

Monmouthshire Scrutiny

Performance and Overview Scrutiny Committee ~ Feedback to Cabinet of Meeting held on 27th January 2026

Report Item 3: School Exclusions Update

The Committee undertook thorough scrutiny of the report, highlighting the following important issues:

Members raised extensive questions about the rising number of school exclusions, seeking clarity on why exclusions and days lost have increased so sharply and how the position compares with Wales, the UK and internationally. They probed the prevalence of repeat exclusions, what happens to those pupils, and whether the current pattern is sustainable. Several members also asked for clearer explanations of how permanent exclusions can be rescinded, why this happens, and what processes and safeguards are in place when pupils move between schools or into the PRU. Questions focused heavily on whether enough proactive, early intervention work is being done to build resilience and prevent behavioural escalation, particularly in younger pupils.

There were concerns about the support pupils receive during and after an exclusion, including what a “typical” exclusion period looks like, how safeguarding is maintained, and whether more could be done to help schools manage reintegration. Members also queried the effectiveness of current interventions—such as trauma-informed practice, managed moves, PRU involvement, and multi-agency working—and asked what evidence exists for which approaches reduce repeat exclusions most effectively. Another theme was inconsistency between schools: members wanted to know how differing exclusion practices are challenged, what formal escalation exists, and how disproportionate numbers in particular schools are addressed. The impact of school budget pressures, staffing reductions, and the flexibility (or potential rigidity) of the new Welsh curriculum were also explored.

Finally, members highlighted information gaps, questioning why exclusion reasons were not broken down in the report and whether future reports could provide more detail, including parental involvement. They also raised broader issues around parental disengagement, smartphone use among children, and the need for clarity and transparency around coding systems, governor oversight, and the capacity of local authority officers to meet rising demand.

Chair’s Conclusion:

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The Chair thanked officers and particularly the Headteachers for attending, and extended the members' thanks to their teams for their hard work. In addition, the Chair highlighted the freshly published Estyn reports on Monmouthshire Education Service and Youth Service, which are positive reports that reflect well on the council's work and should be recognized as such. These reports will be reassuring to service users, parents and learners. He congratulated the council's education team.

Report Item 4: Schools Health Research Network

The Committee undertook thorough scrutiny of the report, highlighting the following important issues:

Members questioned the extent of multi-agency involvement in pupil wellbeing, particularly the roles of counselling, psychoeducation and emotional regulation support for young people before issues escalate. They asked how resilience-building best practice is shared and embedded across schools, and raised concerns about inconsistent participation, asking why not all primary schools or the PRU were included in the SHRN survey. Additional questions focused on whether teaching staff are sufficiently trained to deliver mental health education effectively, and whether there is a risk of pathologising normal childhood stress.

Members queried whether the wellbeing dataset focuses too much on process rather than outcomes, and whether it provides a sufficiently complete picture given that it is anonymised and high-level. They raised concerns about whether issues such as sleep difficulties, physical activity and broader lifestyle factors were being explored meaningfully, and questioned how the data could be used more actively across the curriculum to promote pupil ownership of wellbeing. They also asked whether responses from pupils might be influenced by social desirability, potentially limiting the reliability of some findings.

Chair's Conclusion:

The Chair thanked the officers for the report and their responses to the committee's questions.