

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Birchgrove Comprehensive School
Birchgrove Road
Birchgrove
Swansea
SA7 9NB**

School Number: 6704075

Date of Inspection: 8th – 12th October 2007

by

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Date of Publication: 10th December 2007

Under Estyn contract number: 1200807

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Birchgrove Comprehensive 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 Birchgrove Comprehensive School took place between 08/10/07 and 11/10/07. An independent team of inspectors, led by Peter Guy Carter undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

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

There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a short 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	2
Recommendations	8
Standards	9
Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?	9
The quality of education and training	11
Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	11
Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	13
Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	16
Leadership and management	20
Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?	20
Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	21
Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	23
School's response to the inspection	25
Appendices	26
1 Basic information about the school	26
2 School data and indicators	26
3 National Curriculum assessments results	27
4 Evidence base of the inspection	29
5 Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team	30

Context

The nature of the provider

1. Birchgrove Comprehensive School is an 11-16 co-educational community school maintained by Swansea Local Education Authority (LEA). There were 760 pupils on roll in January 2007 compared to 865 at the time of the last inspection in September 2001. The school serves a suburban area between Neath and Swansea on the eastern side of Swansea. About half of the pupils come from homes which are neither economically disadvantaged nor relatively prosperous. Significant proportions of pupils come from both of these categories.
2. Two areas of the catchment are 'Communities First' target areas and are in the top ten socially deprived areas in Wales. Almost all pupils are from English speaking homes. Around two per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. The school admits around 55 pupils each year who have chosen to attend the school from outside its traditional catchment area.
3. The intake of pupils contains the full range of ability but the ability range is skewed towards the lower end. Around 17% have special educational needs (SEN). Almost 6% of pupils have statements of SEN which is significantly more than during the last inspection. Around 21% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This figure is similar to the local average but higher than the national average. About 78% of pupils transfer to either full time further education or youth training when they leave.
4. The headteacher was acting headteacher at the last inspection. His appointment was confirmed in 2001. Since the last inspection the School Leadership Group (SLG) has been reduced from seven members to three and consists of the headteacher and two deputies. They are supported by a School Management Group (SMG). In 2004 a Specialist Teaching Facility (STF) was set up at the school to cater for children with moderate to severe learning difficulties. At present there are 23 pupils in the STF.

The school's priorities and targets

5. The school's motto is 'Taking Pride in Achievement'. The school has three aims:
 - to maximise every pupils' academic potential in a safe, caring and supportive learning environment;
 - through accelerated learning techniques, provide every pupil with a unique set of learning skills that will transfer into lifelong learning and employment; and
 - to develop pupils' own social skills to raise their understanding of citizenship through the provision of wide-ranging extra-curricular experiences.

6. The School Improvement Plan (SIP) for 2007-2008 and the Strategic Plan (2007-2012) identify strategic aims and objectives in five areas:
 - quality of provision;
 - resources and staffing;
 - finances;
 - cross-cutting (aspects which cut across other objectives); and
 - premises.
7. The SIP contains information about actions needed, resource implications, manager responsible and review procedures in respect of each strategic objective. The Strategic Plan contains short, medium and long term objectives.

Summary

8. Birchgrove Comprehensive School is a very good school with many distinctive and outstanding features. The most important of these are the high quality learning experiences provided. Pupils enjoy their learning and, as a consequence, make very good progress during their time in the school.
9. In the seven key questions the following grades have been awarded.

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

STANDARDS

10. The great majority of pupils of all abilities are very successful in attaining agreed learning goals. They achieve good standards in relation to their abilities in developing knowledge, understanding and skills.
11. They achieve good standards in all key skills including the development of their bilingual competence. They show particular strengths in listening and in working collaboratively with other pupils. All pupils achieve equally well, regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background.
12. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (KS3) is lower than the average attainment in schools where a similar percentage of pupils is entitled to free school meals. Attainment is significantly better at Key Stage 4 (KS4). Although it is lower than local and national averages it is above, and in some cases

significantly higher than attainment in similar schools. In most key indicators of performance at KS4 attainment has improved in the last three years. This is a significant achievement.

13. Pupils make very good progress in their learning during their time in the school. They develop their knowledge, understanding and skills, particularly at KS4. The progress made by pupils between KS2 and KS4 is especially good. This helps pupils to move smoothly on to the next stage of education when they leave the school.
14. The overwhelming majority of pupils has positive attitudes to learning and very high levels of motivation. This is a distinctive feature of this school. They take a keen interest in their work and sustain very good levels of concentration. Pupils behave very well, both in lessons and around the school. They are friendly and welcoming to visitors. Aggressive behaviour is rare and the school is a pleasant and orderly community.
15. Pupils' attendance has improved since the last inspection and attendance rates are similar to the local and national averages. At just over 90%, however, attendance is below the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) target of 92%. Pupils' punctuality at the start of the day and individual lessons is generally good.
16. Pupils make good progress in developing learning and study skills as they move through the school. Their personal, social and moral development also progresses well, in part because of the good Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme of lessons. Pupils show good levels of awareness of the importance of equality of opportunity and they respect social diversity. Overall, they are prepared well to play a full part in the workplace and the community.

THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

17. The quality of education provided by the school meets the needs of all pupils very effectively. It has good features, some of which are outstanding. There are no important shortcomings.
18. Teaching has many outstanding features. This is very clearly indicated by the extremely high proportion of lessons that were given a grade 1 and by the fact that all lessons were considered to be grade 3 or better. These figures are considerably higher than comparative figures for secondary schools inspected in Wales in 2005-2006.
19. There is a strong culture of research into the way pupils learn that is firmly embedded in the school. Teachers plan and structure lessons very carefully to meet pupils' needs extremely well. In many lessons they present their subject in meaningful and often very innovative contexts. They make excellent use of a broad range of resources to secure the active engagement of pupils. Many use stimulating and challenging activities at the start of lessons to help pupils settle

quickly into their work. They conclude lessons well by assessing pupils' understanding of what has been studied.

20. Teachers establish excellent working relationships with pupils based firmly on mutual trust and respect. Pupils are highly appreciative of the support that teachers provide for them. Teachers use questions very skilfully to gauge pupils' knowledge and understanding and all pupils' responses are valued. This secures an excellent atmosphere for learning in the vast majority of lessons.
21. Teachers and pupil understand the robust systems for assessing pupils' achievements. Pupils' work is marked regularly and thoroughly and teachers provide valuable written and oral feedback to indicate strengths and aspects for improvement. There is an increasing use of pupils' self assessment that is becoming embedded in many subjects. This has a very positive impact on learning.
22. Pupils' achievements are recorded systematically across all subjects and their progress is analysed rigorously. National Curriculum (NC) attainment levels are used in all subjects to track pupils' progress in KS3. Overall, pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. There remains, however, some inconsistency in the accurate use of these levels across the range of subjects.
23. The format and quality of reports to parents and carers are excellent. Comments from subject teachers are very informative and provide detailed information about pupils' achievements. They also give clear targets for improvement that focus strongly on how the pupil can improve in the subject itself.
24. The curriculum is broad and balanced and includes a wide range of focused activities which take place outside normal school hours. At KS4, a flexible options programme includes a few vocational courses delivered in collaboration with the local college. The school is in the early stages of developing high quality 14-19 education for pupils educated in east Swansea.
25. The school develops pupils' basic and key skills well. At KS3, Y7 pupils study successfully a recently developed course to improve their basic skills. This initiative develops pupils' adaptable and flexible lifelong learning skills and enables them to have better access to all aspects of the curriculum.
26. The school promotes pupils' personal development successfully. A comprehensive, well-planned PSE programme, covering a wide range of topics, is supplemented by very effective cross-curricular days on careers, health education and industry.
27. All pupils have access to outstanding options advice prior to choosing courses at the end of KS3. With few exceptions, pupils are able to study the subjects and courses of their choice. This carefully planned strategic system for enabling pupils to select suitable options has many outstanding features.

28. A particularly outstanding feature is the school's very successful transition programme that supports pupils in moving smoothly from KS2 to KS3 with minimal disruption to their education.
29. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively through, for example, assemblies of very good quality and daily tutorial sessions where there are opportunities for pupils to reflect on a range of topics.
30. An impressive range of extra-curricular activities is accessible to all pupils. Activities include music, drama, sport, revision clubs in all subjects and educational visits that enhance learning across the curriculum. In addition, a few pupils access the Saturday morning activities available in the school and local college.
31. Careers and work-related education (WRE) are outstanding. The school works very closely with Careers Wales West to provide a wide range of very appropriate experiences for pupils that prepares them exceptionally well for progression to college or employment.
32. Education for sustainable development and global citizenship is embedded in the work of the school. Recycling and energy conservation is done as a matter of course. As a result of its high profile, pupils engage actively in activities that raise their awareness of people less fortunate than themselves. They regularly and strategically raise large sums of money for charities at home and abroad.
33. The school makes a significant contribution to the well-being of all pupils. It provides a safe and secure environment for learning where every individual is valued.
34. The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils has many outstanding features. The new and innovative pastoral structure ensures that key stage managers and form tutors have outstanding knowledge of their pupils. This is further reinforced by an ethos of mutual trust and positive relationships throughout the whole school. Pupils readily approach any teacher if they have problems.
35. Parents' support and involvement in pupils' learning is a priority at all levels. The excellent well-established relationships with partner primary schools result in a successful and smooth transition programme. A distinctive feature of this is the involvement of Y5 pupils in an activity day at Birchgrove. The pastoral and academic support provided for these pupils is outstanding.
36. There is a clear commitment to pupils' personal and social development. This is reinforced by the carefully structured and well co-ordinated PSE programme. This is an outstanding feature. The programme operates throughout the school. It is integrated into the whole curriculum and is delivered very successfully by form tutors. The cross-curricular days make an important contribution to this programme.

37. Key stage managers are well placed to identify emerging patterns of academic progress, attendance and behaviour. Their monitoring of academic progress is outstanding. Those pupils identified are mentored regularly by form tutors and senior managers. This has a positive effect on them and leads to improved standards.
38. Aspects of the provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) have outstanding features. Arrangements for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties in the STF are outstanding. This is a valuable resource within the school. These pupils are fully integrated into the school's activities. Pupils with ALN in the mainstream are supported well by a range of appropriate strategies and make good progress.
39. The work of the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) group is an outstanding feature. This group works very successfully on tasks designed to develop the personal and practical skills needed to get and keep a job.
40. The inclusive nature of the school emphasises the high priority given to equality of opportunity. The school successfully encourages pupils of all abilities to take part in all aspects of the curriculum and challenging extra-curricular activities. Pupils with a range of disabilities are included naturally in the life of the school. Pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) are supported appropriately by the specialist service and bilingual teaching assistants.
41. The friendly and caring ethos of the school promotes good behaviour. Procedures to deal with incidents of bullying and oppressive behaviour are reinforced by a strong and proactive anti-bullying policy, developed and reviewed by the school council. This is an outstanding feature. Parents and pupils are confident that if any anti-social behaviour occurs prompt and positive action is taken by the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

42. The headteacher provides strong and very effective leadership. He is a very good manager of people with an outstanding overview of the school. He translates ideas into workable strategies. The SLG has a good range of skills and talents and works extremely well as a team. Together they provide clear direction for the work of the school.
43. Shared management has resulted in a school community of great strength. Aims and values are clearly stated, well understood and easy to use. Equality for all is a high priority based upon a caring respect for everyone associated with the school. Pupils and staff work extremely well together to maintain a tangible ethos of care and improvement for all.
44. Leaders and managers have devised sophisticated systems for tracking staff and pupil performance. This gives an excellent basis for setting meaningful

targets for improvement. Systems are deeply embedded and refined each year. The management of teams at all levels is outstanding.

45. Processes for change are firmly based on research, analysis, evaluation and professional dialogue. All change is designed to meet specific needs and is focused on improvements in teaching and learning. A recent example is the introduction of a Pastoral Faculty to monitor and improve pupils' performance. The process involved in this development, including a substantial input from the Governing Body (GB) has generated a strong feeling of collective ownership.
46. Staff review processes are very good, well established and valued greatly. The cycle of annual review is used by all teams both formally and informally. Performance management is very good and informs professional development, departmental plans and funding requests well. The process of identifying, tracking and evaluating in-service education and training (INSET) is highly sophisticated and cost effective.
47. The GB helps to set the strategic direction of the school. It has been particularly effective in recent management reviews and restructuring. Governors are active and committed supporters of the school. They monitor the quality of provision mainly through careful scrutiny of reports. They act as critical friends and work closely with the headteacher and SLG. They have ensured that all regulatory and legal responsibilities are met.
48. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating performance are highly effective and focused on improving the quality of learning and teaching. Robust systems for monitoring and self-evaluation were in place at the last inspection and have continued to be refined. They are now outstanding in many respects.
49. The school is forward thinking and keeps at the forefront of research about learning, teaching and educational matters in general. Self-evaluation is based on research and first-hand evidence. It takes excellent account of the views of pupils, staff members and other interested parties. In particular, the school council plays an outstanding role in making decisions.
50. Planning for improvement is outstanding. Subject departments' plans for improvement are discussed fully with the SLG and link well with the SIP. All staff members, pupils and the GB work very effectively together and have brought about improvements across many aspects of school life.
51. As a consequence, pupils' learning experiences are of very good quality and teaching is innovative and often outstanding. Overall, planning and subsequent actions have led to measurable improvements in pupils' achievement, behaviour, attendance and, significantly, in self esteem and confidence for very many of them.
52. The school has addressed fully almost all aspects of the key issues identified in the last inspection report. However, it has been unable to make better provision for the teaching of swimming and work is continuing to improve further the quality and consistency of teaching in physics.

53. The school has sufficient numbers of teaching and support staff to enable it to provide a high level of educational and personal support for its pupils. As a result of necessary reductions in staffing levels, however, a few lessons in physical education are taught by non-specialists.
54. The support given to pupils with SEN and ALN and their integration within the school is exceptional. The way in which members of teaching staff are enabled to develop their professional expertise, to the ultimate benefit of pupils is an outstanding feature of the school.
55. The school buildings and grounds greatly enhance the learning experience and there is a good range of resources, especially in Information Technology (IT) which meets the academic and social needs of pupils. The new playing field is a particularly valuable addition to the school's facilities.
56. Financial decisions are always made in relation to their impact on pupils' personal and academic development. Despite falling rolls in recent years, the ratio of teachers to pupils has been maintained and the Pastoral Faculty developed. The latter has had a very significant influence on further improving behaviour and personal relationships within the school.
57. The school carefully sets budgets for all aspects of its provision and monitors performance towards them on a monthly basis. All spending decisions are clearly prioritised according to the school's strategic objectives and taken after a full cost-benefit analysis. The budgetary and financial management system is outstanding and ensures that the school provides very good value for money.

Recommendations

In order to continue to raise standards and improve performance the school should:

- R1 continue to develop and implement strategies to raise attainment at KS3*;
- R2 continue to improve attendance;
- R3 extend the accurate use of NC attainment levels in assessments at KS3*; and
- R4 implement fully plans to deliver the 14-19 learning pathways*.

*These recommendations are addressed in the current SIP.

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.

A copy of this summary is sent to every family with a child in the school. The full report can be obtained from the school.

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

58. This grade matches the judgment in the school's self-evaluation.
59. The great majority of pupils of all abilities are very successful in attaining agreed learning goals. They achieve good standards in relation to their abilities in developing knowledge, understanding and skills at KS3 and KS4. Pupils with SEN generally achieve good or very good standards in relation to their abilities. All pupils achieve equally well, regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background.
60. Pupils reach appropriate levels in all key skills. The standards they achieve in developing communication, mathematical and IT skills have good features overall and no important shortcomings. Pupils demonstrate outstanding listening skills, paying close attention to teachers' directions and to points raised by other pupils during discussions. Their bilingual competence is good. They respond appropriately to teachers' use of incidental Welsh in lessons.
61. At KS3, in the most recent assessments, attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and in the three subjects combined, was generally below the average attainment in schools where a similar percentage of pupils is entitled to free school meals.
62. Attainment is significantly better at KS4. Although it is below local and national averages, it is above the average for similar schools in most key indicators of performance and in some cases, significantly higher. Overall, results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations in 2007 are the second highest achieved by the school and there is evidence of a marked trend of improvement in attainment at KS4 in the last three years. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls.
63. The very good progress that pupils make is a significant strength of the school. They develop their knowledge, skills and understanding well. Their rate of learning accelerates as they move through the key stages. Pupils make good progress from KS3 to KS4. The progress made by pupils between KS2 and KS4 is especially good. This enables pupils to progress effectively to the next stage of their education when they leave the school.
64. The enthusiastic attitude to learning of the overwhelming majority of pupils is a distinctive feature of this school. They take a keen interest in their work and sustain good levels of concentration. They respond very positively to the good range of different learning activities in lessons.

65. Almost all pupils understand how well they are doing in all subjects. They also know whether they are achieving their potential and what they should do in order to improve the standard of their work. As a consequence, most learners realise their potential and the achievement of many exceeds expectations.
66. At both key stages, pupils show high levels of motivation, work productively and make good use of their time. They are interested and engaged in their learning. They behave very well, both in lessons and around the school. They are friendly and welcoming to visitors. Unruly behaviour is rare and the school is a pleasant and orderly community. Parents and pupils agree that bullying is relatively rare. They are confident that incidents of it would be dealt with promptly and effectively.
67. Pupils' attendance has improved since the last inspection. Attendance rates in the school are similar to local and national averages. At just over 90%, however, attendance is below the WAG target of 92%. Pupils' punctuality at the start of the school day and individual lessons is very good.
68. Pupils' personal and social development progresses well, in part because of the PSE programme of lessons which helps them to develop positive attitudes to lifelong learning. They also make good use of other opportunities to enhance their personal development. These opportunities promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assemblies, some lessons and extra-curricular activities make important contributions to this.
69. Pupils make good progress in developing learning and study skills. They work very well with each other. They collaborate very effectively, in many lessons, supporting each other in their learning. Their social skills, in this respect are outstanding. They make good progress in developing their skills in independent learning and problem solving.
70. Pupils show awareness of and respect for different lifestyles, beliefs and cultures. Their knowledge of the diversity within society is increased through community-based activities and visits. Their concern for others is shown by their participation in fund raising activities for a number of different charities. All pupils show good levels of awareness of the importance of equality of opportunity.
71. All Y10 pupils are involved in WRE and this, as well as other planned experiences helps prepare them for full participation in the workplace and the wider community. Pupils report that they enjoy these experiences, find them relevant and feel that they help them to understand the world of work.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

72. This grade matches the judgment in the school's self-evaluation.

73. Overall grades for the quality of teaching in 49 lessons observed were:

Grade1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
47%	41%	12%	0%	0%

74. These figures demonstrate excellent standards of teaching. The percentage awarded grade one is 30 points higher than the comparative figure for all secondary schools in Wales inspected in 2005-2006. The percentage of lessons in which teaching was judged to be grade one or two is 19 points higher than the corresponding comparative figure. In all lessons good features outweigh shortcomings.

75. Teaching is underpinned by a very strong culture of research into ways in which pupils learn. This has been nurtured highly effectively over a number of years by the Learning Focus Group and is now firmly embedded throughout the school. It has been instrumental in promoting the exceptionally high quality learning experiences that pervade many lessons.

76. Teachers establish excellent working relationships with pupils. They treat all pupils with considerable respect and sensitivity and have high expectations of them. Pupils are highly appreciative of the support that teachers provide for them both within lessons and at other times in the school day. This generates an outstanding atmosphere for learning across the entire school.

77. Nearly all lessons are planned exceptionally well. Teachers have an excellent understanding of the ways in which pupils learn and use this information well to structure their lessons. Many use very stimulating and challenging activities at the start of lessons that enable pupils to settle very quickly into their work. Particular care is taken to ensure that pupils understand clearly what they are expected to do. Lessons are usually concluded very proficiently with a careful check on the extent of pupils' understanding of work covered.

78. Many teachers display excellent subject knowledge through stimulating and challenging dialogue with pupils. They use questions very skilfully to gauge and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. Pupils' responses are valued and treated with considerable care and sensitivity. As a result of this any misconceptions or errors in pupils' work are used highly effectively to support learning. This is a very notable feature in many lessons.

79. Teachers are often very innovative and make very good use of a wide range of highly appropriate resources and activities in lessons. Interactive whiteboards feature prominently and teachers use them proficiently to present ideas to pupils in stimulating ways. Teachers' use of resources is nearly always extremely successful in securing the active engagement of pupils at all times during lessons.
80. All pupils are treated equally and teachers take care to ensure that work is carefully matched to suit the needs of individuals. Learning support assistants work extremely well with teachers to help pupils with special needs.
81. Pupils are encouraged to make use of incidental Welsh both in some subjects and also in form periods. In spite of this, however, there are occasions where opportunities to promote the Welsh language are not exploited fully.
82. In a few lessons the progress of a minority of pupils is a little limited. Pace is slow and tasks are not sufficiently demanding to engage their interest.
83. Marking is exemplary both in terms of its consistency across subjects and in the high quality of the written feedback that teachers provide for pupils. Teachers mark pupils' work in great detail and indicate clearly to pupils what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. Marking is carried out frequently and this enables pupils to be very well informed of their progress in subjects.
84. Whole school systems of assessing pupils' achievements are robust and well understood by teachers and pupils. Pupils' achievements are recorded systematically across all subjects and their progress is analysed rigorously. Procedures are very effective in monitoring the progress of individual pupils and in identifying those who are underachieving.
85. NC attainment levels are used in all subjects to track pupils' progress throughout KS3. However, there remains some inconsistency in the accurate use of them across all subjects.
86. There is an increasing use of pupils' self-assessment that is becoming embedded in many subjects. This is overseen very effectively by many teachers and is very successful in enabling pupils to identify aspects for improvement. Across the school self-assessment is used very well by pupils to track both their academic and personal development. This features well in many form periods.
87. Statutory requirements in relation to assessing and reporting on NC subjects are met at KS3. Teachers also meet the regulations of examining boards for subjects at KS4.
88. Reports to parents and carers are outstanding in terms of their format and content. Teachers provide clear information relating to both personal and academic development. Also, pupils assess their own progress and their comments are often very perceptive. A particularly impressive feature is the consistency and detail that is included from subject teachers. Their comments

focus exceptionally well on strengths and targets for improvement that link explicitly to the subject itself.

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

89. This grade matches the judgment in the school's self-evaluation.
90. Overall, the curriculum is broad and balanced and includes a wide range of focused out-of-school-hours activities. It is successfully modified to meet the needs of individual pupils and enables most to access lifelong learning and employment opportunities. All pupils have access to a range of qualifications that are well matched to their abilities. The curriculum fully meets legal requirements.
91. The curriculum enables pupils to achieve their academic and social potential. Pupils of all abilities are encouraged to improve as they move through the school. As a result, most pupils develop significantly higher levels of confidence and self-esteem.
92. At KS3, pupils study drama in addition to the subjects of the NC and religious education. In Y7 pupils study successfully a recently implemented course to improve their basic skills. This initiative aims to develop pupils' adaptable and flexible lifelong learning skills in order to enable them to have better access to all aspects of the curriculum. Overall, the curriculum at KS3 is adapted well to ensure that pupils develop the skills necessary to move on to the next stage in their learning.
93. At KS4, a flexible options programme is available to all pupils. This includes a few vocational courses that have recently been introduced in collaboration with the local college.
94. The school is committed to, and heavily involved in, negotiations to establish high quality 14-19 education for pupils educated in east Swansea. These innovative changes include a more flexible timetable to provide increased options for pupils to study a wider range of subjects in partnership with other schools and colleges.
95. Currently a few vocational course are offered to pupils at KS4. These include the successful introduction of Business and Technical Education Council (BTEC) courses in Sport and Recreation, delivered by the physical education department with the support of staff from Swansea College, and hospitality and catering offered in the college. The school recognises the need to develop further links to expand the curriculum for pupils at KS4.

96. The school provides a range of opportunities for pupils to gain accreditation. These include, General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), Entry Level Qualifications (ELQ), ASDAN, Diploma in Digital Applications (DIDA), National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) and BTEC qualifications. Very good support is given to pupils to help them make the right choice of both course and qualification. As a result, pupils are very well aware of the need for good qualifications and are motivated well to succeed.
97. A small number of Y11 pupils with poor levels of attendance, follow an alternative programme organised by Engaging Learners in Swansea (ELIS). Overall the programme is well matched to their individual needs. It includes work experience and the opportunity to gain accreditation.
98. The school promotes, successfully, pupils' personal development. A comprehensive well-planned PSE programme, covering a wide range of topics, is supplemented by highly successful cross-curricular days on careers, health education and industry.
99. The transfer of pupils from KS3 to KS4 is outstanding. All pupils have access to very good advice about options prior to making their subject choices at the end of KS3. With few exceptions, pupils are able to study the subjects and courses of their choice. The carefully planned strategic system for transition has many outstanding features. These include:
- very effective well-timed careers advice that includes interviews for all pupils;
 - specific support for those pupils at risk of disaffection to help them with their choice of subjects and courses;
 - a course design booklet and detailed presentation to pupils and their parents that provides useful advice on all aspects of the KS4 programme; and
 - a detailed options survey to establish the needs of pupils.
100. There are highly developed curricular and pastoral links with partner primary schools. As part of the Birchgrove Cluster, staff members from all schools participate together in regular well-planned and appropriate professional development. This has helped them share ideas about many aspects of teaching and learning. A recent initiative has enabled primary and secondary teachers to improve consistency in the assessment of pupils' work using NC levels of attainment. Other outstanding features include:
- strong curriculum links in many subjects that help teachers set challenging work for pupils as soon as they transfer to the comprehensive school;
 - strong links between senior managers of different schools that provide detailed information about pupils' individual needs;
 - effective use of a range of high quality resources to enable pupils and their parents to ask questions about the school; and
 - an annual 'road show' performed by Birchgrove pupils in different primary schools to advertise the sort of activities that pupils can participate in once they transfer to the school.

101. The curricular links the school has developed through the Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) initiative are starting to have a positive impact on standards in the subject.
102. Partnerships with parents, the community and other providers are very good. Parents are kept fully informed of pupils' progress. The 'Birchgrove Banter' newsletter is of very good quality and informs parents of achievements, activities and events. Links with employers in the community are particularly strong.
103. Very well established links with the local further education colleges and university enable pupils to make informed choices about which courses they wish to follow once they have completed Y11. Through links with Initial Teacher Education and Training (ITET), the school is actively engaged in developing teachers of the future. A few teachers share their good practice by delivering aspects of the taught ITET programme in the university. This is a notable feature.
104. The school promotes pupils' personal development very successfully by placing strong emphasis on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Very good quality assemblies and daily tutorial sessions contribute to this by providing opportunities for pupils to reflect deeply on a range of relevant topics. This is linked extremely well to the vast range of charity work that goes on in the school.
105. An impressive range of extra-curricular activities is equally accessible to all pupils. These include music, drama, sport, revision clubs in all subjects and a wide range of educational visits that enhance learning across the curriculum. In addition a few pupils access the Saturday morning activities available in the school and local college.
106. The school is highly successful in providing learning experiences that prepare pupils very effectively for employment and further education. Careers education and WRE are outstanding. The school works very closely with Careers Wales West to provide a wide range of very appropriate experiences for pupils that prepares them exceptionally well for progression to college or employment. Outstanding liaison with the three local colleges in the area ensures that pupils make appropriate choices that best fit their individual needs and career aspirations.
107. Pupils understand the skills required to secure employment. They have access to a very well planned programme that consists of workshops on setting up their own business, the 'Dynamo' project, health and industry days and inputs from employers with different educational backgrounds. An outstanding feature of the programme is the mock interviews conducted by a range of employers. Pupils prepare curriculum vitae and application forms and receive detailed feedback on their application and interview skills. The programme successfully develops pupils' key and personal skills as well as their knowledge and understanding of the world of work.

108. The highly effective and very well monitored work experience is another outstanding feature. Placements are very carefully scrutinised for suitability and pupils are then strategically placed. Employers receive detailed information about the pupil prior to the placement. Placements are monitored well by members of school staff.
109. The school addresses social disadvantage and stereotyping very effectively and is very successful in ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all learners. As a result of the support they receive almost all Y11 pupils go on to further education or employment.
110. All pupils study Welsh. Opportunities for promoting learners' bilingual skills across the curriculum are good in many subjects. Most teachers encourage the use of incidental Welsh in lessons. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of the culture of Wales, through, for example, the annual eisteddfod, the fortnightly Welsh club and residential visits to Glanllyn.
111. Pupils learn about their locality and aspects of Welsh life in general through visits to places of interest including the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff and the Museum of Welsh Life at St Fagans.
112. Education for sustainable development and global citizenship is embedded in the work of the school. Recycling and energy conservation is done as a matter of course. As a result of its high profile, pupils actively engage in a range of activities that successfully raise their awareness of people less fortunate than themselves. They regularly and strategically raise large sums of money for charities both at home and abroad. The school has the Bronze Eco Schools Award.

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

Grade1: Good with outstanding features

113. This grade matches the judgment in the school's self evaluation.
114. The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is a distinctive feature of the school and has many outstanding features. The new and innovative pastoral structure ensures that key stage managers and form tutors have outstanding knowledge of their pupils. This is further reinforced by an ethos of mutual trust and positive relationships throughout the whole school. The pastoral structure has equivalent faculty status to academic sections of the school. Pupils are very comfortable in approaching any teacher with their problems.
115. Parental support and involvement in pupils' learning at all levels is a priority. The school encourages an open door policy with the parents and considers this relationship as a two-way partnership. The school handbook and regular bulletins to parents are a valuable source of information. The school also works well with local employers to enrich pupils' vocational experiences.

116. The guidance, assistance and support for pupils when they choose subjects at KS4 and decide on the next stage of their education in Y11 are outstanding. Excellent links with sixth form colleges and further education colleges ensure that pupils are well informed about available future options.
117. The excellent and established relationships with partner primary schools, result in a successful and smooth transition programme. Pupils testify that they settle in quickly and are very happy in their new environment. An outstanding feature of this programme is the involvement of Y5 pupils in an activity day at Birchgrove. Good features include the well produced, informative 'Leap' DVD and the 'Rockets and Kites Day' for Y6 pupils. The whole programme is further reinforced by a detailed and well-planned Cluster Transition Plan.
118. There is a clear commitment to the pupils' personal and social development. The carefully structured and well co-ordinated PSE programme is an outstanding feature. The programme, which operates throughout the school, is delivered well by form tutors. The whole school programme has been developed to enable pupils to achieve recognised accreditation in PSE at the end of Y10. Cross-curricular days on aspects of PSE such as sex education, learning skills and health related fitness are important features of the programme. The additional input provided by outside agencies such as the Army, NTL, Careers Wales West, HSBC and visiting speakers all make valuable contributions to enhancing pupils' knowledge and learning experiences.
119. There is a strong partnership with Careers Wales West. The careers adviser is located in a designated careers office in the school for three days a week and ensures that pupils have high quality careers advice and guidance in planning for the future. Effective group interviews are held and action plans are drawn up. Intensive preparation for work experience is carried out and mock interviews develop skills necessary in the job market and further education.
120. Key stage managers are well placed to identify emerging patterns of academic progress, attendance and behaviour. The monitoring of academic progress is an outstanding feature. The use made of available data by the data manager is a distinctive feature of this process. Identified pupils are mentored regularly by form tutors and senior managers. This has a positive effect on pupils and leads to improved standards. These pupils are also involved in a highly effective intensive day on study and revision skills at a further education college.
121. The monitoring of behaviour throughout the school is very good. Consistent application by teachers of the Discipline for Learning Policy ensures that all pupils are aware of the high standards expected. There is a clear code of conduct backed by a balance of rewards and sanctions within a positive community atmosphere. The system is driven by rewards, emphasising the positive aspects of hard work and good behaviour as a means to success.
122. Being a healthy school is high on the school's priority and pupils are appropriately encouraged to be healthy. The school council has been prominent in encouraging healthy menus in the dining hall and the withdrawal of vending machines. PSE lessons include health promotion modules and the importance

of healthy exercise and activity is emphasised. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Quality Award.

123. The school has very good procedures for child protection. Both the designated senior member of staff and the designated governor have received appropriate initial and refresher training. One other member of staff has also been trained in child protection procedures. The designated member of staff is part of the Swansea Child Protection Officers Network and provides training for this group. The school is also used as a base for wider LEA governor training regarding child protection. All members of staff receive appropriate update training at the beginning of each school year and procedures are highlighted in the staff handbook. Rigorous monitoring in the school leads to an increased awareness of child protection issues and there are effective links with the social services.
124. Aspects of the quality of the provision for pupils with ALN have outstanding features. Arrangements for pupils with moderate to severe learning difficulties in the STF are outstanding. The STF is a valuable resource within the school. The pupils are fully integrated socially into the school's activities and are in mixed registration groups. All pupils in the STF are supported in mainstream lessons by a team of committed teachers and Learning Support Assistants (LSA). Learning programmes are matched to individual needs. Pupils in the STF are clearly motivated and expectations are clearly stated. Teachers work hard to create and maintain pupils' interest.
125. Pupils with ALN in the mainstream are supported well by a range of appropriate strategies including grouping according to need, LSA support and literacy programmes such as 'Master Class' and 'Successmaker'. Literacy support, particularly at KS3, is well planned and resourced. Pupils make good measurable progress. Records of individual progress are maintained and regularly monitored. Pupils' Individual Education Plans (IEP) are of a very good quality with details of both strengths and weaknesses. They are distributed to all subject departments and effective guidance is given to teachers on writing subject specific targets. Targets are monitored effectively at the end of each term. The IEP system provides a very efficient means of tracking pupils with ALN to maximise their work and potential.
126. Communication with subject departments is very good. In addition to IEPs, they are provided with Health Care Plans, Pastoral Support Plans and relevant up-to-date information on teaching pupils with ALN. Parental involvement is an important aspect of this provision and they are fully involved in discussing IEPs and targets during annual review meetings, parents' evenings and coffee mornings.
127. There are good constructive links with outside agencies which include the educational psychologist, specialist support teachers, therapy services and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). Appropriate support provision is made for pupils who are disappled from modern foreign languages and Welsh.
128. At KS4, pupils with ALN, including those in the STF, benefit from ELQ, ASDAN and BTEC courses. The work of the ASDAN group is outstanding. This course

provides pupils in the STF and special classes with a range of important life skills. The effective links with Swansea College enable pupils to develop their vocational skills.

129. The inclusive nature of the school emphasises the high priority given to equal opportunities. Pupils of all abilities are actively encouraged to take part in all aspects of the curriculum and in challenging extra-curricular activities. Both mainstream and STF pupils were involved in the highly successful "Kielder Challenge". Pupils with a range of disabilities are included naturally in school life. Pupils with EAL are appropriately supported by the specialist service and bilingual teaching assistants and make very good progress. They are encouraged to take GCSE examinations in their first language at the end of KS3.
130. The friendly and caring ethos of the school promotes good behaviour. Procedures to deal with incidents of bullying and oppressive behaviour are reinforced by a strong and proactive anti-bullying policy reviewed and developed by the school council. Effective supporting materials have also been developed and are widely used in tutorial sessions. This is an outstanding feature. Parents and pupils are confident that prompt and positive action is taken by the school if any anti-social behaviour occurs.
131. The school places access for the disabled high on its list of priorities. A very detailed Access Plan and a comprehensive equal opportunities policy incorporate the Disability Equality Scheme. The school has very good physical access to the building and facilities include a lift, chair lifts and ramps. Pupils with both physical and sensory disabilities are fully supported and have access to a full curriculum. The school regularly monitors its policies and practices.
132. High quality assemblies and modules in the PSE programme promote racial equality and respect for other cultures. Racial harmony is effectively linked to the Global Citizenship Project and is reinforced by guest speakers from different faiths. Strong visual images in the school assemblies are effective stimuli. The school strives to celebrate cultural diversity and promote better race relations through activities such as the successful Refugee Week. There is substantial support for both national and international charities.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

133. This grade matches the judgment in the school's self-evaluation. It is one grade higher than the grade awarded for key question one. This is because inspectors have identified outstanding features in leadership and strategic management. These include the headteacher's leadership and the management of teams at all levels which have led to pupils making significant progress in learning.
134. The headteacher provides strong and very effective leadership. He is a very good manager of people with an outstanding overview of the school. He is able to translate ideas into workable and effective strategies. The SLG have a good range of skills and talents and its members work extremely well together. They provide clear direction for the work of the school. Shared management has developed a school community of great strength.
135. Leadership is based upon clearly stated aims and values. They are well understood and easy to use by all members of the school community. They reach into all areas of the school's work. Equality for all is a high priority based upon a caring respect for everyone associated with the school.
136. Leaders and managers have produced a range of relevant policies which reflect the school's aims. These policies allow the school to implement workable strategies for effective management. The school functions smoothly in its day-to-day routines within a stable and orderly environment. Staff and pupils work extremely well together to maintain a tangible ethos of care and improvement for all.
137. Leaders and managers take appropriate account of national priorities. The school is currently at the forefront of development of the 14-19 Learning Pathways agenda for eastern Swansea. The school has forged outstanding and workable partnerships with its primary, tertiary and further education colleagues. These long-standing arrangements are of great benefit to all pupils and ensure stability and continuity of provision.
138. Senior leaders and managers are linked to specific staff teams and faculties to help oversee and co-ordinate their management. They are highly sophisticated systems for tracking staff and pupil performance. This produces an excellent basis for setting meaningful targets for improvement. Systems are deeply embedded in the culture of the school and are refined after evaluation each year. The management of teams at all levels is outstanding.
139. Processes for change are based firmly upon research, analysis, evaluation and professional dialogue. All change is designed to meet a particular need and must be focused on improvements in teaching and learning. The recent introduction of a new Pastoral Faculty is based upon improving pupils' learning and overseeing the performance of all individuals. The processes involved in

this development, including a substantial input from the GB, have created a strong feeling of ownership in the school.

140. Staff review processes are very good, well established and greatly valued. The cycle of annual reviews consists of formal and informal elements and is used well by all teams. The activities and outcomes of all teams are reviewed in detail each year. Performance management is very good and informs professional development, departmental development plans and funding requests. All staff members receive measurable targets as part of the review process. The process of identification, tracking and evaluation of INSET needs is highly sophisticated and cost effective.
141. The GB helps to set the strategic direction for the school. Governors have been particularly effective in recent management reviews and restructuring. They are active and committed supporters of the school.
142. Governors are well informed about issues that affect the performance of the school. They monitor the quality of provision mainly through careful scrutiny of prepared reports. They use the information to take effective and appropriate decisions. They act as critical friends of the school and work closely with the headteacher and senior managers. They have ensured that all regulatory and legal responsibilities are met.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

143. This grade matches the judgment in the school's self-evaluation.
144. The findings of the inspection team match very well those of the school. The grades awarded by the team, for each key question, are the same as those the school awarded itself through self-evaluation.
145. The school's procedures for monitoring and evaluating its performance are highly effective and centre extremely well on improving the quality of learning and teaching. Robust systems for monitoring and self-evaluation were in place at the last inspection and have continued to be refined. They are now outstanding in many respects.
146. The school is forward thinking and keeps at the forefront of research concerning learning, teaching and educational matters in general. Self-evaluation is based on research and first-hand evidence. It takes excellent account of the views of pupils, staff and other interested parties. In particular, the school council plays an outstanding role in discussion and making decisions. Two senior pupils are active participants in most GB meetings.
147. The school's self-evaluation report and the subsequent improvement plan identify clearly the school's strengths and areas for development. Although several

departmental plans, and some aspects of school plans lack detail, planning overall is still very effective in improving quality and standards.

148. Systematic and consistent procedures for self-evaluation draw well upon a very broad range of evidence including classroom observations, reviews of pupils' and teachers' work, surveys and rigorous analysis of performance data. The school makes very good use of all data to analyse trends over time and in planning for improvement.
149. Managers of behaviour and attendance are active in monitoring and reviewing these aspects of pupils' performance, and in supporting them to improve.
150. Systems for tracking the standards, general progress and well-being of individual pupils are outstanding. They are extremely rigorous and inform staff very well about individuals so that they can help them to reach their potential. Systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of new WAG initiatives are not yet implemented fully.
151. Planning for improvement is outstanding. Departmental plans for improvement are discussed fully with the SLG and link well with the SIP. All staff members, pupils and the GB work very effectively together to meet challenging targets and have brought about improvements across many aspects of school life.
152. A particularly outstanding feature of self-evaluation is the way in which all planning for improvement has pupils' quality of learning, achievement and progress at the heart of it. Individual teachers act well upon colleagues' and pupils' suggestions on how to improve aspects of learning and teaching. Pupils are actively encouraged by teachers to be critical friends.
153. Planning has led to pupils receiving very good quality learning experiences and teaching that is innovative and often outstanding. Overall, planning and subsequent action have led to measurable improvements in pupils' achievement, behaviour, attendance and, significantly, in self esteem and confidence for very many of them.
154. Planning and priorities are supported well through very efficient financial control, within the constraints of the budget, with adequate allocation of resources.
155. Over 90% of parents or carers who responded to the inspection's questionnaire felt that the school encouraged them to play an active part in the life of the school, were satisfied with their child's work and progress, and thought that the school's values and attitudes had a good effect on their child. They also stated that in their opinion the school achieved high standards of good behaviour.
156. Workload and remodelling reforms have been planned for well and are being dealt with effectively, giving members of staff opportunity to gain support and training. There is very good Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for all staff members and it is linked well to the priorities of the individuals concerned and of the school.

157. The school has addressed fully almost all aspects of the key issues identified in the last inspection report. It has:

- increased the proportion of pupils gaining GCSE passes at grades A* - C in science, made good progress in developing pupils' investigative skills and improved provision in science to support pupils of average and below average ability at both key stages;
- raised the achievement of girls in physical education at both key stages;
- improved curricular provision for design and technology at KS3;
- further developed pupils' performing skills in music;
- enhanced the provision and training for the use of ICT in subjects;
- reduced the proportion of pupils who leave school at 16 without a suitable and recognised qualification;
- improved significantly the outdoor facilities for the teaching of physical education; and
- met statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship.

158. However, the school has been unable to make better provision for the teaching of swimming, and work is continuing to improve further the quality and consistency of teaching in physics.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

159. This grade matches the judgment in the school's self-evaluation.

160. Despite the 12% decrease in pupil numbers since the last inspection, and the resultant reduction in teaching staff, the ratio of teachers to pupils has been maintained at a high level. Also, the time teachers spend with classes has increased. There is a sufficient number of well-qualified teaching staff to meet the needs of the curriculum in all subjects apart from physical education, where a few lessons are taught by non-specialists.

161. An outstanding feature of the school is the support given to pupils with SEN and ALN in the STF and mainstream. The well-planned deployment and professional development of the LSAs, as well as their involvement in the planning process, enables these pupils to make very good progress.

162. The school's workload and remodelling arrangements meet statutory requirements and all teachers are allocated appropriate planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time and resources.

163. There are sufficient resources for each subject. The provision of IT equipment and software is of a high standard. This, combined with the high level of technical support, ensures pupils have excellent opportunities to develop their IT skills and make full use of the research capabilities provided by the internet.

164. Changes have been made to the accommodation to address the issues identified during the last inspection. There is an ongoing programme of redecoration, the

whole site is very clean and tidy, inside and out, and the school is generally free from litter and graffiti. The recently constructed playing field, provided with support by a lottery grant, significantly enhances the delivery of physical education.

165. The school is very well equipped to meet the needs of pupils and adults with disabilities. The only area which is difficult to access is the English department on the first-floor; classes, which include pupils with a physical disability, are scheduled elsewhere. There is a clear accessibility plan to improve access when funds become available.
166. Procedures for ensuring the safety of all who work in the school are appropriate, as are the security arrangements. No issues of concern were noted during the inspection.
167. The means for ensuring the continued professional development of teachers are outstanding. Training opportunities are identified for each teacher to address their three individual target areas for development, identified through the performance management programme. Teachers are then enabled to undertake training to address these areas and the resultant effects on their pupils' learning are assessed at the performance management meeting in the following year.
168. The capabilities of various non-teaching staff members are identified well and these procedures are a further distinctive feature of the school's work. These individuals are then developed to fulfil key roles in the operation of the school.
169. The system of budgetary control within the school is outstanding. There is a continuous review of every aspect of the school's operations to identify changes to secure more cost-effectiveness. Importantly, all financial decisions are made in relation to the effect on pupils' personal, social and academic development as the main priority. The significant benefits derived from the development of the pastoral team, at a time when teaching posts were being lost, shows how the GB and SLG consider the long-term effects of their decisions.
170. The day-to-day financial management is of a high standard. There is a 'cost-centre' approach, whereby each department has a clearly defined budget based on its agreed development plan. This enables close control to be exercised over expenditure and a monthly report to governors allows them to monitor progress regularly. The shortcomings identified in the 2006 audit have been addressed.
171. The school provides good value for money, as indicated by:
 - improving GCSE examination results;
 - good standards of achievement;
 - very good progress made by pupils with SEN and ALN; and
 - the very high standards of teaching.

School's response to the inspection

172. The headteacher, staff and governors welcome the report. It is very pleasing to note the recognition of Birchgrove as a very good school with many distinctive and outstanding features.
173. The outstanding standards achieved in teaching reflect the skill, commitment and dedication of our teachers and the outstanding work of our support staff is duly recognised. The Learning Focus has been instrumental in promoting the exceptionally high quality learning experiences that pervade all lessons.
174. The report also acknowledges that all pupils, regardless of ability, ethnicity, gender and social background have outstanding opportunities to achieve highly. It also confirms the commitment of the GB and their undoubted contribution to the school's overall success and development.
175. Features recognised as outstanding which contribute significantly to the exceptionally high quality learning experiences include the excellent working relationships between staff and pupils, the pastoral and academic support and guidance provided for pupils (including careers and WRE), the very good behaviour and reward system, the school's very successful transition programme and, finally, partnerships with parents, the community and other providers.
176. We are also pleased that the report recognises the outstanding opportunities provided via our extra-curricular provision and the positive impact upon pupils' social development.
177. The report provides useful recommendations for further improving performance and it is pleasing to note the accurate correlation of the school's self-evaluation report with the inspection team's findings. This proves our self-evaluation systems in the school function effectively at all levels with three of the recommendations already part of the current improvement plans.
178. The action plan, written in response to the inspection report recommendations, will be sent to all parents and the governors' Annual Report to parents will report on progress made against each recommendation.
179. In conclusion, the school wishes to acknowledge the professional, collaborative and rigorous approach of the inspection team at all stages of the process. The inspection and subsequent report has provided us, as a school, with a valuable external audit and a positive endorsement of the work of all stakeholders at the school. It has served to reinforce our agenda for improvement and we can now move forward as a learning community with confidence.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Birchgrove Comprehensive School
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-16
Address of school	Birchgrove Road, Birchgrove Swansea
Postcode	SA7 9NB
Telephone number	01792 535400

Headteacher	Mr Julian Doroszczuk
Date of appointment	October 2000
Chair of governors / Appropriate authority	Mr Wyn Jones
Reporting inspector	Mr Peter Carter
Dates of inspection	8 th – 11 th October 2007

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total
Number of pupils	142	155	137	163	163	760

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	45	5	47.5

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16:1
Average teaching group size	24
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	77.9%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	93.2	91.9	89.8	89.3	90.5	-	-	90.9
Term 2	90.1	89.5	88.7	89.6	88.4	-	-	89.2
Term 3	90.2	88.4	85.5	87.3	97.8	-	-	90.0

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	21%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	45 temporary 6 permanent

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2007															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 137															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	3	7.5	8.2	32.8	35.8	10.4	2.2	0	0
		National	0.2	1	1	0.4	0.3	1.5	7.4	21.6	35.8	23.9	8	0.2	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	3	3.7	13.4	19.4	23.1	20.9	15.7	0.7	0
		National	0.2	5	1	0.3	0.3	1.1	7.4	18.4	25	30.4	15.7	0.6	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0.7	3.7	9.7	25.4	44	14.2	2.2	0	0
		National	0.2	1	1	0.3	0.1	0.5	6.0	18.8	35.1	27.6	11.5	0.1	0

- D Pupils excepted under statutory arrangements from part of the National Curriculum
 A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence
 F Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence
 W Pupils who are working towards level 1
 EP Exceptional Performance, where pupils at key stage 3 perform above level 8

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
By teacher assessment		by test	
In the school	36.6	In the school	-
In Wales	58.2	In Wales	-

Public Examination Results:

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ	
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2007	163
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	38

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2007:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	87	86	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	47	56	54
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	85	85	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	33	42	40
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	98	98	98
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	74	78	77
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	90	93	93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	2	3	4
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	8	3	3
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1			
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2			

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Eight inspectors including the school's nominee spent a total of 32 days in the school and met as a team before the inspection.

These inspectors visited:

- 49 lessons or part lessons;
- acts of collective worship;
- registration and form tutor periods; and
- a range of extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team had meetings with:

- staff, governors, parents and carers before the inspection began;
- senior leaders, middle managers, teachers, support and administrative staff;
- representatives of the community; and
- groups of pupils during the inspection.

The inspection team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- 99 responses to a parents' questionnaire;
- comprehensive documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection; and
- a wide range of pupils' work across the curriculum from Y7 to Y11.

The registered inspector held post-inspection meetings with the school leadership group and the governing body.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Mr Peter Carter (Registered Inspector)	Context, Summary, Recommendations, Key Question One
Mr David Williams	Key Question Two
Mrs Julia Longville	Key Question Three
Mr Gwyn Griffiths	Key Question Four
Mr Ronald Graham	Key Question Five
Dr Alan Cooke	Key Question Six
Mr Edward Tipper	Key Question Seven
Mr Rod Francis	Nominee

Acknowledgement

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

Contractor

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