

**Inspection under Section 28 of the
Education Act 2005**

**Willows High School
Willows Avenue
CF24 2YE**

School Number: 6814041

Date of Inspection: 09 October 2006

by

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78306**

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- * secondary schools;
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- * pupil referral units;
- * independent schools;
- * further education;
- * adult and community-based learning;
- * youth support services;
- * LEAs;
- * teacher education and training;
- * work-based learning;
- * careers companies; and
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Willows High School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents information about the performance of their child's school.

The inspection of Willows High School took place between 09/10/06 and 13/10/06. An independent team of inspectors, led by Gareth Hawtin Buckland undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

The team was required to report on the standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management and the contribution made by the school to its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

Grade 1	good with outstanding features
Grade 2	good features and no important shortcomings
Grade 3	good features outweigh shortcomings
Grade 4	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
Grade 5	many important shortcomings

"There are three types of inspection.

For **all** inspections, there is a written report on seven key questions.

For **short** inspections, there are no subject reports.

For **standard** inspections, there are also reports on six subjects.

For **full** inspections, there are also reports on all subjects.

Estyn decides the kind of inspection that a school receives, mainly on the basis of its past performance. Most schools receive a standard inspection. All special schools, pupil referral units and any new or amalgamated schools receive a full inspection.

This school received a **standard** inspection."

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' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who reach the age of 5 during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of 6 during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of pupils who reach the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y 1	Y 2	Y 3	Y 4	Y 5	Y 6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y 10	Y 11	Y 12	Y 13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

Key stage 1	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

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

A	Advanced
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IEPs	Individual Educational Plans
IT	Information Technology
KS	Key Stage
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
NC	National Curriculum
NQT	Newly-Qualified Teacher
PSE	Personal and Social Education
SDP	School Development Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
UA	Unitary Authority
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
Y (1-13)	Year (1-13)

Context

The nature of the provider

1. Willows High School is an 11-16 mixed community school situated on the eastern side of Cardiff, serving the area of Tremorfa, Splott and Adamsdown. There are 863 pupils on roll at the time of the inspection; overall, there are 28 more boys than girls.
2. The school serves a Communities 1st area where there are multiple social and economic disadvantages. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals is 41%, a figure well in excess of the national average.
3. The school caters for the full ability range of pupils. However, a large proportion of the school's intake is of average and lower than average ability with literacy levels well below national levels. Thirty nine pupils have statements of SEN and a further 134 are on the current SEN register.
4. The pupils in the school comprise a multi-cultural mix with 25% of the pupils coming from ethnic minority backgrounds. Eighteen per cent of the pupils come from homes where English or Welsh is not the first language spoken.
5. The school occupies an extensive site. Dating from the late 1960s, a number of areas have been modernised to meet the needs of pupils in the 21st century.
6. The school has strong links with three main partner primary schools and is part of the East Cardiff Collegium which facilitates an extended vocational provision in KS4 and post-16.
7. The headteacher was appointed in 1994 with staffing arrangements being amended over the past few years, designed to meet the changing needs of this multi-faceted school community.

The school's priorities and targets

8. The school's mission statement is "Willows High school: a learning community".
9. The main priorities for the school, forming the basis of the school's development plans, are:
 - to develop the leadership capacity of middle managers;
 - to improve pupils' attitudes towards learning;
 - to widen and develop learning experiences for all learners;
 - to develop assessment for learning strategies; and
 - to develop corporate support.
10. The key targets for the school are clearly laid out for all staff and are available within whole-school documentation. These targets include targets for pupils' performances, staff development and targets to meet the key priorities identified above.

Summary

11. Willows High School is a good and extremely caring school with many outstanding features. The effectiveness of the social cohesion and inclusion in the school is a truly outstanding feature.
12. Since the last inspection, there have been significant improvements in the quality of education provided for the pupils. Whilst agreeing with the vast majority of judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report, the inspection team has given a lower grade for one key question, namely, in KQ1, where a Grade 3 was awarded by the inspection team.

Table of grades awarded

Key Question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	3
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	2
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	1
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	1
6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	2
7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	1

Standards

13. The school's results in KS3 tests and GCSE remain low when compared with local and national indicators, including benchmarking against schools with similar intakes.
14. In KS3 tests, results have improved over the past few years but not evenly. Compared with similar schools in Wales, the school remains in the lowest quartile for the core subject indicator (CSI), which is the percentage of pupils attaining at least a Level 5 in each of English or Welsh, mathematics and science. Results are also lower than the average for schools within the LEA but are good when compared with the LEA's family of schools within which Willows sits.
15. In key stage 4 (KS4), GCSE results continue to be variable year on year. In recent years, compared with similar schools in Wales, the school has been in the lowest quartile for the percentage of pupils attaining five GCSE passes at A*-C as well as for the CSI. Results are also lower than average for all schools in the LEA. However, provisional results for Summer 2006 are extremely encouraging and indicate a significant improvement on any results previously obtained by pupils in the school.

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Inspection Area	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4
English	2	2
Welsh second language	2	3
Mathematics	2	3
Information technology	3	2
Home Economics: Child Development		2
Catering		2
Art	1	1

16. Standards in key skills are generally good. Pupils listen well and readily volunteer answers to teachers' questions. This is a significant improvement on the last inspection outcomes. Most pupils read fluently and write well, often at length. Numeracy skills are developed well in mathematics and applied in a range of other subjects. The use of ICT and the development of ICT skills are good.
17. The development of broader key skills is well planned and the delivery is starting to have a direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning and the achievement of pupils, particularly within KS3.
18. The use of, and competence in, bilingual skills remain areas for further development.
19. With the new developments in KS3, pupils are making good progress in their learning. Progress in KS4 is less significant albeit sound. Pupils of all abilities acquire new knowledge and skills and understand what they need to do to make further improvements.
20. The development of personal, social and learning skills is very good and pupils show outstanding attitudes towards learning within such a diverse cultural and socio-economic environment. Their respect for the views and beliefs of others within the school and the community is a further outstanding feature of the school.
21. The general behaviour of pupils around the school is generally good with pupils understanding the expectations of the school towards good behaviour. Punctuality to lessons is generally good.
22. Despite a range of strategies being in place, including a very effective reward system, levels of attendance remain a concern. At present, despite a small improvement since the last inspection, levels of attendance remain at 81%, which is extremely low, placing the school in the lowest quartile group when comparing its attendance rate with those of similar schools.

The quality of education and training

23. The quality of teaching in lessons observed was judged as follows:
24. Within the 74 lessons in the six subjects inspected, the grades awarded for teaching in KS3 and KS4 were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
16%	51%	26%	5%	1%

25. Overall grades for the quality of teaching in all lessons observed in KS3 and KS4 were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
20%	49%	23%	2%	1%

26. There were outstanding features in one out of every five lessons and good features with no important shortcomings in nearly seven out of every ten lessons. This well exceeds the targets set by the WAG for the quality of teaching to be good or better in 50% of lessons.
27. Teachers and pupils relate well to each other. Teachers plan lessons carefully, making every effort to ensure that all pupils' learning needs are met. Pupils with SEN receive outstanding support and guidance through the many and varied opportunities provided by teachers.
28. The school's assessment procedures meet statutory requirements. There is a clear assessment policy that teachers follow. Teachers accurately assess pupils' work. However, the use of constructive guidance on what needs to be done to make progress is not generally applied and all departments need to take guidance from the best practice in the school. In a few cases, marking provides the pupils with little more than a grade.
29. Target setting procedures are in place and are used efficiently. However, the use of all available baseline data on prior performance and potential is limiting the accuracy of some of the targets established with pupils. This leads to a lowering of expectations for the performance of some pupils and a lower than anticipated school target for attainment in KS3 SATs and at GCSE.
30. Reporting to parents is of a good quality with parents feeling that the reports convey good information to them in a clear manner. The reports are based on a detailed target-setting and tracking process that identifies pupils' progress over each term and meet statutory requirements.
31. The school generally meets pupils' learning needs provided through a broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum is enhanced significantly through a wide range of outstanding extra-curricular learning and social opportunities as well as through a newly introduced vocational programme in KS4.
32. The school meets all statutory requirements.
33. The school has a range of outstanding links with external partners; these provide the school with a range of opportunities to enhance the education and lives of all the pupils in the school.
34. The school has appropriate equal opportunities' policies and a clear determination to provide the very best educational opportunities to all its pupils irrespective of ability, ethnicity or social background.
35. The provision for pupils with SEN not only meets statutory requirements but offers pupils outstanding opportunities irrespective of their individual needs. Individual education plans (IEPs) provide teachers and learning support assistants with clear guidance on what pupils need to do to meet their personal targets.

Leadership and management

36. There are many outstanding features within the overall leadership and management in the school. The school has clear aims, values and expectations and much work is undertaken to ensure that these are known to all.
37. The headteacher provides very clear and purposeful direction that has led to an improvement in the quality of educational provision during his tenure. He is ably supported by a strong senior leadership team that provides effective and efficient support for all staff and pupils.
38. The school has developed outstanding procedures to promote equality for all and fully meets statutory requirements in respect of racial equality, disability and looked-after children.
39. Monitoring of staff performance is undertaken through thorough procedures albeit insufficient time allocated to monitoring classroom practice in a number of areas. Information collected is used effectively to provide the basis for a very comprehensive programme of continuous professional development for all staff in the school.
40. Links between senior and middle managers are good and departmental targets are discussed regularly. The role of staff coaching as a part of leadership is an outstanding feature of the school's leadership aspirations.
41. The governing body is very supportive and fulfils all its responsibilities with vigour and enthusiasm.
42. The school has sufficient well-qualified teachers to deliver the planned curriculum. However, there are several instances of non-specialist teachers teaching within areas beyond their expertise without sufficient specialist support to ensure that they are providing high quality learning experiences.
43. Resources have improved since the last inspection and there are enough good quality resources to enable teachers to teach and learners to learn effectively.
44. The school provides a vivid and well-maintained environment for all those working within the school. Considerable enhancement of the environment has taken place since the last inspection, resulting in some outstanding facilities within which the pupils can learn.
45. Management of all school resources is very efficient. Financial planning, administration procedures and control are significant strengths of the school. Overall, in view of the contextual constraints under which the school is working and the quality of its provision for all its pupils, the school represents very good value for money.

Progress since the last inspection

46. When considering progress since the last inspection, significant progress has been made in many areas identified as key issues for action at that time.
47. However, further work is needed in a small number of areas. These are:
 - raising the levels of attendance to a satisfactory level;

- using assessment to give clear indications to pupils how to improve their work; and
- setting homework more consistently.

Recommendations

In order to continue the trend of improvement in the school, focusing on the following areas should be central to the school's future plans:

- R1 promote and extend the developing good practice in learning, teaching and assessment across both key stages;
- R2 continue to improve standards of achievement and attainment in both key stages to ensure that all pupils achieve their optimum potential with particular attention being paid to the identified shortcomings in the subjects inspected;
- R3 refine further the target-setting procedures to ensure sufficient challenge exists for pupils of all abilities;
- R4 develop further the role of and delivery of bilingualism within the school; and
- R5 further pursue effective strategies to raise current levels of attendance to a satisfactory level.

The governing body is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the recommendations within 45 working days of receiving this report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. This plan, or a summary of it, will be circulated to all parents at the school.

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

48. The school awarded itself a Grade 2. The grade awarded by the inspection team does not agree with the grade within the school's self-evaluation report. Nevertheless, some outstanding features were identified by the team. These include:

- the considerable effort put into providing an outstanding range of opportunities for each and every pupil to reach their optimum potential; and
- the total acceptance of diversity as a positive aspect of a community and the contribution diversity makes to the learning opportunities and the overall standards achieved by the pupils.

Pupils' success in attaining agreed learning goals.

KS3 and KS4

49. The following table shows the standards that pupils achieved in KS3 and KS4 across the subjects inspected. A total of 74 lessons were inspected in these subjects across both key stages.

	% Grade 1	% Grade 2	% Grade 3	% Grade 4	% Grade 5
KS3	14	57	22	7	
KS4	14	40	35	8	3
KS3 and KS4	14	49	28	8	1

50. Across both key stages, and within KS3 and KS4 separately, these figures are above the current national target of 50% of lessons to be graded 1 or 2. However, with figures of 71% in KS3 and 54% in KS4, a significant further improvement is required in KS4 if the school is to achieve the national target for 2007, namely, 65% to be graded 1 and 2. In KS3 and KS4, 93% and 91% of all lessons were graded three or better respectively, which is below the target of 98% for 2007.
51. The better standards in KS3, compared with those achieved in KS4, mirrors the quality of teaching in each key stage, where 91% of all lessons were graded one, two or three in KS3 but only 84% in KS4.
52. An outstanding feature of the school is the lengths to which the school goes to ensure that all pupils, regardless of background, language or ability, are offered every opportunity to succeed. All pupils have an extensive range of opportunities to achieve well including those pupils with EAL issues, the most able pupils and those with other SEN.
53. The school sets numerical targets for the end of each key stage. However, the target setting process, albeit thorough and understood by staff and pupils, creates targets that are based on prior KS2 performance and Fischer Family Trust predictions but do not fully reflect all the standardised information available at an individual pupil or school level. This results in some inaccurate assessments being made of the ability of pupils resulting in inappropriate targets being set.
54. While standards in key skills vary across and within each key stage, the standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT are generally good, with significant progress being made in the standard of listening skills since the last inspection. Planning for the delivery of key skills across the curriculum is well documented and clearly delivered through a good lesson planning process. The development of wider key skills is good and pupils display many traits that demonstrate the success of the delivery of these key skills.
55. However, bilingualism is an area where skill levels are significantly lower and few opportunities are planned for its delivery. Despite good bilingual signage around the school and a clear policy for bilingualism, there is no evidence of incidental Welsh being spoken within and around the school.

56. Whereas standards of achievement in KS3 and GCSE examination results have improved over the past five years, they are not yet at a good level because of the performance of pupils in a few subjects, the continuing movement in the gap in performance between boys and girls and the low levels of attendance of a significant number of pupils.
57. Despite an improved performance in 2004, results in the NC tests at the end of KS3 over the past three years continue to be variable. In 2005, the CSI for the school was 26.9%, a drop on the performance of 40.8% in 2004. While the performance in 2004 was below that of the LEA and the national figure, the gap in performance between that of the school and national picture narrowed, a trend that reversed in 2005. When comparing the school with schools of similar intake, the performance in the CSI continues to place the school in the lowest quartile.
58. In KS4, the results in 2005, at 22% 5A*-C, were lower than in the previous two years within the 5A*-C performance. However, the performances at 5 A*-G and 1 A*-G showed a significant improvement. In the past two years, the results at 5A*-C placed the school in the lowest quartile when comparing the school with similar schools. Results were well below those of the LEA and the national average. In 2005, at 9%, the proportion of pupils gaining a grade A*-C in the three core subjects combined displayed a dramatic decline on the previous year's outcome of 18%. The result in 2004 placed the school in the lowest quartile by comparison with schools nationally with similar intake.
59. Despite the picture of the past three years, provisional results for 2006 are extremely encouraging, with the school recording the best set of GCSE results in its history. This, together with the improved achievement in lessons observed in KS3, is the first indication that the recent changes implemented in and through the leadership and management are having a positive impact on the performance of pupils in the school.

Progress in learning

60. The rate of progress varies across subjects and between classes, with progress often being good but occasionally restricted by the quality of the teaching. In some subjects, pupils make outstanding progress, as reflected in the grades awarded during the inspection, and in external examination results.
61. The most-able pupils are generally challenged to produce work of a high quality both in their oral and written responses. Pupils with SEN achieve extremely well in the designated classes and, on occasion, make outstanding progress.
62. In general, pupils are aware of the progress they are making, how well they are doing and what is expected of them. The role of the newly created progress team in supporting the academic progress of the pupils is a structure that is already showing signs of enhancing the monitoring of the progress of pupils.

The development of personal, social and learning skills

63. Pupils' ability to solve problems is being developed across the school and is particularly evident in KS3. This development, alongside other broader key skills, is proving to be an example of best practice within some subject areas. Pupils use their knowledge and understanding to address a range of interesting and often challenging situations.
64. High quality displays are in evidence in the vast majority of areas around the school. In many instances, these displays are being used well to enhance the learning of the pupils.
65. The role of group work within lessons is an area that has been developed well. Within areas such as mathematics, art and English, examples of effective use of group work enhance the learning experience of all the pupils. In these examples, pupils collaborate well, are considerate, respectful and supportive of each other.
66. The general behaviour of the pupils in class and around the school is good. Pupils understand the expectations of the school towards good behaviour and the consequences for themselves and others of non-compliance. Around the school, there is a happy and relaxed atmosphere with good relationships both between teachers and pupils, and amongst pupils themselves, being evident.
67. It is acknowledged that instances of poor behaviour occur from time to time and the school demonstrates that it is quick to respond to such situations. The role and use of the Inclusion Room in addressing behavioural issues are an asset to the school. Furthermore, the school is the recipient of several pupils permanently excluded from other schools; in the main, these pupils have integrated well into the life of the school.
68. Standards of attendance remain a significant concern for the school. With a mean attendance rate of 81% over the three terms prior to the inspection, the school remains in the lowest FSM quartile for attendance. A significant number of pupils have high levels of absenteeism which adversely impacts on the whole-school figure. Attendance figures have improved at the start of this academic year, with figures of over 90% being in evidence in each year group in KS3.
69. The recognition and understanding of diversity displayed by pupils and staff in the school are an outstanding example of creating harmony within a school. Regardless of culture, race, ethnicity or academic ability, pupils work alongside each other respecting each other and the contributions made to the learning environment.
70. Extremely good work is undertaken in school to prepare pupils to take a full and active role in the workplace and the community. This work is enhanced by an outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities that helps pupils to learn about work and social conscience through active involvement with the community.

The quality of education and training

Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?

Grade 2: Good and no important shortcomings

71. This grade matches the school's self evaluation grade.

One outstanding feature is the way that the school has established good working relationships with pupils that clearly promote learning. In the best lessons, teachers:

- employ a range of teaching strategies to ensure pupils apply themselves with purpose and self confidence;
- support and manage pupils, intervening according to the needs of individuals and groups; and
- stress the importance of self discipline.

Key Stages 3 and 4

How well teaching meets learners' needs and the curricular or course requirements

72. In the 74 lessons in the six subjects inspected, the grades awarded for teaching at KS 3 and KS 4 were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
16%	51%	26%	5%	1%

73. Overall grades for the quality of teaching in all lessons observed in KS3 and KS4 were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
20%	49%	23%	2%	1%

74. This marks a significant improvement in teaching since the previous inspection and constitutes a strength of the school.

75. Where teaching has good features, lessons:

- form part of a well structured sequence; and
- have clear objectives which are effectively communicated to pupils and are adapted to suit the needs of pupils.

76. In order to secure the active engagement of pupils in these lessons teachers:

- encourage pupils to think about how they learn as well as what they learn;
- ensure that pupils are clear about what they are doing, why they are doing it, and can judge success in their own work;
- pay particular attention to pupils with SEN and those who have English as an additional language; and
- deploy teaching assistants to good effect.

77. However, there are some shortcomings in teaching in a minority of lessons. When these are present, the effectiveness of teaching is limited by:
- an imbalance between the length of the teacher's own presentation and the amount of time given for pupils to complete the tasks set;
 - the range of teaching strategies employed; and
 - the extent to which teachers ensure that pupils particularly, though not exclusively in KS4, are clear about the way in which they can improve their work.

The rigour of assessment and its use in planning and improving learning

78. The school has established procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress and the planning and improvement of their future learning which meet the statutory requirements.
79. Where there are good features, these procedures:
- are based on clear criteria for learning objectives;
 - are efficiently collated and analysed so that they inform the future planning of lessons;
 - are consistently applied by teachers; and
 - enable pupils and their parents to understand what they need to do to improve their work and make progress.
80. There are, however, shortcomings in the way in which assessment procedures are applied particularly, though not exclusively, apparent in KS4. They are:
- the day-to-day assessment, which is good in most departments, is not working effectively in all departments;
 - too many teachers' comments on pupils' work do not get to the heart of what the weakness is, and how the pupil could put it right; and
 - teachers in a minority of departments miss the opportunity for pupils to evaluate their own and each others' work.

Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

81. The grade awarded matches the school's self-evaluation grade.

There are a number of outstanding features in the learning experiences provided by the school. They include:

- the innovative vocational option in KS4 that provides extra breadth to the curriculum;
- the breadth and quality of the out of school learning. The Community Learning Centre organises a homework club and other exceptionally well supported activities that make a significant contribution to the achievement of pupils at the school. There is an excellent range of sporting activities, musical and drama activities and clubs.
- the school has an exceptional range of partnerships in the community. Many of these partnerships make a considerable contribution to improving the education that the pupils receive.
- the success in ensuring that pupils of all backgrounds have equal opportunities at the school. The partnerships with the community and the out of hours provision play a strong part in helping the school tackle social deprivation.

82. There are many good features in the learning experiences provided by the school.
83. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and is accessible to all. In KS3, pupils study a wide range of subjects. The inclusion of drama, IT and “reading and writing” helps to develop pupils’ self-confidence and key skills. In KS4, a wide range of courses allows all pupils the opportunity to gain qualifications that are relevant and appropriate to their respective needs and abilities.
84. The curriculum is broad and balanced and, as pupils develop, the school builds systematically on previous knowledge. There is good progression between the key stages. Good curriculum links with local primary schools ensure that the work at Willows follows on naturally from KS2.
85. The school makes every effort to meet the needs and interests of individual children. The extended opportunities programme in KS4 helps provide additional flexibility to meet the needs of individuals as they near the end of their school career.
86. When planning their work, teachers ensure that lessons help to develop pupils’ basic and key skills. Managers map the coverage of these skills across the curriculum to ensure that all aspects are covered.
87. A well managed PSE programme makes significant contributions to the development of pupils’ spiritual, moral and social understanding. Pupils have an appreciation of their own and other cultures. A notable feature is the way that pupils respect each other, irrespective of sex, ethnic or racial background. Effective careers education is integrated into the PSE programme and there is a good partnership with Careers Wales.

88. The school meets all the necessary legal and course requirements.
89. The school provides effective work related education. Links with the world of work are integrated into a number of subjects. There are excellent work experience arrangements, especially in the vocational subjects. Pupils leave Willows well prepared for the transfer to the world of work or further education.
90. Aspects of *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* are developed in several subjects so that pupils develop an understanding of the culture of Wales. The introduction of a number of bilingual signs has helped to raise awareness of the Welsh language in the school.
91. Several subjects include opportunities for pupils to learn about global citizenship and the need for sustainable development. Pupils have built on this and as a result the school has gained the bronze and silver levels of the Eco-Schools Award. Recycling takes place in every classroom.
92. The school has good links with a number of employers and this has influenced the development of a range of vocational courses at the school.
93. Through organisations such as, Business Dynamics pupils are introduced to entrepreneurial skills.
94. The school has responded well to national priorities for example by developing strong links with partner schools and developing a broad 14-19 curriculum.
95. There is a shortcoming in the learning experiences provided by the school in that the school does not do enough to develop pupils' bilingual skills. There is very little use of incidental Welsh during the school day. A majority of pupils in KS4 do not have enough Welsh lessons to enable them to build on the Welsh language skills they developed during KS3.

Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features.

96. There are many outstanding features in the way that learners are cared for, guided and supported, The inspection team agrees with the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation summary.

How well teaching and training meets learners' needs and the curricular or course requirements.

97. There are a number of outstanding features in the learning experiences provided by the school. They include:

- the Community Learning Centre providing highly effective structured support for pupils, and meeting their varying needs;
- the school's Homework Club successfully catering for the learning and social needs of its pupils. The pupils show a great deal of respect for this facility and are high in their praise of its usefulness as a base for independent learning;
- the quality and depth of involvement in transition arrangements from the partner primary schools;
- pupils' achievements being higher as a result of the exceptional support given by the staff within the Study Centre; evidence shows that the attendees achieve more passes at A* to C than those who do not attend;
- the school being awarded the National Youth Agency Quality in Study Support programme (QISS) in recognition for its support work with the pupils. The school is the only school in Wales and one of only eleven schools in the UK to receive such recognition; and
- the Community Learning Centre providing excellent support for all its pupils.

98. The school presents itself as a caring, well-ordered and inclusive community, which supports and guides its' pupils effectively through various activities. This aspect is a strong feature of the school's supportive ethos.

99. The effective use of learning support assistants and other professional support workers is a strong feature; this is especially prominent with pupils who have additional learning needs. The staff have a very good knowledge of each pupil's identified learning needs and are adept at ensuring that the pupils' targets are met in conjunction with the lessons' aims and objectives.

100. The school's involvement with the parents is very positive and a well-planned induction programme for pupils entering school in Y7 is endorsed and supported by a positive parental perspective.

101. An annual summer school for Y6 pupils helps pupils to become accustomed to the school; the school produces an impressive Starting Secondary School leaflet for new parents and also holds a Family Learning Day early in the new term, ensuring that the parents become familiar with the school.

102. The range of transition arrangements in place for pupils from the partner primary schools is another notable feature of the school's provision. School staff visit the primary schools and establish a well-planned strategy of joint curricular provision in preparation for Y7 pupils. This is an outstanding feature of the school's provision and is effective in planning appropriate provision for year 7 pupils. All such procedures are carefully evaluated and further relevant developments identified and implemented.

103. The school ensures that all pupils are fully supported in their transition from KS3 to KS4, and option evenings are arranged so that each pupil has every

- opportunity to meet relevant staff and supportive agencies to ease their choices and help decision-making. This procedure is supplemented by the production of clear, well written option booklets. The input of a careers education guidance programme into the schools PSE provision ensures well-planned continuity and support.
104. Good links have been established between the school and a local college of further education and a high number of the pupils successfully continue with their education into the local college. Careers staff provide expertise and advice in career choices and participate in PSE lessons in KS4, supporting pupils in identifying future learning and working opportunity pathways.
 105. A well-structured and co-ordinated PSE programme provides good quality support and guidance for all pupils and makes effective use of specialist support services to enhance and supplement the lessons.
 106. An effective pupil council supports the general ethos of the school and their industrious involvement contributes greatly to the personal and social development the pupils.
 107. Although the school experiences low attendance levels, it has successfully identified a number of effective strategies which show early signs of improving attendance rates in some instances. The changes made in curriculum planning in KS3 have seen improved attendance levels in Y7. Attendance levels on the days on which vocational courses are being taught in Year 10 have also been improved. These initiatives, together with first day absence calling to parents - dealt with efficiently by the office staff - together with merit points awarded for attendance linked to annual rewards, have had a positive impact on improving pupils' attendance. The success of these strategies provides a solid basis for attaining improved attendance figures for the future.
 108. The inspection team found an issue relating to health and safety that was discussed with the headteacher and the governing body.
 109. The school has a very effective system of undertaking risk assessment. Effective care plans are in place for pupils with SEN, and for all pupils with medical needs. Relevant arrangements are identified with regard to adequate support and care for vulnerable pupils.
 110. Child Protection procedures meet statutory requirements, are known to all members of staff and are implemented effectively throughout the school. All staff have received updated training and know how to respond to issues or incidents that might cause concern. The school also meets statutory requirements regarding regular reviews and provision for looked-after children who attend the school

The quality of provision for pupils with additional learning needs.

111. Overall provision for pupils with a range of SEN is very good. The detailed policy on the identification, assessment and provision for pupils with SEN are in line with the recommendations of the SEN Code of practice for Wales and is very effectively administered by the SENCO.
112. The SENCO visits all feeder primary schools to attend Y6 annual review meetings. At these meetings meaningful and relevant targets are set for

- pupils' individual education plans. These are communicated to all teaching staff and learning support assistants before pupils arrive at the school in Y7 in order that effective planning for their individual needs is implemented.
113. All pupils who require them have effective IEPs. Cross-curricular targets are specific to each pupil and all staff have copies. In some subjects the targets are pasted into the front of pupils' exercise book.
 114. Statements of SEN are well maintained; annual review meetings are supported by relevant specialists including the specialist careers adviser who attends all transitional review meetings. All statutory requirements with regard to statements are met.
 115. Pupils are well supported in the classroom by a team of learning support assistants who are well managed and effectively deployed. Pupils with specific learning difficulties and pupils with behavioural difficulties are effectively supported by specialist teachers both in the classroom and on an individual basis.
 116. The SENCO liaises effectively with subject departments through the leaders of learning. The quality of provision across subjects is good; teacher planning takes account of pupils' needs, tasks match ability but incorporate appropriate levels of challenge.
 117. Effective partnerships are established both with the LEA and other organisations such as the Dyslexia Association.
 118. Effective provision is made for pupils with English as an additional language. They are well supported in the classroom. The small number withdrawn from a Y7 class are also well supported in their acquisition of new language skills. In KS4, an EAL option group not only positively impacts on standards in English, but on those in other subjects as well.
 119. The gifted and talented coordinator identifies gifted pupils by analysis of screening tests, primary school data and teacher referral. Pupils are monitored carefully as they progress through the school; strategies are in place to enable them to achieve accredited qualifications earlier than their peers.
 120. There is a named governor for SEN and a SEN sub-committee of the governing body which effectively monitors and evaluates provision.
 121. The school has devised effective strategies to prevent pupils whose behaviour impedes the work of others from being excluded. They have established an inclusion room which works well in conjunction with the support centre and SENCO.

The quality of provision for equal opportunities

122. Provision for equal opportunities ensures that each pupil is free from any form of discrimination and harassment. The provision includes many outstanding features through effectively embracing the inclusion of pupils from ethnic minority groups into all aspects of school life. The school's approach towards promoting gender equality and race relations is well developed. This feature is well embedded within schemes of work and the PSE framework. Effective wall displays support this feature.

123. The school shows a high commitment to successfully challenging and preventing racism. This is achieved well through in-service training for staff, regular reviews of the curriculum and monitoring schemes of work, which reflect diversity and challenge stereotypes.
124. The school successfully addresses the varying needs of pupils from different social backgrounds through its own adapted resources and through supportive agencies. This process ensures that the needs of pupils who have difficult home circumstances are well met.
125. Pupils are aware of school rules and of the standards of behaviour expected of them. The staged response to unacceptable behaviour ensures that each pupil understands the consequences of, and procedures to deal with, unacceptable behaviour, which are clearly indicated in each classroom. The consistency of approach from the staff promotes an inclusive learning environment in the classrooms and is an outstanding feature.
126. The school's approach to prevent bullying reflects the school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies, and is an outstanding feature in respect of eliminating oppressive behaviour. Physical aggression and verbal abuse are not tolerated, and although the school had a high number of temporary exclusions for such incidents last term, the current strategies have successfully reduced such exclusions.
127. The school 'Buddy' system, using Y11 pupils, has had a positive impact on reducing bullying and the pupils report that they feel safe in the school. The student council members stated that they considered the Buddy system to be an effective anti-bullying strategy within the school.
128. The school's strategy to re-integrate pupils who have been temporarily excluded, and the use of the Support Centre in this context, is an outstanding feature. This procedure allows staff to establish a differentiated approach and an alternative curriculum prior to re-integration and is flexible enough to allow partial or full re-integration.
129. Record keeping of pupils attending the Support Centre is exceptional and is networked across all areas of the school. This strategy is highly effective in ensuring that all other members of school staff receive relevant information on the pupils prior to their full integration back into mainstream lessons.

Leadership and management

Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

130. The school awarded itself a Grade 1. The grade awarded by the inspection team agrees with the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.

How well leaders and managers provide clear direction and promote high standards

131. There are many outstanding features in leadership and management, at all levels of leadership within the school. These outstanding features include:
- the dynamic and forward looking leadership provided by the headteacher in strategic and financial management;
 - the effectiveness and impact of the clear vision and direction provided for all staff in the school;
 - the development of leadership teams and the role of coaching within whole-school leadership development; and
 - the rigorous measures taken to ensure all interested parties are actively involved in the processes leading to the development of an accurate self evaluation of the school.
132. The school's aims are shared and understood by all sections of the school and the wider community. The school assiduously promotes the value of achieving high standards and pupils realising their potential through a wide range of opportunities both within the curriculum, through effective personal development and in the many extra-curricular opportunities provided.
133. The headteacher provides energetic leadership in many areas of the life of the school. At the heart of his leadership is the belief in the development of others to become effective leaders, empowering staff and striving towards the highest possible standards of work and behaviour amongst the pupils. His leadership is highly effective.
134. He is very ably supported by a newly established senior leadership team that endorses and promotes the same values. As individuals, each member of this team is effective in their respective areas of responsibility; collectively they work well as a team. They have a strong presence around the school and are well known by staff and pupils. Expectations are high and, through formal and informal monitoring, they strive to ensure their expectations are met.
135. Formal links between senior and middle leaders are effective, providing direction and support for academic, pastoral and support staff. Formal reviews are held regularly and the rigour of these reviews provides a sound and accurate platform for further development. The quality of the reflective culture established in the school is of the highest order. This culture, allied to the strong coaching ethos ensures that the performance management process is an example of best practice. Staff morale is high and there is a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration among the staff as a whole.
136. The school has built an exceptional range of very good partnerships with other providers in the community, business and industry. Many pupils take up the opportunities provided through these partnerships and the school continues to encourage pupils to look beyond the school for every opportunity for academic and life success.

137. The school's success owes a great deal to the very good leadership, a leadership that empowers others to take pride in their successes and to recognise the contributions they are making to the success of each pupil.

The extent to which governors meet their responsibilities

138. The governing body contains a wide range of expertise and experience; it fulfils its leadership role very effectively.
139. Governors are actively involved in establishing and promoting the priorities of the school. Many have both the vision and the detailed knowledge to enable them to assist in establishing an appropriate long-term direction for the school's development. For example, the development of the innovative vocational education programme in KS4 and the very good new ICT equipment are testament to the long-term planning and financial management undertaken by the governing body.
140. Through their links to departments, governors are aware of the performances within subject areas in the school. Governors meet with teachers, invite heads of departments to governing body meetings and, as critical friends, actively participate in the monitoring of performance.
141. Performance data are discussed thoroughly and the committees regularly review and up-date school policies. The self-evaluation report was reviewed, challenged and amended through an effective process undertaken by the curriculum committee and the whole governing body.
142. The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are met.

Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

143. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade awarded by the school in its self evaluation report.

Key Stages 3 and 4

A further outstanding feature of the school is the way the headteacher has created a culture that has enabled the school to identify and share good practice. This has resulted in the development of a sophisticated, reflective attitude and professional dialogue among staff which has raised standards in many areas.

How effectively the school's performance is monitored and evaluated

144. There are many good features in monitoring and evaluation. The school is well informed about its own performance and uses a variety of approaches to gather information. These include an analysis of data on prior attainment, the scrutiny of pupils' work and planned classroom observation.
145. The school's self evaluation report is accurate and informative. Amongst its identified good features are:
- concise statements of the school's best features;
 - honest identification of subjects and areas most in need of improvement; and

- clear statements of action already taken by the school to improve.
146. The process of monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance is enhanced through clear policy statements at whole school and department levels.
147. There is a well established cycle of self evaluation planned throughout the year. A variety of approaches is used to gather information on all aspects of the school's performance. The incorporation of self evaluation findings into whole school and departmental development priorities is a significant feature of the school's documentation. Seeking the views of pupils, parents and members of the wider school community is a strategy that is well established.
148. Most leaders and managers are clear about their responsibilities regarding self evaluation. The governing body and the LEA link adviser act as effective critical friends.
149. However there are some shortcomings. In a minority of instances, monitoring policy is underdeveloped and little use is made of prior attainment data to set appropriate targets. Despite the planned programme for reviews, insufficient classroom observation takes place, resulting in good practice not always being identified and shared.
150. Members of the senior leadership team act as line managers to leaders of learning and performance managers. These links currently lack sufficient rigour and need further strengthening in order to establish greater accountability and consistency of approach.

The effectiveness for planning for improvement

151. The school's planning for improvement has many good features. Where the school has been effective in planning for improvement, contributory factors include a departmental self evaluation practice that has clear links with development planning. Innovative attempts are made to make the curriculum more relevant to all pupils and there are consistent and shared approaches to lesson planning and assessment.
152. When monitoring of teaching and learning takes place, it provides clear feedback as to how performance can be improved and provides a sound basis for further development.
153. Rigorous use is made of assessment data to set targets and regular monitoring of performance against targets takes place; revised targets are then established in line with progress.
154. However, there are still shortcomings in some areas. A minority of teachers are unclear about the priorities and actions required to bring about improvement. Also, some teachers require further coaching and support to ensure that self evaluation leads towards measurable improvements in performance.
155. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Issues have been addressed as follows:
- the level of many pupils' basic skills has risen, making them better behaved and more confident learners;

- a significantly greater number of teachers employ a successful range of teaching and assessment strategies, and
- many more pupils have a greater understanding of how to improve their work.

Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

156. In the school self-evaluation report, the school judged this key question as Grade 1. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the judgement of the school.

There are a number of outstanding features. They include:

- the highly effective way that the budget is managed and, having opted out of UA Service Level Agreements for Grounds, cleaning and general maintenance, the school maintains a high quality, learning and teaching environment throughout the school.
- through initiatives such as a negotiated contract with the local college and continually seeking external funding, the school has expanded its allocated budget and resourced a wide range of initiatives and developed high quality facilities to enhance the learning environment for pupils.
- an excellent CPD Programme ensures that all members of staff, teaching and support, are fully assisted in meeting and achieving their training needs and aspirations in line with the SIP; and
- through self-help programmes involving staff, parents and pupils, the internal accommodation is of a very high standard. The school also provides a wide range of high quality additional resources for a broader vocational curriculum and to encourage pupils into higher education courses on leaving the school.

The adequacy, suitability and use made of staffing, learning resources and accommodation?

157. The school is situated in a city location within extensive open grounds and with buildings, including one high-rise block, spread in a quadrangle type development. The facilities allow for departments to be in suites of rooms together; the rooms are of a good size, providing a suitable setting for teaching and learning.
158. It has a sufficient number of appropriately qualified teachers to serve the curriculum. However, where non-specialist teaching occurs, there is a need to ensure that all teachers are sufficiently trained and monitored in the additional subject so as not to adversely affect standards achieved by pupils.
159. Learning support assistants have a positive effect on pupils' learning especially in those lessons where teachers work with them to plan in advance, the support they are to give, and where they understand the expectations of the lesson. However in less well-planned lessons, their impact is much less significant.
160. The pupil-teacher ratio is slightly high when compared with the all-Wales average but is well supplemented by additional staff provided through the

- UA and external funding. In addition, through a negotiated contract with Coleg Glan Hafren and other partners, the school benefits from a weekly input by college trainers and support providers for subjects such as catering, hair and beauty, and literacy development.
161. The EMAS unit provides additional support for pupils with English as a second language, and the school also benefits from a community support room to aid and develop links with community groups.
 162. All staff benefit from a good provision for continual professional development, in line with the SIP. The school maintains the Investors in People Standard for the quality of additional training and developmental opportunities the school provides to staff. Staff undergo annual performance management and appraisal reviews to identify their particular development needs and aspirations.
 163. Teachers from the school have recently gained the Secondary Teacher of the Year Award, Working with the Community Award and the highly commended NQT Award.
 164. The school has good quality administrative, technical and support staff and they make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school. However, the school still lacks sufficient ICT technical support, albeit is planning to address it.
 165. Pupils generally have good access to appropriate learning resources in all departments to match the demands of their learning experiences.
 166. In recent years, the school has achieved many improvements in facilities and resources in a range of departments. New workstations and facilities have been provided in science rooms. The art department and the design and technology department have benefited from improved facilities and resources to replace outdated room layouts and equipment. A new astroturf area provides flood-lit, all-weather, sporting facilities that pupils can access both during and outside school hours. A catering training kitchen and restaurant provides facilities for enhancing catering courses for GCSE and beyond leading to courses in higher education. The hair and beauty saloon and the performing arts centre provide facilities to enable the school to extend vocational courses into these areas. The music technology department has facilities for music development and recording.
 167. The Community Learning Centre provides a resource for working with pupils who need additional support externally to the classroom, particularly those with emotional and behavioural difficulties to have regular access to specialist and psychological advice. Centre staff support teachers dealing with difficult pupils in the classroom and they also support the homework club run after school.
 168. Internally, the school environment is of a very good standard. Furthermore, the school has a rolling enhancement programme to improve further all areas in the next few years.
 169. The quality of the wall displays, both in classrooms and in corridors, is of a good standard and pupils treat these displays and artwork with respect.

170. The school library provides a pleasant working and resource area for pupils and is well stocked with a range of books and other resources. There is also good access to ICT facilities for whole classes, and the whole area is well used during and after school hours.
171. The school has increased and improved the available ICT facilities since the last inspection, and there are plans for further improvements. ICT suites are a bookable resource when not used by the resident teacher. There has been investment in interactive whiteboards for a number of departments and generally these have been well used. However, there is a need for further training and development to ensure that they are effectively used to aid teaching and learning in all subject areas.
172. Some external areas are in need of significant maintenance and this is counter to the attractive internal working environment and facilities the school has worked so hard to achieve. This structural maintenance includes a number of major tasks to the building itself as well as resurfacing the rear yard which currently has a rough, uneven surface unsuitable and unsafe for games.
173. There are a number of quadrangles and enclosed areas around the perimeter of the buildings that are unkempt and litter strewn. The school has supplied large bins in all areas of the school but litter continues to be a problem in some areas of the grounds.

How efficiently are resources deployed to provide value for money?

174. The bursar ensures that day-to-day oversight and management of the school's finances are of the highest possible order. Departments receive a formula funded capitation and regular statements are provided to monitor their expenditure. Departmental underspend on capitation is questioned with in-depth reasoning required on how much can be saved year on year for larger purchases or new initiatives.
175. The budget is monitored on a regular basis by the senior leadership team and governors, and by the UA.
176. Teachers fully understand the implications of the school budget and actively work with the senior management team to use available money to best effect for teaching and learning.
177. Departments can bid for additional funding from the school budget. The school is also continuously looking for, and succeeding in gaining, external funding to resource initiatives that staff wish to instigate within the school. Staff are actively encouraged to look for funding from bodies such as the General Teaching Council for Wales and Sports Council for Wales to develop initiatives within the school as an aspect of personal development.
178. A "cheque book" system has been introduced this year to speed the process of paying for resources and other items of expenditure and this has provided a more efficient method of settling accounts with suppliers.
179. The school has robust planning and review systems in place for the long term running and development of the school that ensures that best value is gained from all available budgetary sources. Negotiated contacts with Coleg Glan Hafren and other providers ensures the sustainability of a percentage

of external funding over a five year period. All available monies are used economically, efficiently and effectively to serve the best interests of pupils and staff. In addition the school continually actively seeks and bids for additional monies in a wide range of areas.

180. Overall, the school provides very good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English including English as an additional language

Key Stage 3: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Key stage 3

Good features

181. The majority of pupils listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. Most respond well to questions and speak clearly and with confidence. They participate well in class discussions and are articulate in proffering their point of view with those in the higher sets offering extended responses.
182. Pupils read aloud with confidence and many with appropriate expression. From a low reading base on entry they make good progress through the key stage. They demonstrate a good understanding of a range of texts from literary and non literary sources. Pupils participating in the Hodder reading project have developed a good understanding of character and mood and are able to show empathy with characters. They have developed good inferential and deductive skills.
183. The majority of pupils make good progress in writing; they are able to write in a range of styles and for a variety of purposes. Most have a good understanding of persuasive writing and are able to recognise and identify the effective tools of such writing from a variety of texts. They use rhetorical questions, emotive language and statistics to effectively present their own arguments in written assignments.
184. The more able use a wide range of research skills in their planning for writing, discuss these confidently with the teacher and use them to enhance their writing.
185. Most pupils, including those with SEN, produce extended pieces of writing.
186. Pupils with SEN make good use of suitable and specialist material and make good progress.

Shortcomings

187. In a small minority of classes errors in spelling and punctuation affect written work.
188. A few written responses of more-able pupils were too brief and did not sufficiently display their abilities.

Key Stage 4

Good features

189. Based on prior attainment, pupils make good progress in gaining qualifications in GCSE English language, English literature and Entry level.
190. Most pupils listen attentively and respond appropriately. They speak clearly and confidently when answering questions and when involved in discussions. More able pupils, in response to open ended questioning, present their replies in an articulate and cogent manner.
191. More able pupils collaborate well in pairs and in small groups demonstrating good inferential, deductive and analytical skills. They share their findings and ideas, often referring to texts to support opinions.
192. All pupils read an appropriate range of non-literary, literary and media texts. Most show a good understanding of character and plot. They understand the techniques employed by a range of authors to create tension, mood, atmosphere, apprehension and anticipation.
193. Pupils studying Macbeth showed a good understanding of the social conditions prevailing in Elizabethan England and their implications relating to the development of the plot. Their good understanding of the play was reflected in their own writing.
194. A less-able group studying Romeo and Juliet was able to interpret quotations from the text and infer accurately the nature of the relationship between Juliet and her father. Again, understanding the conventions of Elizabethan England led to a good discussion on the roles of women in society.
195. In using non-literary texts, pupils, including those with SEN, identify similarities and differences and analyse and summarise content effectively.
196. Pupils write well for a variety of purposes and a range of audience. They understand a wide range of linguistic and literary techniques and how writers employ these to create imagery. They understand simile and metaphor and use them to good effect in their own writing.
197. More-able pupils use planning and drafting to good effect in improving their own writing. There are good examples of extended writing across the ability range, including those pupils with SEN.

Shortcomings

198. In a small minority of classes, errors in spelling and punctuation and paragraphing affect written work.
199. In a very few instances there was some "off task" behaviour that resulted in some pupils not achieving sufficiently.

English as an additional language

Key Stages 3 and 4

Good features

200. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make very good progress in both key stages. They quickly acquire essential English language skills.

201. Pupils' inferential reading comprehension standards are improving through the use of intensive support for two lessons a day, for a short period on arrival. This has contributed significantly to raising standards.
202. Pupils gain appropriate accredited qualifications in GCSE and Entry Level at the end of Key Stage 4.

Shortcomings

203. There are no important shortcomings.

Welsh second language

Key Stage 3: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

204. The majority of pupils, across the ability range, listen attentively and their listening comprehension skills are developing well.
205. Many Y7 pupils can recall a good range of greetings and simple sentences from KS2 and are keen to develop their oracy skills.
206. Pupils provide extended oral responses within topic areas. Many pupils are able to discuss holiday experiences without teacher support, using a good range of language structures.
207. The more-able pupils in Y9 are able to express opinions on fashion preferences confidently, and justify their arguments. In this topic area, these pupils demonstrate a dynamic attitude towards their bilingualism; they achieve very good oral and written standards.
208. Written work is usually well presented and pupils' spelling is developing well. The more-able pupils produce quite extended, well-structured written pieces within designated topic areas. Punctuation is consistently good.
209. Most pupils read with a good degree of clarity and meaning. Pronunciation and intonation are mostly good.

Shortcomings

210. A minority of less-able pupils across the key stage are inattentive during teacher introductions and do not make sufficient progress in their language skills.

Key Stage 4

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features

211. Pupils describe their homes or their work experience placements in Welsh, using extended sentence structures. Some oral presentations are of a very high standard.
212. The oral and written GCSE tasks produced by the more-able pupils are well-prepared and sometimes include a very wide range of appropriate, sophisticated language patterns.
213. Pupils who receive a generous time allocation at KS4 make sound progress in all language skills.

214. Written tasks are often very well-structured and contain extended writing. Pupils' spelling is developing well. Coursework is within GCSE regulations.
215. Many pupils enjoy a good range of Reading and Listening Comprehension tasks and respond correctly by using appropriate cues and filling in grids in the target language.
216. Weekend and holiday language clubs are having a positive, direct impact on the achievements of the pupils, particularly within the use of vocabulary in general discussions.

Shortcomings

217. Pupils who receive restricted time for Welsh second language, or who have not received a full teaching complement in KS3 as a result of former staffing issues, experience some difficulties in re-calling many oral and written language patterns.
218. A minority of Y11 pupils are not attentive listeners. Some aspects of their written work are too short and do not display sufficiently high standards of work. Furthermore, the work is occasionally poorly presented.

Mathematics

Key Stage 3 – Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcoming

Good features

219. In a few classes in Y7 and Y8, pupils have achieved outstanding standards in the work they have done this term on number sequences, indices and relationships between angles. They are skilful in exploring numerical patterns, use ICT confidently, and articulate their findings with confidence. Other classes working on these topics have generally achieved good standards.
220. The work on fractions and probability of some Y9 pupils with SEN is also of an outstanding standard. In particular, many of these pupils successfully use mental methods to work out various fractions of small numbers. They can discuss and estimate probabilities of events with understanding.
221. Elsewhere in this key stage, good standards are evident in many classes. For example, Y7 pupils are confident in expressing mappings and functions in various forms and pupils with SEN make good progress across the whole key stage.
222. The mental number skills of most pupils are developing well. They are confident and usually successful with addition and subtraction of integers, as when calculating angles in triangles, and with finding simple fractions and percentages of quantities. Some pupils are able to explain valid mental methods even when their answers are inaccurate.
223. Good standards in pupils' work are engendered in almost all classes by their teachers' good class-management skills and a wide variety of teaching and learning strategies. Pupils are thus confident in working together on shared tasks and talk readily with understanding about their work. In several classes, pupils demonstrate good skills in the use of ICT.

Shortcomings

- 224. The standards reached by some Y9 pupils are not as high as they might be because several of the topics studied have not been sufficiently challenging.
- 225. The mental number skills of some middle and lower-ability pupils are not sufficiently sharp.

Key Stage 4 – Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features

- 226. Many more-able pupils are making good progress in acquiring algebraic skills. Y10 pupils use and manipulate formulae successfully; Y11 pupils learn successfully to factorise algebraic expressions of various kinds.
- 227. Many middle-ability pupils produce good standards in a range of topics, such as when they explore the limits of the accuracy of measurements. Pupils with SEN continue to make sound progress, building well on their work at KS3.
- 228. Across both key stages, pupils almost without exception present their written work to a high standard.
- 229. In both key stages, in almost all classes, homework makes a positive contribution to good standards of achievement. In addition, in nearly all classes, thorough and consistent marking of pupils' work by their teachers provides good feedback to pupils and helps maintain good standards.

Shortcomings

- 230. In many classes of especially middle and lower-ability pupils, standards of achievement are not as high as they might be because pupils' mental number skills do not build sufficiently on what is achieved at KS3 and, within a given class, their skills of written computation are inconsistent.

Information technology

Key Stage 3: Grade 3 - Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 2 - Good features with no important shortcomings

Good features:

- 231. Most pupils communicate information effectively, combining text and images appropriate to a given audience and for a specific purpose.
- 232. In Y8 and Y9, the majority of pupils select and import information and graphics from secondary sources or the internet to enhance their work. The more-able pupils select appropriate images and explain the choices made.
- 233. Pupils take advantage of regular and constructive feedback to improve the quality of their work; most are able to explain the changes made and give reasons why.
- 234. Most pupils can design and set up basic spreadsheets to carry out calculations and the solutions produced often relate to real life situations.
- 235. By Y9, the vast majority of pupils can collect, store and amend information using a data-handling package for a specific purpose and carry out meaningful interrogations.

236. Most pupils know how to check for accuracy.

Shortcomings (KS3):

237. A significant minority of pupils in each year group are too dependent on their teacher. As a consequence, they are making slower progress than expected and their understanding and use of higher order skills are underdeveloped.

238. A small minority of pupils have difficulty recalling how to insert functions into spreadsheet tables.

Key Stage 4: Grade 2 Good features with no important shortcomings

Good features:

239. Most pupils effectively use ICT to handle, communicate, share and exchange information for a variety of audiences.

240. The majority of pupils reflect critically on their own use of ICT and can explain how and why they have made changes.

241. All pupils confidently use the internet and apply appropriate search techniques to research their coursework.

242. Pupils use technical vocabulary well to explain the applications used.

243. All pupils can collect, store and amend information using a data-handling package for a specific purpose, carry out meaningful interrogations and understand the need to question plausibility of the results.

244. Most pupils demonstrate appropriate means of data collection and are able to design and phrase questionnaires for their intended audiences.

245. The majority of pupils demonstrate the ability to design and set up spreadsheet models to carry out calculations. Most are also able to adapt, extend and refine a model appropriately (e.g. by changing variables) and able to predict likely effects of such changes.

246. The majority of pupils discuss social, economic, ethical and moral issues relating to the impact of ICT in the outside world and understand the impact of technology on their lives.

Shortcomings (KS4):

247. A significant minority of pupils do not yet regularly complete theory tasks which contributes toward the overall attainment levels obtained.

Art

Key Stage 3: Grade 1 - Good with outstanding features

Key Stage 4: Grade 1 - Good with outstanding features

There were outstanding features identified within the art department. They included:

- pupils demonstrating outstandingly good creativity and skill in both two- and three-dimensional artworks;
- pupils displaying imagination in the use of their sketchbooks when researching and developing their ideas; and
- highly effective assessment procedures that help pupils identify how they can improve their performances.

Good features

KS3

248. Pupils make rapid progress in acquiring the essential practical skills in both two and three-dimensional craft activities. Most pupils arrive with below average ability and experiences, and, by the end of KS3, the majority are achieving standards above national expectation.
249. Most pupils demonstrate that they know how to look and record with accuracy when drawing. They use line, tone, colour, shape, and texture confidently. They understand how to exploit colour and pattern with verve. They know how to use computers to research and create art. Pupils demonstrate an awareness of the visual culture of Wales and an appreciation of the art of other cultures.
250. Pupils are able to understand how to improve their work and meet their targets for improvement through regularly participating in an effective assessment process that identifies what they have to do in order to improve.

KS4

251. Pupils are successfully building on their previous practical skills. They are developing very well as independent artists. They succeed outstandingly well in new crafts such as batik. They have a growing appreciation of historical and contemporary art informed by regularly working with visiting artists and visiting galleries.
252. In examinations, their results at the higher grades show continuous improvement. They also have a good track record in national art competitions. Pupils with SEN achieve outstandingly well.
253. Pupils understand how to improve their work and meet their targets for improvement by regularly participating in an assessment process which identifies what they have to do in order to improve.
254. Pupils demonstrate outstandingly good creativity and skill in both two and three-dimensional artworks. They show imagination in the use of their sketchbooks when researching and developing their ideas.

Shortcomings

255. Pupils are not as familiar with the names of craftworkers or designers as they are with artists. Pupils are insufficiently practised in talking about art and artists. When writing about art, pupils too often rely on copied facts and do not express what they themselves see and think.

Home Economics

Child Development: Key Stage 4

Grade 2: Good features with no important shortcomings

Good Features:

256. Pupils can explain the dietary needs of young children to a good standard and make appropriate choices to meet nutritional needs. They demonstrate a good understanding of pregnancy and birth, and how children grow up in a wide range of family groups in a modern society.
257. Pupils' work shows a good underpinning knowledge and understanding of the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of children, and they confidently bring their own experiences into the discussions.
258. Child observations are well planned over a long period, and pupils record in some detail and to a good standard the range of development of the child including growth graphs and learning development charts.
259. Written work is generally of a good standard with extended writing used to explain child development in terms of a wide range of needs and contexts. Pupils also generally demonstrate good numeracy and ICT skills in the presentation of the Child Study and coursework tasks, using a range of ICT applications to present work to a good standard.

Shortcomings:

260. A minority of pupils are too easily distracted and therefore their work lacks sufficient pace. This impacts significantly on the standard of work they are able to achieve. Some pupils do not respond to written work with sufficient detail in the content of their answer.

Home Economics: Key Stage 4

Catering

Grade 2: Good features with no important shortcomings

261. Pupils make suitable food choices for the customer and can explain choice in terms of nutritional content, sensory requirements and cost. They use small equipment well to clean, prepare and slice ingredients to a good standard.
262. When cooking their food products, pupils have good temperature control of hobs and ovens and can use a temperature probe correctly to ensure meat is thoroughly cooked. They demonstrate a sound ability to organise their method of work when preparing for practical food preparation and cooking, and they generally clear their work areas to a good standard on completion.
263. Through work experience, pupils demonstrate a good understanding of a catering organisation. All pupils provide detailed feedback of information in a

variety of appropriate formats that includes an analysis of questionnaires to staff.

264. For those pupils who wear appropriate clothing, the standard of personal health and safety for food preparation is very good. Of those pupils entered for the examination, many achieve above expected grade outcomes.

265. The standard of written work is good with pupils regularly using extended writing to explain their choices and evaluate outcomes, demonstrating a wider knowledge of health issues related to food choices. Pupil coursework demonstrates good numerical understanding and a broad range of ICT applications to present a range of information in appropriate formats.

Shortcomings:

266. A minority of pupils do not demonstrate accuracy sufficiently well when weighing ingredients or when following written instructions to prepare a food dish.

School's response to the inspection

The school was invited to provide a response to the inspection report but in this case, declined to do so.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Willows High School
School type	Voluntary Aided
Age-range of pupils	11 - 17
Address of school	Willows Avenue Tremorfa Cardiff
Postcode	CF24 2YE
Telephone number	02920 414243

Headteacher	Mr Maldwyn Davies
Date of appointment	September 1994
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Ms Chriss O'Connell
Reporting inspector	Mr Gareth Buckland
Dates of inspection	9 – 13 October 2006

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y 10	Y 11	Y 12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	155	181	181	169	177	n/a	n/a	863

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	46	5	49.78

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	17:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	7:1
Average teaching group size	24.5
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	71

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole School
Term 1	88.1	84.1	82.9	80.7	75.4			82.0
Term 2	85.3	82.6	83.1	75.3	73.7			79.9
Term 3	83.1	79.0	78.7	79.4	93.2			82.7

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	41
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	220

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of Key Stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2005												
Total number of pupils in Y9: 160												
Percentage of pupils at each level												
			D	A	F	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	3	1	0	7	21	27	30	7	4
		National	0	1	1	0	2	8	21	34	24	9
	Test	School	0	16	4	0	0	11	21	31	11	6
		National	0	4	1	n/a	n/a	8	20	33	23	10
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	8	1	0	3	8	29	21	24	6
		National	0	1	1	0	1	7	19	26	32	14
	Test	School	0	11	7	0	0	7	22	24	22	7
		National	0	5	1	n/a	n/a	5	17	20	36	15
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	1	4	0	3	21	31	24	13	3
		National	0	1	1	0	0	6	20	33	27	12
	Test	School	0	13	2	0	0	12	40	13	12	3
		National	0	4	0	n/a	n/a	5	17	33	28	13

- D Pupils excepted under statutory arrangements from part of the National Curriculum
A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence
F Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school	29	In the school	28
In Wales	56	In Wales	57

Public Examination Results:

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ			
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2005		137	
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil		26	
The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2005:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	79	86	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	22	50	52
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	74	83	85
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	9	35	38
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	96	97	97
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	62	73	76
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	90	92	9
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	10	8	7

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Inspectors spent a total of 42 days in the school and were joined by the school's Deputy Headteacher as nominee. They held a meeting before the inspection.

During the inspection, inspectors visited:

- 80 lessons in the six subjects inspected and 104 lessons in other subjects;
- registrations and assemblies;
- some extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team met with:

- staff, parents and governors before the inspection.
- senior managers, middle managers, teachers, support assistants and administrative staff;
- groups of pupils representing each year group; and
- representatives of the school council.

The team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- 116 replies to the parents' questionnaire;

- comprehensive documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection;
- samples of pupils' reports; and
- a range of pupils' work.

After the inspection, inspectors held meetings with departments, senior managers and governors.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Gareth Buckland (Rgl)	Key questions 1 and 5
Gwynoro Jones (lay)	Key question 6 support
Glyn Griffiths	Key question 4
David Hughes	Key question 3
Peter Harris	Key question 2 and 6
Jane Down	Key question 7 Home economics
Michael Heylings	Mathematics
Zac Davies	Welsh Second Language
Paul Martin	IT
Eric Forster	Art
Paul Donovan	English and SEN
Helen Jones	Nominee

Acknowledgement

The inspection team would like to thank the governors, staff and pupils of the school for their courtesy and co-operation during the inspection.

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