



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

13th FEBRUARY 2020

KEY STAGE 4 AND 5 EXAMINATION RESULTS FOR 2019 AND PROVISIONAL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORISATION FOR 2019/20

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES (COUNCILLOR J ROSSER)

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the final confirmation of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 examination results for 2018-19 and Primary and Secondary School Categorisation for 2019/20.
- 1.2 To advise members on the significant changes in Welsh Government performance and accountability measures.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the information contained within the report.
- 2.2 Note the action taken to date and the future planned intervention of the Director of Education and Inclusion Services in partnership with Local Authority Education Services and Central South Consortium to support schools currently categorised as amber and red.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure that Cabinet Members are fully aware of the educational performance of our pupils and schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Welsh Government has been developing new evaluation and improvement arrangements to ensure that performance and accountability measures align with the new Curriculum for Wales 2022. It is proposed by Welsh Government that the new arrangements will

assist in raising standards, reducing the attainment gap, and deliver an improved education system in preparation for 2022. These new arrangements are evolving in a planned way to support schools to build a self-improving system and ensure sustained improvements.

- 4.2 Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 outcomes are externally verified through GCSE and GCE Advanced Level examinations which are undertaken at the end of the respective Key Stages.
- 4.3 The local authority analyses examination outcomes for each school and compares school performance across the County Borough. Comparisons are also made against the all Wales averages. For 2019/20, it is possible to ascertain Rhondda Cynon Taf's performance relative to other local authorities on key measures. It is however likely that this comparative data will not be published in future.
- 4.4 When considering Rhondda Cynon Taf's performance relative to the Welsh average it is important to contextualise information and to take into account the socio-economic factors across the 22 Welsh local authorities. Whilst poverty and deprivation are not excuses for educational underperformance, they are factors that influence educational outcomes. In comparing Rhondda Cynon Taf with other local authorities, in terms of eligibility for free school meals, Rhondda Cynon Taf currently has the seventh highest level of statutory school age pupils behind Neath Port Talbot, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Cardiff, Swansea and Merthyr Tydfil. This is a significant shift from 2018, when Rhondda Cynon Taf was ranked as the 3rd highest in Wales in terms of the percentage of learners aged 5-15 eligible for free school meals.

Based on January PLASC 2019 data, there were 20.4% of pupils aged 5-15 known to be eligible for free school meals in Rhondda Cynon Taf, which was significantly above the all Wales average of 18.3%. In addition, Rhondda Cynon Taf has some of the poorest wards in Wales when considering the Welsh Multiple Index of Deprivation data.

- 4.5 Socio-economic measures suggests that a degree of discrepancy between Rhondda Cynon Taf's performance relative to all Wales average outcomes would be predicted given the well documented research that highlights the positive correlation between poverty and poor educational outcomes. Nevertheless, aspirations for our learners remain high.

5. KEY STAGE 4 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- 5.1 Welsh Government is attempting to remove the historic disproportionate emphasis on one or two isolated school performance measures. They have introduced new interim Key Stage 4 (KS4) measures for 2018/19. There is a general move towards a wider range of indicators to better capture the whole learning experience and the progress of all learners, as opposed to a disproportionate focus on particular groups of learners.

5.2 As part of this process of change, Welsh Government has implemented a suite of interim KS4 performance measures. These new measures, based on points scores, will remove the emphasis on threshold measures which have historically resulted in an excessive focus on borderline C/D grade learners. Moving forward, a focus on point scores will reflect a school average of all individual learners' points scores, rather than a percentage attaining a minimum threshold level.

5.3 The KS4 interim measures for summer 2019 are summarised as follows:

- **Capped 9 measure** which includes 3 core measures (literacy, numeracy and science measures) and any other six best qualifications (other than those already contributing to the 3 core measures)
- **Literacy measure** (best of language and literacy)
- **Numeracy measure** (best of mathematics/numeracy)
- **Science measure** (best of science)
- **Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate** measure.

The interim measures are points based rather than focused on the percentage of pupils attaining a particular threshold grade or level. Point score equivalents for the different grades are as follows:

- **A*=58; A=52; B=46; C=40; D=34; E=28; F=22; G=16.**

5.4 Following the Welsh Government announcement in November 2017 regarding early entries, only the results of the first awarding of a complete qualification have counted towards the performance measures for summer 2019 reporting.

5.5 Welsh Government have made changes to the information provided for schools in the All Wales Core Data Sets (AWCDS) to reflect the interim KS4 performance measures.

5.6 In line with the move away from threshold measures, Welsh Government no longer provide analyses on the percentage of learners achieving: individual subjects, including the Welsh Baccalaureate at Foundation or National level, or threshold performance measures, namely the Core Subject Indicator (CSI) or Level 2 threshold.

5.7 Welsh Government have provided analyses of the Level 2 inclusive and Level 1 threshold measures for 2018/19 only. This is due to the fact that there was still a legislative requirement for schools to set targets for KS4 learners against these measures for the 2018/19 academic year. However, this data has been provided to inform school self-evaluation and Welsh Government has strongly advised that legacy measures should not be used for comparative purposes.

5.8 National benchmarking data is no longer provided to allow comparisons with other schools in similar socio-economic circumstances.

- 5.9 The Director of Education in Welsh Government, the Chief Inspector for Estyn and the Chief Executive of the WLGA have sent a joint letter to Cabinet Members, Chairs of Scrutiny, Chief Executives and Directors of Education across Wales to provide a steer on the handling of unverified KS4 examination results for the summer 2019 and the new interim performance measures. The July 2019 letter highlights Welsh Government's view that it is counter-productive for schools to be placed under disproportionate pressure on the basis of individual measures and that focus should be placed on using 'a broad range of un-aggregated data and information' to enable the Council to discharge its statutory duties when reporting on school performance. The communication also recommends that Councils evaluate the performance of individual schools rather than generating aggregated data at local authority level to support and challenge individual schools on their improvement.

Whilst it was intended that comparative data at a local authority level would not be published by Welsh Government, local authority outcomes across Wales were in fact published in December 2019.

6. OVERVIEW OF KEY STAGE 4 PERFORMANCE (2018/19)

- 6.1 Further detail in relation to the interim measures is provided below:

- The **Capped Points Score** calculates the average of the scores for the best awards for all individual learners in the cohort, capped at a total volume of nine GCSEs or equivalent qualifications (referred to as 'slots') **Three** of the nine slots equate to three GCSEs only in literacy, numeracy and science, with the best grade achieved for each slot from the relevant qualifications. The remaining **six** slots reflect to the points attached to each learner's best remaining six qualifications (excluding those awards that are contributing towards the three subject-specific slots described above). There is no cap on the total volume of non-GCSEs that can contribute towards the 'other six' (non-subject-specific) slots.
- The **literacy measure** calculates the average of the scores for all individual learners in the cohort, taking the best grade from any of the literature or first language Welsh or English GCSEs awarded to a learner.
- The **numeracy measure** calculates the average of the scores for all individual learners in the cohort, taking the best grade from either of the mathematics or mathematics – numeracy GCSEs awarded to a learner.
- The **science measure** calculates the average of the scores for all individual learners in the cohort, taking the best grade from science GCSEs awarded to a learner.
- The **Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate measure** calculates the average of the scores for the Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate awards for all individual learners in the

cohort, whether it is the Foundation (Level 1) or the National (Level 2) award.

6.2 Table 1 provides the verified data for Key Stage 4 for 2019.

Table 1: Verified outcomes on current interim performance measures for Key Stage 4 - 2018/19

KS4	2018	2019	Differential
Capped 9 Points Score RCT	n/a	352	n/a
Capped 9 Points Score Wales	n/a	353.9	n/a
Literacy Points Score RCT	38.6	38.2	-0.4
Literacy Points Score Wales	39.4	39.0	-0.4
Numeracy Points Score RCT	37.2	35.7	-1.5
Numeracy Points Score Wales	38.3	37.1	-1.2
Science Points Score RCT	35.4	35.2	-0.2
Science Points Score Wales	36.8	36.8	0
Welsh Baccalaureate Skill Challenge Certificate – Points Score RCT	36.1	37.9	+1.8
Welsh Baccalaureate Skill Challenge Certificate – Points Score Wales	36.5	36.4	-0.1

Please note that as the interim measures are new for 2019, Welsh Government has recalculated 2018 datasets in the form of new, headline interim measures. However, this refitted data for 2018 does not take into account the ‘first award only’ approach to Key Stage 4 performance measures that has been introduced for the first time for 2019 reporting purposes. Prior to 2018/19, the best result for each Year 11 pupil in each subject was used instead. This clearly impacts on the comparability of this 2019 data with previous years.

The comparative data should therefore be considered with caution as it reports measures that were not in place at the time that the cohort was in situ. The datasets are not directly comparable for this reason.

Outcomes on all measures were only slightly below the national average, with the exception of the performance on the Welsh Baccalaureate Skills Challenge Certificate which was above the all Wales average. Performance on most measures do not deviate too significantly from 2018, when considering the new measures and the recalculated data for last year.

Our performance relative to the other 22 local authorities, based on the new interim measures is as follows: Capped 9 (10th); Literacy Points Score (12th); Numeracy Points Score (17th); Science Points Score (17th); Welsh Baccalaureate (6th). Further improvement in Science and Numeracy outcomes would be beneficial in the 2020 summer series. Modelled outcomes based on Efsm levels suggest that performance on

the Capped 9 and Welsh Baccalaureate was better than predicted and literacy, numeracy and science outcomes were very marginally below modelled expectations and the all Wales average rate.

- 6.3 During the autumn term, Council officers worked closely with headteachers and the Central South Consortium to analyse the data so as to evaluate what has gone well and to identify priorities for improvement. This analysis has been undertaken at a school level and subject basis to inform self-evaluation and school improvement planning. Support has been put in place to ensure that underperforming schools are supported to make the necessary progress, and, where necessary, challenged to ensure that timely improvements are made. Challenge has included issuing pre-warning statutory notices to a small number of secondary schools.

An analysis of outcomes for vulnerable groups will also be undertaken in partnership with schools to ensure that they are targeting their resources and interventions appropriately. Further progress is clearly needed across the board to ensure that outcomes are improved at this time of unprecedented reform in Education. The local authority needs to ensure that an appropriate curriculum is made available for all Key Stage 4 learners that best suits their needs and that the teaching provided is of the highest standard.

7. PROGRESS AT KEY STAGE 5

- 7.1 Table 2 outlines verified Key Stage 5 outcomes. Data suggests that there has been progress in the percentage of all learners achieving the level 3 threshold, including boys and girls.

Table 2: Verified Key Stage 5 Outcomes (Level 3 Threshold)

Year		All	Boys	Girls
		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 %
2018/19	RCT	97.8	96.5	98.9
	Wales	97.9	97.3	98.4
2017/18	RCT	96.2	95.0	97.0
	Wales	97.6	96.7	98.3
2016/17	RCT	96.3	95.7	96.7
	Wales	97.1	96.2	97.9

7.2 Performance of girls on the Level 3 threshold in Rhondda Cynon Taf demonstrates significant progress and is stronger than the national average. The performance of all learners is on a par with all Wales average outcomes.

7.3 As can be seen in Table 3 performance has dipped this academic year on the average wider point score measure for all learners, but particularly for boys. In line with the national averages, girls continue to significantly outperform boys on the average wider points score measure and performance for girls remained fairly stable on this measure across 2018/19.

Table 3: Verified key stage 5 outcomes on the average wider points score for Key Stage 5 – 2019

Year		All	Boys	Girls
		Average wider points score for pupils aged 17	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17
2018/19	RCT	691.92	631.4	740.6
	Wales	741.3	693.5	781.1
2017/18	RCT	723.8	691.4	746.1
	Wales	740.1	691.8	780.9
2016/17	RCT	677.6	615.9	723.5
	Wales	730.6	681.2	773.2

7.4 Data in Table 4 suggests that the percentage of learners who achieved 3A*-A and 3A*-C grades in key stage 5 decreased by 0.6%age points and 6.0%age points in 2018/19. In line with national averages, girls outperformed boys on both 3A*-A and 3A*-C measures.

Table 4: Verified outcomes on 3A*-A and 3A*-C Key Stage 5 - 2019

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
2018/19	RCT	9.6	48.3	6.8	40.9	11.7	54.0
	Wales	13.2	58.4	11.7	51.1	14.5	64.1
2017/18	RCT	10.2	54.3	8.5	43.8	11.5	61.9
	Wales	13.4	57.9	13.0	50.1	13.8	64.2
2016/17	RCT	5.5	45.1	6.4	33.5	4.8	53.5
	Wales	10.5	54.7	10.3	47.6	10.6	60.5

8. PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORISATION

- 8.1 The current school categorisation model has changed significantly since 2016 but will remain for the immediate future. The categorisation system will in future need to evolve to fit with the new Evaluation and Improvement arrangements.
- 8.2 **Step One:** consisting of data analysis in relation to standards and performance has been removed.
- 8.3 **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.
- 8.4 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.
- 8.5 **Step Three:** this judgement will lead to a colour categorisation of the school which will trigger a bespoke programme of support, challenge and intervention.
- 8.6 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 the local authority and subsequent use of statutory powers where necessary;
 - trigger intensive and effective collaboration between local authority 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.

8.7 A summary of Rhondda Cynon Taf’s categorisation, subject to National Moderation, is shown below:

Table 5: School categorisation outcomes for 2019/20

Category	Mainstream Primary Schools						Secondary Schools					
	No of Schools			%			No of Schools			%		
	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019	2017	2018	2019
Green	38	36	40	36.9	38.7	43.5	4	5	5	23.5	29.4	29.4
Yellow	59	48	42	57.3	51.6	45.7	10	7	7	59.0	41.2	41.2
Amber	5	6	10	4.9	6.5	10.9	1	3	3	5.9	17.6	17.6
Red	1	3	0	1.0	3.2	0	2	2	2	11.8	11.8	11.8

There has been a 4.8% increase in the percentage of schools categorised as green at primary level, and this is the highest level of green schools achieved in the past 3 years. A decrease in the percentage of primary schools requiring yellow support is evident during 2019/20. Whilst there are more schools requiring amber support at primary level this academic year this has been necessary in a number of cases due to interim leadership arrangements (e.g. acting headteacher posts etc). There are no primary schools categorised as red. There has been a significant reduction in schools requiring red support at primary level due to the removal of 3 schools from Estyn statutory categories (including significant improvement and special measures). This is a significant achievement.

For secondary schools the overall position has remained relatively stable, although there have been 2 positive changes in categorisation at secondary level (one from yellow to green and another from amber to yellow) and 2 negative changes (from green to yellow and yellow to amber). The proportion of secondary schools categorised as requiring the greatest improvement and red support has remained stable.

8.8 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. 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. Senior officers from the local authority, are involved school improvement forums and progress meetings for all amber and red schools. The Director of Education is involved in termly progress meetings with red schools, and half-termly meetings with amber schools.

- 8.9 To summarise, there has been a growth in the number of schools requiring the least amount of support (green) and a deterioration in the number of school categorised as requiring the highest level of support (red). A decrease in the overall number of schools requiring red support reflects the progress made in improving our schools' causing significant concern at primary level.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This is an information report. No Equality Impact Assessment screening form is required.

10. CONSULTATION

- 10.1 This is an information report, no consultation is required.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no financial implications.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 12.1 None at present.

13. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

- 13.1 Educational performance has a clear link to the Council's priority of Building a Strong Economy. Improved educational performance will have a positive impact on this priority.

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1 The new interim performance measures, based on points scores, have removed the emphasis on threshold measures and the associated negative unintended consequences previously associated with these. Namely the narrowing of curriculum choice, the excessive focus on particular group of learners at the expense of others and the competition

created across schools and local authorities which has mitigated against a culture of self-improving schools.

- 14.2 In light of this shift in emphasis in performance measures and reporting, moving forward a wider range of performance measures and contextual information will be utilised during 2019/20 to inform self-evaluation and school improvement planning and to make judgements about school effectiveness.
- 14.3 Provisional performance outcomes on the new interim Key Stage 4 measures suggests that there has been a slight dip in standards in 2019 on most measures. However, it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons across 2018 and 2019 datasets due to the fact that the 2019 outcomes include the 'first award' data only. This is not the case for the re-calculated 2018 datasets. Nevertheless, provisional data suggests that there is scope for further improvements in standards in 2019.
- 14.4 A continued focus on improving leadership and the quality of teaching and learning in our schools is required so that standards can continue to improve and the gap between vulnerable groups (including efsm/nfsm and boys and girls) is narrowed.
- 14.5 Provisional school categorisation outcomes overall suggests improvement in the numbers of primary schools requiring green and red support. Categorisation at secondary level has remained stable overall over 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee-

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Background Papers-

None

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
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**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN
DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, COUNCILLOR J
ROSSER.**

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Background papers – None.

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