

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Abersychan School
Incline Road
Abersychan
Pontypool
Torfaen
NP4 7DF**

School Number: 6784070

Date of Inspection: 30/11/09

by

**Julia Helen Cantle Longville
16347**

Date of Publication: 04/02/10

Under Estyn contract number: 1201409

© Queen's Printer and Controller of HMSO 2010: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The copyright in the material must be acknowledged as aforementioned and the title of the report specified.

Copies of this report are available from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide copies of the report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the cost of reproduction may be made to others requesting a copy of the report.

Introduction

Abersychan 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 Abersychan School took place between 30/11/09 and 3/12/09. An independent team of inspectors, led by Julia Helen Cantle Longville 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.

Estyn's reports follow its guidance for the writing and editing of reports, which is available on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk). The table below explains the terms that Estyn uses to indicate quantities. The table is for guidance only.

Nearly all	with very few exceptions
Most	90% or more
Many	70% or more
A majority	over 60%
Half/around half	close to 50%
A minority	below 40%
Few	below 20%
Very few	less than 10%

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 nursery schools, 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 students 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

Contents	Page
Context	1
Summary	3
Recommendations	9
Standards	10
Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?	10
The quality of education and training	13
Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	13
Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	15
Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	18
Leadership and management	21
Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?	21
Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	23
Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	25
Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning	27
Science	27
Welsh second language	29
Modern foreign languages	30
Geography	32
Physical education	33
Religious education (including religious studies)	35
School's response to the inspection	38
Appendices	39
1 Basic information about the school	39
2 School data and indicators	39
3 National Curriculum assessments results	40
4 Evidence base of the inspection	45
5 Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team	46

Context

The nature of the provider

1. Abersychan School is a mixed 11-16 school maintained by Torfaen Local Education Authority (LEA). It has 935 pupils on roll. At the last inspection, in March 2003, there were 857 pupils in the school.
2. The school serves the north of Torfaen from Blaenavon to Pontypool. Significant parts of this are Communities First areas. Pupils come from the full range of economic and social backgrounds, a high proportion of which are socially and financially disadvantaged. Pupils come mainly from seven partner primary schools. Twenty-three percent of pupils are entitled to Free School Meals (FSM).
3. The school's intake covers the whole ability range although a high proportion is of lower ability. Sixty pupils have statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and a further 189 have been identified as needing some support. These figures are much higher than those reported in the last inspection. Forty-nine pupils are taught in the LEA Special Needs Resource Base (SNRB) located in the school. The SNRB is for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and associated behaviour difficulties.
4. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language. There are a very small number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds in the school.
5. The structure of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has changed slightly since the last inspection. It consists of the headteacher, a senior assistant headteacher, three assistant headteachers and the business manager.

The school's priorities and targets

6. The vision for the school is to provide an education of the highest quality for all pupils, which will prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. Staff promote an ethos of high expectations, positive values and continuous improvement. The aims of the school include to:
 - pursue academic excellence, personal well-being, high self-esteem and happiness for all;
 - deliver high quality teaching and learning that develops creative, enquiring and independent thinking;
 - offer a diverse range of learning experiences that caters for the needs and talents of all pupils; and
 - develop the knowledge, skills and understanding required to become healthy citizens in a modern, technological society.

7. The school's priorities are to continue to:

- raise the achievement of learners;
- improve the educational experiences of all learners;
- create an environment in which pupils feel happy and safe;
- provide a curriculum that meets the needs of all learners;
- develop highly effective leadership and management to deliver a first class education for all learners;
- deploy resources efficiently; and
- develop the school as a community-focused school.

8. The school's targets are:

2010	2011	2012
------	------	------

Key stage (KS) 3

% to achieve Level (L) 5+ in the Core Subject Indicator (CSI)	50%	52%	N/A
% to achieve L5+ in English	57%	61%	N/A
% to achieve L5+ in mathematics	61%	65%	N/A
% to achieve L5+ in science	68%	71%	N/A
Boy/girl differential in core subjects	-10%	-10%	N/A

KS4

% entered for one or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) / Entry Level Qualification (ELQ)	98%	99%	99%
% entered for at least one GCSE	92%	92%	92%
% entered for 5+ GCSE qualifications	91%	91%	91%
% to achieve 1 or more GCSE / ELQ	97%	97%	98%
% to achieve 1 or more GCSE grade A* - G	91%	98%	92%
% to achieve 1 or more GCSE A* - C	76%	76%	76%
% to achieve 5 or more GCSE A* - G	90%	90%	90%
% to achieve 5 or more GCSE A* - C	44%	44%	45%
% to achieve A* - C grades in the CSI	30%	34%	35%
% boys to achieve A* - C in the CSI	30%	27%	29%
% girls to achieve A* - C in the CSI	30%	41%	41%
Average wider points score	304	306	310

Attendance

% Attendance	90.50%	90.50%	90.50%
% U/A	1%	1%	1%

Summary

9. Abersychan is a good school with outstanding features in three out of seven key questions. All pupils are valued and nurtured. High levels of mutual respect permeate the whole school. The clear vision for the school, which focuses on high quality provision, enables pupils to achieve their potential. The strong leadership of the headteacher ensures that the school is making very good progress.

Table of grades awarded

Key Question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	2
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?	2
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

10. Overall, the standards achieved by pupils have good features with no important shortcomings. The following table shows the grades awarded at Key Stage (KS) 3, and KS4 in the six subjects inspected.

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Subject	KS3	KS4
Science	2	2
Welsh second language	2	2
Modern Foreign Languages	2	2
Geography	3	2
Physical education	2	2
Religious Education	2	2

11. The following table shows the standards achieved by pupils at each stage in the 65 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	3 %	81%	16%	0%	0%
KS4	4%	89%	7%	0%	0%
KS3 and KS4	3%	85%	12%	0%	0%

12. There are many good features in the standards which pupils achieve. A high proportion of lower ability pupils enters the school year on year. In recent years, there has been an overall upward trend in performance and significant value added to the achievement and attainment of pupils across the ability range.
13. At KS3, results in the National Curriculum (NC) teacher assessments have improved significantly since the last inspection. In 2009, 51% of pupils reached at least level five in all three core subjects combined, compared to 42% six years ago. Of the three core subjects, results in science have been better than in mathematics and English.
14. At KS4, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) A*-C grades has remained well below local and national averages. However, the percentage of pupils who gained five or more grades A*-G has improved consistently year on year and went up from 80% in 2006 to 96% in 2009. This represents significant improvement and when compared to similar schools, places the school in the top quartile.
15. In the last two years the percentage of pupils who achieved the Level 2 Threshold, including a GCSE grade C or above in English and mathematics, was well below local and national averages. The percentage who achieved the Level 1 Threshold was above both local and national averages.
16. In recent years, almost all pupils, including those in the SNRB, have left school with qualifications. Recent value-added analyses of attainment shows that most pupils achieve results that are either in line with or above expected levels This is a good feature of the overall attainment of pupils at KS4.
17. Standards are at least good with no important shortcomings in almost all of the key skills. This demonstrates significant improvement since the last inspection. Bilingual skills are good. Most pupils understand and use Welsh confidently in lessons and around the school.
18. In comparison with attainment on entry, pupils make good progress overall. The school takes on the challenge of pupils with behavioural difficulties and makes sure that almost all succeed and achieve their potential. Pupils of differing abilities achieve well, though the most able do not always realise their potential in all subjects. Pupils of average and lower ability and pupils with SEN achieve particularly well.
19. At KS3 there is too much variation in the attainment of pupils in foundation subjects. Girls often out-perform boys.

20. The development of pupils' personal and social skills is very good. Pupils thrive on the high expectations the school has of them, both in terms of work and in terms of their behaviour and attitudes.
21. Great emphasis is placed on pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Pupils readily take on responsibility both in school and in the community. Pupils' spiritual development is less well developed.
22. Overall attendance is good. At 91% it is better than in similar schools.

The quality of education and training

23. Overall teaching and assessment are good at both KS3 and at KS4. A particularly strong feature that promotes this is the high quality of relationships between teachers and pupils. Teachers generally treat all pupils fairly and provide excellent support and encouragement for them both within and in addition to lessons. In the best lessons they make very constructive use of the impressive Information Communication Technology (ICT) facilities to involve pupils purposefully in their learning.
24. Nearly all lessons are planned well and progress at a good pace. Teachers often use a good variety of tasks and activities that enable pupils to work productively with others. These are usually appropriate for most pupils but are not always challenging enough to meet the needs of all, particularly those who are more able. Homework is often used well to consolidate and extend classwork.
25. Whole-school systems of assessment are good and used constructively to monitor progress. Most teachers mark pupils' work regularly and usually provide good feedback to them to assist their learning. In the best instances their comments focus well on subject-specific aspects for improvement. Occasionally, however, marking lacks rigour and does not indicate clearly enough where improvements could be made.
26. Many subjects involve pupils purposefully in assessing their own achievements and that of their peers. In a few instances this is done exceptionally well and reflects the strong respect that pupils have for their peers. Nearly all pupils have a clear awareness of their targets in subjects.
27. Overall, the curriculum meets statutory requirements. It is structured well and provides balance, breadth, continuity and progression for pupils across the ability range. The 14-16 programmes available exceed the 2010 Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) requirements. This is an outstanding feature.
28. An extensive extra-curricular programme includes subject-specific clubs and revision classes. The increase in and uptake of extra-curricular activity since 2006 is outstanding.

29. Transition arrangements with partner primary schools and links with the community are outstanding. The school is a vibrant part of the community.
30. The school places great importance on the opportunities available to pupils post-16. It works hard to build partnerships with other providers. The cost and availability of transport affect some pupils adversely and make their access to courses difficult.
31. The promotion of sustainable development is an outstanding feature of the school. It has achieved the Green Flag award for the second time.
32. The provision of work related education is good. All pupils regularly take part in entrepreneurial activities and there is a high success rate in local and national competitions.
33. A caring and supportive ethos permeates the whole school. Staff are committed to providing the highest standard of care for all the pupils. Sensitive and additional support by outside agencies reinforces this care. Pupils feel valued and supported in their learning. The school's monitoring of pupils' academic progress is outstanding.
34. The school's commitment to the overall health and well-being of pupils is outstanding. The Life Skills programme reinforces pupils' understanding of healthy living including diet and physical activity.
35. Peer mentors make an outstanding contribution to the school. They provide valued, accessible support for pupils in the school and community.
36. Child protection is a particular strength of the school. Policy and procedures are well known to all members of staff. Appropriate training is provided biannually by the local authority and annually by the school.
37. The school is innovative in its support for pupils with a wide range of SEN. The quality of provision for pupils with additional learning needs in the mainstream and in the SNRB is outstanding. Most pupils with SEN make good academic, social and personal progress.
38. Management of all aspects of special educational needs in the school is outstanding. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) provides very clear vision and direction. The management of the SNRB is very effective and the head of the SNRB provides very good leadership. Teachers and Learning Support Assistants (LSA) provide very effective support that enhances significantly pupils' learning.
39. The whole-school response to the planning and implementation of concerns about levels of reading attainment is outstanding. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark three times.
40. The school embraces fully the principles of equal opportunities. The principle of social inclusion is fundamental to the school's philosophy. This commitment to

inclusive education for all is underlined by outstanding support and the integration of all pupils into all aspects of school life.

Leadership and management

41. Under the headteacher's energetic and insightful leadership, the school is making very good progress. He has successfully developed a culture in which staff understand the importance of reflecting on the strengths and shortcomings of the school in order to plan for improvement.
42. The SLT has a wide range of experience and expertise and works very well together. Its members offer strong support to the headteacher and provide generally effective leadership in their areas of responsibility. The work of the middle leadership team, developing whole-school policies and sharing good practice, makes a good contribution to developing the leadership and management skills of its members.
43. Senior Leadership Team links with subject departments and other teams generally helps them to set targets, evaluate performance and plan for future developments. However, SLT involvement is not always rigorous enough to ensure developments have maximum effect on learning and standards.
44. Leaders and managers take very good account of the priorities of the Welsh Assembly Government. The school has developed very good links with a range of partners in the community.
45. The governing body contributes very significantly to the strategic leadership and management of the school. Governors ensure they are well informed about issues that affect the work of the school and, as critical friends, they monitor and challenge the school's performance.
46. Self-evaluation is very well embedded into the work of the school. Leaders and managers at all levels value the contribution that self-evaluation makes to continuous improvement with their areas of work. Purposeful use is made of information generated from the self-evaluation process to establish clear priorities for improvement.
47. Arrangements for self-evaluation are very comprehensive and extremely well planned. Most senior and middle managers have good knowledge of the strengths and shortcomings in the areas for which they are responsible. The outcomes of self-evaluation are used very effectively to inform development planning at all levels.
48. A member of the SLT monitors the quality of teaching in subject departments. Many do so rigorously through lesson observations, evaluation of documentation and scrutiny of pupils' work. Although this system is very well planned it does not involve the subject leader observing other teachers in their own or another department.

49. Leaders and managers attach considerable importance to seeking the views of staff, pupils and other interested parties. The views of all staff are very carefully considered to initiate change. Whenever possible, the school seeks the views of parents and local community. The exceptionally large number of questionnaires received as part of this inspection provides evidence of extremely positive parental support for the school.
50. Development planning in the school is good overall. There is an established three-year cycle of strategic planning, supported by annual self-evaluation and development planning. There is clear evidence that the outcome of self-evaluation is used very successfully to plan financially viable improvements across the school.
51. The school's self-evaluation and improvement planning have led to measurable improvements in standards at both KS3 and KS4. Very good progress has been made in addressing the key issues from the last inspection. However, the staff do not measure robustly enough the impact of whole-school initiatives.
52. Teachers are deployed appropriately. Overall, the number of teaching staff is sufficient for the school to run efficiently. In nearly all departments there is a good blend of experienced teachers and those relatively new to the profession.
53. The good number of support staff ensures that all day-to-day routines run smoothly.
54. Overall, the range of teaching and learning resources, including those for pupils with SEN, is very good and supports the delivery of the curriculum well. The school's extensive investment in the provision of ICT equipment is outstanding. This includes networked facilities in all classrooms and a new state-of-the-art ICT facility called the Learning Plaza.
55. Accommodation, overall, is sufficient for the number of pupils currently on roll. The number of classrooms and specialist rooms meets curricular and pastoral needs. Most accommodation is of very good quality. However, there are several shortcomings in the accommodation in the old Grammar block.
56. Financial management is systematic, methodical, and rigorous and helps ensure cost effectiveness. The school monitors and reviews spending decisions effectively and maintains good links between budgets, the allocation of resources and the priorities identified in the School Development Plan (SDP). The extent to which the school has turned its budget deficit into a healthy surplus within two financial years is outstanding.
57. Statutory requirements for workforce remodeling are met fully. All teachers are allocated appropriate planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time and resources, and use this time very well.
58. The inclusive staff development programme, incorporating structured career development and succession planning, is outstanding.

59. Given the progress that pupils make and the high quality and varied learning experiences the school provides very good value for money.

Recommendations

In order to continue to improve, the school should implement the following recommendations.

- R1 Build on the very good progress already made by continuing to improve standards in subjects and attainment in examinations. *
- R2 Ensure more consistency in the rigour with which leaders and managers monitor and evaluate the work of departments and other teams.
- R3 Continue to develop strategies to ensure that teaching provides sufficient challenge for all pupils and especially the more able. *
- R4 Continue to work with the relevant authorities and partners to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged by existing arrangements when they transfer to post-16 education.

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.

* These recommendations are addressed in the current SDP.

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

60. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
61. There are many good features in the standards which pupils achieve. A high proportion of lower ability pupils enters the school year on year. In recent years, there has been an overall upward trend in performance and significant value added to the achievement and attainment of pupils across the ability range.
62. Results in the NC teacher assessments at the end of KS3 have improved significantly since the last inspection. In 2009, 51% of pupils reached at least level five in all three core subjects combined, compared to 42% six years ago. Of the three core subjects, results in science have been better than in mathematics and English. Results in science have been above average compared to those of similar schools and in line with or just above the national average for the last two years.
63. In the last three years attainment has been above the national average in only five out of twelve key indicators of performance. Results in all other indicators remain below the average nationally and those of similar schools. Nevertheless, there is an improving trend, and when compared with ability on entry most pupils make significant progress. In comparison with schools where a similar proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals, results at KS3 are good overall.
64. At KS4, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE A*-C grades has remained well below local and national averages. However, the percentage of pupils who gained five or more grades A*-G has improved consistently year-on-year and went up from 80% in 2006 to 96% in 2009. This represents significant improvement and when compared to similar schools, places the school in the top quartile.
65. In the last two years the percentage of pupils who achieved the Level 2 Threshold, including a GCSE grade C or above in English and mathematics, was well below local and national averages. The percentage who achieved the Level 1 Threshold was above both local and national averages.
66. In recent years, almost all pupils, including those in the SNRB, have left school with qualifications. Recent value-added analyses of attainment shows that most pupils achieve results that are either in line with or above expected levels. This is a good feature of the overall attainment of pupils at KS4.
67. Standards in the six subjects inspected have good features and no important shortcomings in almost all cases. The exception occurs in geography at KS3,

where good features outweigh shortcomings. The grades awarded at each key stage are set out in the table below.

Subject	KS3	KS4
Science	2	2
Welsh second language	2	2
Modern Foreign Languages	2	2
Geography	3	2
Physical education	2	2
Religious Education	2	2

68. The following table shows the standards achieved by pupils at each stage in the 65 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	3%	81%	16%	0%	0%
KS4	4%	89%	7%	0%	0%
KS3 and KS4	3%	85%	12%	0%	0%

69. At KS3, the percentage of lessons where standards were grade one is five percentage points lower than the corresponding KS3 figure for all secondary schools inspected in Wales in 2007-2008 as reported by the Chief Inspector in his most recent annual report. Standards in 68% of lessons were awarded grades one or two compared to 81% in this school. The Chief Inspector also reports standards as grades three or four in 32% of lessons. The school's performance compares very favourably to this with only 16% grade three and no grade four.
70. The standards achieved at KS4 are significantly higher than the corresponding figures in the Chief Inspector's Annual Report. In this inspection, standards in 93% of lessons were judged to be grades one or two compared to 67% in the Chief Inspector's report. The percentage of lessons where grade two was awarded is 29 percentage points higher. However, the percentage of lessons where grade one was awarded is seven points lower.
71. The figures in this inspection show that significant improvement have been made since the last inspection. There has been a significant increase in the proportion of lessons where the two top grades were awarded for standards, from 47% in 2003 to 88% in this inspection. Even so, there has been a slight fall in the percentage of outstanding lessons.
72. Standards are similar in both key stages. Overall, across both key stages, grades are better than in all inspections in Wales 2007-2008, when 70% of lessons were graded 1 or 2. However fewer grade 1 lessons were observed than there were nationally.
73. At both key stages, the standards that pupils achieve in the key skills of communication and ICT are good with no important shortcomings. The standards that pupils achieve in numeracy are better at KS4 than they are at

KS3 where good features outweigh shortcomings. Overall, this demonstrates significant improvement in the standard of pupils' key skills since the last inspection.

74. Most pupils make particularly good progress in the development of their literacy skills. They listen attentively and give extended answers when prompted. Their reading skills improve considerably and are good overall. Pupils across the ability range present their work well. Overall, pupils' written work is good, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to extend their writing.
75. Most pupils become increasingly confident in their use of number as they move through the school. Most use number appropriately in a range of subjects including geography and science.
76. Standards in ICT across the curriculum are good with outstanding features. Nearly all pupils are very confident ICT users. They use these skills on a regular basis to enhance their learning in all subjects. For example in Life Skills, pupils use individual laptops in the Learning Plaza to research independently the topic being covered.
77. There is a strong sense of teamwork within the school and pupils collaborate very effectively. They respond particularly well to the many opportunities for practical work, in creative and problem-solving activities.
78. Almost all pupils have good bilingual skills. They show good understanding of the use of incidental Welsh in lessons and around the school. They understand the phrases used in displays and bilingual signs. They often use the Welsh language confidently in different contexts.
79. In comparison with attainment on entry, pupils make good progress overall. The school takes on the challenge of pupils with behavioural difficulties and makes sure that almost all succeed and achieve their potential. Pupils of differing abilities achieve well, though the most able do not always realise their potential in all subjects. Pupils of average and lower ability and pupils with SEN achieve particularly well.
80. At KS3 there is too much variation in the attainment of pupils in foundation subjects and girls often out-perform boys.
81. Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have very good personal and social skills. Their behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary. Pupils thrive on the high expectations the school has of them, both in terms of their work and their behaviour and attitudes.
82. Relationships between pupils, their teachers and other staff are strong. The impact this has on pupils' ability to learn and make progress is an outstanding feature of the school.

83. Overall attendance is good. At 91% it is better than in similar schools. Pupils understand the importance of attending school regularly and the impact this can have on the standards they achieve. Nearly all pupils arrive punctually to lessons and at the start of the school day.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

84. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
85. The following table shows the overall grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment from observations of 98 lessons across the school.

	Grade1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	20%	66%	13%	2%	0%
KS4	5%	78%	16%	0%	0%
Whole school	14%	70%	14%	1%	0%

86. Overall the distribution of grades for the whole school compares very favourably with those of secondary schools inspected in Wales in 2007-2008, as reported in the Annual Report of the Chief Inspector. The proportion of lessons graded one or two (84%) is much higher than the comparative national figure of 75%. There is, however, a slightly smaller proportion of lessons graded one (14%) than nationally (17%).
87. The figures indicate that teaching and assessment are better at KS3 than at KS4. This is demonstrated by the much greater proportion of lessons where there are outstanding features at KS3 than at KS4. The very small proportion of lessons where there are some significant shortcomings is similar at both key stages.
88. There is a high degree of consistency in the quality of teaching and assessment across the school. In all the six subjects inspected, for example, teaching and assessment have good features and no important shortcomings. Overall the grades for all lessons seen support this strongly with relatively few that either had outstanding features or significant shortcomings.
89. Teaching is highly successful in encouraging pupils to have positive attitudes to learning. Many teachers give up their time freely to support and enrich pupils' learning outside formal lessons. They apply the whole-school discipline policy consistently and this impacts significantly on the quality of learning experiences in lessons. As a consequence, there is a high degree of mutual respect between most pupils and their teachers that is evident in all aspects of school life.

90. Many teachers make good use of ICT in their teaching and pupils respond well to this. Where the facilities are used to best effect they often lead to exceptionally high quality teaching that involves pupils very purposefully in their learning.
91. Lessons are nearly always planned well with good attention paid to promoting pupils' key and wider skills. Most teachers make objectives clear to pupils and often link them constructively to previous lessons. They ensure that appropriate amounts of time are given to allow pupils to complete tasks and to maintain pace in their work. Many make purposeful use of a good variety of homework tasks to consolidate and extend learning.
92. Many teachers conclude lessons purposefully and in the best instances use them well to gauge the extent to which learning objectives have been met by pupils. On occasions, however, they do not use this time to evaluate pupils' depth of knowledge and understanding rigorously enough. This is often because they focus too much on getting responses from pupils that merely identify what has been covered relating to subject content and key skills.
93. Most teachers use their subject knowledge well to explain work to pupils clearly and to stimulate their interests. They make purposeful use of questions and many take particular care to ensure that they secure responses from boys and girls as fairly as they can. In the best lessons they ask pupils to give more extended responses to justify their answers. On a few occasions, however, they do not use questions effectively enough to probe pupils' understanding and reasoning.
94. In many lessons teachers plan a good variety of tasks and activities that enable pupils to work productively with others. These are appropriate for most pupils but are not always matched well enough to the needs of all. This is usually because all pupils are given the same task without sufficient attention paid as to whether more able pupils are challenged enough.
95. Overall, teaching provides good opportunities to enrich pupils' bilingual skills. This is evident in many lessons and in form periods where teachers encourage pupils to make some incidental use of the Welsh language. There are also many bilingual posters in classrooms and in other areas of the school.
96. Whole-school systems of assessment are robust and provide a good indication of pupils' achievements and progress. Pupils are assessed in detail each term and subjects indicate progress in relation to expected targets. At KS3 these relate closely with NC levels and at KS4 to anticipated GCSE grades. Pupils' progress is overseen and monitored well by progress managers with appropriate action taken to address any who are underachieving. Overall the process is efficient and effective.
97. Most teachers mark pupils work regularly and provide helpful written and oral feedback that assists their learning. In the best instances they identify strengths and aspects for improvement that link explicitly to the subject. Occasionally, however, marking is less rigorous and comments tend to focus

more on general aspects such as presentation and not enough on subject- specific areas for improvement.

98. Many subjects involve pupils purposefully in assessing their own achievements and also those of their peers. In a few cases this is done exceptionally well. Overall the procedures make an important contribution to increasing pupils' awareness of assessment. As a consequence most know their targets in subjects well and what they need to do to make improvements.
99. Through its detailed transition plan the school has worked well with colleagues in partner primary schools in order to assist the accuracy of NC levels at the end of KS2. This is particularly evident in core subjects and also in Welsh. Throughout KS3, moderation of levels takes place in all subjects. In spite of this, however, there remain inconsistencies in the accuracy of levels in a few foundation subjects.
100. The school meets statutory requirements in relation to assessing and reporting on NC subjects at KS3 and the regulations of examining boards for subjects at KS4.
101. Reporting arrangements are good. Parents and carers are kept well informed about their child's achievements through two progress reports and a full report in each year. All provide a clear indication of a child's progress in relation to academic and personal achievement and also identify where improvements could be made.
102. Overall there is good consistency in the quality of comments from subject teachers in annual reports. Virtually all provide information relating to achievements and progress in the subject that is detailed, clear and helpful. In spite of this, however, targets for improvement identified in a minority of them are too general and not subject-specific enough.

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
--

103. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
104. The curriculum is accessible to all pupils and meets their needs. At both KS3 and KS4 it is well constructed and gives balance, breadth, continuity and progression. The school demonstrates best practice in the development of its 14-16 programmes and already exceeds the 2010 statutory requirements. This is an outstanding feature.
105. The KS4 curriculum is constructed so that pupils have the opportunity to gain up to fourteen GCSEs or equivalent qualifications. The option groupings provide a good range of choice of academic and vocational subjects, with accreditation. There are effective partnerships with a range of providers, which include other schools, further and higher education colleges and training

agencies. Successful timetabling and travel arrangements allow course delivery on a number of sites. There is strong joint planning with the LEA.

106. Classes for pupils with SEN at KS3 follow a similar curriculum to those in the mainstream. Carefully identified pupils receive additional literacy and numeracy lessons with reduced time spent undertaking a modern foreign language. Good quality LSA support is provided.
107. The SNRB pupils follow a relevant and wide curriculum leading, in the main, to entry level qualifications at KS4. Individual needs are met by selected pupils joining mainstream classes at both key stages. This currently occurs in English, mathematics, design and technology, history, ICT and art.
108. The planning for the development of pupils' key skills is good. Policies and departmental schemes of work are used effectively to improve standards. Co-ordinators and a senior leader oversee this work quite well. Pupils' competence in communication and application of number is assessed on entry and suitable strategies are in place to help pupils progress. ICT skills are very well developed. Pupils are used to group and pair work and most pupils have learnt how to improve their own learning. Thinking skills are fostered very well.
109. There is an extensive and successful extra-curricular programme. This includes departmental clubs and societies. Pupils are appreciative of staff support and interest. Revision classes operate at relevant times of the year, including holiday periods. The 5X60 club and the physical education department activities are integrated to give excellent coverage for a very large number of pupils. The school is in the top ten schools in Wales for participation in this scheme. Performing arts groups provide excellent opportunities for very large numbers of pupils. There is a very successful Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. The increase in, and uptake of, extra-curricular activity since 2006 is significant. It is an outstanding feature of the school and contributes strongly to the standards pupils achieve.
110. The life skills and citizenship programmes are well developed. Pupils know right from wrong and are supportive of each other. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility through, for example, the school council, by running an effective buddy system for new pupils and through participation in, and management of, various clubs.
111. Pupils' spiritual development is less secure. The statutory requirement to deliver a daily act of collective worship is met, but there is an inconsistent approach to its delivery across a very few form tutor groups. The daily thought for the day is very well prepared for a term in advance by the subject leader for religious education.
112. The school's relationships with parents are very strong. The school actively seeks parents' views through questionnaires and surveys. Community links are outstanding. The school both enriches its communities and benefits from them. Pupils are actively engaged in advising community groups and in working voluntarily for them. This work is outstanding and includes the establishment of

a youth club in Blaenavon, the erection of a shelter at a local primary school, the opening of a sports pitch and advice on the use of Glansychan Park.

113. The school benefits from the services of an LEA community officer and the joint working is a very strong feature. A good range of visiting speakers from the community regularly contributes to pupils' learning.
114. Transition arrangements with primary schools are very well developed and are an outstanding feature. There is a transition plan, which is updated annually. Bridging units have been developed and there are curricular group activities in mathematics, English and science, Welsh second language, art, design and technology, drama, modern foreign languages and physical education. Pupils as young as Year (Y4) are involved in a modern foreign language activity. As part of the Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) project, a member of staff teaches primary pupils for half a day each week. Primary pupils take part in the joint drama events and regularly visit the school for taster days. A writing toolkit has been developed for use across the schools and joint staff inset takes place. In addition, there are developing links with Crownbridge Special School.
115. The school places great importance on the post-16 opportunities available to pupils. It has appointed a key stage 4/post-16 transition manager to ensure pupils gain the best advice about courses, higher education and the world of work. It works hard to build partnerships with other providers. It attempts to track its pupils and offers advice if they return requesting help. The cost and availability of transport affect some pupils adversely and make their access to courses difficult.
116. Provision for developing pupils bilingual skills is good. Some pupils taking a full GCSE in Welsh support a bilingual youth club. All pupils at KS4 study the Welsh second language short course, however few choose the full option course. The "Cwricwlwm Cymreig" is embedded through schemes of work, the school and Pontypool eisteddfodau and Urdd activities.
117. Sustainable development is an outstanding feature of the school. There is an active eco-club which has successfully promoted various recycling schemes, litter picking, an allotment garden and water-storage reservoir. The school has achieved the Green Flag award for the second time.
118. Pupils are aware of their own society and the wider world and raise money for their Uganda link school, as well as for other charities of their choice. A video conferencing link with China is at an early stage of development.
119. All pupils regularly take part in entrepreneurial activities through discrete days set aside from the normal timetable. There is a high success rate in local and national competitions. The most recent was the winning of the Welsh title in the "Make your Mark" business challenge. Entrepreneurial activity is an outstanding feature of the school.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
--

120. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
121. The quality of care, guidance and support is a significant strength and has many outstanding features.
122. A caring and supportive ethos permeates the whole school. Progress Managers and form tutors work alongside pupils. They develop outstanding relationships based clearly upon a high level of mutual respect. Staff are committed to providing the highest standard of care for all the pupils. Sensitive and additional support by outside agencies reinforces this care.
123. There is an outstanding partnership between the school and the parents. Parents are consulted regularly on issues that concern their child's learning such as the Discipline for Learning policy.
124. Pupils feel valued and supported. They are involved effectively in making decisions on issues that concern them. The School Council has a very positive profile. It is responsible for the allocation of charity money and offers suggestions for improvements to the school environment and school uniform. These suggestions are taken very seriously by the staff and governors.
125. Pupils receive good quality advice and impartial guidance from both school staff and representatives from the Local Area Network providers to assist them in making informed choices from the school's 14-16 options menu. The development of the role of the Learning Coach is an outstanding development. It provides closely-focused support for pupils in Y9 and above. It is recognised within the LEA and beyond as a model of best practice.
126. There are outstanding pastoral and curricular links with partner primary schools that ensure pupils transfer successfully and settle quickly. The Transition Project begins in Y4. Cross-phase work ensures continuity and progression,
127. The overall contribution made to the support and guidance of pupils by the on-site Youth Worker is outstanding. He provides very effective support to individuals and to groups of pupils with behavioural or emotional problems. He delivers the Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) course and aspects of the Life Skills programme. He also provides training for peer mentors and training on counselling skills for staff including Progress Managers.
128. Pupils receive good support in their personal and social development through carefully-planned and well-managed Life Skills and Citizenship programmes. The programmes are delivered effectively by form tutors.
129. The school has rigorous systems for the monitoring of attendance, behaviour, effort and attainment. Good attendance is a major priority for the school and is

promoted vigorously. This has impacted significantly upon attendance rates across the school. The great majority of pupils is fully aware of school policies on attendance, punctuality and behaviour.

130. The Pupil Tracking System allows for performance and progress to be monitored effectively and for subject teachers and Progress Managers to identify underachievement and implement intervention and improvement strategies.
131. The school has a strong partnership with Careers Wales. On-site advisers including a specialist adviser for pupils in the SRNB and a dedicated careers' library enable pupils to prepare well for the world of work.
132. The school's commitment to the well-being of pupils is outstanding. A Food and Fitness policy encourages pupils to make informed choices to improve their well-being by adopting a healthy diet and participating in the range of physical activities available during the school day and beyond it. The Life Skills programme reinforces pupils' understanding of health fitness and well-being.
133. The very active School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) has had a positive impact by raising awareness of healthy diet and fitness. They have been instrumental in improving the school menu, establishing a Cymru Cooks group and supporting healthy lifestyles.
134. Peer mentors make an outstanding contribution to the school. They receive training from Childline and through an extensive programme in the school. They also get additional accredited training in counselling skills. They make a positive impact in the transition programme with their 'TLC' (Talk Listen Care) film and visits to partner schools. They provide valued, accessible support for pupils in school via their drop-in facility and within the wider community where they staff a Youth Club in a local special school.
135. The school's child protection policy and procedures are well known to all members of staff. Appropriate training is provided biannually by the LEA and annually by the school. This is a particular strength of the school.
136. The quality of provision for pupils with additional learning needs both in the mainstream and in the SNRB has outstanding features. Established links with partner primary schools ensure thorough assessment and identification. Provision is well planned and directed to meet individual needs.
137. Identified KS3 pupils with significant difficulties are well taught in small discrete groups. Other identified pupils with difficulties are taught in larger buffer classes. All pupils in these classes are socially integrated with their peers during registration, life skills sessions, physical education and other school activities.
138. Learning Support Assistants provide very effective additional support for pupils, either individually or in groups. They enhance significantly the learning opportunities for pupils with SEN. They have a very good knowledge of the

pupils and the relationship between them and LSAs is a significant strength. Learning Support Assistants are also effectively deployed in literacy and numeracy initiatives.

139. The whole-school response to the planning and implementation of concerns about levels of reading attainment is outstanding. KS3 identified pupils are withdrawn to receive regular, intensive reading support. Sessions are carefully planned and structured to meet individual needs. Other pupils with reading difficulties participate in a successful buddy reading scheme. Identified KS4 pupils receive reading intervention from the learning coach. Pupils make good progress following these interventions. A KS3 numeracy initiative started in September. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality mark three times.
140. Information on pupils with SEN is communicated effectively. Individual Educational Learning Plans (IEP) are distributed to all members of staff and the SEN File is provided to all departments. This contains useful relevant information on individual pupils including recommended teaching strategies. The regular Additional Educational Needs (AEN) Meeting involving representatives from subject departments is a very effective two-way forum to discuss individual pupils and SEN issues. Individual Educational Learning Plans are reviewed termly and targets are shared with both parents and pupils.
141. The SNRB for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and associated behaviour difficulties is an outstanding feature of the provision in school. It provides a very effective social and educational placement within a caring environment. Schemes of work are closely aligned to the school's mainstream curriculum which enables individual pupils to integrate successfully in mainstream classes.
142. In addition to the broad curriculum, SNRB pupils participate in a wide range of enrichment activities including regular educational visits and integrated clubs. Pupils make good academic social and personal progress. All Y11 SNRB pupils left school last year with an accredited qualification. Individual targets are regularly reviewed on a termly basis. Relevant weekly targets are made by pupils and placed in their planners.
143. Teaching and support staff within the SNRB are dedicated and enthusiastic. The quality of teaching and support is a significant strength. Pupils are very well behaved in both their lessons and around the school. The management of the SNRB is very effective and the head of the SNRB provides very good leadership. There are valuable and supportive links with a range of LEA support services.
144. The SENCO provides very clear vision and direction. She is experienced and very enthusiastic. The management and deployment of resources are outstanding. The school is innovative in its support for pupils with a wide range of SEN.

145. The support for pupils with behavioural difficulties is outstanding. Consistently applied discipline for learning procedures are reinforced by a very effective pastoral support programme. The discipline panel which includes members of the local police force and a governor provides pupils and parents with a support system to prevent further incidents of unacceptable behaviour both in school and in the community. Further valuable support is provided by the youth worker for identified KS4 pupils through the ASDAN Prince's Trust initiative.
146. The school embraces fully the principles of equal opportunities. This commitment to inclusive education is underlined by outstanding support and the integration of all pupils into all aspects of school life. Each individual pupil including traveller children, pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Looked After Children (LAC) receive sensitive, effective support and care according to need. The school fully recognises the diversity of pupils' home backgrounds. The principle of social inclusion is fundamental to the school's philosophy.
147. The school's anti-bullying procedures are outstanding. The behaviour of pupils in classrooms and around the school is very good. This positive climate serves to discourage harassment and oppressive behaviour. The peer mentors reinforce this and pupils are confident that incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively.
148. The school's Access Plan and Disability Equality Scheme are appropriately detailed and highlight both physical and curricular access. They reflect the inclusive ethos of the school.
149. The school is clear in its recognition and respect of diversity. Pupils are made aware of different faiths, beliefs and cultures through curricular provision, Life Skills and assemblies. This awareness of diversity and inclusion is developed further through overseas links and charity work. The ethos of the school creates a culture of respect.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

150. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
151. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which focuses on high quality provision that enables pupils to achieve their potential. He is highly respected by pupils, staff and governors. Under his strong, energetic and insightful leadership, the school is making very good progress.
152. Staff know and understand well the school's mission and goals. Pupils, parents and the community served by the school know and appreciate the school's core

aims. There is a strong commitment to inclusion of all members of the school community.

153. The management of the headteacher is underpinned by a style that seeks to empower other leaders by encouraging them to contribute ideas, develop decision-making skills and manage change. He has successfully developed a culture in which staff understand the importance of reflecting on the strengths and shortcomings of the school in order to plan for improvement. He has also created an ethos where staff feel their ideas and opinions are valued highly. This makes a significant contribution to the good staff morale.
154. In addition to the headteacher, the SLT comprises four assistant headteachers and the business manager. The team has a wide range of experience and expertise and works very well together. Its members offer strong support to the head and generally effective leadership in their areas of responsibility.
155. Teachers and other staff collaborate well in formal teams and working groups, and informally. The middle leadership team (MLT) comprises subject leaders, progress managers and other responsibility post holders. Members of the MLT help to develop whole-school policies and share good practice, particularly in relation to learning, teaching and assessment. The work of the MLT makes a good contribution to developing the leadership and management skills of its members.
156. Individual members of the SLT are linked with departments and other teams. While these links generally help teams to set targets, evaluate performance and plan for future developments, senior leaders' involvement is not always rigorous enough to ensure developments have maximum impact on learning and standards.
157. Leaders and managers take very good account of the priorities of the Welsh Assembly Government. In addition to very good progress in the development of 14-19 learning pathways and the inclusive ethos in the school, the school has made significant strides in promoting healthy living and in education for sustainable development and global citizenship. The school is making good progress in developing pupils' bilingual skills.
158. There are suitable arrangements for appraising the work of teachers and many non-teaching staff. Staff who work relatively few hours, and are not formally appraised, have good opportunities to discuss their development needs. As a result, the professional development of all staff is generally promoted well. This has contributed towards improvements in the quality of provision in several areas, most notably in the planning of lessons and assessment for learning. Several teachers also benefit well from opportunities to develop their professional skills by 'shadowing' more senior colleagues.
159. The school has developed very good links with a range of partners in the community. There are particularly close partnerships with a number of local authority services and voluntary organisations, which are very well led and managed. As a result of these, the school has successfully addressed the

needs of a significant number of pupils who might otherwise have significantly under-achieved or not attended school.

160. The governing body contributes very strongly to the strategic leadership and management of the school. Governors have an appropriate role in development planning and school self-evaluation.
161. Governors ensure they are well informed about issues that affect the work of the school and, as critical friends, they monitor and challenge the school's performance. Several governors have developed a particularly good understanding of the work of the school by spending a day attending lessons with pupils.
162. Governors ensure that they and the school meet regulatory and legal requirements.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

163. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
164. The findings of the inspection team match exactly those of the school in their own self-evaluation report in all of the seven key questions.
165. Self-evaluation is very well embedded into the work of the school. Leaders and managers at all levels value the contribution that self-evaluation can make to continuous improvement within their areas of work. Purposeful use is made of information generated from the self-evaluation process to establish clear priorities for improvement.
166. The school produces a comprehensive annual self-evaluation report that is analytical detailed and evaluative. It provides a clear analysis of the school's strengths and areas for development in relation to all key questions of the inspection framework. The report refers to a good range of evidence to support self-evaluation, including very detailed analysis of assessment and examination data, first-hand observations of the work of teachers and pupils and the views of all stakeholders. Overall, the outcomes of self-evaluation are used very effectively to inform development planning at all levels.
167. All middle managers produce self-evaluation reports that reflect the quality of work in their specific areas. Many include evidence of good practice, including measurable improvement in standards. A few evaluations are too variable in quality and sometimes lack the necessary depth to initiate improvement.
168. Arrangements for self-evaluation are very comprehensive and extremely well planned. Most senior and middle managers have good knowledge of the strengths and shortcomings in the areas for which they are responsible. Most evaluations focus well on improving standards, learning and teaching, and on

enabling pupils of all abilities to achieve their potential. Suitable procedures are in place to monitor regularly the quality of work across the school.

169. A member of the SLT monitors the quality of teaching in each subject department. Many do so rigorously through lesson observations, evaluation of documentation and scrutiny of pupils' work. Although this system is very well-planned it does not involve the subject leader observing other teachers in their own or another department. Pupils very successfully contribute to this process by completing an electronic questionnaire about the quality of teaching and learning in the department. This is very good practice. Following the review, each department receives a detailed report that is well linked to their departmental development plan.
170. The systematic processes for monitoring and evaluating performance at all levels have led to measurable improvements in standards at both KS3 and KS4. However, the extent to which the school measures the success of whole-school initiatives is not robust enough.
171. Leaders and managers attach considerable importance to seeking the views of staff, pupils and other interested parties. The headteacher considers the views of all staff very carefully and he uses these to initiate change. Staff enjoy the opportunity to raise issues and identify areas for improvement through the relatively new Staff Forum. Whenever possible, the school seeks the views of parents and local community. The very high number of questionnaires received as part of this inspection reflects extremely positively parental support for and satisfaction with the school.
172. All pupils are engaged actively in the election of representatives for the school council. Through the school council, pupils review formally the quality of provision in the school. This includes discussions about the quality of teaching and learning as well as other important issues. The recently introduced Pupil (PASS) survey provides another opportunity for pupils to give their views.
173. Development planning in the school is good overall. There is an established three-year cycle of strategic planning, supported by annual self-evaluation and development planning. There is clear evidence that the outcome of self-evaluation is used very successfully to plan financially viable improvements across the school.
174. School and department development plans are successfully linked. The priorities and goals that managers identify for development appropriately relate to improvements in standards and quality. The success criteria, against which staff evaluate the progress of initiatives, are not always detailed enough.
175. The school's work on self-evaluation and improvement planning is good and has led to notable improvements. Very good progress has been made in addressing the key issues from the last inspection.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

176. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report. It is one grade higher than the grade awarded by the inspection team for Key Question 1 and Key Question 5. This is because the inspection team agreed with the outstanding features identified by the school in their own self-evaluation report.
177. Overall, the number of teaching staff is sufficient for the school to run efficiently and to enable the curriculum to be taught effectively. Teachers are deployed appropriately and nearly all teach their specialist subject.
178. All staff are suitably qualified, knowledgeable, and experienced. In nearly all departments there is a good blend of experienced teachers and those relatively new to the profession.
179. The team of LSAs is effectively and flexibly deployed and works efficiently in activities that enhance pupils' learning. There is very good liaison between the teachers and LSAs. The deployment of LSAs is planned and coordinated very well.
180. The deployment of the small team of technical support staff is appropriate and they provide very good support to their designated departments. Members of the school's catering staff provide a well-used service in the relatively new, very attractive, school dining facility.
181. The administrative support staff work as an integrated team to ensure that the reception, office, reprographics, pupil welfare and library operations, for example, function effectively and that all day-to-day routines run smoothly. The school's building and site maintenance staff, including the team of cleaners, contribute very well to the upkeep of the school, keeping the buildings and grounds clean and relatively litter free. The school-based Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) provides good support.
182. Departmental capitation funding levels are formula based and have been increased significantly over the last few years. Overall, the range of teaching and learning resources, including those for pupils with SEN, is very good and supports the delivery of the curriculum well. Each department operates within its delegated budget. A report is produced every term and regular financial statements enable departments to monitor expenditure.
183. The school's investment in the provision of ICT equipment is outstanding, resulting in a very impressive pupil to computer ratio of 2:1. Electronic whiteboards and digital projectors, available in all classrooms, are used very effectively to enrich the quality of lessons. There are 260 laptop computers which, together with the school's wireless network, enable ICT facilities to be readily available in all classrooms.

184. A newly commissioned Learning Plaza houses a state-of-the-art video conferencing suite, a fully equipped recording studio, a DVD editing suite and two exceptionally well appointed teaching areas. This very well utilized facility is an outstanding feature of the school.
185. The well-used and compact library is stocked well with a wide variety of good quality fiction and reference books. It is readily accessible to pupils at lunch times for study and research.
186. Accommodation, overall, is sufficient for the number of pupils currently on roll. Teaching rooms, in each subject area, are clustered together enabling effective use of departmental resources.
187. The quality of the accommodation and facilities in the New Block and the Learning Plaza is outstanding. These parts of the school are fully Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant. In physical education lessons pupils make very good use of the new rugby field and floodlit all-weather pitch.
188. A refurbishment programme is in place to improve the quality of the accommodation in the old Grammar block, main block and music and drama block. Nearly all areas in these blocks are inaccessible for those with disability.
189. Arrangements for the security of the school's buildings are good. External and internal CCTV cameras are used effectively for monitoring, particularly outside school hours when parts of the school are available for community use.
190. There are several outstanding features and numerous good features in the way in which the school manages its resources.
191. Financial management procedures are systematic, methodical, and rigorous and help ensure cost effectiveness in all expenditure. The Business Manager, headteacher and the governing body finance committee monitor and review spending decisions effectively. They maintain good links between budgets, the allocation of resources and the priorities identified in the SDP.
192. The school received a Welsh Secondary Schools Association (WSSA) award for the way in which it worked with the community, parents and pupils attending a neighbouring secondary school prior to its closure. As a result the school secured the transfer of significantly more pupils than was originally anticipated. The resultant increase in pupil-led funding significantly enabled the school to turn its budget deficit into a healthy surplus within two financial years. The elimination of a deficit in such a short timescale is an outstanding feature.
193. Improved transition arrangements with its partner primary schools have helped increase the proportion of pupils progressing to the school's Y7 classes. This has further enhanced the school's pupil-led funding.
194. The school manages its budget very prudently and retains an acceptable contingency reserve, currently just above five percent of its annual delegated

budget, for unforeseen circumstances and future projects. All service level agreements are periodically reviewed in order to ensure value for money.

195. The most recent internal re-audit recognised the school's progress in discharging most of the recommendations contained in the audit report produced about six months earlier. The remaining recommendations have since been suitably addressed.
196. 'Workload Reform' statutory obligations are fully met. All teachers are allocated appropriate PPA time and resources, and use this time appropriately. The agreed workforce restructuring proposals are well embedded. Very good use is made of the teachers' non-contact time to support and enrich provision.
197. The provision of personal development plans (PDP'S) for all staff is inclusive and very well co-ordinated. Every member of staff has a current job description and nearly all have an annual appraisal and review. The staff development programme, incorporating structured career development and succession planning, is outstanding. Staff make good use of available training and development funding. Support arrangements for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are structured well.
198. Given the progress that pupils make and the high quality and varied learning experiences the school provides very good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Science

199. In recent years examination results in GCSE science have improved dramatically. In 2006 27% of pupils achieved grade A*- C, but by 2009 this had risen to 56%. Examination results in GCSE science in 2008 were above the local averages and only just below national averages for passes at grades A*-C. In 2009 they were above both averages.
200. In 2008, GCSE passes at grades A*- G were just below local and national averages and in 2009 they equalled the local average and exceeded the national average. These results represent good achievement in relation to pupils' ability.

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS3

Good features

201. Pupils of all abilities have a good understanding of many aspects of the NC in science. For example, they are familiar with important aspects of digestion,

and know about cells, tissues and organs. Their understanding is nearly always in line with their ability and all are making good progress.

202. Pupils of all abilities carry out practical work carefully and with due regard to safety. They make accurate observations and the majority record their results clearly, using tables. They use simple graphs to present their data.
203. Most pupils are developing the skills necessary to plan effective experiments. They know about controlling variables and the importance of the fair test.
204. Most middle and higher ability pupils organise their work well. They extract useful scientific information from textbooks and the internet. They write good notes and communicate their scientific understanding well, using text, simple diagrams and graphs. They use scientific terms accurately, both orally and in writing.

Shortcomings

205. A few lower and middle ability pupils do not spell certain scientific terms accurately. Others have difficulty in recalling details of previous work.
206. In a few cases pupils do not understand the purpose of the experimental work they are performing.

KS4

Good features

207. Nearly all pupils understand the work they need for their examinations. For example many middle and higher ability pupils have an appropriate understanding of weight and mass. Pupils of all abilities are making good progress.
208. Nearly all pupils communicate their understanding of scientific ideas well, using text, graphs and diagrams. They extract useful scientific information from textbooks and the internet. All use scientific terms accurately, both orally and in writing.
209. Nearly all pupils plan effective experiments. They understand the need to control variables, the importance of the fair test and the need for control experiments.
210. All pupils have good practical skills and carry out experimental work well. Many understand the need for repeat measurements to ensure reliability.
211. Pupils make accurate observations and record them appropriately in tables. Many use ICT very effectively to manipulate their experimental data and present their results as graphs.

212. Many pupils are developing an understanding of some of the practical applications of science. For example middle and higher ability pupils explain how re-cycling may save energy.

Shortcomings

213. A small minority of pupils cannot recall details of previous work, for example, how to calculate power.

Welsh second language

214. Examination results in the Welsh second language full course at GCSE in 2007 were below local and national averages for passes at grades A*-C. In 2008 they were above local and national averages. In both years all pupils achieved a GCSE A*-G grade.

215. Examination results in the short course at GCSE in 2007 were above local and slightly below national averages for passes at grades A*-C. In 2008 they were slightly below local and national figures. In 2008 results compared very favourably with local and national averages for passes at grades A*-G. Results in both full and short courses represent very good achievement for these pupils.

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS3

Good features

216. Many pupils understand the target language and in oral work respond correctly to a number of set questions in structured situations. Many pupils use recently learnt vocabulary accurately in established language patterns. Many convey information and express opinions well when discussing a range of class topics.
217. Most pupils co-operate fully and interact well in pair and group tasks. They use a series of structured and familiar questions in context. Many pupils re-enact their conversations confidently in front of their peers. Most pupils' oral skills are developed further by completing structured questionnaires asking and answering questions.
218. Many pupils read a variety of prose extracts meaningfully. Pupils read aloud in class and the pronunciation and intonation of a majority are good. Pupils build successfully on their range of vocabulary.
219. Most pupils complete a variety of writing tasks well. The presentation of work of many is good. A majority uses correctly a series of basic sentence structures. The more able pupils aim at writing extended passages using a variety of language patterns and appropriate vocabulary.

Shortcomings

- 220. A few pupils mispronounce words and language patterns
- 221. A small minority of pupils lacks the confidence to use the language in non-structured situations.

KS4

Good features

- 222. Most pupils listen attentively and a majority volunteers oral responses in class in answer to questions. Many on both GCSE courses demonstrate a good command of a number of language patterns in impromptu whole-class activities and use simple and complex patterns confidently. A majority expresses clearly opinions on various topics using correct language structures.
- 223. Pupils of all abilities enjoy using the target language when working in pairs and a majority gains in confidence when interacting with peers. This a good feature in most classes.
- 224. Many make good progress in their reading skills and a majority reads challenging extracts confidently in class. All pupils respond to the reading passages by completing well written tasks.
- 225. Most pupils make good progress in their writing skills. Many pupils studying the full GCSE course write extended passages. They structure their work and vary the sentences and tenses of the verbs. The content is often interesting.

Shortcomings

- 226. A small minority is hesitant in giving extended oral responses to questions.
- 227. A few pupils are unsure of specific language structure.

Modern Foreign Languages (French and German)

- 228. Examination results in French and German at GCSE in 2008 were below local and national averages for passes at grades A*-C but broadly in line for passes at grades A*-G. In 2007 results in German were similar to those in 2008. These results were in line with pupils' ability. In French in 2007 GCSE results were above local and national averages for passes at grades A*-C and also grades A*/A. These results represent good achievement.

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS3

Good features

229. Most pupils listen well so they readily follow the foreign languages which are used for most classroom purposes. By Y9 they listen well for detail both in what is read aloud to them and what they hear in recordings of native speakers.
230. Many pupils understand simple printed text well; they read aloud well. Most know how to use bilingual dictionaries. Many pupils speak with consistent accents and intonation, making good efforts to copy the examples they hear.
231. Pupils with SEN achieve well, gaining confidence especially in speaking in tasks matched to their ability. Most pupils ask and answer simple questions well, and make several exchanges in conversation in role-play tasks. Their language increases suitably in complexity over time.
232. In Y7 many pupils write well in sentences; by Y9 many pupils write well at length and refer to past, present and future events, express opinions and make comparisons.

Shortcomings

233. A few pupils do not take the initiative in speech; their accents sound more English than they should.
234. In writing they also make errors in elementary language.

KS4

Good features

235. Most pupils listen well and follow spoken or recorded language at normal speed. They identify important details without much difficulty.
236. Most pupils speak clearly and largely accurately in response to questions. Many extend spoken responses well by giving good reasons for preferences, whether positive or negative, or by using adverbs to add interest.
237. Many pupils read printed or word-processed text, including authentic materials, well. They identify much important detail.
238. Almost all pupils write brief paragraphs well. Many write competently at length using a good range of different tenses and language structures with accuracy. They use an appropriate style of language according to the task, for example in informal letters to French or German friends, or in formal applications for summer jobs abroad.

Shortcomings

- 239. Many pupils do not take the initiative in speech or use the languages spontaneously, but wait to be prompted.
- 240. A few pupils are reluctant to speak at length in response to questions.
- 241. In written work a few, mainly pupils of lower ability, make errors in common spellings and agreements, and a very few do not write well at length.

Geography

- 242. Examination results in this subject at GCSE in the last two years have been below local and national averages for passes at grades A*-C. These results are in line with pupils' ability.
- 243. The most recent results demonstrate significant improvements in passes at grades A*-C and in a 100% success rate of passes at grades A*-G.

KS3 Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS3

Good features

- 244. Year 7 pupils show an awareness and understanding of the relationship between people, economic activity and the environment. Pupils' extended studies of a leisure and shopping centre's impact on Porthcawl are of a good standard. Pupils show good research and presentation skills.
- 245. Pupils in Y8 have a good awareness and understanding of population migration. Pupils confidently explain the economic, social and political "pull and push" issues of internal migration within Italy.
- 246. Pupils have a good understanding of the patterns and relationship between physical geography and human activity. They confidently match farming, industry and tourism in the Northern Italian plain to natural physical advantages.
- 247. Pupils understand how people impact on their environment. Pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship in their Y9 case study on the Amazon rainforest.
- 248. From a case study of the Montserrat earthquake Y9 pupils show a good knowledge of plate tectonics. Pupils understand the principles of prediction, protection and preparation of people living in an earthquake zone.

Shortcomings

- 249. A few pupils in Y7 have a limited understanding of map skills. They find difficulty in locating places in the United Kingdom.
- 250. A few pupils in Y8 have a limited understanding of the relationship between the relief of Italy and human activity.
- 251. Pupils' fieldwork and enquiry skills are insufficiently developed through the key stage.

KS4

Good features

- 252. Pupils in Y10 use a range of geographical skills and techniques to research reasons for migration within the European Community. Pupils present reasoned economic, social and political arguments for and against migration.
- 253. Pupils use good analysis, evaluation and presentation skills to produce course work studies of a good standard. The studies show pupils clearly understand the impact of the redevelopment of Cardiff Bay on different groups of people.
- 254. In their study of Cumbernauld Y10 pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of the relationship between people and their environments. Pupils confidently analyse and explain the social and economic impact of the redevelopment of central Glasgow.
- 255. Pupils have good analytical and interpretive skills. They use geography vocabulary and terminology with increasing confidence and accuracy.

Shortcomings

- 256. A very few pupils do not consolidate their learning of geographical skills through written and graphical work in their books.
- 257. A very few pupils do not understand the relationship between social and economic geography.

Physical Education

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 258. External examination results in physical education at GCSE over the past two years have been almost in line with local, and slightly below national averages for passes at grades A* to C. Results for grades A* to G are excellent. The past and recent results represent good achievement for these pupils.

KS3

Good features

259. Many pupils display good standards in rugby football skills. Most pupils pass and receive the ball with a high degree of accuracy and control. A few pupils demonstrate excellent standards in performing more complex skills. Most pupils are able to use movements such as the side step, swerve and change of pace to good effect. Most pupils are able to combine well with other pupils in performing unit skills such as the ruck. Nearly all pupils demonstrate good standards in using defensive and attacking tactics. Many pupils show good ability in evaluating their own work and the work of others.
260. In health, fitness and well-being activities all pupils participate enthusiastically in challenging exercises. Focussing on the aerobic effects of exercise, all pupils take their own pulse, exercise with intensity and then recalculate their pulse rates to ascertain the effects of their activity. There is a good understanding of exercise intensity and target heart rate zones. Most pupils demonstrate a good understanding when discussing the effects of activities on their personal fitness and well-being.
261. In skill-related fitness activities, most pupils plan and execute a good range of exercises. These pupils fully understand which components of fitness their work is developing. Nearly all pupils demonstrate good technical execution of the various activities.

Shortcomings

262. The physical fitness of a few pupils constrains their levels of achievement.
263. The acquisition of fine motor skills is underdeveloped in a few pupils.

KS4

Good features

264. Many pupils demonstrate very good standards in planning, performing and evaluating their own work and the work of others. This is particularly evident in health, fitness and well-being activities, in the Sports Leader Award course. Most pupils plan, participate in and evaluate their personal fitness programme to a high standard. The technical execution of a range of fitness exercises by a very few pupils is outstanding.
265. In creative activities, specifically in trampolining, all pupils bounce with control and good form. Nearly all pupils perform simple movements such as the seat drop and twisting moves with good effect. All pupils demonstrate good safety principles when spotting for each other.
266. In gymnastic activities nearly all pupils display very good standards when performing a range of simple skills. Nearly all pupils are able to execute

recognised movements with control, body tension and good form. Most pupils are able to perform simple vaults with good power, correct body position and safe landings. A few pupils perform high quality work.

267. Nearly all pupils show good standards of knowledge and understanding when participating in theory sessions and practical activities that focus on the components of fitness. Most pupils fully understand the concepts of interval training and alternative methods that develop strength, endurance and flexibility. Most pupils show good abilities to plan, undertake and evaluate a fitness programme. Many pupils are able to lead warm-up and cool-down activities confidently. A few pupils display very good levels of fitness.
268. In competitive activities in soccer, nearly all pupils show good abilities in performing a range of individual skills. Pupils are able to pass accurately, receive the ball and dribble with control, and shoot effectively.
269. Most pupils demonstrate a sound understanding of both defensive and attacking strategies, which they implement with good effect

Shortcomings

270. The physical fitness of a few pupils constrains their standards of achievement.
271. A few pupils in the examination group have only limited knowledge and understanding of the theoretical aspects of their course.

Religious Education (including Religious Studies)

272. All pupils take a GCSE in Religious Studies. Examination results in 2008 in the GCSE short course taken by most pupils were above local but below national averages for passes at grades A*-C and grades A*-G. In the full course, results at A*-C were below local and national averages but above them for passes at grades A*-G.
273. In 2007 results in the full course were similar to those in 2008; results in the short course for passes at grades A*-C were below local but broadly in line with national figures; at grades A*-G they were above both. These results were broadly in line with pupils' ability.

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS3

Good features

274. Most pupils describe some implications of belonging to a group or a faith. Most recall the main points of the rites or religious events they have studied, such as Guru Gobind Singh's foundation of the Sikh Khalsa. Many pupils describe

differences within religions, such as christening as distinct from adult baptism in Christian denominations.

275. Most pupils use religious terminology and key vocabulary correctly. Most pupils describe how people like Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King or Gandhi responded to important moral and spiritual questions. A majority of pupils suggest explanations for the work of these people in terms of their values and beliefs.
276. Many pupils also express their views well on environmental issues and conservation, sometimes making clear connections with religious obligations. A few pupils give good reasons for the links they perceive between belief and action.
277. Many pupils can give an example of events which have had a profound impact on their own lives. A minority of pupils explains what they might or might not be prepared to die for.

Shortcomings

278. A minority of pupils does not consider in much depth the links between people's values and beliefs, and the actions they may take.
279. A majority of pupils does not explore their personal responses to the beliefs and practices they meet, nor consider their impact on their own values and beliefs, beyond a simple level.

KS4

Good features

280. The vast majority of pupils approach the religions, values and beliefs they study with respect and an unprejudiced mind. Most pupils give a clear summary of Christian and Jewish attitudes to relationships, sex, marriage and divorce. Many of them explain different religious views on contraception, also making clear the differences found within Christianity.
281. A few pupils research well independently to identify differences between and within religions in some detail. Most pupils put forward an opinion on issues which raise profound moral and spiritual questions, such as GM crops and ideas of creation and stewardship. They accept that others may see things differently, but can give some supporting reasons for their views.
282. Many pupils write well-structured accounts for example regarding the pros and cons of marriage or civil partnership ceremonies in places of worship.

Shortcomings

283. A few, mainly pupils of lower ability, write only briefly in response to questions. They draw on a narrow range of comparisons or contrasts, for example in the

beliefs and practices of different religions, so that their arguments are not well developed.

284. A few pupils do not give enough supporting reasons based on their beliefs and experiences when they express their personal views.

School's response to the inspection

285. The headteacher, staff and governors are extremely pleased that the findings of the inspection team recognise that Abersychan School is a good school with many outstanding features. The grades awarded for the seven key questions were a perfect match with the school's own self evaluation report, which is an endorsement of the school's own rigorous self-evaluation process.
286. We were delighted that the report recognises our outstanding curricular and extra-curricular provision which meets the needs of our pupils. The care, support and guidance for our pupils is at the very heart of Abersychan's ethos, and this was fully recognised by the inspection team as another outstanding aspect of the school. Support mechanisms including the youth worker, learning coach and peer mentors were given due praise, and we were delighted that our support for pupils with behavioural issues was recognised as outstanding. Abersychan was described as a school where pupils' behaviour was exemplary. It was also noted that the impact of the relationships between pupils and staff on pupil learning and progress was an outstanding feature of the school.
287. The percentage of lessons achieving a grade one and two was significantly above the national average and a testament to the commitment and quality of our teaching and support staff. Consequently, the school adds considerable value to the progress of pupils from KS2 to KS4 and this was fully recognised in the report.
288. Abersychan values all its stakeholders, and community links, transition arrangements with the partner primary schools and entrepreneurial activity were all described as outstanding features. Effective partnerships with other schools, further and higher education colleges and work-based learning providers were also noted. The partnership with parents was recognised as outstanding, as was the school's commitment to the well-being of its pupils.
289. Leadership at all levels including governors, headteacher, SLT and middle leadership was recognised as playing an effective part in the strategic development of the school. The staff development programme and the morale of the staff received very positive comments. The team also praised the school's outstanding facilities, notably our ICT plaza and laptop provision, and the impact that they were having on the quality of learning.
290. The report recognises the excellent progress made since the last inspection and makes a valuable contribution to the future development of the school, by identifying areas for development. Abersychan can look forward with confidence and build upon the many outstanding features and successes that are highlighted in this report.
291. We would like to thank the inspection team, led by Mrs Julia Longville, for their rigorous and professional approach throughout the whole inspection process.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Abersychan School
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-16
Address of school	Incline Road Abersychan Pontypool Torfaen
Postcode	NP4 7DF
Telephone number	01495 773068

Headteacher	Mr Michael Conway
Date of appointment	1 January 2006
Chair of governors / Appropriate authority	Mr Ron Marchant
Reporting inspector	Mrs Julia Longville
Dates of inspection	30 November – 4 December 2009

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11			Total
Number of pupils	198	208	189	170	170			935

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	53	2.4	55.4

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16.9
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	7.1
Average teaching group size	21.1
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	80.4

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection							
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11		Whole school
Term 1	92.4	90.7	91.3	89.1	91.3		91.0
Term 2	91.7	91.1	91.7	87.0	91.2		90.6
Term 3	82.9	86.6	88.1	87.8	96.9		90.6

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	23%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	67 temporary 2 permanent

Appendix 3

This report uses data for 2009 for LEA and Wales comparative information

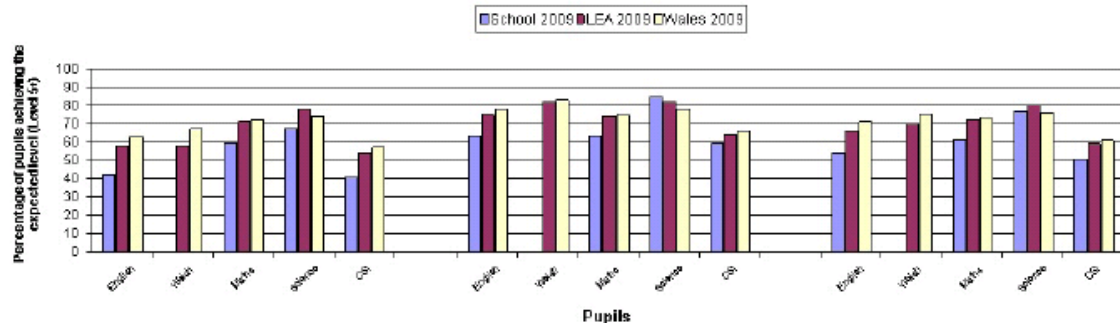
Abersychan Comprehensive
Torfaen

LEA/School no: 678/4070

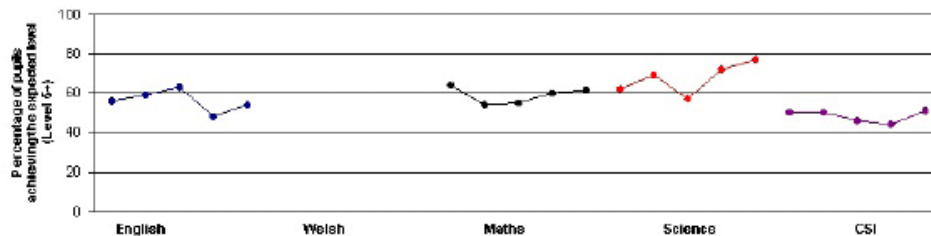
School comparative information: National Curriculum Assessments 2009 with benchmarking Key Stage 3

Percentage of boys, girls, and pupils achieving at least the expected level (Level 5+):

	Boys			Girls			Pupils		
	School 2009	LEA 2009	Wales 2009	School 2009	LEA 2009	Wales 2009	School 2009	LEA 2009	Wales 2009
English	42	58	63	63	75	78	54	66	71
Welsh	.	58	67	.	82	83	.	70	75
Maths	59	71	72	63	74	75	62	72	73
Science	67	78	74	85	82	78	77	80	76
CSI	41	54	57	59	64	66	51	59	61



School Performance over time (2005 - 2009)



Contextual Information

Benchmarked against schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals.

School's results shown in greyed boxes. Column headings refer to...

Quartile 1	School is in the top 25 per cent.	Free School Meal Group
Quartile 2	School is in the top 50 per cent but not the top 25 per cent.	More than or equal to 20 per cent and up to 30 per cent eligible for FSM
Quartile 3	School is in the bottom 50 per cent but not the bottom 25 per cent.	
Quartile 4	School is in the bottom 25 per cent.	

	Quartile 4	Lower Quartile Boundary	Quartile 3	Median Boundary	Quartile 2	Upper Quartile Boundary	Quartile 1
English	54	57		65		70	
Welsh		55		64		73	
Maths	62	64		69		71	
Science		66		71		75	77
CSI		49	51	55		60	

Notes:

1. Figures for Welsh refer to attainment in Welsh first language only.
2. CSI = Core Subject Indicator. To achieve the CSI a pupil must achieve at least the expected level 5 in both Mathematics and Science and either English or Welsh first language.
3. If there were no pupils eligible for assessment in a subject for a particular year the graph will discontinue and show a gap for that year.

Pupils aged 15

Number of pupils aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 195

Percentage of pupils aged 15 who :

	entered at least one qualification	achieved the Level 1 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE pass in English or Welsh first language and mathematics	Core Subject Indicator (2)	Average wider points score per pupil
School 2007/08	92	84	39	27	27	303
LEA Area 2007/08	95	87	57	41	40	351
Wales 2007/08	98	87	58	46	44	356
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	10	293
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	24	280

Number of boys aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 97

Percentage of boys aged 15 who :

	entered at least one qualification	achieved the Level 1 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE pass in English or Welsh first language and mathematics	Core Subject Indicator (2)	Average wider points score per pupil
School 2007/08	91	78	36	24	24	282
LEA Area 2007/08	93	82	49	36	36	319
Wales 2007/08	98	84	53	42	41	334
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	8	274
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	23	256

Number of girls aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 98

Percentage of girls aged 15 who :

	entered at least one qualification	achieved the Level 1 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE pass in English or Welsh first language and mathematics	Core Subject Indicator (2)	Average wider points score per pupil
School 2007/08	94	90	43	31	30	323
LEA Area 2007/08	97	91	64	47	44	385
Wales 2007/08	99	90	63	50	48	379
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	12	315
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	24	307

Abersychan Comprehensive

SSSP

Summary of Secondary School
Performance (1)

LEA/School No. 678/4070

Pupils aged 15

	Percentage of pupils aged 15 who :		Percentage of boys aged 15 who :		Percentage of girls aged 15 who :	
	achieved one or more ELQ (2) only	Left full time education without a qualification (3)	achieved one or more ELQ (2) only	Left full time education without a qualification (3)	achieved one or more ELQ (2) only	Left full time education without a qualification (3)
School 2007/08	3.6	0	6.2	0	1	0
LEA Area 2007/08	0.8	3.2	1.4	4.7	0.3	1.7
Wales 2007/08	2.6	1.5	3.4	1.9	1.7	1.2
School 06/07/08	5	..	6.5	..	3.3	..
School 05/06/07	5.6	..	6.9	..	4.1	..

Pupils aged 17

	Number of pupils aged 17 who were on roll in January 2008: 0		Number of boys aged 17 who were on roll in January 2008: 0		Number of girls aged 17 who were on roll in January 2008: 0	
	Percentage of 17 year old pupils entering a volume equivalent to 2 A Levels who achieved the Level 3 threshold	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17	Percentage of 17 year old pupils entering a volume equivalent to 2 A Levels who achieved the Level 3 threshold	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17	Percentage of 17 year old pupils entering a volume equivalent to 2 A Levels who achieved the Level 3 threshold	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17
School 2007/08	0	0	0	0	0	0
LEA Area 2007/08	96	591	96	533	95	642
Wales 2007/08	94	631	93	596	95	659
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	..	..
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	..	..

Abersychan Comprehensive

School Type: Secondary

Linguistic Delivery: Bilingual or English

LEA/School No. 678/4070

Number of SEN Unit/Special Classes: 5

Number of Pupils on Roll in NCY 11: 194

Percentage of compulsory school age pupils eligible for FSM 2007/08: 22.5

Percentage of compulsory school age pupils eligible for FSM 06/07/08: 20.1

Percentage of compulsory school age pupils on SEN register: 29.6

Percentage of 15 year old pupils on SEN register: 27.7

Level of Welsh Bacallaureate Offered:

Post-16 Pupils			Pre-16 Pupils	
Advanced	Intermediate	Pilot Foundation Foundation	Pilot Intermediate	Pilot

Welsh Bacallaureate Offered: No

KS3 BENCHMARK DATA, 2006 - 2008

Abersychan Comprehensive School

678/4070

Free School Meals, 2004 - 2006	2006	2007	2008
% of pupils entitled to Free School Meals	19.0	18.3	22.5
Free School Meal band	15%<FSM<=20%	15%<FSM<=20%	20%<FSM<=30%
<hr/>			
Key Stage 3 teacher assessment results	2006	2007	2008
% achieving level 5+ in English	59.5	62.9	48.3
Benchmark Quartile	3	3	4
% achieving level 5+ in Mathematics	54.2	55.2	60.2
Benchmark Quartile	4	4	3
% achieving level 5+ in Science	69.3	57.3	72.2
Benchmark Quartile	3	4	1
% achieving level 5+ in Welsh 1st Language	.	.	.
Benchmark Quartile	.	.	.
% achieving the Core Subject Indicator	49.7	46.2	44.3
Benchmark Quartile	4	3	4
<hr/>			
% achieving level 5+ in Welsh 2nd Language	43.1	38.5	35.2
Benchmark Quartile	3	3	3
% achieving level 5+ in Art	45.8	42.7	57.4
Benchmark Quartile	4	4	4
% achieving level 5+ in Design & Technology	41.8	49.7	65.9
Benchmark Quartile	4	4	3
% achieving level 5+ in Geography	51.0	64.3	43.8
Benchmark Quartile	4	3	4
% achieving level 5+ in History	75.2	62.9	79.0
Benchmark Quartile	1	4	1
% achieving level 5+ in Information Technology	41.8	54.5	73.9
Benchmark Quartile	4	4	3
% achieving level 5+ in a Modern Foreign Language	66.7	49.7	24.4
Benchmark Quartile	1	3	4
% achieving level 5+ in Music	58.2	60.1	74.4
Benchmark Quartile	4	3	1
% achieving level 5+ in a Physical Education	22.2	36.4	61.4
Benchmark Quartile	4	4	3

. denotes that the data item is not applicable

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

A team of 12 inspectors, including the school's nominee, spent the equivalent of 41 days in the school. Members of the team held a meeting before the inspection.

During the inspection, inspectors visited:

- 98 lessons or part lessons;
- assemblies and registration periods; and
- some extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team met with:

- staff, parents and carers and governors before the inspection;
- senior leaders, middle managers, teachers, support assistants and administrative staff;
- a representative of the LEA; and
- groups of pupils from each year group and representatives of the school council.

The inspection team considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- 363 responses from parents and carers to a questionnaire;
- comprehensive documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection;
- samples of reports to parents and carers; and
- samples of pupils' work across the curriculum.

After the inspection, inspectors held meetings with six subject departments, senior leaders and governors.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Julia Longville (Registered Inspector)	Context, Summary, Recommendations, KQ1, KQ6 and Appendices
David Williams	KQ2
Angus Dunphy	KQ3
Anthony Sparks / Gwyn Griffiths	KQ4
Alan Lowndes	KQ5
Kerry Jones (Lay Inspector)	KQ7
Clive Rowlands	Welsh second language
David Hughes	Science
Martyn S Williams	Modern Foreign Languages Religious education
John Radford	Geography
Stephen Lloyd	Physical education
Ann Morgan	School's Nominee

Acknowledgement

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

Contractor:

E.L.L.I.S. (Cymru) Ltd.
Jasmine Enterprise Centre
Unit 1
Treseder Way
Cardiff
CF5 5BQ