

No.

## LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor R.R. Thomas (Chair); Councillors A. Asbrey; W. Gilligan; R. Godfrey, E.J. Goodjohn; W.A. Hennessy; N.P. Hodges; J. Lynch-Wilson; N.B. Marshallsea, J.M. Norman, and E. Penn.

Co-Opted Members: M. Price (Roman Catholic Church), L. Barrowclough (Parent Governor – Primary Sector), G. van der Burgt (Parent Governor – Secondary Sector), R. Goodjohn (Vale Youth Forum); G. Scott (Welsh Medium Education), J. Clemett and T. Williams (Vale Youth Council).

Also present: Councillors J. Aviet, R.M. Birch (Cabinet Member for Education, Arts, and the Welsh Language), E. Goodjohn, S.M. Hanks, Dr. I.J. Johnson, N.C. Thomas, and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

### 985 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

### 986 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor H.M. Payne (Vice-Chair).

### 987 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meetings held on 8<sup>th</sup> February and 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

### 988 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

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989 PROPOSED SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING STRATEGY 2024-2026 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2024, as contained within the agenda, was presented by the Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing.

The Officer began by advising that, since as early as 2019, it had become evident that the key emerging challenge for schools was the increasing number of children and young people displaying very complex social, emotional, and mental health difficulties which had been exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic and by ongoing adverse community (cost of living) and environmental (climate) events.

Therefore, to address the urgent need to work differently with children and young people, the Social Emotional and Mental Health Action Plan 2019 – 2022 was developed and implemented following extensive consultation and discussion with head teachers. Significant progress had been made in progressing the original action plan but there was much more to do.

The importance of good emotional mental health and wellbeing had never been greater and required an ongoing focus. Therefore, the proposed Social Emotional Mental Health and Well-being Strategy 2024-2026, as presented to the Committee at Appendix C of the Cabinet report, was a continuation of the strategic direction set in 2019 and brought together all of the aims, objectives, information, and progress to date as well as strategic actions being taken across the Learning and Skills Directorate and Vale of Glamorgan schools. The Strategy aligned with the vision of the Council's Corporate Plan and would support the mental health and well-being of children and young people in the Vale and all those who worked with them.

In conclusion, the Officer apprised the Committee on the seven key strategic priorities to operationalise the Social, Emotional, Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the Vale of Glamorgan Council as follows:

- 1) Support schools to create inclusive, supportive, trusting and mutually respectful educational settings in which pupils and staff can thrive.
- 2) Work in partnership with the local authority human resources team, the Central South Consortium and voluntary sector to enhance staff wellbeing.
- 3) Support schools to meet the needs of all its learners and their families by ensuring that partnership working is well developed and effective.
- 4) Work with a range of partners to mitigate the impact of economic hardship on children and young people and their families in order to support good physical and mental health.
- 5) Work with partners to ensure that children and young people are supported in living a healthy lifestyle that enhances their physical and mental wellbeing.
- 6) In partnership with the CSC and other key partners support educational settings to deliver a transformative health and wellbeing curriculum.
- 7) Develop and commission high quality services and provision to support learners and their families, developing more specialist provision for those with complex, social emotional and mental health difficulties.

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Following the Officer's presentation of the reference, the following comments and questions were raised by the Committee, and subsequently answered by the Officer as follows:

<b>Member Comment</b>	<b>Officer Response</b>
<p>Councillor Marshallsea – In referring to priority 1 of the Strategy, “develop universal school approach to wellbeing and mentally healthy schools,” there were good descriptions of transitions from Nursery into Reception however, was it possible to include descriptions of transition from Primary to Secondary level also?</p>	<p>The Primary to Secondary transition was an integral part of the Strategy and therefore officers would endeavour to ensure that the point was made clearer within the Strategy document.</p>
<p>Councillor Goodjohn – In relation to school based counselling, how often did young people have access to the service and what was the average waiting time for a young person to access the service?</p>	<p>The School Counselling Service produced a report on an annual basis in relation to the information requested by the Member, however the information was not readily available to the officer at the meeting. Therefore, the officer would ensure that the information was forwarded to Committee Members after the meeting.</p>
<p>Councillor Lynch-Wilson – It was pleasing to see that the Strategy was not a quick fix and was structured around a long term goal as well as a comprehensive approach.</p>	<p>Officers were grateful for Members' support and endorsement of the Strategy.</p>
<p>Councillor Penn – It was encouraging to see that 87% of Vale of Glamorgan schools had now completed a self-evaluation process but this was particularly interesting in comparison to the fact that only 39% of schools across Wales had completed the self-evaluation process. Was this simply a case of the Vale of Glamorgan being very pro-active or were there other reasons for this disparity?</p> <p>As a secondary point, in referring to section 2.2 of the revised Strategy, in relation to principles underpinning the whole school approach, a reference was made under the sub-heading Partnership Working in relation to the school “operating as a hub and centre of community life, working together in a timely fashion to provide appropriate interventions.” This echoed the</p>	<p>Since the report before Committee was written, the percentage of Vale of Glamorgan schools involved in improvement planning had now increased to over 90%. There was a very good reason why practice was at the levels that it was in the Vale of Glamorgan compared to the rest of Wales and this was because of the maintained relationship between Scrutiny Members and Local Authority Officers to promote mental health and wellbeing and Members had championed both these factors for a long time. The Council's initiatives in relation to championing mental health and wellbeing had been well supported by Elected Members which meant that activities had been prioritised since as far back as the original Action Plan in 2019. The Vale of Glamorgan Council also invested very heavily in the</p>

<p>approach already taken at Cadoxton Primary School in Barry and it would be timely to invite Cadoxton Primary to present to the Committee to provide evidence of their approaches to enhancing well-being of pupils and their families at their school.</p>	<p>Strategy before it became a statutory responsibility for schools which meant that officers had been able to work collaboratively with schools much sooner. The Council also had a very good partnership with the Health Board to support its endeavours around the Strategy which schools had embraced and therefore the numbers for the Vale of Glamorgan were over 90% compared to other Local Authorities which was a stark difference.</p> <p>There was a wealth of information available in relation to activities being undertaken within Vale of Glamorgan schools, with many differing examples depending on the needs of the children and families at each particular school, therefore officers would liaise with the Chair of the Committee to ascertain the most appropriate examples to present to the Committee.</p>
<p>Dr. Price (Co-opted Member) – The Strategy was a very good initiative, however were there enough financial resources available to deliver on the Strategy and ensure that schools were aware of their statutory duties as well as supporting schools in undertaking self-evaluation?</p>	<p>Yes, officers were confident in the ability to deliver on the Strategy, and work in relation to self-evaluations was already underway/completed. Efforts in relation to the Strategy were now progressing away from the need to self-evaluate but rather to maintain subsequent initiatives. There was a monitoring group which was made up of both Local Authorities and multi-disciplinaries, as well as the Health Board, to ensure that there was still support for schools in place and to engage the remaining 10% of schools that still required further support. In terms of making schools aware of what they needed to do, the Council had the resources in order to undertake that task but, keeping up with the demand of the ever changing needs of children in Vale of Glamorgan schools would be an ongoing challenge.</p> <p>In response to Dr. Price's supplementary question as to whether financial constraints on schools would have an impact on how effective the Strategy was going to be implemented</p>

	<p>within schools, the Strategy was a whole school approach and reflected that very few Vale of Glamorgan children would have a need to go on to clinical support. Therefore, the Strategy supported investment in relationships and making sure that optimum learning environments were in place in the first instance. Therefore, the approach was preventative based with efforts to identify risk factors that, when mitigated, should negate the need for more intensive interventions.</p>
<p>Councillor Hodges – It was pleasing to receive a detailed report that demonstrated the advances that had been made to date. It was also pleasing to see that the Strategy was only in relation to up to 2026 which added flexibility. Was it possible and appropriate to have some form of targets built into the Strategy to demonstrate progress against the objectives of the Strategy?</p> <p>It was recommended that the Committee's endorsement and comments on the Strategy be referred to Cabinet.</p>	<p>Delivering on the Strategy was now the responsibility of all the various teams across the Learning and Skills Directorate, through the various team plans, and it was through the team plans that Members would be able to monitor progress made against the Strategy.</p>
<p>Councillor Thomas (Chair) – Officers had mentioned commissioning services, were said services going to be on a Vale of Glamorgan specific basis or were officers going to work with other local Councils to source the services?</p>	<p>Vale of Glamorgan officers were working with the Cardiff and Vale Health Board which had a footprint across several Local Authorities which would have benefits when commissioning some services. There had however been other initiatives that the Vale of Glamorgan Council had commissioned independently and therefore independent providers had been invited to work directly with the Council.</p>
<p>Miss. Clemett (Co-opted Member) – On the topic of school based counselling, the Vale of Glamorgan Youth Council had also considered the matter, which demonstrated that the average waiting times were around six weeks but young people could be waiting even longer. Many young people on the Youth Council, including Miss. Clemett, felt that the services</p>	<p>The comment echoed the question as raised earlier in the meeting by Councillor Goodjohn and further information would be researched to provide to the Committee after the meeting.</p>

<p>offered by organisations such as Barnardos were quite inadequate and Barnardos had been invited to address the Youth Council as a result. Since counselling services were so important to delivering the Strategy, putting additional pressure on providers of school based counselling was appropriate to highlight concerns in relation to improving services and to ensure the service met young people’s concerns.</p>	
<p>Councillor Marshallsea – In their previous teaching experience, Councillor Marshallsea had witnessed first hand the positive ways in which working with nature could have on children’s mental health via the ‘Forest School’ initiative. High Street School in Barry were making phenomenal efforts by using nature to enhance their learning and pupil wellbeing. Therefore, was the Forest School initiative being incorporated into the Strategy?</p>	<p>The Forest School initiative was captured in the curriculum development with Central South Consortium and was therefore included within the Strategy.</p>
<p>Councillor Ewan Goodjohn – With the Committee’s permission, Councillor Goodjohn queried if there had been any consideration given to the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence Guidelines from 2022 in relation to self-harm within the Strategy?</p> <p>Also in relation to the topic of self-harm, it was a women’s and girls’ equality issue as a study had shown that self-harm affected women and girls more than boys and men and especially in the teenage years. Were efforts being made to minimise the impact on women and girls as much as possible in the mental health crisis that the Council was currently facing?</p>	<p>Consideration of self-harm was not only in the Strategy but also the Council had a monitoring board which consisted of Local Authority officers and Health Board officers who considered information on a regular and frequent basis.</p> <p>Officers would need to consult with both Health and School colleagues in relation to trends for women and girls to see if any self-harm trends were evident. However, it was often problematic to receive accurate feedback in relation to self-harm due to the often-secretive nature of the act. The Council therefore welcomed feedback from young people on the matter of self-harm to help the Council to work out the best approach to talk to young people about an incredibly important issue.</p>
<p>Ms. Barrowclough (Co-opted Member) – If a child was identified as experiencing difficulties due to social, emotional or mental health issues, would the child be classified as having Additional Learning</p>	<p>Every pupil would be unique and therefore they would have a unique set of needs. A child who had been identified as having social, emotional and / or mental health needs may or</p>

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<p>Needs or would they be classified under a different group?</p> <p>As a supplementary question, if the child were considered under the Additional Learning Needs category, would funding for the pupil come from the Additional Learning Needs budget as current applied, or would that be funded from a separate budgetary area?</p>	<p>may not also have Additional Learning Needs, and therefore the categories of needs did not always automatically follow one another. Additional Learning Needs were defined according to the Code. The law that the Vale of Glamorgan Council had was that if a pupil failed to show educational progress or significant learning needs, it was important to assess whether the social, emotional and/or mental health needs were affecting the pupil's ability to learn. Therefore, no automatic assumptions would be made for any pupil.</p> <p>In terms of funding, there was a high level of delegation out to schools so it was expected that if a pupil had Additional Learning Needs, the pupil's social, emotional and mental health needs would also be addressed from within the delegated funds to the school.</p>
<p>Councillor Goodjohn – Would data in relation to self-harm originate from the school based counselling service as well as from Health Board Partners?</p>	<p>It was possible that information on individual cases in relation to self-harm could be raised following use of the school based counselling service but, due to the secretive nature of self-harm, it all depended on whether the young person had chosen to share the matter with school based counsellors. Individuals who had self-harmed did not necessarily seek counselling support automatically but, those that did, would be signposted to the appropriate support. The Council needed to find ways of being able to get a better understanding of what was impacting on young people and, more importantly, what young people needed in order to seek support.</p>

With no further comments or questions raised, the Committee subsequently

**RECOMMENDED –**

- (1) T H A T both the Cabinet reference and appended covering report be endorsed.
- (2) T H A T the comments of the Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Learning

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and Skills Directorate Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) and Well-being Strategy 2024- 2026, as set out within the meeting minutes, be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

#### Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of both the reference and appended covering report to ratify the Learning and Skills Directorate Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) and Well-being Strategy 2024- 2026.

#### 990 CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO CREATE A WELSH MEDIUM SPECIALIST RESOURCE BASE AT YSGOL GWAUN Y NANT WITH EFFECT FROM SEPTEMBER 2024 (REF) –

The Operational Manager for Strategy and Resources presented the reference from the 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2024 Cabinet meeting, the purpose of which was to ensure that the Committee was consulted on the proposals as part of the proposed consultation exercise.

Through a series of supporting PowerPoint slides, the Operational Manager advised that Cabinet approval had been sought on the proposal to create a specialist resource base (SRB) at Ysgol Gwaun Y Nant from September 2024 and that a pilot provision had been operating at the school, which opened with effect from January 2024. There was an identified trend in a growth in Additional Learning Needs (ALN) across all Vale of Glamorgan schools however there was not currently a specialised resource base for primary pupils educated in Welsh medium schools

Contrary to the report as presented, the consultation on the proposal had been extended from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> May to afford schools the opportunity to consider the proposal post the 2024 Easter academic holidays.

The Officer added that the proposal would create specialist Welsh medium educational provision for pupils aged 4-11 years (primary) following the success of a secondary level provision at Ysgol Bro Morgannwg. The purpose of the specialist resource would be to support individual learners, as well as improve the capacity of the home school to create a fully inclusive environment where all learners were given the opportunity to succeed and have access to an education that met their needs.

The SRB would provide periods of integrated provision for pupils with a diagnosis of an autism spectrum condition and those experiencing significant social, communication, interaction, or regulation difficulties. This would include pupils whose high level of anxiety was impacting significantly on their ability to access mainstream education.

In relation to funding for the proposal, the Officer advised that no capital funding was required to ensure that the identified accommodation was suitable as capital works had been completed following the identification of the space for future use for ALN provision, as part of the Welsh Government Capital Grant for Additional Learning



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Needs, and the implementation of the proposal did not require further amendments to the Ysgol Gwaun Y Nant school building.

Revenue Costs of £162k had been committed centrally for staffing the provision and £11k had been allocated via the mainstream funding formula for resources. It was not yet possible to predict school transport costs as demand would be identified based on the home addresses of pupils admitted to the provision.

There would be clear entry and exit criteria for admission to the provision and admissions would be determined by a Local Authority Placement Panel. Pupils attending the provision would do so for two academic terms (part time) in the first instance and be dual registered with their original school.

In conclusion, the Officer apprised the Committee on the consultation process that would be undertaken with prescribed consultees in accordance with the School Organisation Code 2018. The Council would publish a Consultation Document (as per Appendix A presented), that would provide a comprehensive overview of the proposal, outlining any potential implications. A Community Impact Assessment (Appendix B) would also be made available, and any person could respond to the consultation during the consultation period, either in writing or through completion of an online form hosted on the Council's website. Following the consultation, the Council would publish a consultation report, which would provide an overview of the feedback received, as well as outlining the Council's response to any issues raised and said report would be presented to Cabinet for consideration.

Following the Officer's presentation of the reference, and subsequent questions and comments raised by the Committee, the Operational Manager for Strategy and Resources, with support from the Head of Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing, added the following points of advice:

- The proposed 16 pupil places was currently considered enough at the current time, but ALN demand far outweighed the resources available across the Vale of Glamorgan. Therefore, additional pupil places within the SRB would always be required and officers would need to monitor demand as time progressed;
- A qualified teacher had recently been appointed and other roles in relation to the provision had been interviewed recently. Therefore, relevant recruitment had been undertaken and the majority of required staffing was now in place however, it was acknowledged the recruitment for Welsh language provision had been difficult;
- Pupils admitted to the provision would attend the SRB for two days a week for two terms in the first instance. Therefore, they would attend the SRB for two days and then remain at their original school for the other three days of the school week. Pupils on roll at the SRB would be rotated in order to maintain the maximum pupil capacity. This was an approach that was echoed across all other educational support schemes whereby pupils were introduced to the support on a short term basis to begin with, but maintained their connection with their original school;
- In relation to admissions of pupils with complex and severe communication difficulties and children who were non-verbal who had very limited

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communication and / or limited understanding of language, places would be allocated following an assessment of the individual child's needs. An allocation would not be made on a diagnosis only, but rather through all sorts of evidence from a range of sources to decide what was most appropriate for the pupil. The SRB was obviously designed to cater for those pupils with autistic spectrum conditions, as well as those with extreme communication difficulties, however careful consideration would need to be given to each admission given that some children, in particular girls, may mask ASD symptoms and therefore not receive a formal diagnosis. The Council did not wish to preclude any pupil who required their support.

With no further comments or questions raised, the Committee subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T both the Cabinet reference and appended Cabinet report, including details of the consultation process for the proposal, be noted.
- (2) T H A T the proposal to create a Welsh Medium Specialist Resource Base at Ysgol Gwaun y Nant, with effect from September 2024, be endorsed.

#### Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of both the reference and appended covering report on the proposal to create a Welsh Medium Specialist Resource Base at Ysgol Gwaun y Nant with effect from September 2024.

#### 991 SUMMARY OF ESTYN INSPECTION OUTCOMES AUTUMN TERM 2023 (DLS) –

The Principal Improvement Partner for Central South Consortium presented the report, the purpose of which was to update Members on the Estyn outcomes of schools inspected during the autumn term 2023, and progress of schools in statutory follow-up.

Estyn inspected quality and standards in education across Wales. Appendix 1 of the report presented provided details of the two Vale of Glamorgan primary schools (Victoria Primary and St. Brides Major Church in Wales Primary) that were inspected during the Autumn term 2023. The External Officer confirmed that neither of the two schools were in statutory follow-up (Significant Improvement and Special Measures) or Estyn Review.

Appendix 3 of the report set out that Y Bont Faen Primary was inspected by Estyn in the Summer term 2023 and that the school was invited to write a case study on its work in relation to developing creativity through its curriculum. The Officer was pleased to report that the case study had now been published by Estyn in February 2024

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Two schools from the Vale of Glamorgan, Ysgol Pen y Garth and Pencoedtre High School, remained in Estyn statutory follow-up category. Both schools were in Special Measures following their inspections during the 2022 Autumn term. The Post-Inspection Action Plan and statement of action for both schools had now been approved by Estyn and the support provided to each school was set out in Appendix 4 of the report. Estyn would re-visit both Pencoedtre High and Ysgol Pen y Garth again in around four to six months to monitor progress against a sample of the Recommendations set for each school.

The Officer added that the progress of both schools was monitored by Estyn on a termly basis and, since publication of the report before members, the outcomes of the Estyn visit to Pencoedtre High School in November 2023 had now been published which included recommendations around improved teaching and standards at the school.

A second inspection of Ysgol Pen Y Garth had also taken place, since the publication of the report before members, in March 2024, following the school being placed in special measures in November 2022. The findings of the most recent inspection would be reported to Committee as soon as possible. One of the original recommendations raised by Estyn related to strengthening leadership to operate more strategically and the Officer was pleased to report that feedback received indicated that recent SLT employment at the school had helped and was now robust. Estyn also recognised that more time was needed following the SLT changes at the school to embed on the quality of teaching and learning at the school.

In conclusion, the Officer referred to paragraph 2.32 of the report which stated that Llanfair Primary was in Estyn review following its inspection in Spring 2023. Progress the school had made towards addressing their Estyn recommendations would be reviewed about 12-18 months after the publication of the inspection report.

Following the External Officer's presentation of the report, and subsequent questions and comments raised by the Committee, the Principal Improvement Partner, with support from the Head of Standards and Provision for the Vale of Glamorgan, added the following points of advice:

- The arrangement for the Executive Headteacher in place at Pencoedtre High School was for a period of 3 years and had now been formalised. In terms of the Acting Head at Pencoedtre High School, Suzanne Cowan had very recently started in post and was known to Elected Members from her previous role within the Inclusion Team for the Vale of Glamorgan Council. Ms. Cowan was undertaking the Acting Head role on a two-term secondment pending a restructure of the leadership team at the school, which was necessary ahead of an advertisement to go out for a permanent position;
- Officers were in agreement that it would be beneficial to have Elected Members from the Vale of Glamorgan Council taking up Local Authority Governor seats at Pencoedtre High School. Since Pencoedtre High School had been put into special measures, the Head of Standards and Provision as well as the Lead Officer for Social Inclusion and Wellbeing had been added to the Governing Body at the School under the Director's statutory powers;

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- Ms. Cowan was previously a Deputy Head in Eastern High in the Cardiff Authority area and was an integral part of the team that drove improvements in the school. Therefore, the Council had absolute confidence in Ms. Cowan's ability and feedback received from staff at the school since their secondment was that the atmosphere at the school was very calm;
- New measures that were being put in place at Pencoedtre High School were a lot to do with establishing and building relationships with all parties involved in the school such as the union reps, families, staff and the young people themselves. Both Ms. Cowan and Mr. Robertson were very good at building working relationships and communicating progress taking place at the school;
- The Executive Head had met with each member of staff at the school to support with improving morale and finding solutions to building a joint approach moving forward. Efforts were also underway to focus on strengthening the leadership at the school as well as the quality of teaching through a focus on building pupil and staff relationships and managing expectations;
- Officers present at the meeting were not in a position to provide further information in relation to staffroom provision at the school.

In conclusion, the Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language confirmed that the Vale of Glamorgan Council welcomed all applications to the Governing Body of Pencoedtre High School and that no applications received had been refused but, sadly, no applications had been received to date. Appointments to non-local authority governor positions on the Governing Body at the school was an internal school matter and not a Local Authority decision.

With no further comments or questions raised, the Committee subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the autumn term inspection outcomes of both Victoria Primary and St Brides Major Church in Wales Primary be noted.
- (2) T H A T both Victoria Primary and St Brides Major Church in Wales Primary Schools be congratulated for no statutory follow-up following Estyn Inspection.
- (3) T H A T the progress of the two schools in Special Measures, Ysgol Pen y Garth and Pencoedtre High School, be noted.

#### Reasons for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report to update Committee on Estyn findings for schools inspected during the autumn term 2023.

(3) To ensure Committee are informed of the progress of the two schools in Special Measures within the Vale of Glamorgan.