

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

**A Report on the Quality of Education in**

**Cardiff High School  
Llandennis Road  
Cardiff  
CF23 6WG**

**School Number: 6814039**

**Date of Inspection: 29 January – 1 February 2007**

**by**

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Cardiff High School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents information about the performance of their child's school.

The inspection of Cardiff High School took place between 29/01/07 and 01/02/07. An independent team of inspectors, led by Julia Helen Cantle Longville undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

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

There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a **short** inspection.

## Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

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## Context

### The nature of the provider

1. Cardiff High School is an 11-18 co-educational school in Cardiff Local Education Authority (LEA). There are 1447 pupils on roll, an increase of approximately 64 pupils since the last inspection in April 2001. Of these, 377 are in the sixth form, an increase of 61 since the last inspection.
2. The school is situated in the north of the city of Cardiff. Most pupils come from the surrounding residential areas of Cyncoed, Lakeside and Roath. Most pupils transfer to the school from three primary schools. The majority of pupils come from socially and economically advantaged areas. Five per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, compared to just under 17% nationally. The school has a diverse pupil intake. The majority of pupils has English as their first language. There are no pupils in the school who speak Welsh as a first language. Approximately 27% of pupils come from minority ethnic heritages and, of these, approximately 20% of pupils have English as a second language. Sixty-one pupils receive support teaching in English as an additional language.
3. The school's intake includes the full range of ability. There is an above average proportion of pupils of higher ability and fewer middle and lower ability pupils. Thirty-six pupils have a statement of special educational need (SEN) and a further 113 pupils have been identified as needing some support. Seventeen pupils have National Curriculum (NC) disapplications. The school has a Dyslexia Unit that is a specialist resource base serving the LEA. There are currently 14 pupils in the unit.
4. The headteacher was appointed in September 1997. The Senior Management Team (SMT) is made up of the headteacher, two deputy headteachers, two assistant headteachers and the bursar. The headteacher and deputy headteachers were in the school at the time of the last inspection.

### The school's priorities and targets

5. The vision is to make the school an internationally recognised centre of excellence. Its mission statement focuses on developing all members of the school community:  
"To assist everyone in the school to fulfil their individual potential, discover new talents and develop a love for life-long learning".
6. The school has a comprehensive set of aims to promote pupils' academic, personal and social development within the school and the wider community. These aims are to:
  - provide opportunities for pupils to develop their multi-intelligences and to become conscious and active learners;
  - maximise opportunities for pupils to develop a full range of academic, vocational, sporting, creative, social and cultural skills;
  - equip pupils with the skills of literacy, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT) so that they can realise their full potential;

- encourage pupils to aspire to improve their performance and develop their own high standards of achievement;
  - develop good communication and inter-personal skills to enable pupils to take responsibility for themselves and show an appreciation of others within the school and wider community; and
  - pursue all means to enable the school to be fully resourced to provide a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment.
7. The school's five-year strategic plan focuses on six key priorities: learning and teaching, self-evaluation, investing in people, personalising learning, personalising the curriculum and the learning environment. These help inform the annual school and departmental improvement plans.
8. The school's targets for 2008- 2009 are:

### Key stage 3

The percentage of pupils achieving level 5 or above	
English	93%
Mathematics	93%
Science	94%
Core Subject Indicator	89%

### Key stage 4

Entered for at least one GCSE	100%
Attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* - C	88%
Attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* - G	100%
Core Subject Indicator	75%

9. These targets are generated from analysis of data of different groups of pupils and students in the school.

## Summary

10. Cardiff High School is a very good school with many outstanding features. There is a strong ethos of mutual support and respect that permeates the whole school and enables pupils and students to realise their potential. The school's particular strengths are:
- leadership of high quality that provides clear direction and promotes high standards;
  - outstanding results in external examinations;
  - high expectations and a strong culture of achievement that is shared by all;
  - high quality teaching and a culture of research which empowers staff at all levels to be innovative; and
  - very productive relationships between staff and pupils which impact positively upon learning.

11. In the seven key questions the following grades were awarded.

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

12. These grades match the grades awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.

### **KS3 and KS4**

#### **Standards of achievement**

13. Overall results in external examinations are outstanding. Almost all pupils achieve extremely well in relation to their ability.
14. Results of teacher assessment at the end of key stage (KS) 3 are outstanding. This is because they have:
- improved continuously since the last inspection and are currently well above local and national figures;
  - consistently improved in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science and, in 2006, 85% of pupils reached level 5 in the three core subjects combined compared to 56% nationally; and
  - been consistently very good and, over the last three years, have placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools in Wales.
15. At KS4, in the GCSE examinations, results have improved continuously since the last inspection. They are outstanding because, in 2006:
- 80% of pupils gained at least five A\*-C grades, well above the figure locally and nationally;
  - 97% of pupils gained at least five A\*-G grades, well above the local and national average;
  - results in all core subjects were above local and national figures; and
  - results have been consistently very good and currently place the school in the top 25% of similar schools in Wales.

16. In both key stages, almost all pupils of differing abilities, including those with SEN, achieve extremely well regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background. Overall, boys and girls achieve similar standards.
17. Pupils with additional learning needs receive very good support and often achieve beyond what is expected of them.
18. The highly successful "Thinking for Learning" programme in Year (Y)7 and Y8 has contributed successfully to improving pupils' key skills and has positively affected pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Pupils use the skills they develop very well in all aspects of their school life and are well prepared for the world of work.
19. At both key stages, the standards that pupils achieve in the key skills of communication, use of number and information technology (IT) are good with outstanding features. Pupils' IT skills are particularly good and are used very well in different contexts. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection in the development of pupils' key skills.
20. The standard of spoken Welsh developed in Welsh second language lessons is good.
21. Most pupils develop well-refined personal, social and learning skills and show very positive attitudes to their work. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary.
22. Attendance at almost 95% is very good and is well above the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) target. This figure is impressive and is better than in most schools in Wales.
23. Pupils develop a good understanding of moral, social and cultural issues. They show very good awareness and understanding of different lifestyles, beliefs and cultures. However, some inconsistency in the quality of assemblies and form tutor periods impacts adversely on pupils' spiritual development.

### **The quality of education and training**

24. Overall, the effectiveness of teaching, training and assessment is good with outstanding features.
25. The grades awarded for teaching at all key stages were:

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
39%	44%	15%	2%	0%
These grades are based on the observation of 93 lessons				

26. These overall grades for teaching and assessment are outstanding. This is because they are well above the national figures for 2005-2006 when 17% of lessons were awarded a grade 1 and 69% of lessons were graded 1 or grade 2. The number of lessons awarded a grade three or grade four is well below national figures.
27. These grades for teaching and assessment are outstanding and are significantly better than those achieved in the last inspection.
28. There are many outstanding features in the quality of teaching in the school. These include the way in which:
  - teachers contribute greatly to the strong culture of achievement in the school;

- teachers plan very carefully and structure lessons that proceed with pace and purpose; and
  - most teachers have high expectations and challenge and motivate pupils of all abilities.
29. Teachers are highly qualified, motivated and passionate about their work. They have outstanding subject knowledge. They use this knowledge and understanding well to monitor closely pupils' progress. They provide high quality teaching and learning during the school day and as part of the extensive out-of-hours' learning programme.
  30. The relationship between staff and pupils is excellent. All pupils are respected as individuals, regardless of ability, gender, race or disability.
  31. The school's "Assessment for Learning Strategy" is outstanding. Self-assessment and peer-assessment are used to make pupils think about the next stages in their learning. Data are used very effectively to monitor pupils' progress and to encourage them to attain higher standards.
  32. Target-setting is well embedded in KS4. Pupils understand what they need to do to improve. Most teachers mark work regularly and provide feedback to pupils both orally and in writing.
  33. Statutory requirements concerned with assessment, recording and reporting pupils' achievements are met fully.
  34. Overall, parents are kept well informed about their child's progress. Despite the good practice in some subjects, there is lack of consistency in the way in which KS3 pupils understand how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.
  35. Reports to parents are generally good but there is inconsistency in the way in which some teachers set targets for improvement.
  36. There are many very good features in the way the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners. The curriculum is accessible to all and provides pupils with the opportunity to achieve appropriate accreditation. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities that enhances considerably pupils' learning experiences.
  37. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark.
  38. Assemblies promote effectively pupils' moral and social development. Pupils are very respectful of their teachers, visitors and each other.
  39. Partnerships with parents, the community and other providers of education are very good. The partnership with parents and carers is strong. Communication with parents and carers is very good.
  40. There are particularly strong pastoral links with primary schools. Curricular links are less well established and as a result teachers do not take enough account of what pupils have achieved in Y6. An effective induction programme helps new pupils settle quickly into Y7.
  41. Links with employers are very good. The comprehensive work-related education programme is of very high quality and includes numerous opportunities for

pupils to enhance their work-related skills. The school holds the Work-Related Quality Mark.

42. Insufficient use is made of the Welsh language outside Welsh second language lessons. As a result, pupils' bilingual skills are limited.
43. The quality of care, support and guidance given to pupils is good with outstanding features. Arrangements at the school are very effectively managed. The school nurtures a supportive ethos where pupils feel secure.
44. Achievement leaders monitor the progress of pupils very thoroughly. They use data particularly well to set targets for pupils.
45. There are excellent strategies in place to support pupils whose behaviour is a cause for concern. Support of high quality has prevented pupils being permanently excluded from school.
46. The school is very effective in recognising and celebrating the wide range of cultures within the school. Pupils' from all backgrounds achieve well.
47. The school has sympathetic and very effective measures to eliminate bullying. Many pupils feel able to seek help from the Student Advice Council.
48. The quality of provision for pupils with additional learning needs is outstanding in the way in which:
  - teachers plan intervention strategies designed to enable pupils with specific learning difficulties (SpLD) access to the curriculum;
  - sixth-form students provide reading support to targeted pupils in Y7 and Y8;
  - a significant number of staff provide in class support; and
  - the school employs a wide and effective range of diagnostic procedures to continually assess pupils' needs.
49. Able and talented pupils are well supported by the co-ordinator who encourages a variety of approaches, focused through classroom teaching.
50. The school complies with all statutory requirements associated with provision for pupils with additional learning needs.

### **Leadership and management**

51. Leadership at all levels has good features, some of them outstanding.
52. The senior leadership team is outstanding in providing clear direction and promoting high standards. This is because:
  - individual roles within the team are highly complementary one with another;
  - members of the team have the ability to reflect critically on the work of the school and how it can be improved;
  - the senior team is open and approachable in its management style, achieving a very effective balance of support and challenge; and
  - the headteacher fosters distributed leadership.

53. The line management by senior leaders of middle leaders is consistently rigorous. Middle leaders have a clear understanding of their role and implement it with good effect. The systems for the appraisal of staff are very effective.
54. Equality and inclusion at all levels underpin the work of the school.
55. The school has well-planned and thorough processes for setting challenging but realistic targets for both pupils and teachers. It is very successful in meeting its goals.
56. Although the school is addressing successfully many national priorities, it is still at the early stage of addressing the WAG's agenda for widening individual learning pathways in KS4 and beyond.
57. Governors monitor the quality of provision in the school effectively. They are highly pro-active and knowledgeable in helping the school to set its strategic direction. Their individual expertise is very well utilised at all levels in the school. Although the school has a process for linking governors to individual departments, it is not consistently effective.
58. Governors fulfil all the legal duties placed upon them.
59. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating how well the school is performing have many good features, some of them outstanding. These include:
  - a culture of reflective practice;
  - the effective use of detailed department analysis of external results;
  - departmental and whole-school reviews that focus well on the quality of learning and teaching;
  - clear responsibilities within job descriptions for middle and senior leaders to evaluate performance across the school;
  - seeking out the views of parents and governors; and
  - listening to learners through a very effective school parliament, which is an outstanding feature of the school.
60. Senior and middle managers set clear priorities and actions to bring about improvement. The school has a detailed five-year strategic plan based on critical evaluation and costing of the development priorities for the whole school.
61. The governing body plays an active role in the self-evaluation process. Governors have a good understanding of the self-evaluation process and undertake their own self-review.
62. There are outstanding features in the way in which the school:
  - ensures that all members of staff work highly effectively together, to support learning and teaching;
  - is highly pro-active in gaining additional funding from outside sources;
  - manages and develops all members of staff and matches their needs closely to its priorities for improvement; and
  - reviews resources regularly and rigorously to ensure best value for money.
63. The Learning Forum is an excellent example of the way in which the school reflects continually on improving learning experiences for pupils and students.

64. The level of staffing is good with some outstanding features. Teachers are well qualified and have a good range of expertise and experience. A large number of enthusiastic and very capable members of support staff assist them highly competently.
65. Overall, the accommodation has good features, some of them outstanding. However, a minority of classrooms is not furnished well and does not provide a stimulating environment for learning. It provides good access for pupils with disabilities.
66. Overall, there is a good range of resources to support learning. Provision for ICT is good and many classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards or desktop projectors.
67. The school is highly successful in supporting the professional development of all staff. The way in which staff development is linked closely to personal needs and the school's priorities for improvement, is an outstanding feature.
68. The bursar manages all aspects of the school's finances very robustly. She works closely with the headteacher and governing body to ensure that the school's resources are used to good effect.
69. Overall, the school achieves very good value for money. This is reflected in the standards of achievement of pupils and students and in the high quality of learning experiences it provides for them.

## **Sixth form**

### **Standards of achievement**

70. Results in external examinations are outstanding. This is because in 2006:
  - 83% of students achieved A-C grades in two or more Advanced (A) level examinations, well above the national average of 68%;
  - 98% of students achieved A-E grades in two or more A level examinations, above the national average of 94%; and
  - the average points' score for each student entering two or more subjects was well above local and national figures.
71. These results are indicative of the consistently high standard of attainment year on year.
72. Standards that students achieve in the key skills of communication and the use of number are very good overall. Students have well-refined IT skills. They are able to work independently when researching aspects of their work.
73. Most students make very good progress in meeting their agreed attainment targets. They not only achieve success in external examinations but they also develop a wide range of personal and social skills. Their leadership skills are exceptional. The work they do when mentoring younger pupils is exemplary.
74. A very high number of Y11 pupils continue their education in the sixth form, make very good progress and move on to higher education.
75. Attendance, at over 97% in Y13, is outstanding. Although this figure is lower in Y12, it is consistently above 92%. The punctuality of most students is good. A small minority of students occasionally arrives late to lessons and at the start of the school day.

## **The quality of education and training**

76. In 41% of all lessons observed in the sixth form there were outstanding features in the quality of teaching and assessment. There were good features and no important shortcomings in a further 47% of lessons observed. These figures are well above the averages for all inspections in Wales in 2005-2006.
77. In the best lessons, teachers challenge students skilfully. Students are encouraged to work independently to seek information. Teachers make very good use of ICT to enhance their teaching and students' learning.
78. Teachers provide detailed support to individual students and have a clear understanding of their progress and the standards they are achieving.
79. There is little use of incidental Welsh in the sixth form.
80. Students are assessed rigorously and receive good and often outstanding feedback both orally and in writing. They are fully involved in planning their own progress.
81. The curriculum meets the needs of learners in the sixth form. Students study an extensive range of Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and A level courses. The courses provided prepare them effectively for further and higher education and employment.
82. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities is an outstanding feature. Students have access to a wide range of activities that enhances considerably their learning experiences.
83. Students in the sixth form have the opportunity to gain key skills' accreditation.
84. The school is very successful in developing students as independent learners. The learning experiences equip them well with the skills for lifelong learning.
85. Students are very well supported in the sixth form. An effective induction programme helps students settle quickly and introduces them to the routines and disciplines of the sixth form. Careers education prepares students successfully for the world of work or progression on to university.
86. Strategies for encouraging good attendance and punctuality are good overall.

## **Leadership and management**

87. The good and outstanding features of leadership and management are also evident in the sixth form.

## **Progress since the last inspection**

88. The school has made good progress in addressing all of the key issues identified in the last inspection report. The improvements include the:
  - quality of teaching in science and music at KS3;
  - setting of work which meets the differing needs of pupils, especially those with individual education plans (IEPs);
  - continuity and progression in curricular provision from KS3 to KS4;
  - use of ICT across the curriculum; and

- arrangements for teaching personal and social education (PSE) and general studies to ensure that all pupils and students have a common experience.

89. The school meets statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form and the daily act of collective worship for all pupils and students. There is however a lack of consistency in the quality of the daily act of collective worship in assemblies and form tutor periods.

## Recommendations

- R1 Improve the quality and consistency of written feedback to pupils at KS3 and KS4 so that they know what to do to improve.
- R2 Strengthen curricular links with primary schools to ensure continuity and progression in pupils' learning.
- R3 Continue to implement plans to enhance further the 14-19 learning pathways for individual pupils.
- R4 Promote the development of bilingual skills across the curriculum.
- R5 Address shortcomings in accommodation as funds become available.

Aspects of these recommendations are addressed in the school five-year strategic plan.

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 1: Good with outstanding features

90. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade awarded by the school in its own evaluation.

#### KS3 and KS4

##### Pupils' success in attaining agreed goals

91. Overall, results in external examinations are outstanding. They have been consistently very good year on year. In the last three years, pupils' attainment in KS3 and KS4 has placed the school in the top 25% of similar schools in Wales.
92. In 2006, in the KS3 teacher assessments, 85% of pupils gained at least level 5 in the three core subjects combined, compared to 56% nationally. With few exceptions, results have improved year on year.

93. Results at the end of KS3 are outstanding because they have improved continuously since the last inspection and are currently well above local and national figures. There has been consistent improvement in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
94. At KS3, pupils' attainment in English has been better than in mathematics and science. In 2006, boys outperformed girls in mathematics and science and girls outperformed boys in English.
95. At KS4, in the GCSE examinations, results have improved continuously since the last inspection. They are outstanding because, in 2006:
- 80% of pupils gained five or more A\*-C grades, well above the figure locally and nationally;
  - 97% of pupils gained at least five A\*-G grades, well above the local and national average;
  - results in all core subjects combined were above local and national figures; and
  - results have been consistently very good and currently place the school in the top 25% of similar schools in Wales; and
  - the overall pass rate of pupils in GCSE examinations in 2006 was significantly higher than both local and national averages.
96. In both key stages, almost all pupils of differing abilities achieve extremely well regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background. Boys and girls achieve similar standards and the difference between their performance is much smaller than it is locally and nationally.
97. Pupils with additional learning needs receive very good support and often achieve beyond what is expected.
98. At both key stages, the standards that pupils achieve in the key skills of communication, use of number and IT are good with outstanding features. This is because most pupils:
- listen attentively to their teachers and each other and reflect on and apply what they hear to good effect;
  - speak confidently and regularly provide extended answers that demonstrate knowledge and understanding of their work;
  - write accurately and usually present their work well;
  - read fluently and with expression in different situations;
  - use their IT skills very well in a range of different contexts;
  - apply their numeracy skills well in several subjects; and
  - work confidently together, in many subjects, when solving problems, researching and discussing aspects of their work.
99. The standard of spoken Welsh developed in Welsh second language lessons is good.

### **Pupils' progress in learning**

100. Pupils of all abilities make very good progress. They acquire new knowledge and skills and are able to assess how well they have achieved. Some pupils understand what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.
101. Many pupils are very well supported in their learning through the numerous mentoring schemes that operate in the school. As a result, they make good progress.
102. In both key stages, almost all pupils of differing abilities make very good progress regardless of their gender, social, ethnic or linguistic background.

### **The development of pupils' personal, social and learning skills**

103. Pupils understand the importance of equality of opportunity. They are very knowledgeable about national priorities such as the importance of sustainable development and are prepared to use their very good leadership skills in the community and workplace.
104. Pupils develop well-refined personal, social and learning skills and show very positive attitudes to their work. They are highly motivated in most lessons and show a keen interest in their work. Most pupils are mature and use these personal skills to good effect in lessons and in supporting and helping each other improve. They have a positive attitude to lifelong learning.
105. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They show respect to each other, members of staff and visitors to the school. This creates a very calm atmosphere that contributes positively to pupils' learning.
106. Pupils develop a good understanding of moral, social and cultural issues. They show very good awareness of different lifestyles, beliefs and cultures. They are encouraged to use and reflect on this knowledge through the thought for the day, in some assemblies and form tutor periods. There is however inconsistency in the quality of assemblies and form-tutor periods. As a result, pupils' spiritual development is not as well developed.
107. Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in the very high attendance rate of 95% that is well above the WAG target of 93%.

### **Sixth form**

108. Overall, since the last inspection, standards of achievement and attainment have significantly improved. Results in external examinations are outstanding. This is because, in 2006:
  - 83% of students achieved A-C grades in two or more A level examinations, well above the national average of 68%;
  - 98% of students achieved A-E grades in two or more A level examinations, above the national average of 94%; and
  - the average points' score for each student entering 2 or more subjects was well above local and national figures.
109. These results are indicative of the consistently high standard of attainment, year on year.
110. Standards that students achieve in the key skills of communication, use of number and IT are very good overall. Students' speak confidently and listen with

a real sense of purpose. They are able to extract information accurately when researching aspects of their work. Most students are able to:

- use fluently complex subject-specific terminology when discussing their work with each other and their teachers;
- apply their number and IT skills well in a variety of subjects and contexts;
- use their well-refined IT skills when presenting and researching aspects of their work; and
- take responsibility for their own learning and share the outcome of their research confidently with other students in group discussions.

111. A very high number of Y11 pupils continue their education in the sixth form. Most make very good progress in meeting their agreed attainment targets. As a result of very rigorous monitoring and support, students understand fully what they need to do to progress and improve. Those students who underachieve are immediately identified and supported well.
112. Students not only achieve success in external examinations but they also develop a wide range of personal and social skills. Their leadership skills are exceptional. The work they do when mentoring younger pupils is exemplary. A very high percentage of students provide support of high quality that has a very positive impact on pupils' achievement in KS3 and KS4.
113. Most students have a very mature attitude to their work and feel well-prepared for progression on to university and the world of work. A very high proportion of students go on to higher education.
114. Attendance at over 97% in Y13, is outstanding. Although this figure is lower in Y12, it is consistently above 92%. The punctuality of most students is good. A small minority of students occasionally arrives late to lessons and at the start of the school day.

## The quality of education and training

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

#### Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

115. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade awarded by the school in its own evaluation.

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

116. The grades awarded for teaching at all key stages were :

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
39%	44%	15%	2%	0%

These grades are based on the observation of 93 lessons

117. These overall grades for teaching and assessment are outstanding. This is because they are well above the national figures for 2005-2006 when 17% of lessons were awarded a grade one and 69% of lessons were graded one or grade two. The number of lessons awarded a grade three or grade four is well below national figures.

## KS3 and KS4

118. The grades awarded for teaching at KS3 and KS4 were:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
<b>KS3</b>	35%	43%	20%	2%	0%
<b>KS4</b>	44%	44%	8%	4%	0%
<b>KS3 &amp; KS4</b>	38%	43%	16%	3%	0%

These grades are based on the observation of 76 lessons

119. In just over a third of all lessons observed there were outstanding features in the quality of teaching and assessment across both key stages. In 43% of lessons teaching and assessment were judged to be good with no important shortcomings.

120. Overall, these grades for teaching and assessment are outstanding and are significantly better than those achieved in the last inspection. They are also better than the overall grades awarded for teaching and assessment in all secondary schools in Wales in 2005-2006.

121. There are many outstanding features in the quality of teaching in the school.

### Outstanding feature

122. The highly successful "Thinking for Learning" programme, delivered as part of the Y7 and Y8 curriculum, has contributed successfully to developing pupils' key skills. Pupils are confident and listen with understanding and empathy. The guidance provided by teachers has positively affected pupils' behaviour and attitudes. As a result of the programme, pupils of all abilities develop enhanced communication, problem-solving, decision-making and team-building skills. They use these skills very well in all aspects of their school life and are well prepared for the world of work. This highly successful programme has been shared with schools locally, nationally and internationally.

123. Other outstanding features in the quality of teaching in the school are the way in which most teachers:

- demonstrate passion and enthusiasm for their work, which contributes greatly to the strong culture of achievement in the school;
- plan and structure lessons carefully that proceed with pace and purpose;
- have high expectations and challenge and motivate pupils of all abilities;
- explain clearly what pupils are going to learn at the beginning of lessons and check that this has been achieved in plenary activities; and
- reinforce continuously the importance of key skills.

124. Teachers are highly qualified and have outstandingly detailed subject knowledge. They know their pupils very well and take full account of their differing needs. They use this knowledge and understanding well to:

- question and challenge pupils' understanding of their work;
- develop pupils' ability to think critically and reflect on what they know and understand;
- monitor closely pupils' progress; and

- provide teaching and learning of high quality during the school day and as part of the extensive out-of-hours learning programme.
125. They apply the outcome of effectively planned continuous professional development in their teaching. The culture of research that exists in the school is evident in the numerous ways that teachers are prepared to pilot new strategies successfully and disseminate good practice with others.
126. The school's "Listening to Learners" programme is highly successful. The views of pupils' are carefully considered and used to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
127. The relationship between staff and pupils is outstanding. The friendly and supportive environment impacts positively upon learning. All pupils are respected as individuals, regardless of ability, gender, race or disability.
128. Learning support assistants (LSAs) work very well with teaching staff. Close collaboration ensures that pupils with additional learning needs have the support that is required to access the curriculum successfully. They make very good progress.
129. Able and talented pupils are identified through a combination of assessment data and teachers' recommendation. Outstanding support is given to these pupils by teaching staff and students in the sixth form.
130. In a very small minority of lessons in KS3, planning is not sufficiently rigorous to keep pupils motivated and on task. The pace of these lessons is slow and pupils make limited progress.

### **The rigour of assessment and its use in planning and improving learning.**

131. Assessment has outstanding features in the way in which:
- data from all subject departments are used effectively and regularly to monitor pupils' progress;
  - tracking and monitoring systems within most departments are used rigorously to enable pupils to achieve their potential;
  - clearly-defined criteria is used systematically to assess pupils' progress continuously; and
  - carefully planned and individualised intervention strategies are used consistently to encourage pupils to attain high standards.
132. The school's "Assessment for Learning" Strategy is outstanding. Self-assessments and peer assessments are used successfully to make pupils think about the next stages in their learning. Pupils have a good understanding of the purpose of assessment and conduct regular reviews of their performance in most subjects.
133. Staff with responsibility for assessment for learning, help all new staff to improve the quality of teaching.
134. Many teachers mark work regularly and effectively. Oral feedback on ways to improve is outstanding in most lessons. Identification of assessment criteria and how they could be met formed an integral part of the aims and objectives of lessons.

135. Target-setting is well embedded in KS4, with staff informing pupils of their current levels of performance and what their short-term targets are in each subject. This information is communicated both orally, and in writing.
136. Statutory requirements concerned with assessment, recording and reporting pupils' achievements are met.
137. Despite the good practice, there is lack of consistency in the way in which:
- KS3 pupils understand how well they are progressing;
  - parents of pupils in KS3 are informed about the level of attainment achieved in individual subjects; and
  - teachers provide written feedback to pupils that help them improve the quality of their work.
138. Reports to parents are generally good but there is inconsistency in the way in which some teachers set subject specific targets for improvement.

### **Sixth form**

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

139. Overall grades for the quality of teaching in the lessons observed in the sixth form were:

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
41%	47%	12%	0%	0%
These grades are based on the observation of 17 lessons				

140. In 41% of all lessons observed in the sixth form there were outstanding features in the quality of teaching and assessment. There were good features and no important shortcomings in a further 47% of lessons observed.
141. In the best lessons, the objectives for learning, the criteria for success and examination requirements are shared with students. Students are challenged skilfully by teachers through both oral and written questions. They are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively to seek information, clarify understanding and form opinions.
142. Teachers make very good use of ICT including interactive white boards to enhance their teaching and students' learning.
143. Teachers provide detailed support to individual students and have a clear understanding of their progress and the standards they are achieving.
144. Insufficient use is made of the Welsh language, and bilingual skills are underdeveloped.

#### **The rigour of assessment and its use in planning and improving learning.**

145. Students are assessed rigorously and receive good and often outstanding feedback both orally and in writing. Very effective use is made of the comprehensive 'Personalised Learning and Target Maps' to track individual students' performance across subjects. A very detailed and consistently applied system enables teachers, managers, students and parents identify strengths and areas of concern.

146. The meticulous monitoring and mentoring system used by subject teachers and curriculum leaders to ensure that potential underachievers are identified and supported early, is outstanding.
147. Students are involved in planning their own progress and have a good understanding of how they can improve.
148. Reports to parents are generally good but there is inconsistency in the way in which some teachers set subject specific targets for improvement.

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

**Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

149. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade awarded by the school in its own evaluation.

**The extent to which learning experiences meet learners' needs and interests**

150. There are many outstanding features in the way in which the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners.

**Outstanding features**

151. The use of ICT to promote pupils' and students' learning experiences is an outstanding feature. The physical education department has an established website with the aim of creating more interaction between staff, pupils and parents. Pupils and students are heavily involved in collating information for the web site. Pupils access details about the school's sports clubs, results and match reports. In the KS3 section, pupils also access the interactive learning resources linked to developing key points of certain skills. ICT is increasingly used by the department in its teaching programme. This initiative enhances successfully pupils' learning experiences and enjoyment of the subject.
152. In the Welsh department, pupils access interactive language games on the school's website. They can also access these at home. The language games are linked directly to lesson topics and pupils use these effectively to revise, enhance their knowledge of language patterns, and learn new vocabulary. These activities are used with interactive whiteboards to develop successfully pupils' language and IT skills. Pupils assess each other's progress in line with the school's "Assessment for Learning" policy.
153. There are many other outstanding features in the way in which the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners.
154. The curriculum is accessible to all and provides pupils with the opportunity to achieve accreditation. Pupils in Y7 and Y8 also follow 'Thinking for Learning' lessons that develop greatly their learning skills across the curriculum. Learning Skills is a successful optional subject in Y9.
155. All pupils have access to GCSE courses in KS4. More able pupils follow additional GCSE courses. An "Extended Opportunities" programme, designed in collaboration with the Unitary Authority (UA) and the college is offered as part of

the curriculum. This programme has been followed by pupils in previous years but in the current year there has been no take-up for the course.

156. Sixth-form students study an extensive range of AS and A level courses. The courses provided prepare them effectively for further and higher education and employment.
157. Very good progress has been made in developing pupils' key skills across the curriculum. Key skills are highlighted well in schemes of work. Students in the sixth form have the opportunity to gain key skills' accreditation.
158. The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark.
159. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities is an outstanding feature. Pupils and students follow a wide range of activities that enhances considerably their learning experiences. Individual subjects arrange their own well-supported programmes. Pupils and students experience a good number of overseas visits.
160. Pupils' and students' learning experiences are greatly enhanced by effective partnerships with parents, the community and other providers. The outstanding features include the:
  - very strong links with parents and the local community;
  - school's newsletter which is informative and a very effective means of communication;
  - number of outside speakers who are invited to school to address pupils and sixth-form students on various occasions;
  - effectiveness of a very wide range of partnerships from the world of work; and
  - school's commitment to the initial training of teachers and its strong links with a number of initial teacher education institutions.
161. There are particularly strong pastoral links with primary schools. Curricular links are less well established and as a result teachers do not always take enough account of what pupils have achieved by the end of Y6.
162. The school complies with legal requirements at all stages, including religious education in the sixth form and a daily act of collective worship.
163. There are also many good features in the way learning experiences meet learners' needs and interests.
164. Pupils and sixth-form students are successful in attaining very high standards and a high number of pupils return to the sixth form to continue their studies. Students support younger pupils and this enhances greatly their personal and social skills.
165. The school promotes pupils' and students' moral and social development effectively. Pupils are very respectful of their teachers, visitors and each other and an excellent learning environment prevails in lessons. By means of various activities, pupils and students collect large amounts of money to support worthy causes at home and abroad. The school is very successful in developing pupils' and students' moral understanding.
166. There is some variability in the way the school promotes spirituality.

167. Consortium links with other schools and colleges to broaden the curriculum in KS4 and the sixth form are at an early stage of development.

**The extent to which the learning experiences respond to the needs of employers and the wider community**

168. There are many outstanding features in the way in which learning experiences meet the needs of employers and the wider community.

169. The comprehensive work-related education programme is of very high quality. The school holds the Work-Related Quality Mark and close links with *Gyrfa Cymru/Career Wales* strengthen further pupils' and students' knowledge and understanding of the world of work. The vocational aspects of the PSE programme and the experience gained during industry days enhance significantly pupils' learning experiences. The Business Mentoring programme supports successfully underachieving pupils at KS4.

170. The school tackles stereo-typing and social disadvantage in a very effective manner. It promotes equality of opportunity and access to the curriculum and the achievement of high standards by all. The numerous well-planned mentoring schemes involving sixth-form students, staff and outside agencies provide very good support for targeted pupils in KS3 and KS4.

171. The school has developed close links with employers and their needs are taken into account. Very good links with Education Business Partnership (EBP) reinforce strongly pupils' perception of the work-place.

172. Pupils' and students' entrepreneurial skills are very well developed by means of a wide variety of activities. Pupils participate in Industry Days, the Dynamo Project and Young Enterprise Schemes. Many entrepreneurial activities, for example, a highly successful fashion show arranged by students, raise considerable sums of money for charity.

173. The good features of the school's provision include the promoting of sustainable development. This is done in a number of subjects and in the PSE programme. Members of the Eco-Group are very committed and enthusiastic and are anxious to raise awareness of issues related to sustainability.

174. Aspects of *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* are included in schemes of work. A successful annual Eisteddfod promotes Welsh culture. Pupils study Welsh in the curriculum in KS3 and KS4 and many attend residential Welsh second language courses to further their language skills.

175. Opportunities for promoting learners' bilingual skills across the curriculum are limited. Insufficient use is made of the Welsh language outside Welsh second language lessons.

176. The school is very successful in developing pupils and students as independent learners, to be responsible for their own learning. The learning experiences offered equip them with the skills for lifelong learning.

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

##### **Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

177. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade awarded by the school in its own evaluation.

##### **The quality of care, support and guidance to learners**

##### **Outstanding feature**

178. Sixth form students are trained as volunteers to help Y11 pupils with their mathematics. Approximately 90 pupils of all abilities benefit from these well-organised, weekly, cross age tutor sessions that are held after school. Y11 pupils improve their performance as a result of this intervention. Sixth form students also develop useful personal skills during the process.

179. Care arrangements at the school are managed very effectively. Clear lines of communication operate from the assistant headteacher responsible for care, through the heads of school and achievement leaders to the form teachers. Regular meetings of the various teams involved ensure a consistency of approach throughout the school. Pupils see their teachers as caring and approachable.

180. Achievement leaders monitor the progress of pupils very thoroughly. They collect a range of performance data and use this to set a series of targets for pupils whose attitude, behaviour or academic performance is a cause for concern. Teachers work individually with these pupils to improve their performance. Additional support is provided in Y11 by a large number of trained mentors from the local business community. This is organised by the EBP. A large number of sixth-form students also provide well-targeted support for pupils in KS3 and KS4.

181. The partnership with parents and carers is strong. Parents and carers respond well to communications from the school and this ensures an effective dialogue. Due account is taken of parents' views and they have helped to shape school policy, for example in improving Y7 induction.

182. The local EBP works closely with the school and has organised a number of highly effective events. These help to develop pupils' understanding of the role of business and enterprise in society. They include:

- Y9 Enterprise day;
- Y7 Key Skills' day;
- Sikh only Saturday Construction Club;
- Learning, memory retention and revision skills for Y12;
- Business Dynamics, a programme designed to broaden perceptions of the world of work; and
- events aimed at developing entrepreneurial skills, such as the Young Initiative programme and the Dynamo project.

183. For several years there have been continuing improvements in the levels of attendance and these high levels are maintained by a number of very effective procedures. These include:
- contacting home on the first day of absence for targeted pupils;
  - regular monitoring of computerised attendance data;
  - setting of attendance targets for pupils who are a cause for concern;
  - recognition and celebration of those with good attendance records;
  - strong pastoral support and extensive parental liaison for those with poor attendance levels;
  - good liaison with primary schools to target potential problems in Y7; and
  - the need for potential sixth formers to meet attendance targets whilst they are in Y11.
184. Because of the supportive ethos of the school pupils and students feel secure. They have the confidence to approach and talk to staff. The school has well documented child-protection procedures that are known and understood by all staff. There are good links with outside agencies.
185. Pupils receive good, impartial advice about choosing appropriate courses in Y9, Y11 and the sixth form. This is provided by a range of people, including representatives of Careers Wales. Additional support is provided during the PSE programme in KS3 and KS4 and general studies lessons in the sixth form.
186. An effective induction programme helps new pupils settle quickly into Y7. There is a similarly effective programme that introduces students to the routines and disciplines of the sixth form.
187. In planning the provision of personal support and guidance the school takes due account of ACCAC's PSE Framework. The PSE days in Y10 are particularly effective and worthwhile.
188. The school takes due account of ACCAC's Framework for Careers Education and guidance. As a result pupils receive effective support in this area. The school works well in partnership with Careers Wales who provide a dedicated careers officer.
189. The health, safety and well being of pupils are well managed. There are adequate provisions for first aid and a school nurse provides further medical support. The school has carried out successfully a "Safe Routes to School" audit.
190. PSE lessons are less effective when delivered by non-specialist teachers. Sex education is not delivered early enough in the KS4 PSE programme.

### **The quality of provision for additional learning needs**

191. The detailed policy for SEN is in line with the recommendations of the Code of Practice for Wales and is effectively administered by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). The school has a strong inclusive ethos which is reflected in its provision for pupils with a range of special educational needs. This provision is very good with some outstanding features. These include the:
- intervention strategies designed to enable pupils with SpLD access to the curriculum;

- significant numbers of sixth-form students who participate in paired learning experiences with years 7 and 8 pupils;
- significant number of staff providing second-teacher support; and
- impact that the behaviour policy, combined with extremely effective pastoral support, has had on the elimination of permanent exclusions in recent years.

### **Outstanding features**

192. The school's specialist resource base for pupils with statements of SEN for SpLD provides a focus for intervention to enable these pupils to access the mainstream curriculum. The pupils' statements of SEN disapply them from the requirements to study modern foreign languages and Welsh second language and allow them to be withdrawn, during this time, for specialist support. Strategies for in-class support include recording all texts studied onto audio tapes, providing amanuenses for examinations, tests and extended course work, teacher/LSA support in literacy-based subjects, production of study guides and support with organisational skills.
193. Extensive use is made of appropriate multi-sensory strategies to support pupils with SpLD. Pupils make very good progress from a low base on entry and achieve very good standards by the end of KS4. They also make significant progress in developing self-esteem and self-confidence.
194. The school employs a wide and effective range of diagnostic procedures to continually assess pupils' needs. These include:
- primary school referrals and test data;
  - screening tests on admission;
  - parental concern; and
  - referrals by subject teachers and achievement leaders.
195. Good quality IEPs are in place for all pupils who require them. Relevant subject staff are provided with IEP summary sheets which identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses, interventions and teaching strategies. However, targets on the summary sheet lack sufficient detail.
196. Pupils' work and progress is reviewed regularly. Pupils' IEPs are evaluated termly and statements of SEN are reviewed annually. Additional plans are compiled in Y9, prior to pupils progressing to Y10.
197. The school complies with all statutory requirements associated with provision for pupils with additional learning needs.
198. Extensive and successful strategies are used to support pupils with SEN. These include:
- effective liaison with the UA's specialist facility for visually-impaired pupils and the subsequent good quality support for a pupil with visual impairment;
  - the learning skills option in Y9 and the learning support option at KS4;
  - very effective support from the team of LSAs;
  - lunchtime and after-school clubs; and

- the good quality of provision across the subjects of the curriculum where tasks match ability but also incorporate challenge.
199. Able and talented pupils are well supported by the co-ordinator who encourages a variety of approaches focused through classroom teaching. The co-ordinator has arranged weekly meetings with KS3 pupils and 'drop in' session for KS4 pupils. An extensive programme of enhancement, including residential courses and workshops, a writing master class and inputs from external specialists challenges more able pupils to achieve their potential. The school has established effective links with the National Academy for Gifted Children.
200. As part of the continued professional development (CPD) programme, the school provides able and talented training for all staff.
201. Pupils with English as an Additional Language are provided with very good quality support and mentoring that meet their individual needs. Good links with partner primary schools ensure a thorough assessment of pupils' needs before transition. Good links with subject departments after transition ensure continuity and progression in the acquisition of English. Strategies for support include:
- effective in-class support;
  - provision and modification of resources for subject staff;
  - provision of training for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs), Initial-Teacher-Education and Training (ITET) students and graduate teachers; and
  - an open-door policy for pupils and staff.
202. There are excellent strategies in place to support pupils whose behaviour is a threat to their own and others' progress. High quality support provided by the achievement leaders and effective liaison with the SENCO is instrumental in providing for their needs without recourse to permanent exclusion.

### **The quality of provision for equal opportunities**

203. The school is very effective in recognising the diversity of its pupils' backgrounds. On entry, a small number of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is provided with language support. Pupil achievement is analysed with respect to ethnic diversity and this shows that pupils of all backgrounds succeed well at the school.
204. The school is very effective in recognising and celebrating the wide range of cultures within the school. This is evident during school assemblies and events such as the annual fashion show. The school provides facilities for religious observance by members of the various faiths that attend the school.
205. The school has sympathetic and very effective measures to eliminate bullying. Many pupils feel able to seek help from the Student Advice Council. This is staffed by sixth-form volunteers trained by the charity, "Childline".
206. Race relations are good. The school planner makes it very plain that racist behaviour will not be tolerated. The school has a race relation officer and complies fully with the Race Relations Act and UA requirements.
207. Equal opportunities and equality of access to all aspects of school life are actively encouraged. The breaking-down of traditional stereotypes is monitored

by the school's Equal Opportunities, Racial Awareness and Disability Access Curriculum Leader.

208. Partially-sighted pupils and those with physical disabilities are well provided for at the school.

## **Leadership and management**

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

#### **Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

209. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade awarded by the school in its own evaluation.

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

210. The senior leadership team is outstanding in providing clear direction and promoting high standards. This is because:

- individual roles within the team are highly complementary of each other;
- members of the team reflect critically on the work of the school and how it can be improved;
- the senior team is open and approachable in its management style, achieving a very effective balance of support and challenge; and
- the headteacher fosters distributed leadership.

211. The headteacher promotes a culture of enquiry and action-based research, which empowers staff at all levels to be innovative and to contribute to the school's clear and committed focus on learning and teaching. This is exemplified in the Learning Forum group, where staff at all levels are able to present new ideas and where opportunities are given to discuss best practice.

212. There are shared values among leaders, teaching and support staff about learning, behaviour and relationships. School policies are comprehensive and clearly embody these values.

213. Two of the school's key principles, equality and inclusion, underpins all its work and reflects priorities of the WAG. Other priorities, that of education for sustainable development and global citizenship is firmly embedded in many aspects of school life. Plans are in place to audit provision across the curriculum.

214. The school has well-planned and thorough processes for setting challenging but realistic targets for both pupils and teachers. It is very successful in meeting its goals.

215. The line management by senior leaders of middle leaders is consistently rigorous. Senior leaders meet regularly with middle leaders on a formal basis and with a common agenda to evaluate progress and plan for improvement. Middle leaders are well supported by their line managers.

216. Middle leaders have a clear understanding of their role and implement it with good effect. The quality of documentation in departments is generally very good.

Middle leaders, both pastoral and heads of department, have a very clear commitment to quality assurance as an essential means of promoting pupils' achievement, observing lessons and monitoring pupils' work on a regular basis.

217. The systems for the appraisal of staff are very effective. They highlight and meet the professional development needs of staff, while striving equally to address the school's priorities. Senior leaders are very successful in promoting the professional development of staff through school-based INSET workshops.
218. A good example of succession planning and planning for sustainability is the practice of inviting middle leaders, who may aspire to senior management, to apply to join the senior leadership team for a term.
219. The programme for the induction of NQTs is very well managed and is as much about school ethos as procedures. In addition the senior mentor plans for the needs of the individual by facilitating personal research. Newly qualified teachers and those in the early stages of professional development also receive very good support within departments.
220. However, the school is still at the early stage of addressing the WAG agenda for widening individual learning pathways in KS4 and beyond.

#### **The extent to which governors meet their responsibilities**

221. The governors are highly pro-active and knowledgeable in helping the school to set its strategic direction. Their individual expertise is very well utilised at all levels in the school. They undertake their role as critical friend in a highly effective way.
222. Governors monitor the quality of provision in the school effectively, scrutinising the full range of reviews and reports. They have a good understanding of the self-evaluation process and undertake their own self-review.
223. Governors fulfil all the legal duties placed upon them.
224. Although the school has a process for linking governors to individual departments it is not consistently effective.

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

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
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225. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade awarded by the school in its own evaluation.

#### **How effectively the school's performance is monitored and evaluated**

226. The quality of the school's self-evaluation process is very good. The overall findings of the school's self-evaluation report matched fully the findings of the inspection team.
227. The school's self-evaluation report is very detailed and includes a thorough assessment of the school's progress. As a result of the way that the report is presented, areas in need of further improvement are not always sufficiently focused.

228. The arrangements that the senior leaders have established to monitor how well the school is performing have many good features, some of them outstanding.
229. There is an outstanding culture of reflective practice in the school that has enabled staff to identify and share good practice. This has been achieved through a professional dialogue amongst staff to focus on pupils' achievement. Other outstanding features include:
- a designated assistant headteacher for standards, who leads the whole school self-evaluation process rigorously;
  - a substantial programme of investment in teaching strategies as a result of self-review at all levels;
  - the effective use of detailed department analysis of external results, using predictive and retrospective residual data by line and middle managers;
  - departmental and whole-school reviews that concentrate on the quality of learning and teaching; and
  - clear responsibilities within job descriptions for middle and senior leaders to carry out on-going evaluation of performance across the school.
230. The views of parents and governors are sought effectively through regular meetings with the headteacher and the Partnership Group. The school listens to learners through a very effective school parliament, which is an outstanding feature of the school.
231. The governing body plays an active role in the self-evaluation process. As a group, they evaluate their own strengths and areas for improvement.

### **The effectiveness of planning for improvement**

232. Senior and middle managers set clear priorities and actions to bring about improvement. Good features include:
- a detailed five-year strategic plan based on a critical evaluation and costings for the development priorities for the whole school;
  - identified priorities that are clearly matched to the school improvement plan and departmental plans; and
  - regular monitoring of progress and feedback to the leadership team by teaching and support staff.
233. Overall, effective links have been established between senior and middle managers. This has enabled managers to advance further monitoring, planning, data analysis and departmental target setting.
234. The school has made good progress in addressing all of the key issues identified in the last inspection report. The improvements include:
- the quality of teaching in science and music at KS3;
  - setting of work which meets the differing needs of pupils, especially those with IEPs;
  - continuity and progression in curricular provision from KS3 to KS4;
  - the use of ICT across the curriculum; and
  - arrangements for teaching PSE and general studies to ensure that all pupils and students have a common experience.

235. The school meets statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form and the daily act of collective worship for all pupils and students. There is however a lack of consistency in the quality of the daily act of collective worship in assemblies and form tutor periods.

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

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
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236. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade awarded by the school in its own evaluation.

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

237. There are outstanding features in the way in which the school:

- ensures that all members of staff work highly effectively together to support learning and teaching;
- is highly pro-active in gaining additional funding from outside sources;
- manages and develops all members of staff and matches their needs closely to its priorities for improvement; and
- reviews resources regularly and rigorously to ensure best value for money.

<b>Outstanding feature</b>
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238. The school is very successful in promoting a research culture amongst staff. One significant aspect of this is the Learning Forum. This is a firmly established feature of the school and provides an excellent opportunity for staff to share good practice. Although it is run on a voluntary basis it is well attended.

239. It meets frequently throughout the school year and members of teaching staff and school management provide aspects for discussion. These items for discussion focus strongly on thinking skills and strategies to improve learning. The forum is also a very effective vehicle to enable teachers to give feedback on any INSET courses they have attended.

240. The Learning Forum is an excellent example of the way in which the school reflects continuously on improving learning experiences for pupils and students.

241. The level of staffing is good with some outstanding features. Teachers are well qualified and have a good range of expertise and experience. A large number of enthusiastic and very capable members of support staff assist them highly competently. This ensures that teachers have sufficient time to fulfil workload agreements. There is an excellent team spirit and members of staff work very effectively together to ensure that the school functions efficiently.

242. There are some outstanding features in accommodation and these include the:

- Learning Resource Centre which is spacious and well stocked with a good range of material to support learning; and
- cafeteria that provides an excellent facility for Y11 pupils and students in the sixth form.

243. In addition to this, the reception area gives an excellent first impression of the school to visitors.
244. There are other good features in accommodation where the school:
- provides good access to those with disabilities and makes some modifications to meet pupils' needs;
  - makes effective use of some specialist off-site facilities to enrich learning experiences; and
  - provides some pleasant recreational areas for pupils and students.
245. The site manager works highly effectively with both pupils and other support staff to ensure that the school building and grounds are maintained well. Toilets are clean and any litter or graffiti is disposed of promptly.
246. Fourteen pupils in Y8 have been trained by the fire service and, under the scrutiny of the Site Manager, patrol sections of the school at lunchtimes to assess any potential fire risk. A similar group of pupils in Y7 visit classrooms at lunchtimes shutting windows, and turning off lights and computer monitors. This works very successfully and provides the school with valuable information relating to energy efficiency and fire risk.
247. Overall there is a good range of resources to support learning. Provision for ICT is good and many classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards or desktop projectors. Most subject departments are resourced well.
248. There is some variability in the quality of accommodation and resources. A minority of classrooms are not furnished well and do not provide a stimulating environment for learning because of:
- insufficient space for the numbers of pupils;
  - lack of resources; and
  - poor quality of soundproofing where learning is disrupted by sound from other classrooms.

#### **How efficient are resources managed in order to ensure value for money**

249. All members of staff are managed and deployed well. The school is highly successful in supporting the professional development of all staff. This is outstanding in the way in which:
- staff development is linked closely to personal needs and the school's priorities for improvement;
  - good practice is shared enthusiastically with all staff through school-based INSET workshops; and
  - significant amounts of extra funding have been acquired through successful bids from General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) and used to support staff development.
250. The bursar manages all aspects of the school's finances very robustly. She works closely with the headteacher and governing body to ensure that the school's resources are used to best effect. There are outstanding features in the procedures in which:

- resources are reviewed regularly and rigorously and matched closely to the school's priorities for improvement;
- items of expenditure are scrutinised closely for cost-effectiveness; and
- the school secures additional funding from partnerships with parents and uses it effectively to improve facilities for staff, pupils and students.

251. Overall, the school achieves very good value for money. This is reflected in the standards of achievement of pupils and students and in the high quality of learning experiences it provides for them.

### **School's response to the inspection**

The inspection findings acknowledge that the teaching and learning initiatives that the school has been working on over the last five or six years has resulted in high quality teaching and a culture that empowers staff to both innovate and engage in research. We are pleased that the inspectors recognised the impact this has had on examination results, which were described as outstanding. The report also recognised the positive relationships between staff, pupils and parents, which the school is pleased with because establishing a positive relationship with the partners that make up the Cardiff High Partnership has been an objective of the school.

The action plan which will help address the recommendations of the report will incorporate aspects already included in the 2005-2010 Strategic Plan, including strengthening curricular links with partner primary schools and strengthening 14 – 19 learning pathways. Discussions on how the quality and consistency of written feedback to pupils at KS3 and KS4 can be strengthened have already been discussed at Academic Board; recommendations arising from these discussions will be incorporated within the action plan. Likewise, a recent visit to another secondary school identified as having good bilingual skills will help inform that particular part of the action plan. All aspects of the action plan will also be incorporated into the 2007-2008 school improvement plan, and 2005-2010 Strategic Plan will be amended accordingly.

A copy of the school's action plan in response to the inspection recommendations will be sent to all parents. The governors' annual report to parents will report on the progress we are making on the inspection recommendations.

## Appendix 1

### Basic information about the school

Name of school	Cardiff High School
School type	Community
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Llandennis Road Cyncoed Cardiff
Postcode	CF23 6WG
Telephone number	02920757741
Headteacher	Mr Michael Griffiths
Date of appointment	1 September 1997
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Dr Stuart Swinburne
Reporting inspector	Julia Helen Cantle Longville
Dates of inspection	29 January – 1 February 2007

## Appendix 2

### School data and indicators

Year group	Y 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y 10	Y 11	Y 12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	210	214	210	224	212	205	172	1447

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	77	13	84.5

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	17:1
Average teaching group size	23.9
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	75.4

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole School
Term 1	95.4	94.8	94.3	94.5	95.1	94.6	97.1	95.1
Term 2	93.2	92.2	94.0	92.2	93.6	92.8	97.4	93.6
Term 3	93.9	92.5	92.3	91.6	96.9	92.5	98.7	94.0

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	5
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	31 (temporary) 0 (permanent)

## Appendix 3

### National Curriculum Assessment Results End of Key Stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2006															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 208															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	33	44	19	0	0
		National	0	0	0	0	0	2	8	21	35	24	8	0	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	17	44	31	1	0
		National	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	18	24	32	15	0	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	12	24	23	39	0	0
		National	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	19	33	27	12	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	
In the school	85
In Wales	56

### Public Examination Results:

<b>For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ</b>	
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2006	235
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	57

<b>The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2006:</b>	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	97	87	88
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	80	52	54
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	96	84	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	71	38	40
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	99	99	98
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	92	75	77
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	99	93	93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	1	7	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	0	0	0
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	0	0	0

<b>For pupils aged 17, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs</b>	
Number of pupils aged 17 in January 2006	185
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2006	171
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2006	14

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	83	68	68
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	98	92	94
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	24	21	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			

## Appendix 4

### Evidence base of the inspection

Twelve inspectors, including a peer assessor and the school's nominee, spent a total of 46 days in the school and met as a team before the inspection.

These inspectors visited:

- 93 lessons or part lessons taught by teachers in all subjects;
- acts of collective worship;
- registration and form-tutor periods; and
- a few extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team met with:

- staff, governors and parents before the inspection began;
- senior managers, middle managers, teachers, support assistants and administrative staff;
- representatives of the community and other partners; and
- groups of pupils and students.

The team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- 62 replies to the parents' questionnaire;
- comprehensive documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection; and
- a range of pupils' work in all subjects across the curriculum from Y7 to Y13.

After the inspection, the registered inspector held meetings with the senior management team and governors.

## Appendix 5

### Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Julia Longville	Context, Summary, Recommendations, KQ1, Appendices
Gwyn Thomas	KQ2
Clive Rowlands	KQ3
David Hughes	KQ4
Paul Donovan	KQ4 (additional learning needs)
Irene Mackie	KQ5
Susan Gwyer Roberts	KQ6
David Williams	KQ7
Gwynoro Jones	Lay inspector
Michael Haylings	Supporting KQ2
Sheila Bevins	Nominee
Carol Beer	Peer Assessor

### *Acknowledgements*

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

### **Contractor**

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