

Meeting of:	Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 07 October 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Learning and Culture
Report Title:	Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) & Pupil Engagement Service
Purpose of Report:	To update members regarding the impact of changes to the Vale of Glamorgan Local Authority's (LA's) EOTAS delivery and associated key data sets.
Report Owner:	Rhys Jones – Pupil Engagement Manager
Responsible Officer:	Elizabeth Jones, Director of Learning and Skills
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Councillor Rhiannon Birch, Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language Morwen Hudson, Head of Standards and Provision Martin Dacey, Lead Officer for Social Inclusion
Policy Framework:	The recommendations of this report are within existing policy framework and budget.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Pupil Engagement Team was established in 2021-22 to support schools with young people who require bespoke education provision in settings often other than at school. This provision often takes place on an interim basis to support learners whilst more permanent plans are determined to better meet their social emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. • Current EOTAS numbers within the LA have reduced slightly to 44 as of the census week in 2024, this has reduced from the previous 2 years (2021/22 & 2022/23) where the number of EOTAS numbers were 45. • In 2023/24 there were increased challenges in relation to learners who are at risk of exclusion, medical isolation and those requiring bespoke 'interim' provision until specialist or out of county placements can be found. • Budget constraints for the service, along with schools' budgets, pose a greater risk for those learners who are most vulnerable and those needing emergency provision or specialist. 	

- Schools continue to utilise a range of 14-19 learning provision which complements their curriculum offer and is quality assured by schools directly.
- The Pupil Engagement Team supports schools to widen their offer of work placements to broaden the curriculum offer for those learners who are considering seeking employment at post 16.

Recommendations

1. That Members consider the developments made by the Pupil Engagement service and recognise the on-going progress, opportunities, and risks for EOTAS learners within the Local Authority (LA) and the associated impact of the team's work.
2. That Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee receives a further progress update report regarding updated information (based on the EOTAS return for Welsh Government) and the impact of learning for those in EOTAS settings.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. The LA has a legal responsibility under The Education Act 2002 and the Education and Skills Measure 2009 to monitor EOTAS commissioning of services/provision to meet the needs of complex learners.
2. To ensure that Members of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee continue to have oversight of EOTAS provision and services contracted by the Pupil Engagement team to monitor their effectiveness in meeting the needs of learners across the LA.

1. Background

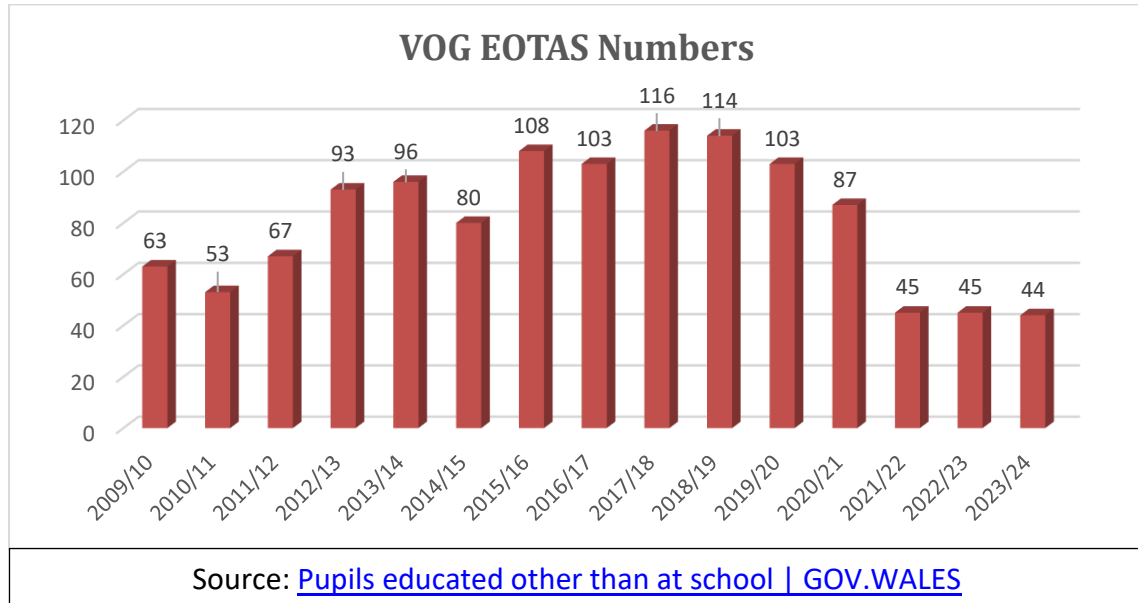
- 1.1 EOTAS is education provision to meet specific needs of pupils who, for whatever reason, have barriers to accessing the curriculum within a mainstream or special school. By law, LAs are responsible for providing these services.
- 1.2 The existence of EOTAS provision is, in part, a response to exclusion(s) from school. This might include a response to a formal disciplinary exclusion or a placement as an alternative to exclusion. EOTAS may also be used for reasons of health and safety where groups, such as pregnant young women, are not considered suitable for mainstream school education, those suffering with severe mental health concerns and anxiety, and those with emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) or those awaiting specialist provision or out of county (OOC) placement.
- 1.3 The Education Act 2002 and the Education and Skills Measure 2009 provide governing bodies with the power to commission external services. This power can be extended to services of an educational nature and is intended to enable governing bodies to fulfil their responsibilities regarding 14-19 Learning Pathways. These services should only be used where the school is unable to meet the curricular needs of the learner i.e., by providing vocational or specialist subjects.
- 1.4 A few schools have started commissioning services which are being referred to as 'Alternative Provision'. It is important to note that the term 'Alternative Provision' is not defined in Welsh law. The use of this term alongside EOTAS has

caused confusion within the sector regarding who maintains responsibility for the services being used and its purpose.

- 1.5** Welsh Government does not consider it appropriate for schools to commission external provision for the purposes of addressing behavioural issues, for example, home tuition for school refusers. This is set out in Welsh Government's statutory guidance *Exclusions from School and Pupil Referral Units*. The addition of social, emotional, and mental health panel (SEMHP) has been introduced as a gatekeeper to identify students needing support and consider what additions can be provided to maintain the learner within mainstream school.
- 1.6** Vale of Glamorgan ALN team have introduced new panel processes to coincide with the rollout of the new ALN Act. These panels embed new practices in measuring the impact of interventions and school's approaches to implementing learning provision to best meet learner's needs. These panels identify instances where needs cannot be met by school or LA and will determine if EOTAS provision is needed via out of county specialist providers.
- 1.7** The LA has developed a range of specialist resource bases for children with more complex social, emotional, and mental health needs. This meets the needs of learners within the Vale of Glamorgan before needing to consider longer term EOTAS provision which may be required Out of County Specialist.
- 1.8** The Pupil Engagement Team annually contracts a range of services from bespoke providers for learners across the LA as required. This includes providers such as Grow at the Amelia Trust Farm, Smooth Starts Plus occupational therapist one to one sessions, private tutors from teaching agencies, online providers such as Academy 21 and our use of AV1 robots with an aim of reintegrating students back into mainstream education provision or within one of our resource bases (based on process and having an IDP). There may also be instances where learners are displaced from education and require bespoke interim EOTAS provision whilst their SEMH needs are determined, and suitable and permanent provision is accessed.
- 1.9** The Pupil Engagement team utilise a mixture of reactive and preventative measures for children and young people in the Vale. Through early identification via exclusions monitoring, attendance monitoring, use of social, emotional, and mental health panel (SEMHP), use of reduced timetables portal, ALN interface meetings, and YJESS interface meetings the team sit within all arenas where these needs are identified. As such key considerations can be made as to early intervention to support a learner to remain in mainstream school whilst identifying their possible wider needs.
- 1.10** During 2023-24 Academic year the Pupil Engagement team secured additional finance £60,000.00 to widen the reach within the Pencoedtre Cluster schools as part of its work within the Pencoedtre Learning Community. The Pupil Engagement team sourced additional resources within the primary and secondary settings to widen the reach of learners disengaged, widen the support for transition to secondary school and to offer additional family intervention and engagement, including a half term transition project. Partners including Cardiff

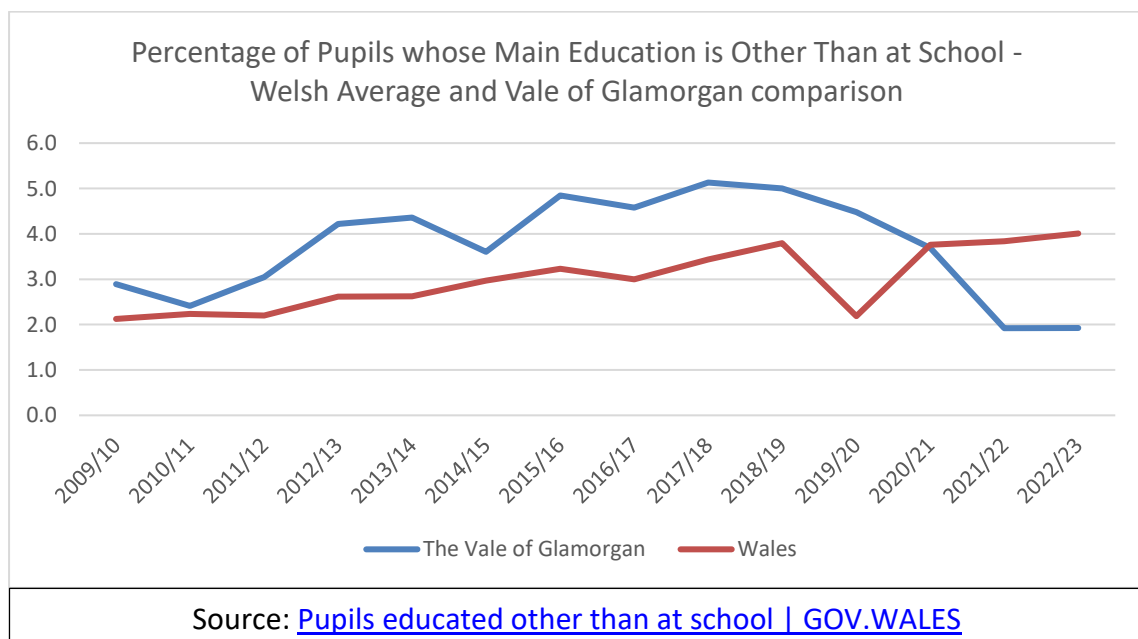
City Foundation, Empire Fighting Chance, Therapeutic Mentoring, and Inspired learners all formed part of this offer.

1.11 The chart below highlights the number of Vale students classified as EOTAS within the Statutory return over the past 15 years.



1.12 Within the Vale of Glamorgan, numbers had increased until the closure of our Pupil Referral Unit and the impact of the Covid pandemic. The past three years gives us an accurate picture of EOTAS numbers across the LA.

1.13 The chart below compares the percentage of students (This data uses the number of pupils per 1,000) across Wales who were in receipt of EOTAS compared to the Vale. The Vale of Glamorgan has dropped below the Welsh average whilst remaining static at 1.9% the Welsh Average has risen from 3.8% to 4% within every 1,000 pupils.



- 1.14** The data above identifies the Vale of Glamorgan as being the 6th lowest LA in terms of numbers (per % of 1,000 pupils) of learners who are EOTAS across Wales.
- 1.15** During census week (22-26th January 2024) within the Vale of Glamorgan the provisional number of students recorded as EOTAS was 48; however, in line with the PLASC schools' data this figure was reduced to 44 by Welsh Government. This breaks down to 6 primary, 30 secondary and 8 post 16 learners for whom we pay private arrangements under their Individual Development Plan (IDP) and the ALN Act.
- 1.16** Many secondary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan choose to utilise a range of 14-19 learning pathways for students who require a more varied curriculum. These pathways include vocational skills, training providers, Cardiff and Vale College Junior Apprenticeship Programme, or via Motivational Preparation College, all of which are used as a method of broadening horizons but also as a means of engaging young people in vocational skills and opportunities. These provisions are arranged directly by schools, and they are responsible for quality assurance to ensure robust procedures are in place to monitor learners' attendance, attainment, and progress. Schools are asked on an annual basis for information.
- 1.17** Secondary schools have used work placements as a mechanism to widen the offer and curriculum for learners needing a more vocational learning offer over many years. Previously this was led by Careers Wales, however, schools are likely to increase the use of this model as we move ahead as a cost-effective way to support learning for students. The Pupil Engagement Team have already supported two secondary schools with Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) training to ensure the work placements are quality assured and safe to use, whilst clear monitoring processes are in place.
- 1.18** The arrangements allow students to experience other forms of education on a part time basis while still preparing for GCSE subjects at their school. Schools also use these pathways to offer more variety for students who find a full-time school-based curriculum and timetable challenging as a means of an alternative learning pathway.
- 1.19** Costs have increased in recent years for all provisions and providers. There are several reasons for this including cost of living, staff wages, inflation, and cost of travel. The biggest factor however is the significant increase in demand for services and specialist support for learners whose needs schools are finding increasingly difficult to meet within their own curriculum.
- 1.20** Throughout the year the Pupil Engagement Team continues to develop its reach; the team have recently linked in with a regional investment fund for those students most at risk of being hospitalised due to risk of self-harm and suicide and their reintegration to education. A member of the team sits within the regional health project Goleudy. With wider partners and health colleagues it allows for formulation meetings for learners within the Vale of Glamorgan and helps to identify strategies to move ahead and forward.

- 1.21** During 2023/24 the rate of learners permanently excluded from mainstream education has risen considerably. This year, we have seen 1 learner permanently excluded from primary school whilst at secondary schools, who have historically had 3 or 4 cases per annum, this has risen to 12 in the last academic year. As a result, the Pupil Engagement team have needed to find additional EOTAS provision from day 16 of exclusions in line with WG Policy, resulting in increased spend and identifying unforeseen and emergency provision which meets need.
- 1.22** Due to rise in hospital or medical needs and those children and young people facing Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), the LA has developed a range of resource bases for those who face significant anxiety and trauma. In addition, from day 16 of an exclusion, the Pupil Engagement team are also required to develop an offer to meet need. This number is increasing and current registers for all resource bases in September 2024 are currently at capacity.
- 1.23** With all resource bases at capacity there is an increased risk in the need for interim arrangements via the Pupil Engagement service, and those children and young people who may need to go to out of county specialist provision if there is no space within the Vale.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The numbers of pupils classed as EOTAS remains stable, however numbers for preventative and reactive provision are increasing for the Pupil Engagement team, this is a combination of those learners permanently excluded, those needing intervention or support from day 16, and those needing interim provision whilst awaiting longer term specialist provision or space within a resource base. This may result in an increased spend for Out of County budget and higher numbers needing and receiving intervention.
- 2.2** The Pupil Engagement Team procure services annually based on need and numbers of learners identified and in line with projected budget allocation, without procuring services early there is a severe risk these services will not be available on an ad hoc basis and we have faced this over the past two years, as a result the LA puts itself at risk of bin taken to tribunal if emergency provision is not available.
- 2.3** The current 2024-25 budget is on target for full spend and in line with all required provision and service delivery, this does not account for additionally excluded children and young people during 2024/25 academic year, or for additional 'interim' provision if learners' needs cannot be met within mainstream or resource base within the Vale of Glamorgan.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** To become a more resilient Wales preventative programmes are completed, such as Cardiff City, GROW, and Empire Fighting Chance, all of which support the development of health programmes that reduce the need for longer term placements. This reduces the need and impact on transport and air pollution by promoting social inclusion within the school. The therapeutic intervention and champions programmes also focus on health, self-care, and self-awareness, looking at social impact and environment as part of their module.
- 3.2** In monitoring, tracking, and reducing longer term specialist interventions, we also contribute to the percentage of young people prevented from becoming NEET, which is set out in the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework and the Welsh Government Child Poverty Strategy. It helps support the national and local indicator of percentage of young people in education, employment, or training, under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 for post 16 learners.
- 3.3** We are pleased to be offering a wide range of subject pathways through our partners that will help inspire young people to fulfil their potential, this helps to create a more equal Wales, a prosperous Wales, and a resilient Wales.
- 3.4** Through collaboration with internal and external partners, local services, and suppliers, the PE Team will work together to improving standards of alternative education provision and ensure that provision is quality assured through regular contracts management meetings. The process ensures the robust monitoring of the progress of learners. Monitoring is undertaken to ensure both the Council and learners are receiving value for money and that provision has a positive impact on young people's education and wellbeing creating a healthier Wales and supporting a Wales of cohesive communities.
- 3.5** The team work collaboratively with internal and external partners to ensure those most vulnerable learners have access to education provision which meets their need, through close working with service areas including the Learning Links Team, Additional Learning Needs team (ALN) and children's services colleagues we work to support education attainment and outcomes and ensure a positive transition to destination for post16.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** Prevention and use of local services and providers aim to prevent the need for longer out of county placements where students require additional daily transport. This will reduce the use of vehicles and help reduce carbon emissions, where required we work closely with the school transport team to consider alternate measures or shared travel to reduce impact.
- 4.2** Meetings with partners, stakeholders and internal staff are held over Microsoft Teams to help minimise transport between meeting locations and impact on

emissions, also use of digital technology where required in lessons or education rather than a tutor providing only 1:1 within homes. An additional example would be the use of the AV1 robots which enable those more anxious learners or those hospitalised to access lessons via an interactive robot in the classroom to enable learner to keep in touch with learning and friends, thus saving us having to send tutors across local authority for teaching, reducing travel and associated air pollution.

- 4.3 By using digital management of information systems within the LA, the team can move towards a paperless service. To support this work, pupil engagement uses digital methods for referral, weekly mirroring forms and electronic signatures to reduce the carbon footprint further.
- 4.4 Procurement and tendering decisions support the local economy, services, and programmes, reducing the impact on miles travelled by all staff and children, whilst supporting where possible preventative measures within schools rather than increased use of buses.
- 4.5 With the implementation of the wider electric pool car strategies from the Council, it is expected that these will be used, along with carpooling with other staff when available to attend face-to-face meetings or visiting providers out of county.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1 The pupil engagement budget 2023/24 had full spend of £486,975.98.
- 5.2 The current 2024/25 budget is fully committed at £489,908.00.
- 5.3 Learning and Skills will need to consider its use of Out of County placements for learners with additional learning needs or those independent schools that can be utilised; with the costs of these placements rising over the years for learners with an Individual Development Plan (IDP) or statement.
- 5.4 Preventative interventions have been prioritised for 2024/25 Academic year to look at preventing those needing longer term interim or specialist placements.

Employment

- 5.5 No changes need to be made to the current structure; we have recently recruited a caseworker within the Pupil Engagement team to support the day-to-day operation.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.6 The pupil engagement team work closely with the ONE V4 management information system of which school SIMS data is also stored. We work closely

with the ONE team to monitor and evaluate the data and to ensure it is accurate for the Welsh Government EOTAS return including information for equalities.

- 5.7** Additional software within Capita for an Attendance Collection Toolkit has been purchased and being used to monitor daily attendance for those EOTAS learners that have been placed in out of county and specialist provisions, this attendance data feeds live data within ONE V4 for greater monitoring and safeguarding of learners from the Vale of Glamorgan.

6. Background Papers

None.