

COUNCIL: 27 JANUARY 2022

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS STATEMENT

Estyn

The local authority's education services underwent a full inspection by Estyn from 29 November to 3 December 2021. The last full inspection was undertaken in 2011. The inspection covered three areas: Outcomes (standards and progress); Education Services; and Leadership & Management, and also included Youth Services. The Inspection Report will be published by Estyn on 9 February 2022.

Qualifications Arrangements 2021-22

At present, all exams planned to take place this year are set to go ahead. Any decision to cancel exams would be made by the Welsh Government. In November 2021, Qualifications Wales shared information with schools and colleges about contingency plans telling them how to award Centre Determined Grades should they be needed. Schools and colleges award Centre Determined Grades by assessing learners' work.

The Welsh Government asked all schools in Wales to have two planning days earlier this month at the start of term. This included time to allow secondary school and college leaders to plan for learners to sit their January exams safely. The Welsh Government has also provided operational advice to support schools and colleges.

If learners are unable to sit any GCSE, AS or A level exams due to take place this month because they are ill or need to self-isolate, they will be able to take them in the summer instead. Vocational qualifications are more diverse in the way that they are assessed. Awarding bodies have already communicated adaptations they have made to their qualifications to schools and colleges.

If exams are cancelled, vocational qualifications similar to GCSE, AS and A level would be awarded using Centre Determined Grades (Teacher Assessed Grades). Awarding bodies will provide further guidance for schools and colleges if exams are cancelled. Ofqual has also published guidance on vocational qualifications for this academic year, with useful information for schools, colleges and learners.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

Implementation of the new ALN system in Wales began in September 2021 and will be rolled out over the next three years. From 1 September 2021, the new system applied to any child not previously identified as having special educational needs (SEN) and any young person who is detained.

From 1 January 2022, the ALN system applies to children in Nursery, or in Years 1, 3, 5, 7, and 10 (except those who have a statement of SEN). Schools have therefore begun identifying which pupils in these year groups have ALN and will hold Person Centred Planning meetings to agree an Individual Development Plan (IDP). For those children who are looked after, or are registered EOTAS, the local authority must take responsibility for identifying whether there are ALN and for creating and maintaining the IDP. This process should be completed before the end of the academic year.

Children and young people with statements of SEN will begin to move over to the new ALN system from September 2022. The process is anticipated to be rolled out over two years. The Council and schools are currently updating their websites to include a range of information for children, young people and their families that explains the new system.

Cardiff Commitment

A wide range of activity is being delivered this term with Cardiff Commitment partners, to open up opportunities and develop the skills and talents of our children and young people. This includes a new 'Debatemate' Cup challenge, which will be launched next month at 8 Secondary Schools in Cardiff, with the support of FinTech Wales and the Council's Economic Development Team. This builds upon the recent success of two young people from Willows High School who competed against schools from across the UK to reach the final of the Dubai Expo Factor competition on 2 December 2021, which they won. They will now travel to Dubai with their teachers to represent the UK on 10 February 2022. Cantonian High School and Cardiff West Community High School also competed and made it to the semi-final.

In addition, the 'Project Search' supported employment pathway for young people with learning disabilities launched in September 2021, which is a partnership between Education Inclusion Services and Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (UHB). This month, the young people are commencing their work-based placements in hospital, supported by a teacher and a specialist employment coach. The aim of the programme is to support the transition from school to work and for students to gain full-time employment at the end of the year, either within the UHB or externally. We hope that this will be the beginning of the development of more supported employment pathways for young people with additional learning needs across the city.

Youth Service

Cardiff's Youth Service was notified in December 2021 that it had achieved the Bronze Level Youth Work Quality Mark. Renewal of the Quality Mark was required due to the redesign of the process, which is extensive and comprised of self-evaluation against prescribed criteria, interviews, visits, and examination of evidence. This is all undertaken by external assessors and then approved by Welsh Government.

The assessors had to be satisfied that the service:

- has a clear vision and plan which measures the impact and effectiveness of its work with young people;
- has good quality youth work practice which meets the local needs of young people;

- develops young people's knowledge, skills and understanding and young people help shape the organisation (e.g. personal, social and emotional skills); and
- meets legal requirements (safeguarding and health & safety).

The Youth Service is now well placed to apply for the Silver Level Youth Work Quality Mark.

In addition to securing the Youth Work Quality Mark and inspection of the Youth Service by Estyn, a review of the Youth Service is to be undertaken by an independent lead. The review will seek to build on the excellent work undertaken to date by the Youth Service and will apply an evidence-based approach, including consideration of the capacity of youth work services to support a sustainable and balanced delivery model for both universal and targeted support across the city.

Cardiff Winter of Wellbeing Programme

Building on the excellent work delivered during the Summer of Smiles and utilising new Welsh Government funding, we are currently delivering the Cardiff Winter of Wellbeing programme, which is focused on 0-25 year-olds. Our Child Friendly City Team is coordinating the programme, which is aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of children, young people and their families during this challenging time. This started last month, with thousands of families gaining free access to live Christmas performances and events throughout the city.

The programme is continuing into the New Year, with 24 community organisations across the city successfully applying for wellbeing grants to deliver a wide range of activities throughout the winter months, including sports, crafts, skateboarding, acting and skating to give just a few examples. There will also be a Cardiff Science Festival where the audience will be invited to a host of new experiences, such as watching researchers dissect a jelly brain, seeing footage of the weird lightning effects on the edge of space captured by the International Space Station and even, so I am told, dancing with dinosaurs! We also have a 10-week wellbeing arts programme starting this month that will be delivered by 19 city-wide partners, including Ministry of Life, Opera Sonic, Barnardo's, Community Music Wales, GLL and St David's Hall.

Children, young people and their families can also visit the Child Friendly Cardiff pop-up shop in the city centre as part of a partnership with St David's Centre. The 6-week residency will see a full, free programme of fun and creative activities for 0-25 year olds being delivered by 20 partners. Again, we are very grateful for the contribution of our partners, including Cardiff and Vale College, RSPB, Green Squirrel, Play Wales, Fiery Jacks, Pedal Emporium, Democracy Box, as well as a range of council services.

Rights Respecting Schools Award

The UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award forms a significant part of our journey to embed children's rights across the city. I am pleased to announce that the number of schools active within the award goes from strength to strength, with over 60% of schools now at bronze, silver or gold award level.

I want to congratulate the pupils and staff at Coed Glas Primary for gaining the Rights Respecting Schools Gold Award. Last month saw a flurry of assessments by UNICEF, with Trowbridge Primary School, Ysgol Hamadryad, Severn Primary School and Ysgol Y Berllan Deg all submitting the rights-based action plan to receive the Bronze Award.

All schools in Cardiff can be part of the UNICEF award free at the point of access as part of a centrally funded package negotiated by the local authority. I would ask those members who are also school governors to encourage their school to become part of the Rights Respecting Schools Award, as the evidence shows the many positive outcomes for both pupils and staff.

Challenging Bullying, Hate Crime/Incidents and Harassment

Guidance has been issued to Cardiff schools, which aims to set out a clear and consistent message for school communities, with a focus on promoting equality and tackling direct and indirect discrimination against children and young people. The guidance builds upon the advice and guidance issued by Welsh Government and requires schools to develop appropriate priorities and programmes of action to reduce discrimination against excluded, socially marginalised, disadvantaged children and to promote equality for these groups. A series of training sessions have been held with school practitioners and school governors in addition to the issuing of this guidance.

Councillor Sarah Merry
Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills
20 January 2022