

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

25TH JANUARY 2018

KEY STAGE 4 AND KEY STAGE 5 EXAMINATION RESULTS AND PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORISATION FOR 2018

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING, CLLR. ROSSER.

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with the final confirmation of the Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 examination results for 2016-17 and the Welsh Government Primary and Secondary School Categorisation for 2017 - 2018.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Note the information contained within this report.
- 2.2 Note the action taken to date and the action planned to be taken by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning in partnership with the Central South Consortium to support those primary and secondary schools in Categories Amber and Red.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The progress made by schools in improving standards and outcomes for children and young people in Rhondda Cynon Taf is a priority for the Council.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The outcomes for young people at the end of Key Stage 4 is externally verified via GCSE examinations and at the end of Key Stage 5 via GCE Advanced Level examinations.
- 4.2 Schools have individual subject results to enable senior leaders to challenge underperforming departments.
- 4.3 The Local Authority can analyse the performance of each school compared to the other secondary schools in the County Borough and

across secondary schools in the Central South Consortium. When the data is finalised the results of each Local Authority is benchmarked to indicate the comparative performance across Wales.

- 4.4 In reviewing the comparative position of the Council it is important for Members to recognise that social deprivation has a significant impact on educational performance. Rhondda Cynon Taf is the second most deprived local authority yet the performance of our pupils exceeds the expected level. Deprivation is not an excuse for underperformance but a well researched reason.

5. KEY STAGE 4

- 5.1 This year substantial changes have been introduced to the KS4 curriculum and to how individual pupil and school performance is assessed in Wales, Northern Ireland and England. In the past the three countries have been aligned and the education standards had been set and maintained by one qualification regulator. There are now three separate regulators for the GCSE qualification across the three countries. Scotland has historically had alternative qualifications.

- 5.2 As a result the GCSE qualifications are developed to meet the different requirements of each regulator, and are awarded independently of each other. This means that the grades awarded within a subject will no longer be benchmarked across each country. Clearly, this could create problems in the future in terms of comparisons between qualifications for employers and further and higher education institutions. The three regulators are committed to working together, as they keep their respective approaches to maintaining standards under review.

- 5.3 In Wales, 2017 has seen:

- The introduction of new GCSE's for English Language, Welsh (first) Language, GCSE Mathematics and a new examination GCSE Mathematics – Numeracy;
- The new GCSEs are now linear with the assessment being undertaken through examination at the end of the course. Previous GCSEs were available in a modular option, which included a controlled assessment unit for the language qualifications and examinations which could be taken in stages over a two year period;
- Significant changes to the key performance measures:
 - A maximum of two vocational qualifications (40%) will count towards the Level 1, Level 2 and Level 2 inclusive. In 2016 five vocational qualifications could have counted for the Level 1 and Level 2 thresholds and three for the Level 2 inclusive;
 - Only the new GCSE's for English Language, Welsh (first) Language, and one of GCSE Mathematics or GCSE

Mathematics – Numeracy will count towards the literacy and maths elements of the Level 2 inclusive performance measure. English Literature no longer is counted towards the literacy and maths elements;

- The capped points score performance measure is the “best” nine qualifications, rather than the previous eight, which must include English Language or Welsh (first) Language, GCSE Mathematics, GCSE Mathematics – Numeracy, two Science qualifications (two Science GCSE’s from 2018), and no more than four vocational qualifications.
- 5.4 In Wales GCSEs are graded A*-G, whilst In England, the GCSEs that are designed to meet the requirements of the English regulator (Ofqual) are now graded 9 to 1, with 9 being the highest grade. Where the WJEC, the examination board for Qualifications Wales, does not offer specific subjects such as Latin, Community Languages such as Polish, Film Studies etc, schools can access the qualifications through the English examination boards and the pupils will be graded under the 9 to 1 mechanism.
- 5.5 As this is the first year the new examinations are being undertaken by Welsh pupils, the WJEC, the body that sets the examinations, wrote to all schools in November 2016 to highlight some of the outcomes they expect to see on respect of the changes. These include:
- Increased variability for schools and colleges as they adapt to the demands of the new qualifications;
 - The proportion of students awarded grade C or above in both new GCSE Mathematics qualifications will be lower than the percentage of pupils awarded a grade C or above in each of these qualifications individually. The two new Mathematics qualifications and the English Language/Welsh (first) Language are significantly different to the previous GCSE qualifications, assessing different content and skills.
- 5.6 The new examinations test different skill sets and knowledge bases than the previous examinations, and this year’s results cannot be meaningfully compared to last year’s results. It will take a further two years to establish meaningful comparative trend data.
- 5.7 The table below sets out the outcomes for Rhondda Cynon Taf’s Key Stage 4 for 2017. The provisional Central South Consortium data is also shown to provide some form of comparative and the 2016 data to illustrate the significant change in how the performance measures are calculated.

KS4	2016 Legacy GCSE's %	2017 New GCSE's %
Level 1 threshold (5 A*-G at GCSE or equivalent)		
RCT	96.7	94.7
CSC	94.3	94.2
Wales	95.3	94.4
Level 2 threshold (5 A*-C at GCSE or equivalent – minimum of three GCSEs)		
RCT	90.3	63.2
CSC	87.1	67.5
Wales	84.0	67.0
Level 2 threshold (5 A*-C at GCSE or equivalent) including English/Welsh and mathematics		
RCT	56.6	49.8
CSC	60.9	54.4
Wales	60.3	54.6
A* - C in English		
RCT	68.6	56.4
CSC	70.6	63.5
Wales	69.3	63.7
A* - C in Welsh		
RCT	75.3	74.7
CSC	78.0	79.0
Wales	75.1	74.2
A* - C in Mathematics (best of the 2 GCSEs)		
RCT	61.3	59.3
CSC	66.1	62.4
Wales	66.9	62.5
A* - C or equivalent in science		
RCT	85.4	78.6
CSC	85.5	80.2
Wales	82.4	75.6

5.8 The table illustrates that the new GCSE's and the new method of calculating the key performance indicators suggests a significant decrease in educational performance in RCT and Central South Consortium in 2017. As explained earlier, educational performance in some schools has increased between 2016 and 2017 if the 2016 method of calculating the key performance measures had been applied. Therefore it is difficult to form an informed opinion on the performance of all our 17 secondary schools. Nevertheless, there are some schools that have performed significantly better than others, and a few schools where the results do provide some cause for concern.

Over the rest of this academic year, Council officers, working with headteachers and the Central South Consortium will continue with bespoke improvement work to promote more of what has gone well, and address what needs to improve, on a school by school level, and

within each school, on a subject by subject area. We understand that schools must support pupils to demonstrate a readiness to learn (wellbeing) and also have in place increasingly excellent learning opportunities for these learners to make outstanding progress in their studies.

6. PROGRESS AT KEY STAGE 5

6.1 Over the last three years, there have been substantial changes in the post 16 environment with the removal of some courses, the introduction of new syllabi, the reorganisation of some sixth forms and the restriction in the choice of examination boards. This makes comparison across the years very difficult as you are not comparing like with like. Nevertheless, RCT has held its own against the National Level 3 threshold indicator being within a percentage point for each of the last three years. Last year the national indicator dropped by 0.9 of a percentage point whilst RCT dropped by only 0.7. It is to be hoped that we will now enter a period of stability that will allow our schools to flourish and to better the national averages.

Year		All	All	Boys	Girls
		Number of pupils aged 17 who entered a volume equivalent to 2 A levels	Entered a volume equivalent to 2 A levels who achieved the level 3 threshold %	Entered a volume equivalent to 2 A levels who achieved the level 3 threshold %	Entered a volume equivalent to 2 A levels who achieved the level 3 threshold %
2016/17	RCT	1004	96.3	95.7	96.7
	Central South	3589	97.4	96.7	98.0
	Wales	10152	97.1	96.2	97.9
2015/16	RCT	1079	97.0	95.3	98.3
	Central South	3751	97.7	96.9	98.3
	Wales	10804	98.0	97.1	98.6
2014/15	RCT	1180	97.0	96.0	97.8
	Central South	3813	97.0	96.8	97.9
	Wales	11838	97.1	95.9	97.8

6.2 In line with national averages, girls continue to outperform boys in the wider points score. There has been a significant drop in the average points score this year as a number of qualifications were replaced or discontinued. The Essential Skills suite has been replaced with the Welsh Baccalaureate which has reduced six qualifications into one.

RCT is well in advance with the roll out of the Welsh Bacalaureate and this measure will be reported upon in future years.

Year		All		Boys	Girls
		Number of pupils aged 17	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17
2016/17	RCT	1175	677.6	615.9	723.5
	Central South	4096	736.1	694.1	774.0
	Wales	11434	730.6	681.2	773.2
2015/16	RCT	1278	765.7	705.8	812.7
	Central South	4286	830.2	780.6	874.0
	Wales	12066	823.2	768.00	869.9
2014/15	RCT	1398	730.2	669.9	777.8
	Central South	4416	808.7	764.1	847.9
	Wales	13473	799.7	746.5	845.9

6.3 This year, the Welsh Government published the number of learners who achieved 3A*-A grades and also the number of who achieved 3A* to C. This will form part of the new suite of indicators which will replace the level 3 threshold. In line with national averages, girls outperform boys at A*to C but, against trend, boys outperform the girls at A*-A.

Year		All		Boys		Girls	
		Percentage of Pupils entering a volume equivalent of 2 A levels who achieved 3 A*-A grades	Percentage of Pupils entering a volume equivalent of 2 A levels who achieved 3 A*-C grades	Percentage of Pupils entering a volume equivalent of 2 A levels who achieved 3 A*-A grades	Percentage of Pupils entering a volume equivalent of 2 A levels who achieved 3 A*-C grades	Percentage of Pupils entering a volume equivalent of 2 A levels who achieved 3 A*-A grades	Percentage of Pupils entering a volume equivalent of 2 A levels who achieved 3 A*-C grades
2016/17	RCT	5.5	45.1	6.4	33.5	4.8	53.5
	Central South	11.8	56.6	12.6	49.7	11.0	62.5
	Wales	10.5	54.7	10.3	47.6	10.6	60.5

- 6.4 It has long been felt that the current suite of performance indicators do not provide an adequate overview of the quality of provision at post 16. There are many factors that can be used to measure success at post 16 and this has influenced the Welsh Government to introduce a new suite of performance indicators from next year. Apart from the addition of the Welsh Baccalaureate and the 3A*-A and 3A*-C measures, the Welsh Government will introduce a value added measure as well as a report on the destinations of the learners. This information will be published alongside data from the Further Education sector to enable our learners to make more informed decisions at 16.

7. PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORISATION

- 7.1 The current school categorisation model has changed significantly since 2016.
- 7.2 **Step One:** consisting of data in relation to standards and performance has been removed.
- 7.3 **Step Two:** This judgment based on the school's ability and capacity to self-improve is now central in coming to a view on a school support category. The process begins with the school's own self-evaluation. The judgement on capacity to improve is to do with the school's ability to drive its own improvement for the future and has a strong focus on leadership, learning and teaching.
- 7.4 Following consideration of the self-evaluation report and relevant evidence relating to school leadership, the performance of all learners and groups of learners and the quality of teaching and learning within the school, the governing body, together with the challenge advisor, will agree the judgement for the school's capacity to improve.
- 7.5 **Step Three:** this judgement will lead to a colour categorisation of the school which will trigger a bespoke programme of support, challenge and intervention.
- 7.6 The categories of support are:
- **Green - these are our best schools who:**
 - know themselves well and identify and implement their own priorities for improvement;
 - are rewarded by greater autonomy with limited, if any, interaction with challenge advisors; and
 - have the capacity to lead others effectively (school to school support).
 - **Yellow – these are our good schools who:**
 - will know and understand most of the areas in need of improvement;

- have many aspects of the schools performance which are self-improving; and
 - will receive limited challenge and support meetings deployed according to need.
- **Amber – these are our schools in need of improvement who:**
 - do not know and understand all the areas in need of improvement;
 - have many aspects of the schools performance which are not improving quickly enough; and
 - will receive time limited, focused challenge and intervention to support improvement; and
 - be subject to termly progress meetings with senior challenge advisor.
 - **Red – these are our schools in need of greatest improvement who:**
 - will receive critical intervention;
 - receive an automatic warning letter from LA and subsequent use of statutory powers where necessary;
 - trigger intensive and effective collaboration between LA and consortium;
 - will receive time limited, focused challenge and intervention to support improvement; and
 - be subject to half-termly progress meetings with the senior challenge advisor.

7.7 What are the results of the School Categorisation in Rhondda Cynon Taf?

A summary of the provisional categorisation of the Council's schools subject to National Moderation is shown below:

Category	Primary Schools						Secondary Schools					
	No of schools			%			No of schools			%		
	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
Green	19	22	37	18.1	21.6	36.0	1	5	4	5.9	29.4	23.5
Yellow	66	66	59	62.9	64.7	58.0	9	7	10	53.0	41.2	59.0
Amber	16	13	5	15.2	12.8	5.0	6	5	1	35.2	29.4	6.0
Red	4	1	1	3.8	0.9	1.0	1	0	2	5.9	0	11.5

7.8 The Central South Consortium's Framework for Challenge and Support sets out the response from the School Improvement Service to schools in each of the four categories, with the greatest support and challenge targeted at the amber and red schools.

7.9 For the amber and red schools, the diagnosis of need for improvement undertaken by the challenge advisor with the school will drive the work within the school. The challenge advisor will provide the core allocation of contact according to the school's category and will broker the

required additional support through the commissioning function of the school improvement service working closely with the strategic advisors as necessary.

7.10 The nature and amount of support will be determined by the identified need and may be derived from a number of sources, which could include one or a combination of:

- Support from other schools in the region;
- Support from other school improvement organisations and/or individuals from across the UK;
- Specific leadership and/or teaching development.

7.11 For schools requiring amber or red support the challenge advisor will need to keep the school's progress and the appropriateness and impact of the support under review so as to make changes where required in good time. The focus will be on the impact of the work to secure improvement rather than the number of days delivered.

7.12 To date, sufficient progress is being made by the vast majority of amber and red schools. Over the next few years, the Council and the schools will work together to strive to ensure all our schools are good schools and no school is in the Red category.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the contents of the report are for information purposes only.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

The Council has duties under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (amended) under Section 13A 'to promote high standards in primary and secondary education'.

11. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES

This has a clear link to the priorities set out in the in the Rhondda Cynon Taf Single Integrated Plan. In order to prosper people must have the education and essential skills to secure employment.

12. CONCLUSION

12.1 Across the Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 & 3, the performance of our pupils and schools has been relatively consistent, showing, in general, incremental improvement, as there has been over the past five years.

Welsh Government is planning curriculum changes for these key stages in the future, as it implements the vision and principles of the Donaldson Review.

- 12.2 However, KS4 has seen significant changes in 2017 in terms of the KS4 curriculum and the way in which school performance is assessed. In 2018, further changes will be introduced with the new Welsh Baccalaureate attainment measures at Foundation and National levels replacing the current Level 1, Level 2 and Level 2 inclusive threshold measures.
- 12.3 Schools across Wales have sought to introduce these changes with minimum disruption to pupils and ensuring that this year's pupils are not disadvantaged by being the first year group being assessed under the new curriculum and performance measures. The new approach introduced by Welsh Government is certainly more robust and challenging to pupils and schools.
- 12.4 Given this is the first year of the new KS4 curriculum and performance measures it is difficult to form a balanced judgement on the performance of each school, however, it is evident that some similar schools in the County Borough have out-performed others. It is important that the schools working with the Consortium understand their respective performance and take steps to ensure that action is taken to improve future KS4 results.

Other Information

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Children & Young People

Background Papers: None