

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Brynmawr School
Rhyd
Intermediate Road
Brynmawr
NP23 4XT**

School Number: 6775401

Date of Inspection: 22nd – 26th October 2007

by

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Brynmawr 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 Brynmawr School took place between 22/10/07 and 26/10/07. 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 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

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Brynmawr School is an 11-18 co-educational foundation school in the Blaenau Gwent Local Education Authority (LEA). The school was founded in 1897 and moved to its present site in 1964. In 1992 it became grant maintained and assumed foundation status in 1999. In January 2007 there were 943 pupils and students on roll compared to 874 at the time of the last inspection in November 2001. At the same time there were 201 students in the sixth form. This has now risen to 241 and is a marked increase on the 117 students in the sixth form in the previous inspection. There are 973 pupils and students on roll at the time of this inspection.
2. The school serves Brynmawr and towns and villages in Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire. Attainment on entry to the school indicates that the intake represents the full range of ability. Only a very small proportion of pupils comes from a minority ethnic background and English is spoken as the first language in virtually all pupils' and students' homes.
3. There are 100 pupils with special educational needs (SEN) of whom nine have statements of SEN.
4. Just over 10% of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals. This figure is significantly lower than both the Welsh average of 17.5% and the LEA average of 24.3%. Pupils and students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds but a significant minority experiences disadvantage.
5. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2005. He has experience of working as a headteacher in another school and, before that, was deputy headteacher of this school.

The school's priorities and targets

6. The school's motto is '*Gorau Ymgais Gwybodaeth*', Knowledge is the Best Acquisition. The school aims to value all pupils and students and to ensure:
 - the promotion of self-esteem, confidence and respect for others;
 - moral and spiritual awareness;
 - high expectations in the sporting and cultural field; and
 - an awareness of the needs of the community.
7. The School Improvement Plan (SIP) 2006/8 sets targets in five areas:
 - pupils' and students' achievement;

- departmental effectiveness;
- pupil/student enrolment;
- governors, management and organisation; and
- whole-staff in-service training.

Summary

8. Brynmawr School is a successful school in most important respects. Its pupils and students attain good results in external examinations and the overwhelming majority of parents is very satisfied with the quality of education provided. The school is a safe and orderly community. Leadership and management ensure good value for money. There are, however, some shortcomings in management and compliance with curricular statutory requirements.
9. In the seven key questions the following grades were awarded.

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

Standards

10. The inspection inspected the standards that pupils and students achieve in six subjects of the curriculum at Key Stage (KS) 3 and KS4 and in the sixth form. The following table shows the grades awarded.

Standards in subjects inspected			
Subject	KS3	KS4	Sixth form
Welsh second language	2	3	3
Mathematics	2	2	2
Design and technology	3	2	3
History	2	1	1
Geography	1	1	1
Religious education	3	2	2

11. The following table shows the standards achieved by pupils and students at different key stages in the six subjects inspected.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	17%	56%	27%	0%	0%
KS4	20%	50%	30%	0%	0%
KS3 + KS4	18%	54%	28%	0%	0%
Sixth form	29%	53%	18%	0%	0%
Whole school	21%	53%	26%	0%	0%
These grades are based on observations of 73 lessons					

KS3 and KS4

12. Pupils of all abilities and at both stages are generally successful in attaining their agreed learning targets. They reach appropriate levels in key skills showing particular strengths in communication skills in the English language. Pupils achieve success regardless of their social or ethnic background. They do not, however, succeed equally well in all subjects.
13. Results at the end of KS3 in the last three years are above the averages for schools where a similar percentage of pupils is entitled to have free school meals, in respect of most key indicators of performance. At KS4, results overall compare favourably to those from similar schools. They are higher than national averages and significantly higher than local averages.
14. There is some variation in levels of attainment in recent years, corresponding, in most cases, to fluctuations in levels of ability in different year groups. There is, nevertheless, strong evidence which indicates an underlying trend of improvement in standards.
15. In a minority of subjects there are shortcomings in pupils' attainment. In these subjects pupils are less successful in attaining agreed learning goals. There are also shortcomings in the standards that pupils achieve in developing their bilingual competence.
16. Pupils make good progress in learning. They make particularly good progress by the end of KS4, in comparison with their standards of achievement at the end of KS2. Most pupils with additional learning needs make good progress.
17. Pupils make progress in their spiritual development and good progress in their social, moral and cultural development.
18. Pupils develop their personal and social skills well. They work productively and behave well, both in lessons and around the school. Overall, attendance is good and the great majority arrives punctually at the start of lessons and the school day.
19. Although pupils work well with each other, their abilities in working independently are less well developed. They tend to rely quite heavily on their

teachers for guidance. In other respects they are prepared effectively for participation in the workplace and community.

The quality of education and training

20. The education provided by the school meets the needs of the great majority of pupils regardless of their gender, ability or background. However, in a minority of subjects, pupils' needs are met less effectively.
21. Overall, teaching was judged to be at least grade two (good features and no important shortcomings) in around three-quarters of lessons. In just over a quarter of lessons, teaching was judged to be grade one (good with outstanding features). These figures compare favourably with other schools inspected in Wales in 2005-2006.
22. A particular strength of teaching is the strong working relationships between pupils and teachers that foster a good atmosphere for learning in the vast majority of lessons. Lessons are usually well planned and teachers use a good range of resources and activities to maintain pupils' interests. In many lessons, interactive whiteboards are used well as a visual stimulus although sometimes their potential is not utilised fully.
23. Pupils' work is assessed well in many subjects. Most teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and provide helpful written comments and good oral feedback. This enables pupils to understand what they need to do to improve. In a minority of subjects, however, assessment is inconsistent in regularity and accuracy.
24. There is increasing use of self-assessment. It is used very well in many subjects to facilitate pupils' learning. Most pupils, therefore, have a good understanding of how well they are doing.
25. Reports to parents and carers are good. They provide clear information that focuses well on pupils' progress in subjects and on their personal development. Occasionally, however, targets for improvement are too general and do not relate explicitly to how pupils can improve in the subject itself.
26. A good range of learning experiences is provided for pupils. The curriculum is broad and flexible and provides progression between key stages. It meets the learning needs and interests of pupils at both stages and gives many opportunities to achieve accreditation.
27. At KS3, in addition to the requirements of the National Curriculum (NC), the curriculum includes an extra modern foreign language and drama. These subjects enhance the development of pupils' language and personal skills. Some foundation subjects of the NC, however, receive a smaller time allocation than others.
28. At KS4 there is a wide range of relevant subject options and a vocational opportunities programme. This helps meet the needs of pupils with different

abilities and interests. A statutory course in the Welsh language, however, is not available for all pupils at KS4.

29. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs is enjoyed by a large number of pupils. They broaden and enrich pupils' learning experiences and greatly enhance their self-confidence. Pupils and staff are actively involved in raising funds for local and national charities.
30. A well-structured mentoring programme provides good support for pupils preparing for external examinations. Good provision for pupils' personal, social, moral and cultural development occurs in assemblies, form tutor periods, Personal and Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons and other learning experiences. Opportunities to enhance spiritual development, however, are missed, particularly because pupils in a minority of classes do not have a daily act of collective worship.
31. Careers and work-related education (WRE) are well established features of the curriculum and provide good opportunities for pupils. The school runs a very effective Enterprise Week in the summer term for Y9 pupils.
32. The school places a growing emphasis on the development of pupils' basic and key skills. However, the development of bilingual competence lacks co-ordination and direction. Particular emphasis has been placed on the development of IT skills in recent years. This has contributed to very good results in external examinations and been successful in enhancing pupils' confidence when using computers.
33. Guidance and support of good quality are provided for all pupils. The school cares for, and makes a good contribution to the well-being of all pupils.
34. The school's transition and induction procedures and the mentoring system for younger pupils are appreciated by the pupils. As a result new pupils settle well into the school.
35. Form tutors give good guidance. Pupils feel they can approach staff members and share any concerns. Parents speak highly of the supportive ethos of the school. Out of 138 responses to a questionnaire distributed to parents and carers before the inspection, over 96% were positive. This is a relatively high figure. The homework diaries help parents keep well informed of their child's work and progress. Both pupils and parents are confident that anti-bullying procedures are effective.
36. There are effective links with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) which help encourage good attendance. The Breakfast Club is well attended by many pupils. Healthy living and eating and The Rewards In School Education (RISE) initiative, all promoted by the school council, help motivate and support the well-being of pupils.
37. At the end of KS3 pupils receive good guidance about choosing subject options. They also receive appropriate guidance about future careers from Y9 onwards

and throughout KS4. This provides useful guidance for pupils who wish to enter the sixth form.

38. Arrangements for identifying levels at which pupils are working and their additional learning needs (ALN) are very good. Strong links with partner primary schools enable the school to gather information in order to meet individual needs effectively. Some sixth-form students provide very good support for younger pupils through paired reading. Good support is also provided by designated support teachers for pupils with ALN in Year (Y) 7 and Y8.
39. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) provides good support. The quality of guidance provided for teachers is further enhanced by information in the very good SEN handbook. Groups of pupils withdrawn from mainstream classes to enable needs such as dyslexia to be addressed receive good support. Individual Education Plans (IEP) are specific and of good quality.
40. The provision for children who are looked after by the local authority is effective. Good use is made of external specialist support agencies.
41. In a minority of subjects, where there are difficulties in providing designated staff support for pupils with SEN, IEPs are not used effectively. In these cases staff representatives of subject departments do not attend some meetings of the SEN forum. There are inconsistencies in departmental planning to meet pupils' needs and monitor their progress.
42. Provision for pupils who are more able and talented lacks co-ordination across subjects. There is insufficient modification of tasks and resources for pupils with additional learning needs in some lessons.
43. The quality of provision for equal opportunities is good at both stages. All pupils are included in all aspects of provision. The Homework Club provides useful opportunities for pupils from various social backgrounds to receive help and use Information Technology (IT) resources. Religious education and school assemblies enhance pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures.
44. Details are recorded of the gender, ethnicity and ability of pupils who take courses at KS4. This enables the school to monitor the attainment and achievement of different groups of pupils.

Leadership and management

45. The leadership provided by the headteacher has good, and some very good, features. He values good levels of attainment highly and a safe and orderly learning environment. He is supported well by the senior management team (SMT). Since his appointment standards of attainment have risen steadily.
46. In the great majority of cases, middle managers lead their teams or departments very effectively. They have good links with senior leaders and managers, understand their duties and responsibilities and fulfil these

effectively. This contributes well to the success that learners achieve in these subject departments.

47. In a minority of cases, there are shortcomings in departmental management. Where this occurs, managers are less effective in driving up standards of attainment and manage their teams less efficiently. They do not monitor performance and the quality of education provided by their departments well enough. There are also shortcomings in senior managers' quality assurance of these departments.
48. Governors work closely with the school. They are committed and loyal supporters. They meet regularly as a Governing Body (GB) and have appropriate committees to enable them to carry out their work effectively. They have not, however, ensured that the school complies fully with all statutory requirements.
49. Leaders and most middle managers understand their responsibilities. All subjects use first-hand evidence to evaluate their work using the Estyn Common Inspection Framework. For a significant minority, however, the process of evaluation is lacking in depth and rigour.
50. Self-evaluation is successful in seeking the views of pupils, parents and carers and good account is taken of their views. Pupils' views are sought through the school council and the teaching and learning pupil committee as well as through an increasing use of self-assessment. Parents, carers and pupils are consulted well through questionnaires and their views are acted upon appropriately.
51. The headteacher and senior leaders play a significant role in using self-evaluation to plan for improvement. They pay particular attention to analysis of previous results in external examinations and appropriate targets are set for all subjects at both stages. Priorities are supported well by the allocation of resources and this has led to a marked improvement in the use of IT in subjects. Overall, however, there is inconsistency across subjects in setting clear and measurable priorities for improvement that relate explicitly to learning.
52. Self-evaluation contributes well to continuing improvements made in relation to the attainments of pupils in external examinations. Overall, good progress has been made since the last inspection in improving standards of achievement in most subjects and also in the quality of teaching and accommodation. There are, however, other aspects of the key issues listed in the report of the last inspection that have not been addressed fully. These include, for example, compliance with statutory requirements and strategic planning.
53. The school has sufficient specialist and experienced teachers to deliver all the subjects and aspects of the NC. Some staff members have useful experience of working in industry. In a few departments, some non-specialist teachers teach the subject but they are supported well. Their teaching does not detract from the overall quality of provision.

54. There is an appropriate number of learning support assistants and support teachers who work closely with their designated pupils. Effective use is made of external specialist staff to address pupils' special needs.
55. The team of clerical staff contributes significantly to the smooth-running of the school and members of the caretaking, cleaning and catering staff undertake their duties conscientiously and well.
56. The school's resources for learning are good and pupils have access to very good IT facilities. There is no central library but a good variety of books is available in all subject areas to aid learning.
57. The best use is made of accommodation. The school, externally and internally, is kept in very good decorative order and the extensive sports grounds are free from litter.
58. The good and occasionally outstanding displays in corridors and classrooms enhance pupils' learning. There is a good balance between the presentation of information and the display of pupils' own work.
59. The financial management of the school is outstanding. Decisions, sometimes quite difficult ones, are made in order to make best use of the funds to improve learning and resources. All spending is carefully considered and closely linked to the objectives set out in the SIP. The use of all resources is reviewed on a continual basis. At KS3 and KS4 the school gives good value for money.

Sixth form

Standards

60. In over four-fifths of lessons observed in the six subjects inspected students achieved standards which had good features and no important shortcomings. There were outstanding features in over a quarter of the lessons. Standards in all sixth-form lessons observed were judged to be grade three or better.
61. Students attain high standards at Advanced (A) level in almost all subjects. They are particularly successful in attaining the higher grades of A, B and C, especially by comparison with the local average. They demonstrate good standards in all key skills except for bilingual competence.
62. In the sixth form, students make good progress in learning and particularly in the development of knowledge and understanding of the subjects they study. Most students know how well they are doing and how to improve. Their successful attainment helps them to move to higher education or employment.
63. Students have good personal and social skills. They show confidence and self-esteem and are at ease when speaking to each other, members of staff and visitors to the school. They work very conscientiously, making good use of their

time. However, they tend to rely on teachers' support and are less accustomed to directing their own studies and working independently.

The quality of education and training

64. Teaching is good with no important shortcomings in the large majority of lessons. Teachers establish effective working relationships with students and provide good support for them in and outside of lessons. They have good knowledge of their subjects and use this effectively to prepare students well for external examinations. Lessons are usually planned well and work is closely matched to students' individual needs.
65. In the best lessons teachers provide students with good opportunities to work both independently and with each other. In other lessons, however, teaching tends to be over directive and, as a consequence, students are involved less actively in the process of learning.
66. Students' work is assessed well in most subjects. Marking is usually thorough and teachers provide helpful feedback that focuses well on strengths and aspects for improvement. In a minority of subjects, however, assessment is inconsistent in terms of regularity and accuracy.
67. Students are involved in assessing their own progress and most do this well. Reports to parents and carers provide good information about academic and personal progress. Often, however, comments from subject teachers are too general and do not provide clear information on how a student can improve their knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject itself.
68. Students are offered a good range of learning experiences and courses. These prepare them effectively for higher education, training and employment. Provision is enhanced by collaborative links with a local school and college.
69. Students are involved in a number of extra-curricular activities and a pastoral programme which contribute to the development of their personal and social skills. However, the statutory provision of religious education in the sixth form is not available.
70. The school has established a supervised study facility to support students. Good individual support is provided when needed for students who have difficulties with literacy such as dyslexia. There are good support systems to help the large majority of students who apply for places on university courses.
71. A significant number of sixth-form students assist in the provision of learning support for pupils in Y7.

Leadership and management

72. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very effective. They have helped the school to provide successfully for the significant increase in the

number of students in the sixth form in the last two years. The sound management of the sixth form has also contributed to its smooth operation and the creation of improved study facilities for students. The most recent results at A level have been particularly good.

73. The good features of self-evaluation evident at KS3 and KS4 also occur in the sixth form. Students' views are sought through the school council and sixth-form council and students are confident that their views are given appropriate consideration. Self-evaluation contributes well to students' attainment in external examinations. Overall, however, there is some inconsistency across subject departments in the rigour of self-evaluation and the effectiveness of planning for improvement.
74. The sixth-form curriculum is delivered very effectively by a team of well-qualified and experienced teachers. Facilities for the sixth form are very good. A large learning resource area is very well equipped with computers. Sixth-form students have their own common room. This, however, is functional rather than a relaxed place to socialise.
75. The budget is exceptionally tight. This is due mainly to the very large increase in the numbers of students in the sixth form, and to the level of funding which is based on the smaller numbers of students in previous years rather than on the present needs. Funds are managed especially well to maximise provision of resources for students. This and other factors, including the number of higher grades attained at A level, clearly demonstrate that the management of the sixth form gives outstanding value for money.

Recommendations

To continue to improve the school should implement the following recommendations.

- R1 Address the shortcomings in standards in Welsh second language, design and technology and religious education identified in this report.
- R2 Continue to develop pupils' and students' skills in working independently.*
- R3 Meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship, the teaching of Welsh at KS4 and religious education in the sixth form.
- R4 Improve systems to assure quality and consistency in middle management.*
- R5 Make more consistent and effective use of self-evaluation to identify clear and measurable aspects for improvement.*
- R6 Ensure all departments make effective use of IEPs to address effectively, pupils' special educational needs.
- R7 Develop and implement strategies to promote and enhance learners' bilingual skills.

*Aspects of 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.

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 76. This grade matches the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.

KS3 and KS4

- 77. The following table shows the standards that pupils achieved in KS3 and KS4 in the six subjects inspected.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	17%	56%	27%	0%	0%
KS4	20%	50%	30%	0%	0%
KS3 + KS4	18%	54%	28%	0%	0%
These grades are based on observations of 56 lessons					

78. The figures in this table exceed the national targets for 2007 for standards in 98% of lessons to be awarded grades one, two or three and for standards in 65% of lessons to be awarded grades one or two. They also compare very favourably with standards in other secondary schools in Wales inspected in 2005-2006.
79. The highest standards which had good and outstanding features were achieved in geography at both stages and in history at KS4. In religious education and design and technology at KS3 and in Welsh second language at KS4 standards had good features which outweighed some shortcomings. In mathematics at both key stages, Welsh second language and history at KS3 and religious education and design and technology at KS4 standards had good features and no important shortcomings.
80. Overall, there is little significant difference between the standards achieved at KS3 and KS4. At both stages, the great majority of pupils with SEN achieves good standards in relation to their abilities.
81. At KS3, in the most recent assessments where comparative data is available, (2004-2006) attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and in the three subjects combined was above the average for schools with a similar intake in many cases.
82. At KS4, results overall in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations in 2006 were above the averages for similar schools in Wales. In 2004 and 2005, however, GCSE examination results were mostly below the averages for schools where a similar percentage of pupils is entitled to have free school meals. Although results in 2007 were a little lower than in 2006, attainment remained above national averages and significantly higher than local averages. There have been significant increases in the GCSE pass rates in 2006 and 2007 by comparison with results in 2004 and 2005.
83. The variation in attainment in recent years corresponds, in most cases, to fluctuations in levels of ability in different year groups. There is strong evidence which indicates an underlying trend of improvement in standards.
84. In most subjects, girls outperform boys. In recent years, however, the difference between girls' and boys' attainment in all key indicators of performance at KS4, has been reduced. The difference between girls' and boys' results is now smaller than it is locally or nationally.
85. The standards achieved by pupils in the key skills of communication, numeracy and IT have good features and no important shortcomings. Very good progress

has been made in the development of pupils' key skills, especially their communication skills in the English language, their IT skills, and their ability to apply these skills in different subjects. This has a positive impact on the standards that pupils achieve across the curriculum.

86. In lessons in Welsh second language at KS3 pupils demonstrate standards of bilingual competence that have good features and no important shortcomings. At KS4, most pupils do not study the Welsh language and, therefore, make no further progress in this subject. This is an important shortcoming. At both stages pupils rarely practise their bilingual communication skills outside Welsh lessons.
87. Pupils of all abilities and at both stages are generally successful in attaining their agreed learning targets and, in some cases, exceeding expectations. There are no significant barriers to learning. Pupils achieve success regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background.
88. In most subjects of the curriculum and at both key stages the great majority of pupils makes good progress. They have made particularly good progress by the end of KS4 in comparison with their standards of achievement at the end of KS2. Most pupils show interest in their work and apply themselves to it conscientiously. They make good progress in acquiring new knowledge, skills and understanding and using them in increasingly unfamiliar contexts.
89. Most pupils understand how well they are doing and know their own strengths and weaknesses. They know what they need to do in order to improve. There is some inconsistency across departments in the use of data and NC levels of attainment in setting targets for further improvement.
90. The good progress made by pupils of different abilities in most subjects helps them move from one stage of education to the next. Very good use is made of information from partner primary schools to help pupils perform to the best of their abilities when they enter KS3. As pupils progress to KS4 and, for most pupils, into the sixth form, they are enabled to adjust their levels of performance to the demands of external examination courses.
91. Pupils generally have a good work ethic. The conscientious approach adopted by most pupils helps them to realise their potential. The attainment of many often exceeds expectations.
92. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. The great majority shows good levels of motivation and responds positively to tasks set for work in class or at home. Pupils show interest in their work and sustain good levels of concentration.
93. The behaviour of pupils, both in lessons and around the school, is very good. They behave responsibly, show respect for each other and members of staff and are welcoming and courteous to visitors. Inappropriate behaviour seldom affects learning in lessons.

94. Parents who responded to a questionnaire and pupils interviewed during the inspection agree that bullying is rare. They are confident that the school deals promptly and effectively with any instance of bullying.
95. Attendance rates, at just over 90%, are similar to those noted in the report of the last inspection. Overall, attendance is a little higher than the local average and very close to the national average. It is, however, below the national target of 93%.
96. Unauthorised absence is similar to the average nationally but higher than the local average. With few exceptions, pupils arrive punctually to lessons and at the start of the school day.
97. Although pupils work well with each other, their abilities in working independently are less well developed in many subjects. They tend to rely quite heavily on their teachers for guidance. Although pupils develop their problem-solving and decision-making skills in some subjects, their progress overall is constrained by this tendency to depend on teachers' direction.
98. Pupils develop their personal and social skills well. The PSHE programme and other events organised by the school help them develop positive attitudes to lifelong learning.
99. Pupils make good use of opportunities to enhance their personal development. These opportunities promote their social, moral and cultural development. Assemblies, as well as some lessons and extra-curricular activities, make important contributions to this. Pupils demonstrate their personal development by the positive attitudes and values they show as members of the school community. Spiritual development, however, is promoted less effectively.
100. Pupils acknowledge and respect different beliefs and cultures. A wide range of activities, both in and out of school, show a socially caring and supportive ethos. Concerns for others and social awareness are demonstrated by a range of activities including annual charity events which raise considerable funds each year.
101. All pupils in Y10 are involved in WRE and this helps prepare them for participation in the workplace and community. Pupils report that they enjoy these experiences and find them relevant and useful.

Sixth form

102. The following table shows the standards that sixth-form students achieved in the six subjects inspected.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Sixth form	29%	53%	18%	0%	0%
These grades are based on observations of 17 lessons					

103. These figures exceed both national targets for 2007. These targets are for grades one or two to be awarded for standards in 65% of lessons and grade three or above to be awarded for standards in 98% of lessons. However, the sample is small and such comparisons are not wholly reliable.
104. Standards have good and outstanding features in history and geography. They have good features and no important shortcomings in mathematics and religious education. Standards have good features which outweigh shortcomings in Welsh second language and design and technology. The lessons in which standards were judged to be grade three occurred in Welsh second language and design and technology.
105. Results in external examinations are very good overall. In the A2 level examinations in 2007, 71% achieved the higher grades of A, B and C. The two highest grades were achieved by 46% of candidates. The overall pass rate (Grades A to E) was 98%. These are impressive figures which are higher than the national averages for 2006. The proportion of students who achieved the higher grades in 2007 is significantly higher than both local and national averages in 2006.
106. Students make good progress in the development and application of their key skills. The standards they achieve in communication using the English language, numeracy and IT are good with no important shortcomings in most subjects. There are particular strengths in students' use of IT.
107. There are few opportunities for students to use their bilingual communication skills. Many students show a basic understanding of some signs and greetings in the Welsh language but their overall competence shows minimal development.
108. The school attracts many students into the sixth form. As well as the students who progress from Y11 in Brynmawr, students from other schools are also admitted into the sixth form. The sixth form is more than double the size it was at the time of the last inspection. Once students begin their studies in Y12, the majority remains to complete their studies in Y13. Of these, around 85% proceed directly to higher education.
109. Most students meet their learning and attainment targets. Students' progress and performance are carefully monitored and these procedures help them to achieve success.
110. In the sixth form, students make good progress in learning and particularly in the development of knowledge and understanding in the subjects they study. Overall, trends in performance show improvements in recent years. Almost all students know how well they are doing and how they can improve. Their successful attainment helps them to move on to higher education or employment.
111. Students have good personal and social skills. They show confidence and self-esteem. They are at ease when speaking to each other, members of staff and

visitors to the school. They work very conscientiously and make good use of their time. However, they tend to rely on teachers' support and are less accustomed to directing their own studies and working independently.

112. Students gain in maturity during their time in the sixth form and make an important contribution to the school community. Many use well-developed personal and social skills to help younger pupils. They generally act responsibly and provide good role models.

113. In the sixth form, students' attendance and punctuality are generally good.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

114. This grade matches the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.

KS3 and KS4

115. The following table shows the grades awarded for teaching in the six subjects.

	Grade1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	19%	56%	25%	0%	0%
KS4	33%	39%	22%	6%	0%
KS3 & KS4	24%	50%	24%	2%	0%
These grades are based on observation of 54 lessons					

116. The following table shows the grades awarded for teaching in all lessons observed.

	Grade1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	21%	58%	21%	0%	0%
KS4	39%	36%	21%	4%	0%
KS3 & KS4	28%	49%	22%	1%	0%
These grades are based on observation of 79 lessons					

117. The figures compare very favourably with other schools inspected in Wales in 2005-2006. There is a greater proportion of lessons judged to be grade one (28% compared with 17%). Also, in 77% of lessons teaching was judged to be grade two or better compared with 69% in other schools.

118. The proportion of lessons where teaching is judged to be grade two or better is very similar at both key stages. There is, however, a greater proportion of lessons where teaching was judged to be grade one at KS4 than at KS3. This

is indicated in both the lessons inspected in the six subjects and in the other lessons.

119. In the six subjects inspected teaching was judged to be good with outstanding features in geography and history. In religious education, design and technology and mathematics at KS4, teaching was judged to be good with no important shortcomings. Good features outweigh shortcomings in the teaching of Welsh second language and mathematics at KS3.
120. A particular strength of teaching is the strong working relationship between pupils and their teachers. These foster a very good learning atmosphere in nearly all lessons and are highly successful in promoting pupils' positive attitudes to their work. Teachers exercise their authority clearly and fairly and treat all pupils with respect and sensitivity
121. Nearly all lessons are planned well with clear objectives that are communicated effectively to pupils. They are structured appropriately and progress at a good pace with activities that are matched carefully to meet pupils' needs. In a very few lessons, however, teachers do not always allow sufficient time at the end to summarise the work. Homework is usually used well to consolidate and extend pupils' learning
122. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this competently to explain work clearly to pupils. Most use questions skilfully to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding and make good use of their responses. Occasionally, however, their questions only require short answers and opportunities for more effective dialogue with pupils are missed.
123. Teachers make effective use of a good range of resources to capture pupils' interests. Electronic whiteboards feature prominently in many lessons. They are used well to present information to pupils. Sometimes, however, they are not used interactively and their potential is not exploited fully. Learning support assistants (LSA) provide good support to individuals and small groups where appropriate.
124. Teaching is successful in treating pupils fairly and in securing equal opportunity for all. In a few lessons, however, boys tend to answer more questions asked by teachers than girls.
125. Except in lessons in Welsh second language there are few opportunities that enable pupils to develop their communication skills in the use of the Welsh language.
126. A range of benchmark data is used appropriately to set targets for individual pupils at the start of each key stage. Subject teachers assess pupils' work at regular intervals throughout the school year using NC levels at KS3 and GCSE grades at KS4. This information is recorded onto a whole-school database and is used systematically throughout the school year to track pupils' progress. Overall, the process is effective in identifying and responding to those who are underachieving.

127. Pupils' work is assessed well in most subjects. Most teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and provide helpful written comments and good oral feedback to them.
128. In a minority of subjects, however, assessment is inconsistent in terms of accuracy and regularity. Marking sometimes lacks rigour and does not provide sufficient information to pupils on aspects for improvement.
129. There is increasing use of self-assessment by pupils. It is used well in several subjects to facilitate their learning. Teachers also use RISE points to encourage good work from pupils and these provide a good stimulus for many of them. Overall, most pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
130. Teaching meets all statutory requirements for assessing and reporting on pupils' progress at KS3 and also the requirements of examination boards at KS4.
131. Reports to parents and carers are good. They provide clear information that focuses well on pupils' progress in subjects and also on their personal development. Targets for improvement are indicated but sometimes they do not give clear information as to how a pupil can improve in the subject itself.

Sixth form

132. The following table shows the grades awarded for teaching in the six subjects inspected.

Grade1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
29%	42%	29%	0%	0%
These grades are based on observations of 14 lessons				

133. The following table shows the grades awarded for teaching in all lessons observed.

Grade1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
19%	57%	24%	0%	0%
These grades are based on observations of 21 lessons				

134. Teaching has good features and no important shortcomings in over three-quarters of lessons. It is good with outstanding features in just under one fifth of lessons. Good features outweigh shortcomings in all lessons. However, in just under a quarter of lessons observed, shortcomings were judged to be important.
135. In the six subjects inspected teaching was judged to be good with outstanding features in geography and history. In mathematics and religious education teaching was judged to have good features and no important shortcomings. In

Welsh second language and design and technology teaching was judged to have good features which outweighed some shortcomings.

136. Teachers establish effective working relationships with students and provide good support for them in and outside of lessons. They have good subject knowledge and use this particularly well to assist students in preparing for external examinations.
137. Lessons are usually planned well and structured appropriately to meet students' needs. Teachers explain ideas clearly to students in lessons and make good use of resources to capture students' interests. Electronic whiteboards feature prominently in many lessons and are used effectively to present information to students in stimulating contexts. They are not, however, always used interactively.
138. In the best lessons questions are used very skilfully to probe and extend students' knowledge and understanding of their work. Furthermore, in these lessons good opportunities are provided to enable students to work both independently and with others. Occasionally, however, teachers do not secure the active involvement of students in lessons and this adversely affects their ability to work independently.
139. Teaching is successful in treating students fairly and in promoting opportunities for all. It is, however, less successful in promoting bilingualism. Outside of Welsh second language lessons there is little use made of incidental Welsh in other subjects.
140. Students' work is assessed well in most subjects. Marking is usually thorough and teachers provide helpful oral feedback that focuses well on aspects for improvement. In a minority of subjects, however, the regularity and accuracy of assessment are inconsistent. Marking sometimes lacks rigour and does not exemplify clear aspects for improvement to students.
141. Reports to parents and carers provide good information relating to both academic and personal development. Students are involved in assessing their own progress in several subjects and also provide their own self-evaluative comments in their reports. Comments from subject teachers are usually detailed and give a broad overview of progress. Targets for improvement are indicated but often they do not give clear information about how a student can improve in the subject itself.

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

142. This grade is one lower than the school's self-evaluation grade. The inspection team judged that there are important shortcomings in a few areas of what is generally a good, relevant and broad curriculum.

143. The curriculum is constructed to provide a good range of learning experiences for all pupils. It is broad and flexible and is equally accessible to all pupils. The curriculum meets the learning needs and interests of pupils at all key stages and provides many opportunities to achieve appropriate qualifications.
144. At KS3, all subjects of the NC are taught to all pupils. The curriculum also includes an extra modern foreign language and drama. These subjects enhance the development of language and personal skills. The inclusion of these extra subjects is greatly appreciated by the pupils and their parents. Some subjects, however, receive a smaller time allocation as a consequence. Pupils with SEN receive the same curriculum and, with appropriate support, make good progress throughout the key stage.
145. At KS4, in addition to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, there is a wide range of relevant subject options which are studied by the majority of pupils. In addition a small number of pupils follow a vocational opportunities programme. This combines elements of school and college-based components, a life-skills course and access to distance-learning materials. This works well for pupils selecting this route. The curriculum is successful in enabling almost all pupils to achieve appropriate accreditation. There is no provision, however, for a statutory Welsh course for all pupils at KS4.
146. Continuity and progression between the stages are good. Many pupils continue their studies in the sixth form where they can choose from a good range of learning experiences and courses. The provision is enhanced by collaborative links with a local school and college of further education. The sixth form has grown rapidly in size in recent years and the curriculum has matched the expansion. Students are involved in a number of extra-curricular activities and a pastoral programme which contribute to the development of their personal and social skills. This development is limited, however, as the statutory provision of religious education is not available in the sixth form.
147. The school places a growing emphasis on the development of pupils' basic and key skills. At KS3 pupils are encouraged to develop their literacy skills by the provision of extra teaching time in English. Particular emphasis has been placed on enhancing IT skills in recent years. This has been most successful in enhancing pupils' confidence in using computers.
148. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs is enjoyed by a large number of pupils and students. They broaden and enrich pupils' learning experiences and greatly enhance their self-confidence. Pupils and staff members are actively involved in raising funds for local and national charities.
149. A well-structured and developing mentoring programme provides good support for KS4 pupils in preparation for external examinations. Good provision for pupils' personal, moral, social and cultural development occurs in assemblies, tutor periods, PSHE lessons and other learning experiences.

150. In order to provide a daily act of collective worship the school has adopted a 'Thought for the Week' approach for all classes at the start of the school day. However, opportunities to enhance pupils' spiritual development are missed, because of inconsistencies in this approach. Some classes do not receive a daily act of collective worship.
151. Careers and WRE are well-established features of the curriculum. They provide good opportunities for pupils and students. All pupils have a two-week work experience placement in KS4 which is carefully arranged and well managed. Pupils are supported well and value the opportunities to meet employers.
152. The school has good links with outside agencies and a number of local businesses. Pupils' entrepreneurial skills are developed well, particularly during a very effective Enterprise Week held in the summer term for Y9 pupils when they are encouraged to design, make and market their own product in groups. This enhances their team-building and problem-solving skills greatly.
153. Although pupils develop their understanding of the culture of Wales in the majority of subjects, their knowledge of the Welsh language is promoted less well. Bilingualism is developed through the study of Welsh as a second language at KS3. However, provision for developing the bilingual competence of all pupils lacks co-ordination and direction.
154. The school addresses social disadvantage and stereotyping in a very positive way. Teaching and support programmes encourage all pupils to succeed in their studies. Caring attitudes are fostered at all times. Members of staff have positive attitudes to pupils and their achievement of high standards. This gives pupils a healthy self-belief.
155. Pupils' awareness and understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship are developed well. They understand the significance of recycling and are aware of healthy-eating initiatives. The school council is active in this field and its members are supported by school managers and some subject departments.
156. The school reflects national priorities for lifelong learning very effectively. The level of achievement for all has risen since the last inspection. Provision for the sixth form has been transformed in that time and students' results have continued to improve as the sixth form has increased in size.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

157. This grade matches the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.
158. Pupils appreciate the guidance they receive which helps them realise their achievements, and identify areas for improvement. This ensures a comprehensive support structure for all pupils. Form tutors know their pupils

well, and the heads of year and heads of each key stage support them effectively. The school has recently established a supervised study provision for students in Y12 and Y13 which helps them to develop their independent learning skills.

159. There are strong links with parents. Parents report that the school is a very caring and supportive community. The homework diaries serve as effective links between parents and the school.
160. Pupils receive good impartial guidance when they choose their KS4 options. The options booklet is informative and pupils attend an options evening with their parents. Pupils in Y11 who wish to continue their education in the sixth form receive good guidance towards choosing courses. A parents' evening helps support this transition process. The school provides very good guidance for those students who wish to apply for higher education.
161. There are effective arrangements to help new pupils settle in. Staff members visit partner primary schools and establish effective curricular and pastoral links. Well-planned induction days and parents' evenings are arranged each year for pupils in Y6. These and other events meet the needs of pupils, including those with SEN, effectively.
162. The school's peer and academic mentoring systems are effective in supporting new pupils who can share their concerns with older pupils at the school. Pupils feel that this helps them to settle well into their new environment.
163. The school council takes an active role in seeking improvements. It has been instrumental in establishing the RISE system for recognising and rewarding good work and behaviour. This helps pupils, in particular those at KS3, to behave appropriately and motivates them to achieve well in their tasks.
164. Good systems are used to monitor attendance. Administrative staff members follow up unexplained absences immediately. Parents make appropriate use of homework diaries to notify the school of any school-time medical appointments. The school has effective links with the EWO, who supports well the school's efforts to improve attendance. The school provides an informative leaflet to parents, which emphasises the importance of good attendance. It awards attendance certificates to pupils who gain maximum attendance each term. Members of staff also check pupils' attendance in lessons.
165. The school has effective links with the careers service to guide pupils towards option choices before entering KS4. The careers evening is appreciated by pupils and parents. The school also holds a pupils' and parents' evening for Y11 pupils to outline the needs and plans for the GCSE year.
166. The school promotes healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle. School meals include more healthy options at the request of the school council. An early morning breakfast club provides a healthy start to the day for many pupils. Lessons within the PSHE programme encourage the value of regular exercise and warn of the dangers of solvent abuse.

167. There are appropriate child and adult protection policies in place. The school provides appropriate training for all teaching, ancillary and support staff. Members of staff are aware of the procedures to follow should a concern arise.
168. The school assesses pupils' progress and needs accurately and sets clear targets for improvement. Results of standardised tests indicate that most pupils with SEN make good progress. There is good individual support for those students in Y12 and Y13 who experience literacy difficulties, including dyslexia.
169. The SENCO has produced a comprehensive handbook for all staff members. This includes details on how to support pupils with SEN effectively.
170. Designated support teachers support pupils with SEN effectively in mainstream classes in Y7 and Y8. In some instances they withdraw pupils for small group support. This is good practice, which adapts lesson content and objectives appropriately to meet their needs. LSAs provide effective support for pupils with statements of SEN.
171. Support for pupils with SEN in classes without designated support staff is not as well planned. In some subjects, teachers do not plan, modify tasks, nor adapt resources appropriately, to meet pupils' needs. In some instances an LSA is relied upon to adapt the work for the pupil. These are shortcomings, which adversely affect provision for pupils with SEN.
172. Y12 and Y13 students provide an effective paired-reading programme for identified younger pupils. These pupils make good progress developing their reading skills.
173. Pupils' IEPs are specific, clear and helpful. They are reviewed twice yearly. Some departments, however, have yet to fully utilise the IEPs to plan suitable provision for pupils with SEN. This is a shortcoming because, as a consequence, some pupils' specific needs and targets are not addressed fully.
174. An SEN forum is organised by the SENCO to share information with subject departments. However, as other meetings are arranged at the same time as the SEN forum, some representatives do not attend on a regular basis. Although information and minutes are passed on to all forum members who do not attend, this is a shortcoming, which adversely affects inclusive provision and monitoring of pupils with SEN.
175. A few pupils with specific learning difficulties are withdrawn from mainstream classes to receive support to improve specific aspects of literacy. This support addresses the needs identified in their IEPs effectively.
176. The school keeps parents fully informed of their child's progress. Parents are invited to attend the annual review of statement of SEN. The school makes effective use of appropriate agencies to provide support for pupils with ALN.

177. At KS4, some pupils with various ALN follow the vocational opportunities programme. These pupils make good progress and a number of them make the successful transition to appropriate further education courses.
178. Some teachers identify the more able and talented pupils and provide extended tasks for them. However, this practice is inconsistent across all areas of the school.
179. The school's provision for a small number of pupils who are looked after by a local authority meets statutory requirements. The school has established suitable arrangements to meet the needs of any pupil who may be learning English as an additional language.
180. There are very effective strategies to prevent pupils who behave badly from disrupting the work of other pupils. The procedures to re-integrate pupils who have attended the LEA Pupil Referral Unit are effective.
181. The member of the GB responsible for SEN issues visits the school regularly to discuss aspects of ALN provision. The provision for pupils with ALN meets statutory requirements. It complies fully with the SEN Code of Practice.
182. The school ensures that all pupils have full access to all teaching and other activities at the school. The school's homework club supports pupils well. This provision is particularly useful for those pupils who do not have access to IT resources at home.
183. Various PSE lessons and school assemblies promote the school's equal opportunities and race equality policies well. These provide pupils with opportunities to understand issues of racism and encourage them to respect different faiths and cultures. Some subjects such as religious education promote understanding of, and respect for, diversity within society. Pupils respond positively and raise funds to support less fortunate children in other countries.
184. The school records details of gender, ethnicity and ability of those pupils who take courses at KS4. It monitors and analyses the attainment and achievement of different groups effectively.
185. There are good procedures to make pupils aware of the effects of bullying. Pupils state that the school's 'Buddy' system is highly effective in minimising any risk of bullying. The school's caring ethos and the vigilance of staff and pupils support pupils who may experience bullying or harassment.
186. The school has a short-term accessibility plan. However, the school has drawn up plans, with the help of the LEA, to show how access for those with disabilities could be improved, when finances become available. No priorities have yet been set.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

187. This grade is one grade lower than the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation. This is because, although inspectors recognised many good features, they judged some shortcomings to be important.
188. The grade for this key question is one grade lower than the grade awarded for key question one. This is because although overall standards of achievement and attainment are predominantly good, particularly in relation to comparative data, some important shortcomings in leadership and middle management are evident in certain areas.
189. The leadership provided by the headteacher has good, and some very good, features. He values good levels of attainment highly and a safe and orderly learning environment. The direction he gives to the work of the school is informed by these values and priorities. Standards of attainment in external examinations have risen steadily since he took up his appointment.
190. The headteacher's values reflect the priorities of parents. Out of 138 questionnaires returned by parents and carers immediately before the inspection, over 96% of responses were positive or very positive. This is a relatively high figure. The significant increase in the size of the sixth form also indicates parents' endorsement of the school's values.
191. The headteacher is supported well by members of the SMT. They work purposefully and, in most cases, successfully to improve standards and quality. They make an important contribution to the smooth operation of day-to-day routines. They use data to help set challenging targets and goals. They share the headteacher's values and this is reflected in the quality and nature of their work.
192. In most departments there are effective links between senior and middle managers. Where these occur, leaders and managers communicate well, understand their duties and responsibilities and fulfil these effectively. This contributes well to the success that learners achieve in these subject departments.
193. Most departments are managed effectively. In some departments, for example history and geography, there are outstanding features in leadership and strategic management. In some other departments, however, management has important shortcomings. In these cases, heads of departments do not manage or monitor the performance of their teams consistently well. This constrains the quality of educational provision in these subjects.

194. Where the management of subjects is less effective there are shortcomings in senior managers' quality assurance of these departments. Senior managers do not always deal with difficulties effectively enough or take prompt action to improve situations. In design and technology, for example, difficulties in middle management associated with the prolonged absence of a member of staff had not been resolved at the time of the inspection.
195. Leaders and managers work in partnership with other providers of education and training in the area. In particular, there are good collaborative links with a local school and college of further education. Leaders and managers have worked effectively in developing these links.
196. Some account has been taken of the national priorities for education. Good progress has been made, for example, in respect of provision for education for sustainable development and global citizenship. There is little evidence, however, of effective actions taken by leaders and managers to promote the development of learners' bilingual competence.
197. Leaders and managers have established suitable procedures to manage the performance of members of staff and promote their professional development. These procedures generally work well. In a minority of cases, however, performance management is not rigorous enough and does not result in significant improvements in the quality of provision.
198. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very effective. They have helped the school increase significantly the number of students in the sixth form in the last two years. The sound management of the sixth form has enabled it to operate smoothly and efficiently and has led to improvements in the accommodation and study facilities provided for students.
199. Governors work closely with the school. They are committed and loyal supporters. Very good and well-established relationships exist between senior governors and the headteacher. They meet regularly both formally and informally to discuss the work of the school.
200. Governors are well informed about the work of the school. The full GB meets regularly, studies reports and analyses of examination results and carries out reviews and audits of policies. There are appropriate committees of the GB to enable it to carry out its duties effectively. Individual governors make good use of their areas of expertise when serving on these committees.
201. Governors have not ensured that all legal and regulatory requirements are met. The school does not comply fully with statutory requirements concerning some aspects of curricular provision, nor does it provide information in the school prospectus about access for the disabled. Some key issues from the report of the last inspection have not been addressed.

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

202. This grade is one grade lower than the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation. This is because, although inspectors recognised many good features, they judged some shortcomings to be important.
203. The inspection team agreed with the grades awarded by the school in its self-evaluation in key questions one, two, four and seven. In the other key questions, however, the inspection team awarded one grade lower than the school. This is because the inspection identified some important shortcomings in each of them. Overall, the school's self-evaluation report is of good quality but, in places tends to be insufficiently critical.
204. Leaders and most middle managers understand their responsibilities. There is effective continuing dialogue between senior managers and members of teaching staff to ensure that roles and duties are understood. This is an ongoing process and is used well to strive for improvements. Despite this, a minority of middle managers is less clear about their role in monitoring and evaluating their areas of responsibility.
205. All subjects use first-hand evidence to evaluate their work using the Common Inspection Framework. Most subject leaders monitor their teams' work well through lesson observations and discussions with staff and pupils. This information is collated and, in most departments, used purposefully to inform departmental self-evaluation. There is, however, inconsistency in the quality of this across subjects. A significant minority of self-evaluation reports produced by subject departments are largely descriptive and lack depth and rigour.
206. Self-evaluation is successful in seeking the views of pupils, students, staff, parents and carers and good account is taken of their views. Pupils' and students' views are sought through the school council and also through an increasing use of self-assessment across the school. Learners are also consulted through questionnaires and through their own teaching and learning committee. Parents and carers are consulted well through questionnaires which are acted upon appropriately. The headteacher also meets regularly with members of non-teaching staff to ensure that their views are considered.
207. The headteacher and SLT play a significant role in using self-evaluation to plan for improvement. Particular attention is paid to analysing previous results in external examinations and appropriate targets are set for all subjects in all key stages. Most subject leaders also reflect on issues in learning and teaching when drawing up their aspects for improvement. Overall, however, there is inconsistency across subjects in setting clear and measurable priorities for improvement that relate explicitly to learning.
208. Members of the school council feel that their views are valued and that they play an important part in improving the quality of life in the school. They work

effectively together and contribute well in initiating changes and making improvements. These include promoting healthy eating, using RISE points to encourage good work and reviewing and modifying anti-bullying procedures.

209. Priorities for development are set out clearly in the SIP. The GB and senior leaders ensure that, wherever possible, priorities are supported through sufficient allocation of resources. This had led to a significant investment in improving IT resources. There have also been improvements in accommodation. Additional funds have been secured from other sources and these have been used well to enhance the provision of musical instruments and for specific projects in science and IT.
210. Self-evaluation contributes well to continuing improvements made in relation to the attainments of pupils and students in external examinations. This is particularly apparent in the sixth form. Overall good progress has been made since the last inspection in improving standards of achievement in most subjects and also in the quality of teaching.
211. Good progress has been made in addressing a number of the key issues in the last inspection report. There have been significant improvements in the provision for IT and also in the quality and the range of learning resources in subjects. The provision for pupils with SEN is much improved although better liaison with subject departments has not been addressed fully. Improvements have also been made in the procedures for assessment in most subjects.
212. Little progress has been made, however, in addressing statutory requirements for providing a daily act of collective worship and for the teaching of religious education in the sixth form. Moreover, the school improvement plan still only covers two years and has not been extended to cover a longer period of time.
213. Overall, in spite of some shortcomings, self-evaluation is successful in playing an important role in ensuring the continuing trend of improvement in achievement and attainment of pupils and students.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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214. This grade matches the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.
215. The school has sufficient qualified, specialist and experienced teachers to deliver all the subjects and aspects of the NC. Some teachers have usefully spent time in industry enabling them to pass on their experiences of the world of work to pupils.
216. In a few departments, some non-specialist teachers deliver the subject but they are supported well and their teaching is effective. There are no technicians in

IT to support the teaching staff, due to budgetary constraints. However, the school receives technical support for IT from the LEA.

217. Five LSAs and 16 support teachers work closely with their designated pupils. Effective use is made of external specialist staff to address pupils' special needs effectively.
218. The team of clerical staff contributes significantly to the smooth running of the school and the caretaking and cleaning staff undertake their duties conscientiously and well. Members of the catering staff are directly employed by the school and provide an excellent service.
219. The school's resources for learning are good. Pupils have access to very good IT facilities. There is no central library but a good variety of books is available in subject areas to aid learning. The sports pavilion provides additional changing facilities and teachers sometimes use the committee room as a teaching base.
220. The best use is made of the accommodation and it is sufficient for the number on role. The school, externally and internally, is kept in good decorative order and the extensive sports grounds are free from litter. The good and occasionally outstanding displays in the corridors and classrooms enhance pupils' learning. There is a good balance between the display of information and pupils' own work.
221. A team of well-qualified and experienced teachers delivers the sixth-form curriculum.
222. Classes are held in appropriate teaching bases and a large learning resource area is very well equipped with computers and provides appropriate accommodation for private study and research. It is very well managed. Sixth-form students have their own common room. This is, however, functional rather than a relaxed place to socialise.
223. Economic and effective use is made of resources for learning. Staff members at all levels ensure that the funds they have are spent efficiently and productively. There are good monitoring arrangements to ensure that the very best value for money is achieved.
224. A planned programme for redecoration and refurbishment ensures that the accommodation, which is reviewed regularly, provides a good setting for teaching and learning.
225. The deployment of staff and their professional development are clearly linked to the school's priorities. Teachers have very good opportunities to identify individual needs and they are well supported by senior managers. There is a good programme of continuing professional development (CPD) and teachers continue to develop their skills either through whole-school training or through training in specific areas. Their expertise is used very well.

226. The school meets statutory requirements for reducing teachers' workload with each teacher having a guaranteed 10% planning, preparation and assessment time. Senior managers have appropriate additional time to carry out their duties, commensurate with their roles and responsibilities.
227. There is an excellent programme for the induction of newly-qualified teachers (NQT), who are allocated both an induction and a subject mentor. All NQTs are monitored, mentored and assessed very well. The school works well in collaboration with providers of Initial Teacher Education and Training to help prepare teachers of the future to enter the profession.
228. The financial management of the school is outstanding. On a day-to-day basis the headteacher and the school finance officer monitor the budget very closely with the finance committee of the GB meeting regularly to discuss income and plan expenditure. Sometimes difficult decisions are made in order to make best use of the funds to improve learning and resources. All costs and spending decisions are carefully considered with close reference to the objectives outlined in the SIP. At KS3 and KS4 the school gives good value for money.
229. Students in the sixth form have very good access to good resources for learning, particularly following the large investment in IT equipment and the opening up of the learning resource centre. Teachers are well deployed according to the specific curricular and pastoral needs of the sixth form.
230. The budget is exceptionally tight, due predominantly to the very large increase in the numbers of students in the sixth form and to the retrospective funding. It is extremely well managed to maximise provision and resources for the students. This and other factors, including the high level of A to C grades at A level, clearly demonstrate that the management of the sixth form gives outstanding value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Welsh second language

KS3 **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

KS4 **Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

Sixth form **Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

KS3

Good features

231. Most pupils offer brief but accurate responses in oral exchanges using the Welsh language. When practising speaking in pairs they are willing to participate and complete appropriate activities using familiar sentence patterns correctly. Pupils understand short passages based on vocabulary already acquired and complete tasks which require specific information.
232. All pupils listen well to the teacher and to each other. They complete more formal listening tasks well, when they have to become accustomed to different voices and accents. Reading skills in Welsh are developing. Pupils read aloud in class with good pronunciation and understanding.
233. Pupils write sentence patterns accurately using structures learnt in previous lessons. They produce various types of good written work expressing factual and personal information and expressing opinions about different hobbies.
234. Pupils with ALN make good progress in mixed-ability classes. Tasks adapted to suit different levels of ability allow these pupils to develop some understanding of the language and use basic structures to communicate.

Shortcomings

235. A few pupils are uncertain in their oral responses. They tend to rely on notes and this adversely affects their fluency. When using the Welsh language to communicate, some pupils do not extend their answers. They seldom make incidental use of the Welsh language.
236. Some more able pupils do not write extended pieces for different purposes using a range of patterns and a wider vocabulary, especially in Y9 as they progress to KS4. The less able pupils experience difficulty when writing in Welsh and, as a consequence, some of their work is inaccurate and incomplete.

KS4

237. Examination results in the GCSE Welsh full course in the last three years have been above national and local averages for passes at grades A* - C. However, the proportion of pupils who study Welsh at KS4 is relatively small.

Good features

238. The more able pupils use familiar sentence patterns fairly confidently when conveying information and can discuss different topics in pairs using the Welsh language. Most pupils listen attentively when completing formal listening tasks and show a good understanding of dialogues and short extracts.
239. Many pupils show a good understanding of Welsh reading material and respond to it by completing written tasks accurately. They read material closely linked to the course with clarity and meaning.
240. Pupils complete a fairly good variety of written tasks in Welsh, based on the needs of the external examination. Descriptive paragraphs, letters containing personal details and short dialogues are produced with a good degree of accuracy.
241. More able pupils are encouraged to complete extended pieces and can use a good range of sentence patterns and vocabulary. Appropriate use of the Welsh language to convey information and ideas in different styles is seen in good quality coursework.

Shortcomings

242. A minority of pupils has difficulty recalling language previously learnt. These pupils rely heavily on written support. This affects their fluency and makes their oral responses slow. Most pupils do not have the confidence to use the Welsh language outside the structured situations and, as a result, their speaking skills are not developing sufficiently.
243. Some less able pupils have some difficulty with pronunciation when reading and rely on teachers' support. They understand more of the Welsh language than they use.
244. A small number of pupils works at a slow pace and their completed written work is brief. Pupils only complete short paragraphs, dialogues and basic Welsh language exercises.
245. Many pupils do not build on language skills already acquired because in the present academic year 87% of Y10 and 86% of Y11 do not have any lessons in Welsh.

Sixth form

246. The numbers studying Welsh at A level are small but pupils have achieved a 100% pass rate in their examination results at this level. No students study Welsh in Y13 at the present time.

Good features

247. Some progress is being made in understanding explanations. Listening skills

are good and build on skills acquired at KS4.

248. Appreciation of poetry is developing well with good use made of specialist vocabulary. There is good understanding of techniques used to convey meaning.
249. A wider vocabulary is being acquired and improvements are developing in the understanding of grammar and syntax.
250. The written work of the previous cohort in Y13 produced as course work contained a wide variety of written formats with due attention paid to grammatical accuracy. The coursework was structured and presented well.

Shortcomings

251. Answers tend to be confined to short replies and there is a lack of confidence in the use of language skills to communicate. There are some difficulties with pronunciation when reading aloud and a reluctance to engage in conversation.
252. There is very little evidence of the development of writing skills in Y12. The inspection took place near to the beginning of the academic year and relatively small amounts of written work have been completed.

Mathematics

KS3 **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**
KS4 **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**
Sixth form **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

KS3

253. At KS3, recent results in mathematics from teachers' assessments at the end of the key stage compare favourably to results attained in schools where a similar percentage of pupils is entitled to have free school meals. The results are well above local and national averages.

Good features

254. Pupils' basic number skills are good. They perform calculations accurately and use appropriate methods. The great majority shows confidence in using mental arithmetic. They use mathematical terminology appropriately when explaining methods or answering questions.
255. Pupils in Y7 understand the equivalence of fractions and decimals and in Y8 pupils of all abilities can compare and simplify fractions. Pupils of middle and higher ability are confident when converting between percentages, fractions and decimals.

256. Able Y7 pupils are confident in finding the areas of compound shapes based upon rectangles and use isometric paper to make two-dimensional representations of three-dimensional shapes.
257. Lower ability pupils are able to order directed numbers and interpret real-life situations involving negative numbers. In Y9, pupils of lower ability are able to solve simple linear equations with appropriate support.
258. Many pupils of all abilities across the key stage are able to seek solutions to problems of an unfamiliar nature.

Shortcomings

259. A few pupils have difficulty in recalling multiplication facts or adopting appropriate strategies for calculation, for example when calculating areas of rectangles or finding missing angles in triangles or quadrilaterals.
260. In a few pupils' books, work is not presented well. Some of these books contain unfinished work.

KS4

261. At KS4 the percentage of students gaining a grade C or better in GCSE mathematics has improved over the last three years. Results were above local and national averages in 2005 and 2006 but below the average when compared with similar schools nationally. Performance in 2007 showed a significant improvement when compared with national averages.

Good features

262. Pupils' basic number skills are good. They perform more complex calculations accurately using appropriate methods. The great majority develop expertise and confidence in mental arithmetic.
263. Across both key stages pupils use mathematical terminology such as "class interval", "discrete", "prime", "expression", "congruent", "translation" and "column vector" correctly to explain methods or in answering questions.
264. The majority of pupils of average ability in Y11 is confident in substituting positive and negative values into quadratic expressions and is able to use IT to plot the points. They are able to manipulate formulae including simple factorisation when required.
265. Lower ability pupils in Y10 are able to describe translations using column vectors and draw images of shapes on a grid effectively.

Shortcomings

266. Across the ability range a few pupils lack confidence in their ability to choose correct strategies to solve problems and often require guidance.

267. A small minority of pupils makes simple arithmetical errors, for example, when calculating coordinates, and has difficulty in manipulating directed numbers.

Sixth form

268. In the sixth form, A level results have improved over the last three years and compare favourably with LEA and national averages.

Good features

269. Pupils in Y13 understand the meaning of equivalence of algebraic expressions and are able to manipulate partial fractions. They are able to integrate using a variety of techniques and are confident in using a calculator to put in boundary conditions and reach numerical solutions. They are able to model real-life situations such as differential equations and are confident in reaching general solutions.

270. In Y12 students are able to differentiate quadratic expressions from first principles.

271. Y12 students who are re-sitting GCSE show an understanding of a variety of algebraic techniques and are able to manipulate quadratic expressions.

Shortcomings

272. A small minority of Y13 students finds difficulty in simplifying numerical logarithmic expressions and is over ready to use a calculator to gain a numerical answer.

273. A few Y12 students need support to recall appropriate strategies from previous key stages when manipulating algebraic expressions.

Design and technology

KS3	Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings
KS4	Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
Sixth form	Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

KS3

Good features

274. Most pupils understand how a design solution is developed from a design brief. They can produce a design specification which lists the basic features of the product they are engaged in designing and making. In Food Technology the specifications are particularly effective.

275. The folders of the more able pupils show very good use of computer-generated material to enhance their work. They present information from the internet and their own research very well.
276. All pupils can record their ideas for solutions to the design problems. These ideas are developed well within projects in Resistant Materials. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of skills and processes involved in the manufacture of their solutions are good.
277. In practical sessions pupils are capable of working well on their own. Pupils seek help when they need it. The work produced by most pupils is of good quality. In Food Technology and Textiles, where group work takes place regularly, pupils support each other very well in producing their practical work.
278. Pupils experience the use of computer aided manufacture (CAM) within their practical work and this is used effectively on the products they make in Textiles. In Resistant Materials pupils use computer software to test their circuits before they are manufactured.
279. Pupils with ALN make good progress developing to their potential.

Shortcomings

280. A significant minority of pupils are over dependent on the structured support provided by booklets when working through the design process. Pupils' understanding of this process and the role each part has to play within it is limited. This constrains the standards they achieve.
281. Pupils' creative designing skills are under-developed within their booklets where they show a limited number of possible solutions. When they have made and evaluated their products pupils do not look closely enough at how their product satisfies the targets in their specification.

KS4

282. The percentage of pupils who gained A* to C grades in GCSE Design and Technology Resistant Materials was higher than the national average for this year and two years ago but was below this level last year.
283. The percentage of pupils who gained A* to C grades in GCSE Design and Technology Graphic Products fell below the national average this year for the first time in many years.

Good features

284. Pupils are very good at explaining their design ideas and intentions orally. When recording these thoughts pupils show very good use of the internet and computer aided design (CAD) packages. This is particularly good within the folder work of pupils following the Graphic Products course.

285. The development of design ideas within the folders of the more able pupils is very good. In these folders pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of materials. Pupils use this knowledge to good effect when producing outcomes of good quality.
286. In the Resistant Materials course, most pupils have a good knowledge of traditional skills, processes and materials. They use them effectively to produce outcomes of good quality.
287. All pupils show an ability to use CAD/CAM to enhance their work. They use their skills and knowledge of this equipment very effectively in the Graphic Products course.
288. Pupils with ALN make good progress, reaching their potential and producing products of a good standard, especially within the Resistant Materials course.

Shortcomings

289. Work in the coursework folders of a minority of pupils following the Resistant Materials course shows that their designing skills do not develop enough. This work shows limited originality and flair. Pupils' notes on their ideas show underdeveloped knowledge and understanding of terminology.
290. Some pupils do not always understand the links between the stages of the design process. This is evident in the lack of cross references within folders when research material is not linked closely with decisions made in writing specifications. Pupils do not make enough references to specifications when evaluating their product.

Sixth form

291. The percentage of students who gained A to C grades at A level in recent years has been below national averages and does not reflect students' abilities.

Good features

292. Students are able to identify their own design problems to which they can produce a solution by following the design process.
293. In the work of the best students the design process is used well. These students use a range of investigative techniques effectively when developing design solutions. This enables them to provide a sound basis for producing specifications.
294. All students display a very good working knowledge of a number of relevant computer software packages. They use these well to present their research and design work.

295. Students draw upon good knowledge of materials, skills and processes when developing design solutions. The quality of the practical work of the more able students is good.

Shortcomings

296. Students' skills for independent learning are not developed enough. This does not enable them to progress at the pace normally expected of students working at this level. This results in the range of possible solutions not being explored sufficiently in the work of the majority of students.

297. Students do not develop their chosen ideas enough and include insufficient information about alternative construction details. Having manufactured their solutions, students' evaluation of this work shows insufficient depth and not enough reference to the original intentions of their specification.

298. Students' knowledge and understanding of a range of broader issues within design and technology are underdeveloped.

History

KS3 Grade 2: Good features with no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Sixth form Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

KS3

Good features

299. At KS3 many pupils acquire and successfully develop the full range of skills required in history in the NC. They have good levels of factual knowledge and are able to demonstrate this orally and in extended written work.

300. Pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of change and continuity, cause and consequence. In their study of the first world war, they demonstrate the ability to distinguish between different types of causes such as short term and long-term and that there are links between causes.

301. From Y7 pupils develop an awareness of chronology. They use timelines to illustrate chains of events across the centuries.

302. Pupils understand the nature of historical evidence. They can extract relevant and accurate information from a range of sources.

303. Most pupils understand that historians present differing interpretations of the past. More able pupils make well-supported judgements and can present a balanced view. Nearly all pupils are able to structure an interpretation and present arguments for and against a hypothesis. For example, Y8 pupils made

sound historical judgements on the question – was Henry VIII a successful king?

304. Pupils present their ideas in a wide variety of formats such as student guides, newspaper reports, spider diagrams and extended essays. The majority produces detailed, carefully-planned and well-presented answers.
305. All pupils develop research skills and investigative approaches to examining people and events in history. Pupils demonstrate the effective use of these methods in, for example, their studies of famous personalities of the 20th century in Y9 and, in Y8, the six wives of Henry VIII.
306. Pupils with ALN make good progress relative to their ability. In their study of life in the middle ages pupils of lower ability in Y7 were able to extract information from visual historical sources.

Shortcomings

307. The work of a few pupils of lower ability is incomplete.
308. The low literacy level of a small minority of pupils, particularly boys, sometimes makes access to historical concepts difficult, for example, interpretations in history and the use of historical sources.

KS4

309. Examination results in history at GCSE has been above the average for the LEA and nationally. The trend is one of continued improvement relative to the ability levels of pupils upon entry to the school.

Outstanding features

310. Pupils respond very well to challenging work. They show higher-order thinking skills when making historical judgements, for example about the problems and challenges of the USA in the 1920s.
311. Independent research is a prominent feature of pupils' work. They use IT effectively for this purpose. They are able to analyse and evaluate a wide range of historical documents.
312. Pupils are focussed on self-improvement. They show clear knowledge of their targets. They can explain what they need to do to improve in self-assessment work. This helps them make progress and achieve very high standards.
313. Pupils have an excellent knowledge base. They can recall factual information accurately. They produce written work which is detailed, carefully planned, logically argued and researched to a very good standard, for example in Y11 profiles on Nazi leaders.

Good features

314. Pupils build successfully on the range of skills developed at KS3 and make very good progress. They use their knowledge and understanding to make historical judgements based on a wide range of sources. For example, Y11 pupils judged the relative importance of the threats of the various opposition groups in Nazi Germany.
315. At KS4 pupils adopt a critical and mature approach to the testing of historical sources for reliability, bias and usefulness.
316. Pupils continue to develop skills related to the historical concept of interpretations of the past. They produce detailed and well-balanced answers supported by factual knowledge.

Shortcomings

317. A few pupils, particularly boys, do not complete written tasks and do not include sufficient historical detail.
318. A few pupils find difficulty organising their resources in history effectively.

Sixth form

319. Examination results prior to 2007 fell below national and local averages prompting a change to a more relevant examination syllabus. Examination performance for 2007 shows a significant improvement following a change to this more appropriate examination syllabus.

Outstanding features

320. Students use independent research very effectively. They read and synthesise information from a wide variety of primary and secondary sources. They make considered and informed judgements about the relative importance of the evidence to their line of enquiry, for example, on the circumstances and intentions which led to the Final Solution of the Jewish problem. They use IT very well to support their research.
321. Students work effectively in collaboration to produce extended and well presented oral and written answers. They show very good development of the skills of time management, planning, drafting and redrafting showing high levels of motivation. They use these study skills well to achieve high standards in history.
322. There is a very clear focus on improvement strategies. Students show an in-depth knowledge of their strengths, targets and areas for development in history. They can explain what they need to do to improve performance

Good features

323. Students produce written work of good quality demonstrating a secure understanding of all historical concepts. Many pupils have a very detailed factual knowledge.
324. Students are able to support their ideas with reference to a wide range of historians' views, for example about Winston Churchill and the concept of total war.
325. Students' approaches to historical interpretations and their use of evidence show considerable skill development from KS4. Students are able to analyse and evaluate the views of historians.

Shortcomings

326. There are no significant shortcomings.

Geography

KS3	Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
KS4	Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
Sixth form	Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

KS3

Outstanding features

327. Pupils demonstrate an outstanding knowledge and understanding of place. Using an atlas they identify, locate and record selected countries on a world map with accuracy.
328. The majority of pupils possesses an outstanding grasp of geographical terminology. They apply key words with precision in their study of a range of topics including the weather and the water cycle.

Good features

329. Basic geographical skills are well developed. Pupils use these skills to interpret maps, photographs and statistical information successfully. Their graphical skills are good.
330. Pupils display a thorough understanding of the water cycle and its processes. With the aid of a diagram they explain and describe accurately each stage of the cycle applying the appropriate terminology.
331. Most pupils with ALN complete work of a good standard. They have a good understanding of the physical characteristics of three contrasting National Parks in Wales. Their knowledge of why such an area such as the Brecon Beacons has been designated a National Park is good.

332. Pupils demonstrate a sound grasp of the relationship between the demands placed on the environment by people and the need to preserve and protect areas of natural beauty for future generations. They complete work of good quality on how different priorities impact on the management and use of our National Parks.

Shortcomings

333. A few pupils are insecure in their ability to use latitude and longitude lines as reference points to locate countries and cities on a world map.

KS4

334. Examination results in this subject in the last three years have been consistently above the national averages for GCSE passes at A*-C grades.

Outstanding features

335. Pupils demonstrate an outstanding knowledge and understanding of the processes and patterns in physical geography. They describe and explain in detail the formation of ribbon lakes. They understand the origin, transportation and deposition of moraine and its role in the formation of glacial depositional features.
336. Pupils' skills of analysis and interpretation of complex geographical data are good. They express their findings clearly in completed coursework assignments using a variety of formats such as written, graphical, map, photographs and the use of IT. Coursework assignments based on the local area are good, many are outstanding.
337. The majority of pupils displays an outstanding grasp of a wide range of geographical vocabulary. They are secure in applying increasingly sophisticated terminology to a variety of geographical situations and contexts.

Good features

338. The mapping and graphical skills of the majority of pupils are good. They use atlases, information sheets, photographs and IT resources with confidence to complete set tasks of good, sometimes outstanding quality.
339. The majority of pupils with ALN makes good progress. They demonstrate a thorough understanding of the physical geography topics studied as part of their examination course.
340. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the problems facing upland hill sheep farmers. They provide good reasons for the decline in hill sheep farming and the effects this has on individuals and whole communities. They understand the necessity for farmers to diversify and provide many named examples.

Shortcomings

341. There are no significant shortcomings.

Sixth form

342. Examination results at A level in the last three years have been broadly in line with or above national averages for passes at grades A and B.

Outstanding features

343. Students display an outstanding grasp of the processes at work leading to flooding in drainage basins. They use the Mississippi flooding in 1993 to explain and describe accurately the factors that caused flooding in large drainage basins.

344. The majority of students demonstrates a good understanding of a range of statistical and graphical techniques, map skills and IT resources to research, analyse, interpret and record their assignment findings. Many of the coursework assignments based on the local area are of an outstanding quality.

345. Students use complex geographical terminology with accuracy. They apply the vocabulary to good purpose both orally and in the completion of written set tasks. This is an outstanding feature.

346. The majority of students has an outstanding grasp of key environmental issues. They understand the need to achieve a balance between conservation and development. They use to good effect deforestation in the Amazon Basin as a case study to enhance their understanding of sustainable development.

Good features

347. The majority of students displays a mature attitude towards all aspects of their work ensuring the achievement of high standards. Their notes and assignments are detailed, organised and well presented.

348. Students possess a sound understanding of the indicators to be considered in the identification of patterns in world development. They understand the significance of using the plight of indigenous peoples such as native Americans and Aborigines as indicators of development.

349. The majority of students displays a good understanding of how people respond to and attempt to reduce the devastating effects of natural phenomena. They refer to the Trans America Pyramid building in San Francisco to good effect to illustrate the technological advances introduced to limit or prevent the catastrophic effects of earthquakes.

Shortcomings

350. A few students are reluctant to contribute fully to class discussion.

Religious education (including religious studies)
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KS3	Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings
KS4 (Religious Studies)	Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
Sixth form (Religious Studies)	Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS3

Good features

351. Building on their previous knowledge, pupils show a sound understanding of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, and are able to place them in chronological order.
352. When they respond to a range of images of Jesus from art they formulate considered views of the appearance and character of Jesus and appreciate the symbolism involved. They respond well to this stimulus and express their views with confidence.
353. In their study of Moses pupils recall previous relevant learning and understand his contribution to the early history of the Hebrews. They appreciate the importance of the experiences of Moses to the beliefs and practices of Jews today.
354. Pupils have a good understanding of Islamic worship and practices. They know how the Qur'an is used by worshippers and recognise its importance to Muslims. They know how and why Muslims pray and understand the significance of washing before the prayer rituals. Most are able to empathise with those Muslims for whom the daily prayer pattern is a priority and appreciate the commitment involved.
355. Pupils with ALN make good progress in each year group with well targeted support.

Shortcomings

356. A minority of pupils has an insecure knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices studied.
357. A minority of pupils does not try to imagine how people feel when they express themselves in worship.
358. Some pupils are not developing skills to enable them to reflect upon and respond to religion and human experience.

KS4

359. Recent examination results in the short course GCSE have resulted in high attainment above the national average for A*-C grades. Pupils representing the full range of ability are entered.

Good features

360. In their study of relationships pupils explore maturely their views on what makes a good relationship and analyse successfully concepts such as love, commitment and responsibility.

361. Pupils identify the distinctive features and perspectives of Christian and Islamic teaching on marriage and compare the similarities and differences. They reflect on these perspectives and express with confidence their own viewpoints.

362. Pupils are making good progress in their understanding of key concepts such as injustice, prejudice and discrimination and recognise the issues raised by the abuse of power and authority. They are able to appreciate and evaluate the responses by religious believers to the moral issues involved and know about people who have challenged injustice because of their religious belief.

363. In class discussions pupils demonstrate skills in analysing arguments and drawing conclusions. They are able to form their own opinions and express their own responses to the issues discussed, drawing on their understanding of religious teaching and sometimes their own experiences.

Shortcomings

364. A few pupils confuse the practices of the religions being studied and find it difficult to explain why believers hold particular views.

Sixth form

365. The small number of A level students who have taken the Religious Studies A level course in the last two years has achieved results which are above the national average.

Good features

366. Students make good progress in their understanding of some of the key concepts and practices in Buddhism. They are familiar with some of the key events in the life of the Buddha, appreciate the relevance of those events to life today, and make links between these events and Buddhist concepts.

367. In their religion and ethics course, Y12 students begin to engage successfully with the study of natural law and utilitarianism. They understand the views of significant scholars and are beginning to apply, with sound reasoning, ethical principles to current moral issues.

368. Students in Y13 demonstrate a detailed understanding of the concepts of the just war and holy war and the questions that they raise today. They successfully investigate and analyse these concepts from the perspectives of Christianity and Islam and make connections with other aspects of human experience.

369. Their essays show good use of religious language and appropriate terminology. They are able to interpret and evaluate soundly the ideas that they engage with.

Shortcomings

370. A few students show reluctance to express their own views and responses. They are not engaged sufficiently in independent enquiry and investigation.

School's response to the inspection

The governors, headteacher and staff would like to put on record their recognition of the professionalism with which the inspection was carried out. The report enables the school to evaluate its current position. The recommendations will enable the school to continue to move forward. The inspection process has identified the many strengths of Brynmawr School but also highlighted areas for improvement or modification.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Brynmawr School
School type	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Rhydwl, Intermediate Road, Brynmawr
Postcode	NP23 4XT
Telephone number	01495 310527

Headteacher	Dr M C Norton
Date of appointment	1 st January 2005
Chair of governors / Appropriate authority	Cllr D L Elias
Reporting inspector	Mr Peter Carter
Dates of inspection	22 nd – 26 th October 2007

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	140	126	165	158	153	134	67	943

Total number of teachers	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	52	2.2	54.2

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	17.4 : 1
Average teaching group size	23.3
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	75%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	94.0	91.7	89.7	90.1	90.1	92	81	91.2
Term 2	92.0	90.3	90.6	90.5	89.1	93.0	90.0	90.5
Term 3	91.5	90.5	89.5	88.8	82.6	93	91	88.6

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	10%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	61 (temp.) 0 (perm.)

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2006															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 159															
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	0	0	5	16	47	22	9	0	0
		National	1	1	1	0	0	2	8	21	34	24	9	0	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	9	26	40	19	0	0
		National	1	1	1	0	0	1	7	19	26	32	23	0	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	23	52	38	16	0	0
		National	0	0	1	0	0	0	7	21	38	24	9	0	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	63	In the school	-
In Wales	57	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 2006	159
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	42

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2007:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	91	84	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	62	43	54
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	91	82	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	45	29	40
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	96	94	98
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	84	70	77
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	96	89	93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	4	11	7
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	0	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	-	-	-

For pupils aged 17, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs	
Number of pupils aged 17 in January 2006	70
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2006	64
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2007	6

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	63	45.9	68
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	98	89	94
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	18	15	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	-	-	-
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	-	-	-

(UA Unitary Authority)

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Eleven inspectors spent a total of 40 days in the school and met as a team before the inspection.

These inspectors visited:

- 73 lessons or parts of lessons in the six subjects inspected;
- 27 lessons or part lessons taught by teachers in other subjects;
- 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 and parents and carers before the inspection began;
- senior leaders, middle managers, teachers, support and administrative staff; and
- groups of pupils and students during the inspection.

The team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- 138 responses to a questionnaire circulated to parents and carers;
- comprehensive documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection; and
- a wide range of pupils' and students' work across the curriculum from Y7 to Y13.

The registered inspector held post-inspection meetings with the senior management team and the governors.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Mr Peter Carter (Rgl)	KQ1, KQ5, Context, Summary, Recommendations
Mr David Williams	KQ2, KQ6
Mr Ronald Graham	KQ3
Mr Glyn Griffiths	KQ4 (including ALN)
Mrs Rhiannon Boardman (Lay)	KQ7
Mrs Heulwen Jones	Welsh second language
Mr Hugh Griffiths	Mathematics
Mr Hywel Buckland	Design and technology
Mrs Carolyn Meade	History
Mr Huw Llewelyn	Geography
Mr Graham Davies	Religious education and religious studies

Acknowledgement

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

Contractor

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