



Cowbridge Comprehensive School

Governors' Extraordinary Report 2021

May 2021

www.cowbridgecomprehensiveschool.co.uk

Well being given highest priority in uncertain times.

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By Hilary Drew, Chair of Governors

It will be no surprise that Education is facing one of the most acute crises in recent history, with schools shut for the second time in less than a year. It is undoubtedly an extremely worrying time for all involved. Fortunately, with our excellent leadership and management team, as praised by Estyn in last year's inspection, we have been best placed to manage the constantly changing directives from Welsh Government caused by the impact of Covid-19 for schools.

Our school has ensured that all pupils have access to technology, issuing laptops, assisting with broadband access (or paper versions, if pupils prefer) and has remained open for a variety of vulnerable pupils and those students of key workers throughout the pandemic. The vision from Mrs Thomas, strong assured leadership from her team and professionalism of all staff, working tirelessly



Decaying Fruit - Amber Sweeney (Y12). Amber took inspiration from the artist Valerie Hegarty who transforms paintings by "demolishing and reconstructing them".

More information detailing the school's comparative academic performance, future targets and a financial statement for the year end can be found on our website.

New Curriculum Achievements by Martin Blamey (Chair, Standards & Performance Cttee)

The school was very pleased to feature in a special Estyn 'thematic' report published at the end of last year which focused on how maintained secondary, all-age and special schools are preparing for the Curriculum for Wales.

The New Curriculum was developed after the publication of a report in 2015 by Professor Donaldson called Successful Futures. This outlined proposals for a new curriculum that would build on the existing strengths of Welsh education. The report identified four purposes that provide a starting point for a new Curriculum for Wales:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

The inspectors noted that the central aim of the school is that pupils should develop to be resilient, curious, independent and highly-skilled young people and that the school has fully embraced the four purposes and aims to integrate these into everything that the school does. The report went on to state: "Over the last 18 months, more than 50 teachers have completed one or more accredited programmes for leadership in education, or for high-quality teaching and learning. Professional learning has a high priority at the school. This focus on professional learning has facilitated and encouraged high-level discussion relating to teaching, learning and leadership across the school. These processes have enabled teachers to share practice, observe each other's lessons and provide constructive suggestions for improvement to colleagues. This has led to an 'open door' culture and a willingness among teachers to strive for higher standards of teaching and learning."

since the onset of the pandemic, has put our school on the front foot with regards to implementing effective blended and distanced learning. The Google classroom is the main online platform used for all departments who are constantly refining and reviewing blended learning to ensure the best support and provision to enable all our pupils to engage successfully.

fully.

A Recovery programme has been developed to identify progress and deficits in pupil's learning and wellbeing directly caused by the pandemic with a focus on literacy and numeracy, particularly targeting our pupils with additional learning needs.

Wellbeing has been given the highest priority at this uncertain time.

(Continued on page 2)

Wellbeing has been given the highest priority at this uncertain time.

Continued on page 2

Well being given priority in uncertain times *(continued from front page)*



Workbooks to support home learning during lockdown ready for collection

(Continued from page 1)

tain time, with therapeutic , health, counselling sessions, resilience training and ALN interventions running in our Wellbeing Centre.

The Governors have continued to perform their roles virtually, concerns regarding the impact of social disadvantage and widening inequality on

our school community have featured strongly and policies have been introduced to focus on these issues.

A successful vaccination programme allows us to look forward to a 'new normal' with the exciting prospect of a 3-19 school increasing the opportunity for excellent standards of education in

Cowbridge throughout all age ranges.

As a Governing Body we are especially grateful to all those involved with our school community for the monumental effort they have put in to support our pupils, families and local community during these unprecedented times

New Curriculum Achievements *(continued from front page)*

has had a 'substantial impact on pupils' personal development, wellbeing and the standards that they achieve'. In addition, staff have been engaged in professional

learning relating to improving pupils' behaviour, enhancing their wellbeing and 'understanding the teenage brain.' Estyn found that "the school's evaluation processes

indicate that these initiatives are having a positive impact on pupil engagement, wellbeing and attitudes to learning. There is a high level of support and 'buy in' from staff."

Strategic Review by Kevin Fox

"A recovery programme has been developed to identify progress and deficits in pupil's learning..."

The Governors and Senior Leadership Team regularly review the school's strategy. So, on a cold morning in December we met in the school hall (with masks and antiseptic wipes) to consider the results of a STEEPLE analysis. This method considers the Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political, Legal and Ethical influences on an organisation. As a new governor, what might I expect to hear? Impressively, the review was so thorough that it managed to encompass plagues, chickens, pit-closures, a book by David Goodhart and a lonely elephant! Here is a sample of what we learned:

Plagues have occurred regularly throughout history and have a powerful shaping effect on society. Baroness Wilcox suggests that the economic effect of COVID-19 might be as impactful for Wales as the pit closures. How might this affect the demographics of the area and educational needs in the future?

Technology has been critical

in providing the means to educate during the pandemic. However, at the start of lockdown, economic factors meant that initially 1.9 million households lacked broadband and many also lacked computers. If left unmitigated, this had the potential to exacerbate inequality in education. Fortunately, across our region Hwb provided 650 devices, as well as 200 MiFi devices for families lacking broadband.

Overall, £2M has been invested in school IT across the Vale and Cowbridge plus improvements in IT infrastructure have allowed real-time online teaching in 2021. Despite these moves, equality and equity are likely to remain the 'elephant in the room' for education.

The rolling postponement and cancellation of exams has been trying but wholly necessary for students. However, the situation does provide us with an opportunity to reflect on the purpose of these certificates. O levels and CSEs were replaced in the 70s by GCSEs; how will or should these exams evolve in the future? Are

teacher-graded assessments equally valid? Undoubtedly, a political decision will be required for resolution.

Finally, we considered the ethics surrounding how we as a society value those navigating our exams system. 'Head, Hand, Heart' by David Goodhart explores the ethics of how society rewards caregivers and manual workers. Is our exam system too elitist, over rewarding certain skills and aptitudes at the expense of other virtues? If we are to achieve equity and equality in education, then it should be measured by achievement, fairness and opportunity..

Eventually, I emerged, head spinning, into the same cold December air that I had left just a few hours earlier. Nothing had changed and yet, perhaps, something had. The school seemed an even more integral part of society than before, constantly adapting and reacting to the needs of the next generation; one eye watching over this group of students and the other scanning the horizon for risks and opportunities.

Teaching & Learning During a Pandemic *by Mr A. Fowles (Deputy Head)*

No one could have predicted how rapidly things would change when the first Covid-19 related lockdown began in March 2020.

Up to that point teaching and learning provision was based on face-to-face contact between pupils and their teachers. Engagement, levels of understanding, subject knowledge development, skills development, levels of motivation and enthusiasm of pupils could all be closely monitored by teachers. However, the ongoing restrictions and especially following the suspension of normal school activities on Monday 14 December 2020, the school entered a new world of remote provision of teaching and learning.

The challenge was to provide engaging resources and learning activities for pupils who were learning at home. The aim was to engage with as many pupils as possible, to maintain progress and to help realise and reinforce the message that it is not possible to replicate the classroom at home.

The main method used to support and develop home learning provision was through the Google Classroom platform. The pace of change in the use of this facility in a comprehensive way was rapid to say the least. Staff training, new protocols and standard operating procedures all had to be implemented. This went hand in hand with the huge investment in new hardware and ICT infrastructure

which has been made at school to ensure that facilities were fit for purpose and could benefit as many pupils as possible.

The school's home learning provision evolved into a three-pronged approach. This can be seen below.

1. Live or synchronous lessons/ sessions

This involved a live lesson, session, seminar or tutorial delivered by the teacher using Google Meet through Google Classroom.

The structure and approach taken for the lesson will be determined by the relevant department and class teacher.

2. Asynchronous teaching/ check in where the teacher has set work and is available online

Subject teachers were available online for all timetabled lessons. During the virtual lessons, teachers were able to offer written help, instruction, guidance, clarification and feedback related to the work set. The work set might have included but was not restricted to, structured tasks; self-directed learning experiences; research tasks; examination question completion; reading tasks; accurate note taking tasks; essay completion; the use of video extracts to enhance learning; or, recordings of teachers delivering video extracts/voice overs, to motivate and engage learners.

3. Self study sessions

Pupils were able to catch up with work already set or new

work uploaded to Google Classroom.

An opportunity for pupils to consolidate, organise their work, read or work on longer term project work.

However, the staff were well aware that for some pupils and families, online provision would be challenging to access effectively due to a number of reasons.

Therefore the school also arranged for paper versions of work in a number of subject areas and year groups which was to be collected from school by pupils.

Members of staff in school carefully tracked levels of pupil engagement and made numerous phone calls to the homes of pupils to offer support, advice and guidance.

Pupils or families who might have been struggling with any aspect of education, were told to get in touch with the school as soon as possible. Members of staff will always do their utmost to help.

Although this has been a hugely disruptive and unprecedented period, many pupils showed considerable resilience, adaptability, and independence as they engaged with their home learning. However, we have learnt many lessons over the last few months, particularly relating to the use of technology in education and its role in enhancing teaching and learning. These lessons will undoubtedly be used to inform future planning and provision across the school to benefit all pupils.



'Bake-off' in Cowbridge!
During lockdown, pupils were also given various 'challenges'. This delicious cake was made by Seren Lowe who was in Y10.

"The challenge was to provide engaging resources for pupils who were learning from home..."

Financial Notes *by Mike Jose (Chair, Finance Committee)*

Spending for the 2019/2020 budget was in line with the school improvement plan priorities and included a number of capital developments funded by external income. Developments includ-

ed a new wellbeing garden at the rear of the wellbeing centre, a new canopy for the Sixth Form patio area so that it can be used in rainy weather. Additionally, a new Applemac suite was installed to complement

ICT provision across the school. We also have developed ALN provision to accommodate a small number of pupils with bespoke provision called Tyfu which complements their mainstream curric-

ulum. The £9k deficit was attributed to loss of income with the closure of the school in March as a result of the pandemic. This resulted in a small loss of income from canteen provision.

ALN Report: Close cooperation with feeder primaries *by David Griffiths (ALN Coordinator)*

Provision for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) is detailed in the school's ALN Policy and can be accessed online or by request. The policy is reviewed annually.

There are currently 61 pupils on the ALN register excluding those on classroom intervention and monitoring. These pupils are categorised based on the degree of additional needs and the level of support which they receive. As students successfully transition through school and needs change, pupils can be added or removed from the register. Statemented pupils receive the majority of their lessons in mainstream provision, with some support, and if required a modified curriculum (in line with their Statement provision). This is led by need. Where the curriculum is modified, interventions are put in place, as directed by the pupils' Statements of ALN. This ranges from specialist literacy and numeracy lessons, to over-learning and support with social, and basic life skills. Due to increased severity of need for a number of our pupils at School Action Plus, we ensure that these pupils also receive specialist support and interventions where appropriate, e.g. modified curriculum and specialist sessions.

The school works extensively with feeder primaries to share information and en-

Children Receiving Support 2019/20	
Wave of Provision	
School Action	21
School Action +	31
Statement of Educational Need	9
Total on ALN register	61

sure that appropriate support is put in place before students arrive. Reading and spelling tests at the start of Year 7 also ensure that students who haven't been identified as having additional needs receive the appropriate support. Baseline testing.

The Learning Support provision at KS3 continues to be successful. Literacy interventions with Year 7, 8 and 9 pupils are overseen and taught by staff who are Literacy specialists, in order to make the best use of strategies and resources. 120 pupils are currently involved in this successful scheme, which is tracked and analysed three times throughout the academic year. Numeracy support is provided within small classes across Key Stages 3 & 4 and is led by Maths specialists, including a member of the Maths department who is qualified to teach pupils with specific learning difficulties.

Building on the developments in supporting pupils with additional learning needs, the school has introduced its 'Tyfu' provision

this year. 'Tyfu' the Welsh word for 'grow', embraces the ethos where all pupils, regardless of ability, background, family circumstances and of their current social and emotional issues, have equal and equitable opportunities to reach their potential in order for them to develop into ambitious, capable learners, committed to lifelong learning. To provide a specialist, well equipped base where pupils who require an alternative approach to their academic studies and wellbeing can 'grow' and thrive. Provision with Tyfu is through a highly personalised curriculum for the small number of students in Key Stage 3 and 4 who struggle to meet the academic and social demands of full mainstream education. Tyfu provide these pupils with the opportunity to enhance their social and emotional skills and experiences and to maximise their chances of success in achieving qualifications at the end of KS3 and KS4. These students also develop skills and experience of the world of work to reduce the chances

of them being NEET (not in education, employment or training) post-16 and to enhance their self-esteem and confidence as they take the next steps for life and education, beyond Cowbridge Comprehensive School.

The school continues to work regularly with external outreach support from the Local Authority to provide regular interventions for students with cognition and learning issues, speech and language difficulties, autism and hearing impairment. Further to this, we also run interventions for pupils with visual impairment (VI), with students being instructed on the use of Braille and also in using Prodigy and Braille Note, ICT solutions to support independence.

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act was passed in 2018. The Act firmly puts the child at the centre of any planning and also takes into account the views of all stakeholders. The ALN department over the past year has been preparing for the changes outlined by the Act by embracing pupil centred planning within review processes for statements, developing One-Page-Profiles for ALN students and creating Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for students with at School Action Plus in Year 9. The ALN department will continue to embed these changes ready for its implementation in September 2021.

School Information

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Visit our new-look web-site!
www.cowbridgecomprehensiveschool.co.uk

TERM DATES 2021/22

Autumn term 2021:

Sept. 3rd- Dec. 17th

Half-term: Oct. 25th - Oct. 29th

Spring 2022:

Jan. 4th - Apr. 8th

Half-term: Feb.21st - Feb 25th

Summer 2022*:

Apr. 25th - July 22nd

Half-term: May 30th - June. 3rd

*** Queen's Platinum Jubilee: June 2nd**

Bank Holiday Celebrations: June 3rd

May Day Bank Holiday: May 2nd

MEET THE GOVERNORS!

Title/Initial	Name	Committee	Type	Until
Mrs Hilary	Drew	Chair	Community	Nov. 2023
Mrs Terrie	Vaughan-Taylor	Vice-Chair & SPW	Community	Sept. 2023
Mr Martin	Blamey	HT Perf. Review	Community	Nov. 2024
Mr Mike	Jose	Resources	Community	May 2025
Mr John	Homfray	SPW.	Community	Nov. 2024
Mr David	Farrell	Pupil Discipline	Parent	Oct. 2024
Prof Kevin	Fox	SPW	Parent	Oct. 2024
Mr Steven	Lewis	SPW	Parent	May. 2023
Mrs Margot	McIntyre	SPW	Parent	Oct. 2023
Mr Julian	Phillips	Resources	Parent	Oct. 2023
Mr Steven	Blackman	Resources	LEA	Oct. 2024
Cllr Geoff	Cox	Resources	LEA	Oct. 2021
Cllr. Hunter	Jarvie	Staff Discipline	LEA	Oct. 2022
Cllr Andrew	Parker	Resources	LEA	Oct. 2024
Mrs Jenny	Smith	Safeguarding Governor	LEA	Apr. 2023
Mrs. Debra	Thomas	Headteacher	Ex-Officio	
Mr Richard	Burgum		Teacher	Nov. 2023
Mr Jonathan	Ling		Teacher	Feb. 2022
Mr Brandon	Walters	Finance	Staff	Mar. 2021
Miss Seren	Burgum	School Council	Ass. Pupil Governor	July 2022
Mr Gethin	Poacher	School Council	Ass. Pupil Governor	July 2022
Mrs Ruth	Williams	Clerk		

Next Steps *by Martin Blamey (Chair, Standards and Performance Committee)*

As the school emerges from the constraints of the past year, senior staff together with governors have been looking to the future and planning for the resumption of a normal school life. Part of this process involved joint meetings during which the School Improvement Plan (SIP) was reviewed and refined. Several targets were prioritized. The recovery plan is subject to regular review focusing on the need to address the deficits in pupils' learning, skills and wellbeing as a result of the advent of the pandemic in 2020, the subsequent lockdowns and school closures. It was important that affected pupils should be identified quickly and appropriate interventions introduced that would impact positively on

learners.

The return to a full curriculum experience to address deficits in learning, skills and wellbeing is another high priority. Nearly all pupils should make progress in line with age related expectations so that they feel confident and prepared for formal assessments. The review finalised arrangements for the new Curriculum for Wales¹, assessments and plans for implementation. All staff need to have a secure understanding of the ways in which the New Curriculum will be assessed and are able to use assessment criteria to plan engaging, exciting and challenging learning opportunities for pupils. Departments worked collaboratively to develop 'Areas of Learning Experiences' for Year 7. These schemes of

learning have been created with overarching skills (literacy, numeracy and digital competency) as the foundation for learning. The Year 7 curriculum plan is designed to maximise learning experiences.

Staff training was severely disrupted this year consequently a key component of the SIP is the introduction of an in-house induction programme for Newly Qualified Teachers and the relaunch of the Outstanding Teacher (OTP), Leadership (OLEVI) Certified Instructors, and other development programmes. The school's early professional development programme:

- Enables recently qualified staff to develop highly effective teaching and learning skills

- Develops resilience
- Robustly prepares recently qualified staff for the rigours of the career.
- Promotes retention of high quality staff which allows for succession leadership.

Evaluations show that nearly all pupils achieve in line with expectations because of excellent teaching and learning, supported by the professional learning programme. Finally, the school is developing plans to improve the physical infrastructure of the site to meet the needs of the changing profile of the school. We recognize that multi-purpose spaces provide flexibility for appropriate curriculum delivery across all phases, which meets the requirements of pupils of all abilities