

Torfaen County Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
Pontypool  
Torfaen  
NP4 6YB

25/06/2026

Dear Andrew Powles

### **Enhanced LALI visit: June 2026**

On the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> June 2026, Alan Edwards HMI and a team of HMI carried out an enhanced local authority link inspector visit which focussed on your approaches to additional learning needs (ALN) and inclusion and your approaches to improving attendance.

During our visit, we had the opportunity to:

- Meet with you and the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families
- Meet with the senior leaders who lead on the two focus areas
- Meet with a range of officers who lead on aspects of the two focus areas
- Meet with a range of headteachers and other leaders from schools and settings
- Consider a range of documentation provided by you and your teams

We hope you and your education services team found this visit to be helpful. Below is a summary of our findings.

### **Area of focus 1: Approaches to Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and inclusion**

During our visit it was useful to hear about the steps you have taken to strengthen the strategic leadership for ALN and inclusion. Leaders told us how they have established a clear and shared vision for ALN, strengthened governance arrangements and maintained a strong focus on improving outcomes for children and young people. Officers and school leaders said that this has helped to create a shared commitment to inclusion across services, settings and schools.

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Mae Estyn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Bydd gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn y naill iaith neu'r llall yn cael yr un flaenoriaeth.

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Leaders have prioritised strengthening relationships with partners. School leaders told us that this has helped to improve collaboration with schools, settings and regional partners. School leaders value the opportunities to inform developments, such as funding arrangements, placement processes and the implementation of ALN reform through a range of groups. They were also positive about the accessibility, expertise and responsiveness of the ALN team, valuing the high-quality support, challenge and guidance they provide.

It was interesting to hear how officers have set about strengthening the local authority's approach to statutory processes for ALN. This has included developing clearer referral pathways, robust entry and exit criteria, improved placement arrangements and more consistent approaches to individual development plans (IDPs). Schools told us that they value the professional learning offer for ALN and feel that is helping to strengthen their capacity to meet the needs of their pupils. We also found it helpful to discuss how you have worked to develop the provision within EOTAS and the PRU. This has helped to ensure that pupils in these settings have access to a broader range of pathways and strengthened support arrangements.

### **Questions to consider:**

- How will the local authority continue to develop a shared understanding of high-quality inclusive teaching across settings and schools?
- How will the local authority address the need for increasing demand for specialist provision?

### **Area of focus 2: Improving attendance**

In our discussions, it was clear that the local authority continues to place a high priority on improving attendance. This work is underpinned by the local authority's strong focus on the 'Marmot principles' aiming to address any inequalities so that all children and young people in Torfaen can thrive.

During our visit, it was useful to hear how officers evaluate the impact of their work. It was clear that the Director of Education and his team have built positive and trusting relationships with school leaders. Schools told us that they value the support the local authority provides and gave us examples of how this work has helped them to secure improvements in pupils' attendance. Officers work regularly with the school improvement service to strengthen this aspect of their work.

It was interesting to discuss how officers use a broad range of data to monitor local authority and school attendance. This includes considering the attendance of different groups of pupils well to target support and challenge to schools. Teams such as the Education Welfare Service work pro-actively with schools and maintain a clear focus on

reducing any barriers to poor attendance. It was positive to hear how the local authority has continued to strengthen the relationships within and across. Officers told us that this has had a positive impact on their work and helped them to understand the contributions different teams make to improving aspects of the authority's work such as attendance. This has helped to strengthen the joint working of teams, as has the increased involvement of different officers in extended leadership team meetings.

The local authority has been developing its approach to improving attendance across clusters of schools. School leaders were positive about this approach and value the Education Welfare Officer working within clusters. They feel it has helped to reduce duplication of work and to develop a shared approach to improving attendance across the local authority.

**Question for consideration:**

- Would providing the comparative attendance data for different groups of pupils in your monthly data release to schools further strengthen your approach?

Many thanks for facilitating the visit and I look forward to discussing the developments in the two focus areas with you and your colleagues in my future link visits.

Your Sincerely

*Alan Edwards*

**Alan Edwards HMI**