departments and partner organisations. These activities both supported and complimented local service delivery and were intertwined

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with a broad range of strategic objectives from the Community and Corporate Plan and Service Business Plans. Without intervention from UKSPF, progress against a number of these key objectives would have been significantly hindered, reduced, or completely lost, in addition to significant impacts on a range of other local strategies and action plans.

Conclusions and Closing Thoughts

This report has sought to provide all Councillors with a view of how our education system is performing. As I state in my introductory comments it is not intended to be all encompassing, recognising every success or addressing every risk that we face but rather it is intended to provide a level of assurance and clarity for the reader.

Through the report there are areas of strong practice; the performance of our schools in external examinations, the attendance of pupils in primary school and the progress that learners make, that is evident in our schools. Our work to support vulnerable learners and promote the wellbeing of all our learners should also be noted.

The delivery of Wales' first operationally net-zero carbon school in Abergavenny is an achievement that should be celebrated. The change in the provision to a through school offers the chance to enhance the opportunities in the most socio-economically disadvantaged part of the County. The school has the potential to be transformative for its learners.

However, the report also identifies the risks that we face and some specific challenges. We can still make further progress in our school-based performance and our continued focus on excellence in the classroom will remain. The performance of our children eligible for free school meals remains (and will always be) a priority. This now also extends to their attendance in school. We are also seeing changes in the range of children's needs present in our schools. Children with neuro-development needs are now the most significant group of ALN learners but we are also seeing the emergence of a cohort of younger children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. The provision for these learners will need to be monitored and potentially enhanced in the coming period.

The challenge for the directorate is to balance a number of competing priorities and we will continue to work closely with our schools in an open and honest way to meet that challenge. The way in which the schools have started the journey to becoming a self-supporting and self-improving system is a positive development.

A risk that underlies all the considerations of educational provision noted above is that of funding. School's budgets are under pressure and that brings pressure on school leaders. Fortunately, the investment in the 2025/26 budget should alleviate some of those challenges but it is likely to require enhanced funding in the future. This will be set against challenging public finances and competing priorities within this Council too.

I will close the report by recognising that none of the achievements recognised, nor the actions taken to mitigate the risks that have been identified, would have been possible without the time and energy of a host of professionals across Monmouthshire. Colleagues in our schools, within the authority and in our partners work tirelessly to ensure that our learners and young people, from our very youngest children supported by Flying Start to our learners preparing themselves for university, apprenticeships and the world of work at the end of their school careers are as well supported and cared for as they can be. I am

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grateful that every day I have the opportunity to work with such a group of committed and talented colleagues.

Appendix 1 - Glossary

ALN	Additional Learning Needs
ALNCO	ALN Coordinator
ALNET	Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal Act
ALP	Additional Learning Provision
AOLE	Areas of Learning and experience
CLA	Children Looked After
EAL/ML	English as an Additional Language/Multi-lingual
EBSA	Emotionally Based School Avoidance
eFSM	Eligible Free School Meals
EHE	Elective Home Educated
ELSA	Emotional Literacy Support Assistant
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
EWS	Education Welfare Service
FSM	Free School Meals
IDP	Individual Development Plan
LACE	Looked After Children in Education Officer
LOSIE	Lead Officer for Safeguarding in Education
MASS	Monmouthshire Autism in Schools and Settings
MEP	Monitoring Evaluation Process
PEP	Personal Education Plan
PRS	Pupil Referral Service
RSE	Relationship and Sex Education
RVE	Religious and Values Education
SHRN	School Health Research Network

TIPSS	Trauma Informed Practice Skills & Strategy
TRACE	Trauma and Adverse childhood experiences
VLL	Vulnerable Learners Lead

Appendix 2 – The Evidence Base

Estyn outcomes (since May 2022) – school and local authority	Outcomes of SIP Supported Self-Evaluation	Self-evaluation summaries	SDP priorities	All local authority Evaluative Impact Reports (EIR)
17 inspection reports	All Schools	22 summaries	All Schools	7 EIRs
<p>Based on the recommendations and areas for improvement highlighted in the seventeen inspection reports for Monmouthshire schools, strategic priorities for the local authority could include:</p> <p>Strengthening the quality, focus, and impact of school self-evaluation and improvement planning processes, identified as a need in a majority of reports</p> <p>Improving the consistency and quality of teaching,</p>	<p>Improvement of Teaching and Learning Quality and Consistency ensuring that teaching is consistently good, supporting and challenging pupils of all abilities.</p> <p>Developing Skills, Particularly Literacy, Numeracy, and Digital Skills, including ensuring they have opportunities to apply these skills effectively across the curriculum. Specifically, raising standards and providing opportunities for literacy, numeracy, and digital (ICT) skills.</p> <p>Strengthening Self-</p>	<p>Improving pupils' skills in key areas, particularly Welsh language, literacy numeracy and digital competency.</p> <p>Strengthening the quality and consistency of teaching and learning, including challenge for all learners and effective feedback.</p> <p>Developing leadership capacity at all levels, including middle leaders and governors, to drive school improvement.</p>	<p>Improving teaching and learning to ensure high-quality teaching, develop pupils' skills and promote independent learning.</p> <p>Developing leadership at all levels.</p> <p>Developing assessment and self-evaluation processes to effectively monitor pupil progress.</p> <p>Improving attendance and fostering pupils' social, emotional, and mental wellbeing.</p>	<p>Improve the quality and consistency of teaching, focusing on challenge, differentiation, and high expectations and explicit planning for skills progression across the curriculum. Leadership needs to ensure this consistency.</p> <p>Strengthen leadership capacity and effectiveness, especially for middle and senior leaders, enabling them to drive school improvement and conduct robust self-evaluation, monitoring, and quality assurance.</p>

Estyn outcomes (since May 2022) – school and local authority	Outcomes of SIP Supported Self-Evaluation	Self-evaluation summaries	SDP priorities	All local authority Evaluative Impact Reports (EIR)
<p>ensuring appropriate challenge, effective feedback, and fostering independent learning, noted in a majority of reports.</p> <p>Enhancing pupils' skills development, focusing on application across the curriculum and progressive skill-building, an issue in around half of reports.</p> <p>Improving pupils' Welsh language skills and confidence, particularly spoken Welsh in informal situations and understanding culture, highlighted in around half of reports</p> <p>Developing provision to support pupils'</p>	<p>Evaluation and Improvement Processes improving the rigor and effectiveness of their self-evaluation and monitoring processes. This often includes ensuring these processes accurately identify areas for development, focus on the impact on pupil progress and learning, and involve staff, leaders, governors, and sometimes parents and pupils.</p> <p>Developing Leadership at All Levels There is a recurring need to develop leadership capacity, distribution, and effectiveness across schools, including senior, middle, and aspiring leaders.</p> <p>Improving Attendance Several schools identify</p>	<p>Refining self-evaluation and improvement planning processes to ensure they accurately identify impact on pupil outcomes.</p> <p>Addressing specific areas impacting pupil progress and well-being, such as attendance, provision for ALN, and the use of the outdoor learning environment.</p>	<p>Enhancing the curriculum, including through the development of digital skills and Welsh language development.</p>	<p>Enhance assessment practices, including improving marking and feedback, promoting self and peer assessment, and improving questioning techniques.</p> <p>Develop pupils' independent learning skills and resilience, providing opportunities for purposeful independent and collaborative work and reducing over-reliance on adult support.</p> <p>Ensure targeted and effective support for vulnerable learners by, maximising resources like the PDG grant and implementing evidenced based strategies to address</p>

Estyn outcomes (since May 2022) – school and local authority	Outcomes of SIP Supported Self-Evaluation	Self-evaluation summaries	SDP priorities	All local authority Evaluative Impact Reports (EIR)
<p>independent learning and improving the quality and consistency of feedback to help pupils improve their work, noted as areas for development or recommendation in a minority of reports</p>	<p>attendance as an area requiring improvement, sometimes with a specific focus on analysing data effectively or addressing attendance for particular groups like those eligible for free school meals.</p> <p>Enhancing Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Provision Strengthening provision for pupils with ALN is a focus, including meeting statutory obligations, tracking progress, and ensuring appropriate support and resources. Developing staff understanding of specific needs.</p> <p>Improving Assessment and Feedback Schools are working on improving assessment strategies, such as assessment for learning, and strengthening feedback</p>			<p>barriers, improve wellbeing, and accelerate progress.</p>

Estyn outcomes (since May 2022) – school and local authority	Outcomes of SIP Supported Self-Evaluation	Self-evaluation summaries	SDP priorities	All local authority Evaluative Impact Reports (EIR)
	<p>processes to ensure they are effective in helping pupils understand how to improve their work. Providing opportunities for pupils to engage in self and peer assessment is also an area of focus.</p> <p>Developing Pupils' Independent Learning Skills Providing opportunities for pupils to develop independence and resilience in their learning is a recurring theme.</p> <p>Progressive Development of Welsh Language Skills Numerous schools are working on improving pupils' Welsh language skills, particularly spoken Welsh or oracy, and ensuring opportunities to use Welsh across the curriculum or in everyday</p>			

Estyn outcomes (since May 2022) – school and local authority	Outcomes of SIP Supported Self-Evaluation	Self-evaluation summaries	SDP priorities	All local authority Evaluative Impact Reports (EIR)
	situations.			

Appendix 3 - Primary School Attendance by School 1st September 2024 to 21st February 2025

Schools above 95%	Schools below 95% and above 93%	Schools below 93% and above 90%
ARW	Castle Park	Cross Ash
Cantref	Dewstow	Kymin View
Goytre	Durand	Llandogo
Llanvihangel	Gilwern	Pembroke*
Osbaston	Llanfoist	Thornwell
Raglan	Magor	King Henry
Shirenewton	OLSM	
The Dell	Overmonnow*	
Trellech	Rogiet	
	St Mary's	
	Undy	
	Y Fenni	
	Y Ffin	

NB: * Schools with an SRB

Numbers in Ysgol Gymraeg Trefynwy are too small to be meaningful at this point.

Appendix 4 – The Education Welfare Service Graduated Response

Model School Graduated response to improving attendance. Attendance is a whole school priority – Everyone’s business!	
97% - 100% Class Teacher Form Tutor Attendance Officer Family Liaison Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School attendance is tracked weekly by allocated school member of staff for attendance. Key school staff i.e. FACE, FLO, Attendance Officer, Wellbeing/Pastoral support, Head of Year’s (HoY’s) meet regularly within school – who does what when? Learners and parents are made aware of their attendance (half termly/termly/Parent meetings/Parents Evenings). High/Improved attendance is celebrated (Assembly, meetings etc.)
96% - 90% Class Teacher Form Tutor Attendance Officer Family Liaison Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form tutors / class teachers and other key staff in school will discuss changes to attendance with individual pupils and inform parents. On-going tracking of attendance to identify possible barriers to school attendance and appropriate strategies put in place to support pupils (i.e. – Mentoring, ELSA, Nurture group, meet & greet) Letters to parents to share attendance and any concerns, followed up with improvement or continued decline letters.
90% - 81% Heads of Year Attendance Officer Family Liaison Officer Wellbeing Support Pastoral Support Attendance Lead/HT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents and carers are informed of a continued decline in attendance and concerns and barriers to attendance are explored with school staff and pupil/parents in an arranged school meeting. School-based support continued to be offered i.e. mentoring, ELSA, set quiet zones, Pastoral Support plan consideration. Attendance Plan to look at attendance improvement, outlining barriers and strategies developed by school - A chronology sheet may be useful to record actions. Reasonable adjustments made were appropriate to support attendance (i.e. exit pass, meet and greet on arrival, mentoring, quiet zones for lunch / break) Monitoring and tracking of impact and outcomes of actions taken by the school in relation to attendance plan. Reviewed plans and pastoral support plans with parents and pupils and any additional agencies involved. Consideration by school of One Page Profile and ALNCo/EPS

	<p>advice/Guidance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Referral to EWS for FLO support following school consultation meeting discussions.
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<p>80% - 50%</p> <p>Heads of Year</p> <p>Attendance Officer</p> <p>Family Liaison Officer</p> <p>Wellbeing Support</p> <p>Pastoral Support</p> <p>Attendance Lead/HT</p> <p>EWS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key school staff allocated to monitor the Attendance Plan (embedded within existing plan – One Page Profile, Pastoral Support Plan with alternative provision or a reintegration timetable may be considered etc.) and attendance is tracked, with actions taken and impact evaluated and recorded. • Concerns with continually decreasing attendance passed onto HoY / HT / Attendance Lead • Consider referrals to external professionals – Inspire, Face 2 Face Counselling, School Health Nurse, CAMHS In-Reach Group, SPACE Wellbeing • Referral to EWS for FLO support following school consultation meeting discussions. • Discussion with EWS in consultation meetings and consideration of formal referral. • If formal referral is agreed following school having exhausted all possible school supporting strategies, school to meet with parents/carers to share concerns and inform them of any referral to EWS before making the referral.
<p>49% - 0%</p> <p>Heads of Year</p> <p>Attendance Officer</p> <p>Family Liaison Officer</p> <p>Wellbeing Support</p> <p>Pastoral Support</p> <p>Attendance Lead/HT</p> <p>EWS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School to carry out frequent reviews of the Attendance Plan with key member of school staff, with regular tracking and recoding of actions taken and impact – A chronology sheet may be useful. • Bespoke support offered, with the potential of more bespoke learning provision within school as identified by the school. • School to monitor the impact of bespoke support on levels of attendance. • Formal consultation with the Education Welfare Service regarding the concerns if a referral has not already been made.

Appendix 5 – Non-maintained Settings’ Estyn Inspection Outcomes

Non-maintained Setting	Date	Follow-up	Case studies
Meadowbank Day Nursery*	September 2022	No	Yes
Mathern Day Nursery at Caerwent	September 2022	No	No
Tiny Tots	October 2022	No	No
Crossway Nursery*	October 2022	No	Yes
Ladybirds at OLSM	November 2022	No	No
Sticky Fingers Under Fives	December 2022	No	No
Little Tigers Day Care	February 2023	No	No
Nevill Hall Creche	May 2023	No	No
Sunshines Pre-school	June 2023	No	No
Llandogo Early Years	June 2023	No	No
Ladybirds at Llanvihangel	October 2023	No	No
Little Explorers	November 2023	No	Yes
Little Trees St Arvan’s	March 2024	No	No
Busy Bodies Playgroup*	June 2024	No	Yes
Usk Nursery	October 2024	No	No
Puddle Ducks Nursery”	November 2024	No	No
Hopscotch Nursery	December 2024	No	Yes

Appendix 6 – Primary School Inspection Outcomes

School	Date	Follow-up	Case studies
Dewstow	May 22	Special measures	No
St Mary's R.C.	June 22	No follow-up	Yes
The Dell	June 22	No follow-up	No
Gilwern	October 22	Estyn Review	No
King Henry VIII	November 2022	Significant improvement	No
Castle Park	December 22	No follow-up	No
Llanfoist	January 23	No follow-up	No
Llanvihangel	January 23	No follow-up	No
Cantref	April 23	No follow-up	No
Undy	May 23	No follow-up	Yes
Trellech	October 23	No follow-up	No
Monmouth	February 23	No follow-up	No
Kymin View	March 24	No follow-up	No
Llandogo	March 24	No follow-up	No
Cross Ash	May 24	No follow-up	No
OLSM	July 24	No follow up	No
Y Fenni	September 24	No follow-up	Yes
Caldicot	October 24	Significant improvement	No
ARW	November 24	No follow-up	Yes
Magor	January 25	No Follow-up	Yes
Shirenewton	March 25	No follow-up	Yes
Chepstow	March 25	No follow-up	Yes

Appendix 7 - Local Authority Aggregate Data

Key measures – Compared with Wales

Please note that these measures are not contextualised but compare with the Wales average.

Table 1.1c - Qualifications outcomes				
Title	2023 - Monmouthshire	2024 - Monmouthshire	2023 - Wales	2024 - Wales
Capped 9 points score (interim)	374.7	369.8	358.1	352.1
WBacc Skills Challenge Certificate indicator – points score	41.1	37.8	31.6	30.2
Literacy indicator – points score	41.9	40.3	39.7	38.5
Numeracy indicator – points score	41.2	39.7	37.1	35.9
Science indicator – points score	38.9	37.8	36.9	36.0
No qualifications - % of pupils	0.8	1.1	1.4	1.8
5+ A* A or equivalent	26.0	27.5	20.3	18.1

For all measures Monmouthshire is above the Wales average, except No qualifications (where lower is desirable).

Key measures – Compared with 'Modelled' by FSM

Modelled expectations for each indicator are all above expectation indicated by Free School Meals, except literacy indicator which is slightly below. Please note that each table number is from the original data pack, not this report.

Table 4.1 - KS4 Capped 9 points score (interim) - LA Average			
Title	2024 - Capped 9 points score (interim)	2024 - Modelled score	2024 - Difference
Monmouthshire	379.4	372.1	7.3
Wales	364.2	-	-

The Capped 9 score is 7.3 points above the modelled expectation. This is the equivalent of approximately 1/7th of a GCSE grade per learner.

Table 4.2 - KS4 WBacc Skills Challenge Certificate indicator - points score - LA Average			
Title	2024 - WBacc Skills Challenge Certificate indicator – points score	2024 - Modelled score	2024 - Difference
Monmouthshire	39.2	36.2	3
Wales	31.4	-	-

The Skills Challenge Certificate score is above expectation, by the equivalent of almost half a GCSE (equivalent) grade per learner.

Table 4.3 - KS4 Literacy indicator - points score - LA Average			
Title	2024 - Literacy indicator – points score	2024 - Modelled score	2024 - Difference
Monmouthshire	41.1	41.3	-0.2
Wales	39.8	-	-

The literacy score is 2.3 points above expectation, the equivalent of 1/3rd of a GCSE per learner.

Table 4.4 - KS4 Numeracy indicator - points score - LA Average

Title	2024 - Numeracy indicator – points score	2024 - Modelled score	2024 - Difference
Monmouthshire	40.5	38.2	2.3
Wales	37.1	-	-

The numeracy score is also 2.3 points above expectation.

Table 4.5 - KS4 Science indicator - points score - LA Average

Title	2024 - Science indicator – points score	2024 - Modelled score	2024 - Difference
Monmouthshire	39.1	39	0.1
Wales	37.3	-	-

The science score is very slightly above expectation, the equivalent of 1/60th of a GCSE grade per learner.