

COUNCIL: 17 MARCH 2022

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS STATEMENT

Estyn Inspection Report

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 was published by Estyn on 9 February 2022 and can be accessed on the Estyn website at: https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2022-02/Inspection%20report%20Cardiff%20Council%202022_2.pdf

In summary, the inspection report notes the sustained and incremental improvement in the quality and effectiveness of education services in Cardiff. It acknowledges the "*bold and ambitious vision for all learners*" that is shared by senior leaders in the Council and the high expectations for officers, schools and other providers that are set out by the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Education and Chief Executive. The strong commitment of elected members and officers at all levels to supporting young people and their families was also highly evident. The report also details the strong educational outcomes for Cardiff schools following inspections between 2017 and 2020 and highlights that, at Key Stage 4, outcomes for learners are above expectation for many schools. The report makes four recommendations for improvement:

1. Improve counselling services for children and young people
2. Improve quality of self-evaluation
3. Ensure work of regional consortium focused on Cardiff's priorities
4. Ensure strategic leadership and oversight – development of Welsh-medium education

Estyn has also invited the Council to prepare three case studies on its work in relation to the Cardiff Commitment, support for asylum seekers and transforming youth work for dissemination on Estyn's website, recognising excellent practice.

Estyn Inspections of Schools

Estyn recently completed a monitoring visit of progress at Cardiff West Community High School. Following this visit, the school has been judged to have made sufficient progress and, as a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is removing the school from any further follow-up activity. This means that there are currently no Cardiff schools in an Estyn category or subject to follow up activity, which is a great achievement and further demonstrates the progress and improvements made by schools and education services in Cardiff under this Administration.

Review of Youth Services

I can confirm that the first phase of the review of Youth Services, which is being undertaken by an independent lead, has now commenced. The review will seek to build on the excellent work undertaken to date by the Youth Service, which was recognised by Estyn in its recent inspection report. Initial feedback arising from the review is expected to be provided to officers by the end of April 2022.

Covid-19 Guidance for Schools

With Covid-19 cases continuing to fall and following changes made to the alert level in Wales and related Covid restrictions by the Welsh Government, all schools in Cardiff have returned to a local decision-making framework of mitigations in line with a move to alert level zero. The Council will continue to monitor case numbers and the impact on schools in Cardiff and will work with individual schools, where cases numbers increase, to ensure that an appropriate level of mitigations are in place. All schools will continue to reinforce social distancing, hand hygiene and good ventilation, but other mitigations, such as staggered starts and finishes, will not be in place.

Qualifications Arrangements 2021-22

On [7 February 2022](#), Qualifications Wales issued further advance information about the changes or adaptations to assessments for GCSE, AS, A level and vocational qualifications in 2021/22. This followed on from the information that was shared with schools and colleges in November 2021 that explained the changes or 'adaptations' (as termed by Qualifications Wales) to assessments in order to give them enough time to prepare for exams in summer 2022. Changes have been made to GCSE, AS, A level and vocational qualifications to reflect the disruption to teaching and learning time due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

School Organisation Programme Update

The Council has appointed ISG Construction as the contractor to design and build the Fairwater Campus project. The extensive project, which will possibly be the largest in Wales to date, brings together three schools on one site – Cantonian High School, Riverbank Primary School and Woodlands Secondary School. This is a flagship project for the Council that puts education at the heart of the design and is sector leading on net zero carbon measures. Subject to planning and procurement, work on the new campus is expected to begin in 2023.

The Fitzalan High School project is also progressing well and a topping out ceremony was held on 8 February 2022, which was attended by the Welsh Government Minister for Education and Welsh Language, Jeremy Miles MS. It was great to see how far the building works have progressed, as well as some of the amazing stories of how the build is impacting positively on the local community. One of the Kier Design Managers also used to attend Fitzalan High School.

A ground breaking ceremony was held on 10 March 2022 to mark the start of construction of a new primary school as part of the St Edeyrns development within the Pontprennau & Old St Mellons ward. The Council has worked closely with the developer, Persimmon, to award the building contract to Halsall Construction. The

school will be the new home of St Mellons Church in Wales Primary School, which is currently located in Llanrumney, and is also the first school to be delivered as part of Cardiff's Local Development Plan.

Edible Playgrounds

Cardiff Council is working in partnership with environmental charity, Trees for Cities, and has, so far, delivered 15 'edible playgrounds' to schools across the city with the aim of getting children excited about growing and eating healthy food, whilst providing valuable outdoor learning resources. We have been able to transform school playgrounds into vibrant outdoor fruit and vegetable gardens using bespoke designs where food growing can be accessed across the entire school, encouraging healthier diets and good eating behaviours among our children and young people.

I attended the official launch of the project at Glan-yr-Afon Primary School in Llanrumney on 8 March 2022, together with representatives from Trees for Cities and Grow Cardiff. School staff and pupils also performed a song that was specially composed for the event. I am pleased that funding has been awarded for 2022/23 to continue this programme, which we aim to expand to include up to 40 schools across the city over the next three years. This will also support the delivery of our One Planet Cardiff strategy by promoting a range of air quality, tree planting and holistic greening schemes to address climate change.

Cardiff Commitment

On 4 March 2022, the Cardiff Commitment, in partnership with Invest in Cardiff, Fintech Wales and Debatemate, launched the 12-week debating programme with Cardiff West Community High School, Cantonian High School, Cathays High School, Willows High School, St Teilo's Church in Wales High School, Eastern High, Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf and Fitzalan High School. Over 100 pupils attended the launch and young people will be introduced to the FinTech industry via the debates, which involve schools debating against each other on topics relating to the FinTech industry – anything from Big Data to Artificial Intelligence. FinTech companies in Cardiff such as Admiral Insurance, Grant Thornton and Delio will be supporting the judging of the debates at Week 8 that will culminate in the debate finals in Week 12.

The Cardiff Commitment Team and Into Work Advice Service have appointed a Volunteer Officer to support the development of volunteering placements for young people aged 14-24 years old. The Volunteer Officer will be working with Cardiff Commitment partners to encourage and support them to develop volunteering placements in their organisations. A Social Value Officer has also been appointed to the Cardiff Commitment Team to ensure that opportunities through goods and services contracts, both internal and external to the Council, are developed that support children and young people in the city.

The Cardiff Commitment, in partnership with Fitzalan High School and the Council's HR People Services have supported the funding, recruitment and placements for five young people from Cardiff to take up Kickstart placements at Fitzalan High School in estates, cleaning and ICT. The Cardiff Commitment Post 16 Officer will also be working with the young people to capture their experiences of the programme with a view to developing similar opportunities across other high schools in the city.

The Cardiff Commitment School Business Forums have now been developed in a total of five secondary schools in the city (St Teilo's, Cathays, Cantonian, Willows and Cardiff West), with a further three secondary schools signing up this month to the programme for September 2022 (Whitchurch, Glantaf and Eastern). The Business Forums provide schools with employers reflective of the growth sectors in the region and provide a mechanism for schools to develop partnerships, collaborate and deliver careers and work-related experiences for their pupils, which encourage ambition, deliver skills and provide opportunities that support progression into education, employment and training.

Project Search is nearing its first year of completion, with eight young people experiencing a supported employment pathway in partnership with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. Recruitment for the September 2022 cohort is currently taking place and, after the success of this year's programme, the cohort size is doubling to offer this experience to a total of sixteen pupils. Employers across the city have also expressed an interest in developing more supported employment pathways for young people with Additional Learning Needs and the Cardiff Commitment will look to develop this over the coming months.

Cardiff Winter of Wellbeing Programme

Our city-wide Winter of Wellbeing programme continues to be delivered to children and young people in Cardiff and has involved 31 community organisations delivering fun, engaging and creative activities for families as part of our community grant and arts programme. Last month, our free Half-Term programme was attended by over 2,000 children and young people. Children, young people and their families can also still visit the Child Friendly Cardiff pop-up shop within St David's Centre, which has seen over 5,000 people visit and take part in a schedule of free activities. Some examples of the great activities that have taken place to date include a Lego workshop run by Arup, which enabled children to design a city centre contributing to a live consultation in the city centre; parents writing and recording a bespoke lullaby; Ukulele lessons, and a baby disco. More information about what's happening as part of the Winter of Wellbeing programme until the end of March 2022 can be found on the Child Friendly Cardiff website at: https://www.childfriendlycardiff.co.uk/winter_of_wellbeing/

Women Connect First

I was delighted to join Councillor Gordon in meeting recently with representatives from local charity, Women Connect First, whose offices are in the Riverside ward. I then went along, on 28 February 2022, to see one of their after school clubs which is held on Monday afternoons at Butetown Pavilion, where local children aged 5 to 12 years have been able to meet in person again after having to hold virtual sessions on Zoom over recent months. It was lovely to meet everyone there and to see the great work going on and the children enjoying arts and crafts activities. The after school club is also being supported by funding received by Women Connect First as part of our Cardiff Winter of Wellbeing programme.

Councillor Sarah Merry
Cabinet Member for Education, Employment & Skills
11 March 2022