

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

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REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

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KEY STAGE 4 EXAMINATION RESULTS, AND THE SECONDARY SCHOOL BANDING FOR 2013

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with final confirmation of the Key Stage 4 examination results and the Secondary School Banding results for 2013.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 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 & Lifelong Learning to support those secondary schools in Bands 4 & 5.
- 2.3 Agree that the information in this report is sent directly to all secondary school governors for information.

3. KEY STAGE 4

- 3.1 The table below sets out the final Rhondda Cynon Taf's Key Stage 4 results over the five years to 2013 in respect of the key indicators upon which schools and the local authority are assessed by Estyn.

Key Stage 4	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	% change 2009 to 2013
Level 1 threshold (A*-G at GCSE or equivalent)						
RCT	86.5%	86.7%	88.3%	89%	93.0%	6.5%
Bridgend	88.1%	89.1%	89.4%	92%	93.3%	5.2%
Merthyr Tydfil	83.2%	85.7%	84.4%	87%	92.7%	9.5%
Cardiff	86.9%	87.8%	89.3%	91%	91.7%	4.8%
Vale of Glamorgan	92.9%	91.8%	91.4%	94%	94.5%	1.6%
Wales	88.2%	89.7%	90.3%	92%	93.2%	5.0%
Level 2 threshold (5 A*-C at GCSE or equivalent)						
RCT	56.5%	58.0%	64.4%	69%	77.9%	21.4%
Bridgend	59.5%	60.8%	63.2%	66.4%	72.3%	12.8%
Merthyr Tydfil	52.8%	54.8%	60.6%	64.3%	72.9%	20.1%
Cardiff	58.6%	61.4%	63.9%	68.3%	73.0%	14.4%
Vale of Glamorgan	72.5%	73.4%	75.3%	79.6%	82.6%	10.1%
Wales	60.7%	63.7%	67.3%	73%	77.8%	17.1%
Level 2 threshold (5 A*-C at GCSE or equivalent) including English/Welsh and Mathematics						
RCT	40.7%	43.0%	43.4%	44%	46.3%	5.6%
Bridgend	45.2%	47.9%	44.6%	50.7%	52.3%	7.1%
Merthyr Tydfil	34.7%	34.4%	39.3%	32.5%	38.7%	4.0%
Cardiff	44.3%	47.6%	48.4%	49.3%	49.9%	5.6%
Vale of Glamorgan	54.3%	57.1%	56.0%	55.3%	55.4%	1.1%
Wales	47.2%	49.4%	50.1%	51%	52.7%	5.5%
Core Subject Indicator (A*-C at GCSE or equivalent in English/Welsh, Mathematics and Science)						
RCT	39.8%	42.5%	43.0%	43.0%	45.3%	5.5%
Bridgend	43.6%	47.5%	44.8%	49.9%	50.6%	7.0%
Merthyr Tydfil	33.2%	32.9%	38.1%	31.7%	36.3%	3.1%
Cardiff	43.2%	46.7%	47.3%	47.9%	46.7%	3.5%
Vale of Glamorgan	53.6%	54.4%	54.0%	53.9%	50.2%	-3.4%
Wales	46.0%	48.0%	48.7%	49%	49.2%	3.2%

3.2 Good progress has been made by schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf against the key performance indicators, increasing at a faster rate than the Welsh average over a number of years, and in particular in the 2012/13 academic year.

3.3 The data on these key performance indicators for each of the secondary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf over the past 4 years is set out in Appendix 1. This table shows

that for the 2013 academic year, the majority of our schools made good progress against a range of the performance measures. This analysis of the school by school performance illustrates that the majority of Rhondda Cynon Taf schools have improved the Level 1 and 2 threshold indicators but further work is required to ensure a greater proportion of pupils also pass the Level 2 threshold for English and/or Welsh and Maths over the next few years.

3.4 The two key indicators Estyn and the School Standards Unit place considerable emphasis on in forming an opinion on the standard of education provision are as follows:

- Level 2 threshold (5 A*-C at GCSE or equivalent) including English/Welsh and Mathematics; and
- Core Subject Indicator (A*-C at GCSE or equivalent in English/Welsh, Mathematics and Science).

3.5 Over the past five years, Rhondda Cynon Taf has improved faster for these two indicators than the Welsh average, but performance across the schools is mixed. In the past too many schools, when compared with similar schools based on free school meals, were in the third and fourth quartiles. This has changed in 2013 and I am pleased to report that the majority of secondary schools are in the top two quartiles when compared to similar schools in Wales. This is the principle reason for the schools' improved performance in the Welsh Government Banding, set out in Section 4 to this Report.

3.6 The following table sets out pupils' performance in the four key subject areas of English, Welsh, Mathematics and Science, over the past five years.

Key Stage 4 A*-C	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	%age point improvement 2009 to 2013
English	55.3%	56.5%	57.9%	56%	56.8%	1.5%
Welsh	71.4%	69.3%	73.0%	70.0%	69.9%	-1.5%
Science	58.5%	60.6%	67.7%	76.6%	82.0%	20.0%
Mathematics	45.8%	47.7%	49.3%	51%	53.0%	6.4%

3.7 We can see that:

- Mathematics has made good progress in 2013, with 12 of the 19 schools improving the number of pupils that achieve an A*-C at GCSE. Significant support has been provided to improve the Mathematics results in 2013 through a working group of headteachers and Maths specialist teachers;
- English results have made little progress in recent years and we need to see a rate of improvement similar to that achieved in mathematics;
- The Welsh first language results have declined across Wales, and in RCT the decline is due to a 3% decrease in the boys' results from 63% in 2009 to 60% in 2013 with the girls remaining static at 78%;
- The Science results continued to benefit from more schools offering BTEC Science in addition to the Science GCSE.

3.8 The gender variation in Rhondda Cynon Taf is significant, other than in mathematics where in 2013, boys out performed girls. The table below shows the gender variation for the core subject areas.

Key Stage 4 A*-C	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
English - boys	46%	48%	47%	46%	50%
English – girls	65%	65%	70%	66%	66%
Welsh – boys	63%	61%	63%	61%	60%
Welsh – girls	78%	77%	83%	79%	78%
Science – boys	57%	57%	65%	71%	75%
Science – girls	60%	65%	72%	79%	82%
Mathematics – boys	46%	47%	48%	50%	53%
Mathematics - girls	46%	49%	51%	52%	51%

- 3.9 The table shows that the boys are underperforming in English and Welsh when compared to the girls. If we are able to address this issue through the Literacy Strategy in primary schools and Key Stage 3, we should see a further improvement in the Key Stage 4 indicators, with more pupils achieving the Level 2 threshold in English or Welsh.
- 3.10 Since September 2012, all heads of department of the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and Welsh departments meet as groups with the Council's Head of School Achievement on a middle leadership development programme that shares best practice and challenges individual school data. As a result, good practice has been shared and implemented and we expect to see further improvement in the core subject outcomes in 2014.

4. SECONDARY SCHOOL BANDING

Introduction

- 4.1 In 2011, the Minister for Education and Skills, Leighton Andrews AM, introduced a national banding system for secondary schools. Banding forms part of a wider range of policy actions designed to give the Welsh Government a much clearer focus on the performance and progress of Welsh schools. Banding has also helped to ensure that, local authorities and consortia direct our support and resources most effectively where needed. The following paragraphs provide Members with a reminder of the Banding System.
- 4.2 **What is banding?** - Banding is a way of using national data on school performance in context to group schools according to where they are relative to other schools in Wales. The banding system is one of a suite of policy actions designed to give local authorities a clearer focus on the performance and progress of our schools. The system groups secondary schools into bands reflecting their outcomes and progress, taking account of the challenge they face from socio-economic circumstances. Banding provides consortia and local authorities with a starting point for discussion with schools. It helps us to direct resources to where they are needed most to ensure we secure the improvements necessary in our school system.
- 4.3 **How does banding work?** - Banding uses the relative performance of schools across four sets of data to group them into one of five bands – those in Band 1 show good overall performance and progress and those in Band 5 show weak performance and progress relative to other schools. Within each band relative performance is measured to take account of actual performance, progress over time and performance relative to context and cohort.

- 4.4 **Are schools ranked by performance within individual bands?** - Schools can see where they are in relation to the band boundaries – but this is not a ranked league table. Within a band there will of course be variation in terms of both overall strengths and in relation to the different patterns of strength and weakness of schools.
- 4.5 **Is banding just league tables by another name?** - No – you can have strong accountability without league tables. Banding is about grouping our schools according to a range of factors to identify priorities for differentiated support. Banding will also be used to identify those from whom the sector as a whole can learn. Banding is simply a tool to help us be most effective in driving improvement across the board. The Welsh Government is not seeking to introduce competition between schools; rather, it wants, as we do to improve performance in all schools.
- 4.6 **What data is used to band schools?** - The model for secondary schools uses a mix of data to reflect most recent outcomes, progress over time, contextual results and value added. 12 measures are used which reflect the Welsh Government's priorities of improving literacy, numeracy and reducing the effect of deprivation on educational outcomes.
- 4.7 **Why has Welsh Government used the level 2 threshold including English/Cymraeg and mathematics rather than the wider level 2 threshold?** - The level 2 threshold including English or Welsh and mathematics is the headline performance indicator for secondary schools in Wales. It balances the importance of core skills of literacy and numeracy with the need to offer our young people a broad and varied range of options.
- 4.8 **Why include attendance information?** - The need to improve attendance and behaviour is a national priority. If learners are not in school they cannot learn.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Secondary School Banding 2013

- 4.9 On 12th December 2013, the Welsh Government released the Secondary School Banding for 2013, as follows:

School	Band 2013	Band 2012	Band 2011	Progress in 2013
Ferndale	1	5	4	Up 4
Y Pant	1	1	2	No change
Cardinal Newman	2	2	2	No change
Mountain Ash	2	3	2	Up 1
St John the Baptist	2	3	3	Up 1
Treorchy	2	3	1	Up 1
Aberdare High	3	5	4	Up 2
Blaengwawr	3	4	4	Up 1
Hawthorn	3	4	4	Up 1
YG Rhydywaun	3	5	4	Up 2
YG Y Cymer	3	5	4	Up 2
Aberdare Girls'	4	3	1	Down 1
Bryncelynnog	4	4	3	No change
YG Garth Olwg	4	4	5	No change
Pontypridd	4	5	5	Up 1
Tonypandy	4	4	4	No change
YG Llanhari	5	4	4	Down 1
Porth County	5	5	4	No change

School	Band 2013	Band 2012	Band 2011	Progress in 2013
Tonyrefail	5	4	5	Down 1

- 4.10 Overall we have 11 schools (6 in 2012) in Bands 1-3 and 8 schools (13 in 2012) in Bands 4-5. The improvement in the schools' performance across the range of Key Stage 4 performance measures and the improved pupil attendance has had a significant impact on the banding.
- 4.11 Nevertheless, there are a few local authorities that have no schools in Band 4 and 5, and whilst, Rhondda Cynon Taf has some of the most challenged schools in terms of socio-economic context, we should continue to aspire to ensure all our schools are the best in Wales.
- 4.12 It is worth noting the following schools that have:
- Made excellent progress, in particular, Ferndale that has leapt from Band 5 to Band 1, the first in Wales, and Aberdare High, Y Cymer, and Rhydywaun have moved up two bands;
 - Sustained high levels of performance over the three years, which include Y Pant, Cardinal Newman, Mountain Ash, St John the Baptist and Treorchy.
- 4.13 Of the eight schools in Bands 4 & 5, all have made improvements in some of the key performance measures in 2012/13, but the majority have suffered from underperformance in mathematics.

What is the Council doing/planning to do to improve performance?

- 4.14 The Banding results are significantly better than 2011 and 2012 and reflect the overall progress of each school's performance in 2013 and over the past three years. In September 2012 warning letters in accordance with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, were issued to **five** Band 4 & 5 secondary schools setting out agreed educational and attendance performance targets for 2013. Of the five schools, three made significant progress and moved up two Bands, one moved up one Band and one stayed still. The warning letters for three of the five schools have been withdrawn. During the past year the Council has supported all five schools and all have made progress against the targets set.
- 4.15 Nevertheless, two schools that made the least progress have had revised targets set and further support is being provided. A further two schools have had warning letters after a period of underperformance. The remaining four schools in Band 4 & 5 have a package of support which includes specialist mathematics and English/Welsh support and two of the schools have also been subject to a review of the management arrangements.
- 4.16 If the schools, subject to a warning letter, fail to make sufficient progress towards achieving realistic targets, the Council **will** exercise its powers of intervention and change the governance and management arrangements of the schools.
- 4.17 The Council has sought to support schools to improve educational outcomes at KS4 which includes :

- Providing all schools with a range of intervention and support strategies for Year 11 students that have been successful across the UK;
- Introduced the Outstanding Teacher Programme across all our secondary schools, a programme that is considered to be a catalyst behind the success of the London Challenge. The programme seeks to turn our best teachers into outstanding teachers and to provide them with the skills and knowledge to support and train other teachers within the same school or in another school to become outstanding teachers;
- Introduced IRIS technology in our secondary schools to enable teachers in other schools, working collaboratively on the Outstanding Teacher Programme, to observe each other teach, using on-line video technology. This allows detailed analysis to be undertaken of teaching practice and also minimises disruption to both schools;
- A middle leader development programme for all secondary school head of core subject departments has continued in 2013/14. The middle leaders share data, challenge each other's performance and share best practice;
- A package of mathematics specialist support which also includes expertise from Education London;
- The Council is monitoring, on a half-termly basis, secondary schools progress towards achieving KS4 Level 2 in English/Welsh and Maths;
- A significant increase in the challenge and support to secondary schools from experienced and successful Consortium System Leaders, some of whom are current or ex-headteachers;
- Supporting and creating the capacity for our best schools to support our lower performing schools to improve their educational performance. This is being delivered within the Consortium;
- Specific data provided to schools with comparative and supportive analyses to challenge and support schools to reduce gender and FSM differences and highlight underperformance in KS3 and 4;
- More robust target setting procedures in place across all schools.
- Made further improvements to the Attendance & Well Being Service to tackle non-attendance at school.

4.18 Over the next few months, the Council will be working with the eight Band 4 & 5 schools to identify how the schools are implementing appropriate, short and medium term strategies to ensure more pupils in Key Stage 4 achieve the Level 2 threshold including an A*-C in English/Welsh and mathematics.

4.19 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 Band 4 and Band 5.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Education performance in Rhondda Cynon Taf at Key Stage 4 has made a significant step forward in 2013 with many schools making significant progress. This rate of progress must be sustained if we are to ensure that the eleven schools in the top three bands and the eight schools in Bands 4 & 5 compare favourably to similar schools across Wales.

5.2 An improvement in educational performance in Rhondda Cynon Taf will only occur when:

- Standards of teaching continue to improve;
- Individual pupil's performance is rigorously tracked and appropriate timely interventions and support provided to the pupils; and
- Headteachers are prepared to tackle staff underperformance at all levels in their school, at senior and middle leadership levels as well as main-scale teachers. Currently, some schools are more rigorous in their approach to school improvement and that is reflected in the school's performance.

- 5.3 Schools and the Council have a responsibility to all pupils to reduce the school by school and in school variation in education performance. Each secondary school headteacher has had a copy of the Key Stage 4 results of all the secondary schools and the banding information across Wales. It is evident from the information as to which schools are the high achievers and from whom schools need to learn best practice.
- 5.4 The Council and the schools have made a concerted effort in the past year to improve standards of teaching and learning in schools, through a variety of approaches. The next step is for headteachers and their senior management teams to consistently share and implement successful approaches to leadership and management; and teaching and learning, with the support of the Council and its education advisors.
- 5.5 As a group, the secondary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf have made good progress in 2013 and the governing bodies, headteachers, staff and pupils should be congratulated for the improvement in performance. School improvement is not a smooth process but it does require significant focus, rigour and commitment if it is to be achieved. Clearly, if this focus, rigour and commitment continues, the pupils of Rhondda Cynon Taf will achieve better educational outcomes in 2014 and onwards.

Cabinet - 22.01.14
Agenda Item 4

APPENDIX 1

School	Free School Meal Band	KS4 Level 1 Threshold				KS4 Level 2 Threshold				Level 2 inc English/Welsh First Language & Maths				CSI			
		09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13
Aberdare Girls'	>30%	83%	92%	97%	93%	51%	81%	82%	73%	38%	54%	45%	37%	38%	54%	45%	35%
Aberdare High	>20% but < 30%	89%	81%	83%	88%	51%	62%	46%	67%	32%	34%	27%	44%	34%	34%	27%	42%
Blaengwawr	>30%	79%	85%	82%	95%	45%	51%	57%	81%	28%	33%	33%	39%	29%	33%	32%	38%
Bryncelynnog	>10% but <15%	90%	93%	93%	97%	57%	66%	72%	73%	52%	54%	52%	43%	50%	54%	52%	43%
Cardinal Newman	>15% but >20%	88%	96%	92%	100%	54%	69%	71%	86%	43%	57%	60%	57%	42%	55%	53%	57%
Ferndale	>30%	75%	88%	87%	96%	42%	42%	46%	84%	22%	24%	25%	38%	22%	23%	24%	37%
Hawthorn High	>20% but < 30%	85%	85%	82%	94%	47%	51%	55%	83%	38%	40%	41%	34%	36%	39%	41%	31%
Mountain Ash	>30%	78%	86%	90%	93%	68%	78%	75%	86%	36%	35%	31%	43%	35%	34%	31%	41%
Pontypridd High	>15% but >20%	85%	93%	90%	94%	53%	55%	60%	60%	43%	39%	36%	46%	43%	39%	35%	44%
Porth County	>20% but < 30%	90%	86%	88%	90%	50%	61%	66%	63%	33%	33%	37%	43%	33%	33%	37%	42%
St John Baptist	>10% but <15%	97%	96%	96%	99%	77%	67%	82%	81%	69%	58%	66%	73%	71%	60%	66%	72%
Tonypandy	>20% but < 30%	79%	87%	91%	92%	64%	59%	86%	80%	38%	28%	28%	29%	38%	28%	28%	29%
Tonyrefail	>20% but < 30%	88%	87%	85%	91%	48%	60%	67%	77%	33%	33%	40%	35%	31%	31%	39%	35%
Treorchy	>20% but < 30%	97%	97%	97%	97%	84%	85%	93%	95%	59%	54%	43%	58%	57%	53%	42%	58%
Y Pant	>10% but <15%	98%	95%	97%	99%	72%	79%	82%	92%	66%	70%	71%	68%	66%	69%	71%	68%
YG Cymer	>15% but >20%	87%	92%	90%	100%	52%	77%	60%	99%	30%	41%	40%	48%	29%	38%	40%	41%
YG Garth Olwg	>10% but <15%	94%	92%	92%	98%	70%	69%	75%	71%	57%	50%	56%	44%	56%	49%	56%	42%
YG Llanhari	>10% but <15%	94%	97%	96%	97%	60%	69%	74%	71%	50%	49%	58%	53%	50%	49%	61%	53%
YG Rhydywaun	>15% but >20%	94%	92%	93%	97%	59%	60%	61%	82%	50%	48%	42%	56%	49%	48%	43%	56%
RCT		87%	88%	89%	93%	58%	64%	69%	78%	43%	45%	44%	46%	43%	43%	43%	45%
Wales		90%	90%	92%	93%	64%	67%	73%	78%	49%	50%	51%	53%	48%	49%	49%	49%

