



*Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all*

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg  
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate  
for Education and Training in Wales

**A report on**

**Treorchy Comprehensive School  
Pengelli  
Treorchy  
Rhondda  
RCT  
CF42 6UL**

**Date of inspection: March 2012**

**by**

**Mr Peter Harris**

**for**

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education  
and Training in Wales**

During each inspection, inspectors aim to answer three key questions:

**Key Question 1: How good are the outcomes?**

**Key Question 2: How good is provision?**

**Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?**

Inspectors also provide an overall judgement on the school's current performance and on its prospects for improvement.

In these evaluations, inspectors use a four-point scale:

<b>Judgement</b>	<b>What the judgement means</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
<b>Good</b>	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
<b>Adequate</b>	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

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## Context

Treorchy Comprehensive School is a large 11-18 mixed comprehensive school in the county of Rhondda Cynon Taff. There are 1,580 pupils on roll, compared with 1,511 at the time of the previous inspection in 2006. There are currently 364 students in the Sixth Form compared to 268 in 2006.

Most pupils come from local primary schools though over the past three years over 40 pupils a year have entered the school having attended primary schools outside the traditional catchment area.

The school's intake is from a varied social background and represents the full range of ability. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is 23.5%, which is well above the national average of 17.1% for secondary schools.

Academic ability on entry is below national averages. The school has 16% of pupils on the special educational needs register, compared with the national average of 19.6% for secondary schools. While most pupils come from English speaking homes approximately nine percent of pupils are fluent in Welsh.

The current headteacher was appointed in 2011. Apart from one deputy headteacher, all members of the senior management team took up their posts after that time.

The individual school budget per pupil for Treorchy Comprehensive School in 2011-2012 means that the budget is £3861 per pupil. The maximum per pupil in the secondary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf is £4511 and the minimum is £3634. Treorchy Comprehensive School is 15th out of the 19 secondary schools in Rhondda Cynon Taf in terms of its school budget per pupil.

## Summary

<b>The school's current performance</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>The school's prospects for improvement</b>	<b>Excellent</b>

### Current performance

Treorchy Comprehensive School is an excellent school because:

- the school is extremely well led;
- pupils make progress well above expectations and achieve very high standards;
- there is a very effective provision to develop communication skills;
- teaching in the school is very effective; and
- there are sector leading aspects to the provision.

### Prospects for improvement

The school's prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- the leadership provided by the headteacher and leadership team is outstanding;
- middle leaders and managers are very effective and have a significant impact on outcomes;
- there are very effective processes for self-evaluation;
- the school has an excellent track record in securing improvement; and
- the school has an exceptionally strong ethos.

## Recommendations

The staff and governors of Treorchy Comprehensive School need to:

R1 continue to improve the current excellence in standards of pupil achievement and wellbeing.

This recommendation features in the school development plan.

### **What happens next?**

The school will produce an action plan that shows how it will address this recommendation.

The school will be invited to prepare a written case study describing the sector leading features identified in this report.

## Main findings

### Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?

Excellent

#### Standards: Excellent

Outcomes are well above expectations.

In key stage 3, the core subject indicator has been well above the average of similar schools on the free-school-meal benchmark over the last three years. The school's performance in the non-core subjects at key stage 3 is also very good. It has been consistently above average when compared to similar schools. In key stage 4, pupils' performance is outstanding. Performance in all major indicators, as well as in each of the core subjects, has been consistently above average over this period of time.

At post-16, pupils' attainment reflects a continuing upward trend over the past three years. Performance at the level three threshold has remained above average over the past three years.

In key stage 3, the difference in the performances of boys and girls is significantly lower than the Wales and family averages. Though in key stage 4, the difference in performance between boys and girls is greater than average, that of boys is nevertheless above the average for boys in the family of schools.

Increasing proportions of pupils in receipt of free school meals gain the core subject indicator in key stage 3 and in key stage 4.

In the last three years no pupil has left school without a qualification.

Pupils make extensive progress in each key stage in acquiring the skills and knowledge needed to move on to the next stage of learning. In most lessons observed, nearly all pupils achieved good standards, and in around two thirds of these lessons they achieved excellent standards. Pupils with additional learning needs make very good progress.

Pupils of all ages and abilities have very well developed communication skills. They have very good reading and writing skills. Most pupils speak confidently. They express themselves clearly and thoughtfully using a wide general and subject-specific vocabulary.

Many pupils write to a very high standard. Their work is accomplished and many make well-considered and extended responses.

Nearly all pupils demonstrate very good listening skills. They respond very well to questions from their teachers and are very attentive to one another.

Pupils make excellent progress in developing the skills they need to learn effectively. They work very productively in pairs and in groups to explore ideas and to develop their understanding. Many develop their analytical skills very well and transfer skills fluently from one context to another.

Most pupils reflect very well on their learning. They assess their own work and that of their peers accurately and carefully. They are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, and know how to improve their work. Pupils set themselves challenging goals in response to the high expectations and targets teachers set.

Pupils' performance in Welsh second language at key stage 3 is outstanding. Over the past three years it has been in the top quarter of similar schools. In Welsh, in key stage 4 a large majority of pupils make excellent progress.

### **Wellbeing: Excellent**

Pupils' wellbeing is outstanding.

Nearly all pupils feel safe in school. They receive very good personal support. They report that the school deals very effectively with the very few incidents of bullying. Most understand the importance of healthy living. Levels of participation in physical activities are high.

Behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are courteous and show very high levels of respect to others.

Improvements in attendance have been very good over the past three years. Compared to similar schools attendance is above average and in the top quarter. Nearly all pupils are punctual to lessons.

Pupils' involvement in community activities and events is extensive. Many participate successfully in projects and raise substantial sums of money for charities. These pupils gain very valuable levels of experience and confidence.

The school takes comprehensive account of pupils' views. Pupil voice is strong. Consultative groups make an invaluable contribution to decision making in school life.

Pupils display very good social and life skills. Most have very positive attitudes to work. They possess the skills necessary to move confidently to the next stage in their development.

<b>Key Question 2: How good is provision?</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
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### **Learning experiences: Excellent**

The learning experiences offered by the school have significant sector leading strengths.

Provision for promoting Welsh within the school is sector leading. Innovative transition arrangements, planning of the highest quality and a very wide range of accreditation opportunities lead to excellent outcomes.

There are sector leading opportunities for more able and talented pupils to acquire formal qualifications.

A broad, flexible and inclusive curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, enabling them to make outstanding progress.

The key stage 3 curriculum builds on the strong foundations created by well embedded transition projects and an innovative humanities course in Year 7. Pupils are provided with coherent learning programmes and outstanding levels of support to achieve their goals.

Provision for the development of key skills is excellent. Effective accreditation arrangements are in place for communication and numeracy in key stage 3 and via the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification in key stage 4 and in the sixth form. The ways in which the school monitors this provision is highly effective.

The curriculum in key stage 4 and the sixth form provides a good balance of academic and vocational pathways. The school comfortably exceeds the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure. The range of opportunities for extra-curricular learning is exceptional and its management is outstanding.

Education for sustainable development and global citizenship is co-ordinated well. Examples of very good joint working and projects are evident throughout the school. Green Flag status was achieved in February 2012.

### **Teaching: Excellent**

Outstanding teaching in the school produces excellent outcomes.

Teachers hold consistently high expectations of all pupils. They plan lessons of high quality that secure exceptional levels of engagement. Teachers provide a wide range of experiences that is very carefully matched to pupils' abilities, needs and interests. Excellent working relationships between staff and pupils contribute to a very positive learning environment and high achievement. Teachers use innovative approaches to developing pupils' communication and problem solving skills. They ask questions to very good effect to check and extend pupils' reasoning.

Marking is mostly good and outstanding in many cases. Perceptive comments provide useful guidance.

Frequent opportunities are provided across the curriculum for pupils to assess their own and each other's work. These enable pupils to identify very effective improvement targets that have a significant impact on the quality of their learning.

Pupils are extremely well informed about their current and expected levels of achievement. Teachers use a very effective whole school assessment system to establish challenging targets, monitor and record pupils' progress and intervene promptly to address underachievement. The impact of the system on pupils learning and achievement is outstanding.

Arrangements for reporting to parents are very good. Annual interim reports provide useful summaries of progress and effort. Comprehensive end of year reports include very good subject specific comments, with clear and precise targets for improvement.

### **Care, support and guidance: Excellent**

The quality of care, support and guidance is excellent. The impact that the pastoral care system has on outcomes is sector leading.

There are highly effective arrangements to promote pupils' health and wellbeing within a very caring and supportive environment. These are firmly embedded in the school's personal and social education provision.

The school has established very well planned pastoral care arrangements that make a significant contribution towards supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Strategies to support and guide pupils through the various transition stages are strengths of the school.

There are excellent links with specialist services to support pupils' needs and provide valuable information and guidance. Outstanding initiatives promote social inclusion, reduce barriers to learning and contribute towards improving attendance and achieving high standards.

The school has appropriate policy and procedures for safeguarding.

The provision for pupils with additional learning needs is outstanding. The school ensures that all pupils receive well planned support through a wide range of strategies. Excellent use is made of data to identify needs and plan appropriate intervention programmes. Teaching staff receive valuable advice on how to adapt tasks and strategies and teaching assistants provide good support. Teachers take good account of individual education plans to plan activities that are monitored regularly, promoting high standards of provision and effective support.

### **Learning environment: Excellent**

The school's ethos is outstanding.

The school is a very caring and inclusive community. Parents and pupils value highly the safe and secure environment for learning. A strong culture of mutual respect and the commitment to individual well being and academic progress leads to excellent outcomes.

The principles and practices of equal opportunity are successfully applied for all pupils regardless of gender, race or disability. Excellent use is made of outside agencies and facilities to promote multiculturalism and value diversity. This underpins the strength of interpersonal relationships within the school community.

Accommodation is sufficient for the number of pupils. The general teaching areas and specialist rooms are of good quality. Resources are well matched to pupils' needs. Displays on the corridors and classrooms support learning effectively and celebrate achievement. Sporting facilities are of very good quality.

<b>Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?</b>
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<b>Excellent</b>
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**Leadership: Excellent**

Leadership and management in the school are highly effective.

The school is led very well by the headteacher and senior management team. Together they communicate successfully a vision for the school that staff and pupils share. Senior leaders promote a culture of high expectation in an exemplary way. This filters through all aspects of school life and contributes to sustained improvement in standards.

Middle leaders make a very good contribution to the success of the school. Excellent team work, a culture that encourages innovation and high levels of accountability have been very effective in raising achievement.

The school's strategic priorities focus strongly on improving outcomes for all pupils. Leaders use data effectively to inform teaching and learning and measure progress. The school sets very challenging targets for pupils and monitors them robustly. The impact this has on raising standards is outstanding.

Performance management arrangements are planned well and succeed in challenging everyone to strive for excellence.

The governing body takes an enthusiastic part in school life and fulfils its legal and statutory duties. Governors have a clear understanding of their role and act as very good critical friends to the school. They are well informed about school performance and are appropriately involved in strategic developments.

The school takes full account of national and local priorities. These feature prominently in policy documents and improvement plans.

**Improving quality: Excellent**

The school's knowledge of its strengths and areas for development are outstanding.

The school's self-evaluation process underpins strategic planning very effectively. This has had a most positive impact on standards and the sustained success of the school.

Detailed whole-school and area self-evaluation reports are effective analytical tools. Managers make excellent use of a wide range of monitoring activities which include extensive lesson observations, thematic surveys and scrutiny of pupils' written work on a regular basis. They are based on the rigorous evaluation of data on standards. The views of stakeholders are valued. All reports analyse effectively the progress made and identify priorities for improvement within specific timescales.

Leaders and managers link the conclusions of self-evaluation very effectively to set priorities for improvement. Whole-school and area improvement plans have a very clear focus on raising standards. These plans identify measurable and suitably challenging targets and detailed success criteria. Frequent dialogue and meetings between the senior management team, heads of department, heads of learning and skills and all staff ensure the success of self-evaluation and improvement planning.

The strong professional learning community is an excellent feature of the school. It contributes positively to initiatives to improve teaching and learning. Continuous professional development is very well supported and good practice is shared effectively amongst all staff.

**Partnership working: Excellent**

Strategic partnership working with other providers has produced significant benefits in terms of improved standards.

The headteacher has a clear vision for joint planning. The school has developed highly effective links with other providers. This collaboration has enabled the school to widen the curricular choices for pupils and use resources efficiently. Quality assurance procedures to keep courses under regular review are highly effective.

The school enjoys excellent relations with parents. Parents are fully appreciative of the role the school plays in both the wellbeing of their children and the life of the community.

Very productive relations have been established with partner primary schools. Jointly planned and well-managed transition initiatives consistently improve standards.

The school plays a significant role in the community. There are excellent business partnerships. Public performances of a very high standard form an integral part of community activity.

**Resource management: Excellent**

The school manages its resources extremely well.

There is an appropriate balance between the responsibilities undertaken by the governors and those delegated to the headteacher and finance manager. Expenditure is closely monitored and prioritised in order to seek the highest impact on pupils' achievement. Departments manage their own capitation well and provide robust spending plans.

The school is staffed appropriately to teach the curriculum. All members of staff are deployed very well. Teachers use their planning, preparation and assessment time very efficiently.

Arrangements to identify and meet the training needs of all members of staff are very good. The quality of professional development is a significant strength of the school.

In view of the outcomes achieved by pupils the school provides excellent value for money.

## Appendix 1

### Commentary on performance data

In key stage 3, the core subject indicator has been well above the average of similar schools on the free-school-meal benchmark over the last three years. In science over this period, pupils have performed to a very high standard and have been in the top quarter of similar schools both at level 5 and above and at level 6 and above.

In English, performance at level 5 and above has been significantly above average in two out of the past three years; at level 6 and above this has been the case for each of the three years.

In mathematics over this period of time, performance has been consistently above average at level 5 and above. At level 6 and above this has been the case over the past two years. These are outstanding features.

Over the past three years, the school's performance in the non-core subjects at key stage 3 is also very good. It has been consistently above average when compared to similar schools.

At key stage 4, pupils' performance is outstanding. The level 2 threshold including English and mathematics, the level 2 threshold, the core subject indicator and the level 1 threshold have been consistently in the top quarter of similar schools on the free-school-meal benchmark for the past three years. Performance in these four indicators as well as in each of the core subjects has been consistently above average over this period of time.

At post-16, pupils' attainment reflects a continuing upward trend over the past three years. The percentage attaining the highest grades has increased over this time from 37% to 42%. Performance at the level three threshold has remained above average over the past three years

At key stage 3, the difference in the performances of boys and girls is significantly lower than the Wales and family averages. While at key stage 4, the difference in performance between boys and girls was greater than average in 2011 that of boys was nevertheless above the average for boys in the family of schools and that of girls was significantly above average for girls in the family of schools.

The difference in performance between pupils eligible for free school meals and those who are not has decreased over the period since the school was last inspected. Increasing proportions of pupils in receipt of free school meals gain the core subject indicator in key stage 3 and in key stage 4.

In 2011, 87% of pupils remained in full-time education in the school at the end of key stage 4. This figure is significantly above the average for the local authority and for Wales. Just under 3% of pupils leaving in summer 2011 were not in education, training or employment. This figure is much better than the local average. In the last three years no pupil has left school without a qualification.

## Appendix 2

### **Stakeholder satisfaction report**

#### **Responses to parent questionnaires**

Questionnaires were completed by 403 pupils.

Nearly all report that they are doing well at school and that teachers help them do their best in their work and encourage pupils to take on responsibility. Nearly all report that school is a safe place to learn, that they are taught to be healthy, that they are treated with respect and that they are respected by members of staff.

Nearly all agree that the school gives good advice when choosing subjects and that they feel well prepared for the next stage in their learning. Nearly all report that there is someone to listen to their point of view when they are worried.

The majority of learners feels that the school takes good account of their views.

#### **Responses to parent questionnaires**

Questionnaires were completed by 655 parents.

All agreed that staff at the school expect pupils to work hard and do their best.

Most parents report that their child likes school and is making good progress. Most report that appropriate support is given to particular needs. Most report that homework builds well on what is learned in school. Nearly all parents are happy about the ways in which the school informs them about their child's progress.

Almost all parents agree that the school helps their child develop as a person, to take on responsibility and to become more mature. Their children are treated with respect and are prepared well for the next stage in their learning.

Almost all report that the school is well run and feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions or suggestions.

## Appendix 3

### The inspection team

Peter Harris	Reporting Inspector
Glyn Griffiths	Team Inspector
Alan Kelly	Team Inspector
Emyr Wyn Roberts	Team Inspector
Andrew Herdman	Team Inspector
Helen Adams	Lay Inspector
Heather Cooper	Peer Inspector
Helen Bergum	School Nominee

## Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk))

Under the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school must provide copies of the report to all parents of the school. Where a pupil is subject to placement by a local authority, a copy of the report should be sent by the school to each relevant authority.

### Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (FPR) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of five during the academic year. FYear 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of six during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	FPR	FPY1	FPY2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The four key stages cover the following year groups:

Foundation Phase	Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

## Glossary of terms

Core subject indicator (CSI)	This relates to the expected performance in English or Welsh, mathematics and science, the core subjects of the National Curriculum.
Families of schools	These have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.
Level 1	This represents the equivalent of a GCSE at grade D to G.
Level 1 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade D to G.
Level 2	This represents the equivalent of a GCSE at grade A* to C.
Level 2 threshold including English or Welsh first language and mathematics	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C including English or Welsh first language and mathematics.
Level 2 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C.
Level 3	This represents the equivalent of an A level at grade A*-E.
Level 3 threshold	This represents a volume of learning equivalent to two A levels at grade A* to E.
Average wider points score	This includes all qualifications approved for use in Wales at the relevant age, for example at the age of 16 or at the age of 18.
Capped wider points score	This includes the best eight results from all qualifications approved for use in Wales at the age of 16.
All-Wales Core Data sets	Schools and local authorities may refer to performance relative to their family of schools. These families of schools have been created to enable schools to compare their performance to that of similar schools across Wales. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in 20% most deprived areas of Wales, having special education needs at school action plus or statemented and with English as an additional language acquisition less than competent.