



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16th OCTOBER 2023

CHILD POVERTY AND COMMUNITY FOCUSED SCHOOLS UPDATE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES

Author: Daniel Williams, Head of Attendance and Wellbeing Service

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members on the Community Focused School approach in RCT. The report provides a further update on this agenda following the report provided to Members in December 2022.
- 1.2 The report discusses the approach to family engagement and utilisation of Welsh Government and Cabinet funding in this area as well as some of the Capital Grant that has been provided to RCT by Welsh Government.
- 1.3 The report also covers elements of the work undertaken to mitigate the impacts of poverty on learners and their families so that, where possible, barriers are removed to education.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Note the positive impact of the work undertaken around the Community Focused School and Child Poverty agenda as well as next steps.
- 2.2 Consider whether there are any aspects of the report that the Committee would like further information on in the future.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 RCT has been a champion of work around family engagement, which falls within the wider Community Focused School agenda, since 2020 and can therefore be seen as an early adopter of some of the more recent focus from Welsh Government.
- 3.2 A survey was previously run with schools to understand the existing approach to Community Focused Schools in the summer of 2022, with these findings

presented to Members later that year. That survey has been re-run with schools to inform this report and provide comparative data.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 In the academic year 2018/19, secondary school attendance (including special schools) in RCT declined 0.1% from the previous year to 92.8%. This was the lowest point since the 2012/13 academic year.
- 4.2 As an attempt to improve attendance in some of our most deprived school communities, on 13th February 2020, a proposal was approved by Cabinet to fund a Family Engagement Officer pilot across six secondary/through schools. The rationale for these six schools was a combination of attendance and deprivation data. They were the six lowest performing schools for secondary mainstream attendance in 2018/19, with five also being the lowest performing schools for attendance in the previous academic year as well. All but one ranked in the five most deprived secondary/through schools when looking at datasets from the WIMD at the time of proposal.
- 4.3 Cabinet approved £174,000 for the employment of the six positions with an April 2020-August 2021 window for the pilot to take place. As specified in the original proposal, the positions were to be managed by each school with a bespoke action plan created and reports being centrally monitored by the Head of the Attendance and Wellbeing Service.
- 4.4 In June 2021, the initial pilot was brought back before Cabinet for review. At this stage, due to the impact of COVID-19, Cabinet agreed to an extension of the pilot for an additional year at secondary/through schools and the introduction of a 24-month primary pilot for 13 settings on a match-funded basis. The same rationale for inclusion was used for this phase which included a combination of attendance and deprivation data.
- 4.5 In 2022/23, the Council was provided with funding by Welsh Government of £341,237.23 for the expansion of Family Engagement Officers and an additional £30,000 for a Community Focused School post. In July 2022, we appointed a Lead for Community Focused Schools who now sits within the Attendance and Wellbeing staff structure whilst Cabinet agreed to utilise the Welsh Government funding for the expansion of Family Engagement Officers on a 50% match-funded basis to 9 primary schools, 3 secondary schools and a PRU. This brought the total offer to 32 settings who were offered match funding for the employment of a Family Engagement Officer.

5. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1 Family engagement is a central element of the Welsh Government Community Focused School approach and to support this agenda, Welsh Government has provided additional funding for 2023/24 of £527,840.35 which is a marked increase on the funding provided the previous year.
- 5.2 Due to the financial situation facing schools, it was decided that this grant funding would be utilised to support those schools who were already part of funding arrangements so that we could ensure the FEO positions remained as part of the staffing structure. 29 of the 32 schools offered support were actively

employing Family Engagement Officers or were advertising for new staff members due to fill recruitment gaps. We have therefore extended the offer of support to these 29 schools on an improved match funding basis of 80% from the Local Authority/Welsh Government grant and 20% funding from schools since 1st April 2023. The continued use of Cabinet funding alongside the Welsh Government grant has allowed us to extend the period of funding until August 2024 for all schools.

6. OUR APPROACH TO COMMUNITY FOCUSED SCHOOLS

6.1 As outlined in 3.2, we previously surveyed our schools during the summer term 2021/22 to better understand and baseline their approach to family and community engagement and how they utilise their buildings as hubs for community activity. We split the survey into three areas – family engagement, community engagement, and multi-agency engagement.

6.2 We received 96 responses to the original survey in 2022 and 59 responses to the 2023 survey. The reasons behind the lower response rate include a shorter window for the survey as well as the continuation of the Action Short of Strike.

6.3 Since the initial survey was undertaken, we employed a Lead for Community Focused Schools in September 2022 to lead in this area. Part funding is provided by Welsh Government for this post.

6.4 Family Engagement

6.4.1 In 2022, the majority of respondents (61.5%) indicated that they had explicit reference in their School Improvement Plans to how they will work with families to improve the wellbeing and achievement of all pupils. In 2023, this figure now stands at 76%. The most common approaches utilised to strengthen family engagement across all schools has also changed during that time. Regular communication with parents remains the most popular approach but whereas in 2022 providing resources to parents to support learning at home and annual parental voice strategies were 2nd and 3rd respectively, these have now been superseded by family participation in school events and workshop opportunities for parents. This suggests that in the last year or so, school focus has shifted from 'passive' approaches to direct face-to-face participation and engagement with parents and families.

6.4.2 Schools told us that the overwhelming majority offer support to parents that will, in turn, help parents to support their child's learning at home (96.9% in 2022, 93.2% in 2023). Although there is a slight decline here, there is a significant increase in schools who offer tailored workshops to parents (50% in 2022, 78% in 2023). The three most popular themes for the workshops remain the same - the development of literacy, development of numeracy and emotional health and wellbeing. Other subject areas offered include Welsh language development, digital skills and speech and language support. The frequency of the tailored workshops varied with the most popular frequency being termly in both surveys.

6.4.3 In 2022, only 26% of respondents stated they offer parenting programs on site which has increased to 46% in the latest survey. There has also been a shift in how consultation is undertaken with parents/carers – those who responded

'mainly via surveys' fell from 85.4% in 2022 to 63.8% this year. This may have been impacted in 2022 by continuing concerns around face-to-face consultation following the pandemic but it is hopeful that this is now easing. Termly consultation was the most popular timeframe for consultation from our schools in both surveys.

6.5 **Community Engagement**

- 6.5.1 In 2022, most schools (61.5%) did not explicitly reference how they work with the community to improve the wellbeing and achievement of pupils within their School Improvement Plans. In 2023, there was a nearly even split with 49.2% of respondents now saying that they do explicitly reference the community.
- 6.5.2 We have also seen an increase in the percentage of schools who offer activities or services to children outside of the school day (82.3% to 89.7%). There is also a small increase (34.4% to 35.6%) of our schools who offer activities or services to children during the school holidays. This includes Food and Fun, holiday childcare provision, forest school sessions, Youth Engagement and Participation Service (YEPS) provision as well as sporting activities.
- 6.5.3 Although still a minority of schools, there has also been an increase in the percentage of schools who offer activities/services to families or the community outside of the school day (20.8% to 37.3%) and a slight increase in those also providing an offer during the school holidays (13.5% to 15.3%).
- 6.5.4 Adult Community Learning (ACL) opportunities on school sites was an area identified for development in the previous report where only 8.3% of schools stated they had offered these opportunities. This has increased to 20.3% of schools in the latest survey. We have also employed a Schools Family Learning Coordinator in September 2023 to promote the central government funded Multiply programme and offer mathematics/numeracy courses for parents. We are leading on an area focused on parents/carers and have secured a healthy budget to support this work in relation to outcome 'W45: Courses for parents wanting to increase their numeracy skills in order to help their children and help with their own progression.' We hope this will continue to increase the opportunities on offer within our schools. Funding is in place until the end of March 2025.
- 6.5.5 Co-location and strong partnership working is a feature of Welsh Government guidance on Community Focused Schools. In 2022, 24% of schools indicated they had third sector partners regularly work from their school and these ranged from Cylch Meithrin and Flying Start provisions to childcare, sports clubs and performing arts and dance groups. This figure has now increased to 33.9%. It is encouraging that schools are now working more closely with partners and their communities but co-location remains low and remains largely unchanged in the last year (13.5% to 13.6%). Wider integration with public sector and third sector partners could develop these opportunities further which would hold multiple benefits for the organisations, schools and service user. A focus of some of our capital works discussed in 6.8 aims to support increased opportunities for co-location in some settings.

6.6 **Agency Engagement**

- 6.6.1 We have also seen a considerable increase in the percentage of schools who responded indicating that their School Improvement Plan makes explicit reference to working with agencies to improve the wellbeing and achievement of all pupils (47.9% to 61.0%).
- 6.6.2 Although the explicit reference has increased, there has been a small decrease in the number of schools (61.5% to 59.3%) who have a designated member of staff with responsibility for developing and improving multi-agency working as part of their roles and responsibilities. This may be due to the role being shared amongst staff members but further exploration of this decrease is needed.
- 6.6.3 We have also seen an increase in the percentage of schools who provide wrap around provision before/after school on the school site (34.4% to 47.5%).
- 6.6.4 Of the schools responded, many offered varying strategic initiatives they employ to develop mental health, well-being and support services as a whole system model. This includes linking closely with statutory and third sector partners including the CAMHS SHINE project, Whole School Approach Implementation Lead and Place2Be.

6.7 **Community Focused Schools Strategy**

- 6.7.1 As outlined in 5.3, Welsh Government has provided funding for the last two years to support a pilot of Community Focused School managers/leads in each local authority. We appointed a Lead for Community Focused Schools in July 2022 with a start date of September 2022. The Lead sits within the Attendance and Wellbeing structure in Education and Inclusion Services.
- 6.7.2 This post has worked closely over the last year with schools across the LA but with a particular focus on the Treorchy cluster as an area who have developed strong community links and where family engagement has been prioritised by schools for several years. The intention is for the role to work cluster-by-cluster across the LA in the coming years. Initial work has also started with the Mountain Ash cluster working in collaboration with NofskyWIT – a community interest company.
- 6.7.3 The Lead has worked closely with the Family Engagement Officers/Community Focused Schools lead officers in the Treorchy Cluster at co-constructing a framework utilising guidance from Welsh Government. Work has been undertaken with the officers, parents/carers, learners and the community to map current provision and to look at actions to further develop opportunities to increase engagement with families, the community and agencies. This includes the exploration of co-location opportunities within schools and encouraging the use of school buildings by the community on a more frequent basis.
- 6.7.4 In line with the guidance documentation released by Welsh Government, the lead has also worked with partners to develop a draft Community Focused School strategy which signposts to the many areas which serve as Guiding Principles to the Community Focused School ethos. This is included in Appendix Two.
- 6.7.5 The Lead has also worked closely with colleagues in 21st Century Schools on the capital project to support the Community Focused School agenda. The

initial survey in 2022 was used to identify some of the schools who were in need of capital support to develop their approach to Community Focused School. The Lead also established an all-Wales Community Focused Schools Leads/Managers group who meet every 6 weeks to discuss different LA approaches, links with Welsh Government and sharing of good practice.

6.8 **Capital Works**

- 6.8.1 Welsh Government has supported capital programmes for Community Focused School improvements for the last two years. In the 2022/23 financial year the grant terms and conditions were focused on 'Supporting Small and Medium Scale Practical Projects to Safely and Effectively Open Schools to the Community Outside Traditional Hours'. RCT received just over £1.6 million in 2022/23 to support these small and medium scale projects which were focused on extending existing facilities rather than completely new projects.
- 6.8.2 The funding was therefore utilised to support works in 10 schools across the local authority. The range of projects included enhancing community rooms provisions, upgrading gymnasiums and changing rooms to support wider community use, fencing to ensure appropriate access arrangements and storage and seating for outside groups to utilise on school sites.
- 6.8.3 In the 2023/24 financial year, the funding level was in line with the previous year but Welsh Government criteria for inclusion was changed. Instead of small and medium scale projects, expressions of interest were invited for larger programmes of work.
- 6.8.4 Expressions of interest were therefore provided to Welsh Government earlier in the year for four projects with each receiving feedback that Welsh Government were content to support pending the completion of a Project Information Proforma for the three projects with a value below £500,000 (Trehopcyn Primary, Porth Community School and Treorchy Primary School) and a Business Justification Case for the one project above £500,000 (Hawthorn High School).
- 6.8.5 These have been submitted and, at the time of writing, Welsh Government has sought further clarification around some areas of the Business Justification Case which have been submitted by the deadline of 25th September 2023.
- 6.8.6 The projects included in the proposals include new community facilities in unused or underutilised buildings in Trehopcyn Primary School and Hawthorn High School, a remodel and refurbishment of the sports hall and changing facilities in Porth Community School that are fit for community use and the creation of a Health Hub for co-location opportunities in Treorchy Primary School.

7. **ANTI-POVERTY INITIATIVES**

- 7.1 In addition to the support provided for Family Engagement Officers in deprived school communities outlined in sections 4 and 5, Education and Inclusion Services have also been involved in other initiatives to try to mitigate the impact of poverty on learners and their families.

- 7.2 One example is the Big Bocs Bwyd scheme which is running in 10 RCT schools. This scheme is aimed at providing low or no cost food, and other items, to the school community from a shop unit on the school site. It has several purposes including support families with access to produce, a reduction of food waste by repurposing stock from local shops and supermarkets, as well as curriculum offers for learners who are involved in growing schemes as well as the running of a shop unit.
- 7.3 The Big Bocs Bwyd scheme was supported centrally during the initial launch of these units with a group established to share intelligence and good practice as well as providing links to other areas of the authority including the Sustainable Food Coordinator. This supported schools to access and work with local community groups including allotment societies to source fresh produce for the Big Bocs Bwyd.
- 7.4 Other elements of support have also been sourced for schools including links forged with the RCT Citizens Advice Bureau. Outreach sessions have been run in a number of RCT schools to provide local advice for families and the wider community. Citizens Advice also provide a termly newsletter for schools which is distributed to all settings from our central team.
- 7.5 Where individual families are in need of wider support, Education and Inclusion Services and schools work closely with the Resilient Families Service who provide financial appraisals to take an in-depth look at where support may be needed.
- 7.6 Additional support for families facing financial hardship are also operational at a school level including food pantries on site, referrals to Food Banks, school uniform swap schemes, amongst others. The LA leads in areas including the rollout of Universal Free School Meals, the Schools Essentials Grant, the Childcare Offer for Wales and Period Dignity. All of these schemes are aimed at alleviating the financial burden on families.
- 7.7 Last year, there was also a project in the Cynon Valley which involved six schools looking at the 'Cost of the School Day'. This project was supported by the Child Poverty Action Group and involved the whole-school community identifying and reducing the financial barriers faced by learners and their families. This raised many issues important to families to provide support and remove stigma. This involved steps such as:- schools encouraging online payments for fundraising days to prevent the need for children to carry cash or families to feel the pressure of having to pay; payment plans for school trips to spread the cost instead of one-off payments; simplifying non-uniform days so that costumes were not needed to be bought and items could be made in school.
- 7.8 As a result of this work, and the excellent practice displayed during an Estyn inspection, Llwydcoed Primary School were invited to write a case study on Poverty Proofing the School Day. This can be found here: [Poverty Proofing the School Day | Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#). This also formed part of a presentation by the Headteacher in a recent Primary Headteachers' meeting in September 2023 to share this element of best practice with colleagues across the local authority.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been needed for the work to date.

9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Not applicable. Surveys were available to schools in both Welsh and English but the results of these do not impact on the Welsh language. Any resources produced for supporting the Community Focused School agenda will be made available bilingually.

10. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

10.1 The 2023 survey undertaken with schools outlined in section 5 is included in summary as Appendix One. The FEO pilots have been approved by Cabinet.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no additional financial implications as a result of this report. The Lead for Community Focused School is part funded by Welsh Government for the 2023/24 financial year. There may be a need to consider how this role is funded in future years if Welsh Government funding is not forthcoming.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

12.1 There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

13. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES / WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

13.1 The resource provided in the form of Family Engagement Officers meets the objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan for People by 'ensuring people are independent, healthy and successful' through improving services for children and young people as well as their families. It also meets the Prosperity target by ensuring we have good schools, so all children have access to a great education.

13.2 The Community Focused School agenda meets the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 by fostering school and community relations to create a Wales of cohesive communities while improving the prosperity and resilience of our children, young people and families.

14. STRATEGIC OR RELEVANT TO ELECTORAL WARDS

14.1 The schools chosen for Family Engagement Officer funding have been based on need from attendance and deprivation data. The Lead for Community Focused Schools will work on a cluster-by-cluster basis across the County and is not specific to any one electoral ward although initial stages have focused in the Treorchy Cluster area which covers the electoral wards of Treherbert, Treorchy, Pentre and Ystrad.

15. CONCLUSION

- 15.1 The focus that RCT has placed initially on Family Engagement Officers and then later on the wider Community Focused School agenda is already showing improvement in several areas.
- 15.2 The surveys undertaken provide a good starting point for wider discussion points with schools and the developments of next steps for our LA support for this area.
- 15.3 Wider work is likely needed on the Community Focused School agenda to engage with partners on a strategic level. There are also initial plans in place to scope governors' training to be developed and delivered to increase governor awareness of the Welsh Government and LA strategic approach.
- 15.4 Additional work will also continue into supporting learners and their families facing financial barriers to education. A dedicated area of the RCT website is under development for families to access 'Help and support for Education Related Costs'. Providing this information in one space will hopefully further support families in need.

Summary of Survey Results (Open ended questions have been omitted)

1. Do you have explicit reference in your school improvement plans to how you will work with *families* to improve the wellbeing and achievement of all pupils?

Yes	45
No	14

2. What approaches have you used to strengthen family engagement within your setting?

Regular communication with families	58
Provide parents with resources to support the learning at home	48
Workshops opportunities for parents to support children's learning at home	49
Family volunteering opportunities	22
Family participation in school events	50
Communications that support different cultures and languages	24
At least annual parental voice strategies to help shape what you do in school	46
Other	15

3. Does the school offer support to parents to encourage them to support their child's learning at home?

Yes	55
No	4

4. Does your school offer tailored workshops to parents?

Yes	46
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No	13
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5. If yes, what type of tailored workshop does your school provide?

Development of literacy	36
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Development of numeracy	24
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Emotional health and wellbeing	32
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Welsh Language	11
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Digital skills	15
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Speech and language	11
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Other	12
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6. How frequently do you offer tailored workshops?

Weekly	4
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Half-Termly	7
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Termly	13
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Annually	11
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Other	11
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7. Are parenting programs run on your school site?

Yes	27
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No	32
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8. How does the school consult with parents?

Parental surveys	37
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Face to face consultation	9
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Other	13
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9. How frequently does the school consult with parents?

Weekly	10
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Half-Termly	12
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Termly	17
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Annually	9
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Other	11
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10. Does your school have a Family Engagement Officer (FEO)?

Yes	31
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No	28
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11. Do you have explicit reference in your school improvement plan to how you will work with the *community* to improve the wellbeing and achievement of all pupils?

Yes	29
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No	30
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12. Does your school currently offer activities or services to children outside of the school day?

Yes	52
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No	7
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13. Does your school currently offer activities or services to children during the school holidays?

Yes	21
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No	38
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14. Does your school currently offer activities or services to families/ the community outside of the school day?

Yes	22
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No	37
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15. Does your school currently offer activities or services to families / the community during the school holidays?

Yes	9
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No	50
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16. Does your school offer or co-ordinate any adult community learning (ACL) opportunities?

Yes	12
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No	47
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17. Does your school have a dedicated community room available for parents and families to use?

Yes	30
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No	29
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18. Do any third sector organisations regularly work from your school?

Yes	20
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No	39
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19. Do you provide school assets for wider community use?

Yes - during school hours	5
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Yes - outside of school hours	10
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Yes - both during school hours and outside of school hours	9
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No	35
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20. Does the school have any services co-located at your school e.g. police, health, GP, YEPs

Yes	8
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No	51
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21. Does the school have a senior lead for developing family and community engagement?

Yes	37
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No	22
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22. To what extent does the school have a vision and plan for family and community engagement (1 being no vision and 5 being clear vision and plan)

23. As a school do you have explicit reference in your school improvement plan to how you will work with *agencies* to improve the wellbeing and achievement of all pupils?

Yes 36

No 23

24. In your school do you have a designated member of staff with responsibility for further improving multi-agency working as part of their roles and responsibilities?

Yes 35

No 24

25. Does your school provide wrap around provision before/after school on your school site?

Yes – just before school 12

Yes – just after school 4

Yes – both 12

No 31

Draft Community Focused School Strategy

RCT Education and Inclusion Services

Strategy for Community Focused Schools

2022-2025

Issued: September 2023

Due for review: September 2024

Introduction

In RCT, our Education and Inclusion Services Directorate Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 outlines the mission, vision, values, and ambition of the Directorate over the next 3 years. Our mission is:

‘To deliver equity and excellence in Education and enhanced well-being for all.’

To support the delivery of equity and excellence in education and enhanced well-being for all our approach to Community Focused Schools will encompass and include:

1. Family engagement -

- Creating meaningful opportunities for families and carers to be involved in school life and decision making and to be engaged in children’s learning.
- Working closely with families to give children and young people the best home learning environment possible.
- Ensuring families have the skills, confidence, and resources to actively support their child’s learning at home and in school.
- Working in a constructive way with families to address any barriers to engagement.

2. Community engagement –

- Encouraging schools to draw upon and utilise links with community groups and organisations and also offer support and opportunities to community members.
- Acting as a key part of the local community, offering opportunities to use the school facilities for adult learning, well-being, play, sporting, cultural and other community activities.
- Signposting to other support or advice services.
- Utilising the skills and organisations within the community to extend and enrich learning opportunities and to positively influence change.

3. Multi-agency engagement –

- Developing partnerships with wider services and interventions to remove any barriers to learning. A Community Focused School makes links with these services and supports the child and family to access the right support at the right time.
- Collaborating effectively with other key services and agencies to ensure that all children thrive and learn.
- Sharing information where appropriate so that children and young people and their families can access the appropriate support at the right time.
- Supporting access to wider services which may be co-located in a school premises or located elsewhere within the community.

We are committed in RCT to providing excellent services which improve the lives of children, young people, their families, and the wider community. This includes the experience and quality of schooling and services they will receive from us. We have

therefore developed this strategy that will run alongside our Education Strategic Plan for the years 2022-2025.

There are 4 key enablers which support the progression between family, community, and multi-agency engagement.

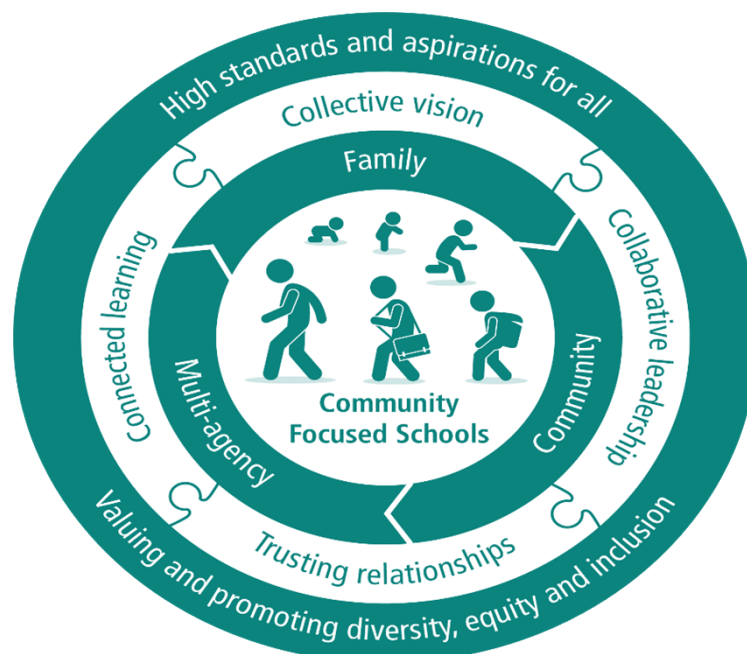
1. **Collective vision** - The need for all stakeholders to help develop and realise the vision for the school, families, and communities.
2. **Collaborative leadership** - Leadership across stakeholders to ensure shared voice, decision making and goals.
3. **Trusting relationships** - Trusting and non-judgmental relationships between schools, families, and community members, and between staff and children or young people allowing everyone to feel listened to, valued and respected.
4. **Connected learning** - A strong focus on high quality and connected learning across home, school, and the community, maximising the opportunities in each sphere.

For a number of years, we have demonstrated the strong partnerships schools have with their families and wider communities. This strategy has been developed to embed good practice and strengthen those relationships and further progress engagement with community and multi-agency partnerships. It is also aimed to provide consistency and guidance in the approach to Community Focused Schools in RCT, this document will be supported by additional guidance. Stakeholder voice will be vitally important in the design and delivery of the approaches. This strategy is aligned with cross-directorate work to ensure that our services work in partnership with all stakeholders.

In developing this strategy, we have utilised these key documents, policies and the approaches contained within them to inform our practice:

<https://www.gov.wales/community-focused-schools>

Welsh Government's model for Community Focused Schools



This model reflects a whole-system approach. Working from early years to post-16 is crucial to the success of our children and young people.

The elements of family, community and multi-agency engagement are interconnected. Each element does not work in isolation but has an influence and impact on the others, combining to become a self-perpetuating model.

Guiding Principles

- **Adverse childhood experiences and trauma-informed approaches (ACEs)** – ACEs are traumatic events, or experiences, that happen before the age of 18 and can continue to have an impact throughout that person’s life. [ACEs - Hwb \(gov.wales\)](#)
- **Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan** – Welsh Government Anti-racist Action Plan was launched on Tuesday 7th June 2022, it is built on the values of anti-racism and calls for zero tolerance of all racial inequality. [Anti-racist Wales Action Plan | GOV.WALES](#)
- **Childcare** – The Childcare sector covers a wide range of different types of provision, which are subject to a set of National Minimum Standards for regulated childcare. [National Minimum Standards for regulated childcare | GOV.WALES](#)
- **Children and young people’s plan** – Welsh Government have set out the part they can play in making Wales a wonderful place for children and young people to grow up, live and work, where everyone feels valued. Community Focused schools are an integral part of this vision. [Children and young people's plan \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)
- **Curriculum for Wales** – This allows the opportunity for schools and school clusters to develop programmes of learning that suits their community needs. Equality and diversity are at the core and this supports the Community Focused Schools approach. Building better relationships between schools and families, communities and employers will support educational achievement and [Careers and work-related experiences](#). This will lead to developing meaningful partnerships and allow the next steps opportunities for employment, education and training to be explored. <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>
- **Cymraeg 2050** - The ambition of Welsh Government is to have 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050 and the Community Focused Schools approach aligns with this aim. The strategy and framework will support the promotion of the Welsh language. [Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers \(gov.wales\)](#)
- **Early childhood education and care** - It is important for schools to work with the early years providers in their area to support a smooth transition for every child from childcare to early education. Working with partners offering the Childcare Offer further supports the transition into full-time education. High quality early childhood education and care has been shown to be the most effective and cost beneficial single early intervention strategy to enhance child developmental outcomes, in particular language and cognitive development. [Get 30 hours of childcare for 3 and 4 year olds | GOV.WALES](#)
- **Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) and Electively Home Educated (EHE)** - Although Community Focused Schools is a school-based policy there is recognition that some children are educated elsewhere either at home or in other settings and school has a role in supporting transition.

- **Enriching the school day** - Creating academic and sporting activities and offering a wide range of social and cultural opportunities will broaden opportunities for learners, especially for those who are from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This will support their well-being, wider development and engagement with the school. The school has an important role in supporting the enrichment activities provided by a wide range of partners.
- **Families First** – This programme uses a multi-agency approach, focusing on early intervention and prevention depending on the needs of the family. The range of support can be offered to individual members or the whole family. <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/ChildrenandFamilies/ParentandFamilySupport/Financialsupportforfamilies/FamiliesFirst/WhatisFamiliesFirst.aspx>
- **Food and Fun (also known as School Holiday Enrichment Programme)** – Welsh Local Government Association run this scheme and the programme is a valuable part of providing good nutrition, educational provision and fun activities during the summer holiday. There are strong links between the Community Focused School approach and Food and Fun. <https://www.wlga.wales/food-and-fun-school-holiday-enrichment-programme>
- **Flying Start** - Is the Welsh Government's early years programme that helps families with children under 4 years old in disadvantaged areas of Wales.

Help available includes:

- part-time childcare for 2 to 3 year olds
 - an enhanced Health Visiting service
 - access to parenting programmes
 - support for children to learn to talk and communicate
- <https://www.rctfamilies.co.uk/EN/ParentsCarers/SupportServices/FlyingStartChildcare.aspx>
- **Free school breakfasts** - The Welsh Government is 'maintaining our commitment to provide free breakfasts for all primary school learners.' The primary breakfast offer is an element of the food in school policy and supports the ambition that no child in Wales goes hungry during the school day. <https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/SchoolsandLearning/Schoolcatering/Freeprimaryschoolbreakfastclubs.aspx>
 - **Further education** - There are strong links between Community Focused Schools and further education providers. It is important for schools to make positive links with providers to not only engage learners but to also help signpost families or carers to adult education services and even provide adult education on their premises to support family learning.
 - **Healthy Start scheme** - The scheme applies to those who are more than 10 weeks pregnant or have a child aged under 4. It can help those eligible to buy healthy products and foods like milk or fruit or get free vitamins. [Get help to buy food and milk \(Healthy Start\)](#)
 - **Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales** – is the Welsh Government's long term strategy to prevent and reduce obesity. Alongside the strategy are 5 two-yearly plans that focus on the early years, children and adolescents, as well as tackling health inequalities for all.

The strategy is made up of 4 national themes:

- Healthy environments
- Healthy settings
- Healthy people
- Leadership and enabling change

A Community Focused School also supports these themes.

<https://www.gov.wales/healthy-weight-strategy-healthy-weight-healthy-wales>

- **Parenting supporting – Parenting. Give it time.** – is a Welsh Government scheme that offers free practical tips and expert advice for all parenting challenges of all ages.

The core purpose of parenting support is about working with parents to:

- reduce risks
- strengthen parenting capacity
- develop and build resilience
- sustain positive change in the best interests of children

A Community Focused School also supports these aims.

[Parenting. Give it time. | GOV.WALES](#)

- **Play** - Playing is a vital activity for children of all ages and supports their well-being, resilience and development. As identified by Public Health Wales outside play encourages a high level of activity and is an important step towards healthy weight for children. Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) creates a specific right for all children to have rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts. Community Focused Schools can play an active part in ensuring school grounds are fully utilised by their communities. Opening school grounds for organised play activities and events has a significant part to play in addressing the urgent need to ensure that more children can access outdoor play.

[Home - Play Wales](#)

- **Pupil Development Grant** - The purpose of the PDG is to improve outcomes for learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and Children Looked After (CLA). It is intended to overcome the additional barriers that prevent learners from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving their full potential. Community Focused Schools approach aligns with these objectives.
- **Speech language and communication** - The Welsh Government wants every child to have the best start in life. Supporting children in their early years makes a real difference to their futures. That includes developing speech, language and communication skills by the right person, in the right place and at the right time. [Talk With Me: Speech, Language and Communication \(SLC\) Delivery Plan | GOV.WALES](#)
- **Sustainable communities for learning** - Through investing in the premises of schools we hope to create better facilities that can be used by learners and the wider community. This includes access to adult learning and sports and leisure activities.
- **Tackling child poverty** – Community Focused schools have a vital role to play in building community resilience and well-being. Taking this approach will help address the significant barriers to progression for children impacted by poverty. It is a statutory duty to tackle child poverty and mitigate its impacts, including

the educational inequalities that children experience as a result of living in poverty. [Education in Wales: action plan 2017 to 2021 | GOV.WALES](#)

- **The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code** - adopts a person-centred approach which places children and their families at the heart of the decision-making process. It also requires all services to work together for a child or young person with ALN. Community Focused Schools will make links will external agencies and services to ensure appropriate support is accessed.
[The Additional Learning Needs Code and regulations | GOV.WALES](#)
- **Universal Primary Free School Meals** – All primary school children in Wales will get free school meals by 2024. This commitment is in response to the rising cost-of-living pressures on families and the shared ambition from Welsh Government in tackling child poverty and ensuring no child goes hungry in school. Universal Primary Free School Meals will help to:
 - tackle poverty
 - secure the well-being of future generations
 - reduce the inequalities of outcomes linked to socio-economic disadvantage across education, health, and prosperity[Universal Primary Free School Meals \(UPFSM\) | GOV.WALES](#)
- **Wider communities’ policy** - The Welsh Government is committed to working with and supporting our communities, both local places and communities of interest, in every aspect of social, environmental and economic life as well as through educational provision. Community Focused Schools is an important part of this approach.
[Programme for government | GOV.WALES](#)
- **Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Schemes** – Is delivered by Public Health Wales on behalf of the Welsh Government and takes a whole school approach to promoting health and wellbeing. The approach to a ‘healthy school’ is one which takes responsibility for maintaining and promoting the health of all who ‘learn, work, play and live’ within it not only by formally teaching learners about how to lead healthy lives but by enabling learners and staff to take control over aspects of the school environment which influence their health. Community Focused Schools align with the scheme as healthy schools actively promotes, protects and embeds the physical, mental and social health and well-being of its community through positive action.
[Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes - Public Health Wales \(nhs.wales\)](#)
- **Whole school approach to mental health and well-being** - Is a framework document issued by Welsh Government that contains both statutory guidance and non-statutory advice. It provides direction to address the emotional and mental well-being needs of all children and young people, as well as school staff as part of the whole-school community. Community Focused Schools closely align with this approach. The framework seeks to support good emotional and mental well-being by promoting a positive cultural environment in schools, where children and young people form positive relationships with staff and other learners, and relationships are strengthened:
 - between children and young people
 - between teaching staff
 - with the school senior leadership team and wider school staff
 - with parents and carers
 - with other professionals working with the school

- with the wider community that surrounds the school
[WG42005 \(gov.wales\)](#)
- **Youth Engagement and Progression Framework** - Is a Welsh Government programme that helps identifying the young people at risk of disengagement or at risk of homelessness and helping them back on to a learning pathway that is right for them. Community Focused Schools should form close partnerships with Youth Engagement and Participation Service to help provide support to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training and those at risk of homelessness.

<https://www.gov.wales/youth-engagement-and-progression-framework-overview>

<https://www.rctfamilies.co.uk/EN/Professionals/CWRSservices/TheYouthEngagementandParticipationService.aspx>

YEPS - RCT's Youth Service

- **Youth work** - offers young people aged 11 to 25 opportunities for learning that are educative, expressive, participative, inclusive, and empowering. Youth work supports young people through significant changes in their lives and encourages them to:
 - gain and develop knowledge, understanding, attitudes and values
 - make constructive use of their skills, resources and time.

It is important for Community Focused Schools to:

- be aligned to and work with local youth work services
- signpost young people to local youth work services
- identify how youth workers could be utilised in the school

[Youth work and engagement | Sub-topic | GOV.WALES](#)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EDUCATION and INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16TH OCTOBER 2023

CHILD POVERTY AND COMMUNITY FOCUSED SCHOOLS UPDATE

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
AND INCLUSION SERVICES**