

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Cowbridge Comprehensive School
Aberthin Road
Cowbridge
CF71 7EN**

School Number: 6734065

Date of Inspection: 24 – 28 September 2007

by

**Julia Longville
16347**

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

The inspection of Cowbridge Comprehensive School took place between 24/09/07 and 28/09/07. 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:

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

There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a **short** inspection.

Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Cowbridge Comprehensive School is an 11-18 co-educational school, maintained by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. There are 1296 pupils on roll, slightly fewer than at the time of the last inspection in November 2001. Three hundred of these are sixth form students slightly more than at the time of the last inspection.
2. The school is situated on three separate sites in the market town of Cowbridge. Pupils in Year (Y) 7 and Y8 are in the lower school situated in the town centre. The middle school and sixth form block are on the outskirts of the town, approximately one mile from the lower school. Overall, the area served by the school is prosperous.
3. The majority of pupils come from the town and surrounding rural area. Approximately 27% of pupils come from outside the unitary authority and gain places because they attend one of the ten designated partner primary schools. Three percent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, compared to 16.6% nationally. Almost all pupils have English as their first language. One percent of pupils speak Welsh as their first language. Approximately four percent of pupils come from minority ethnic heritages.
4. The school's intake includes the full range of ability. One percent of pupils have a statement of special educational need and a further 132 pupils have been identified as needing some support. Five pupils have National Curriculum disapplications.
5. The headteacher was appointed in November 2003. The senior management team includes two deputy headteachers and four assistant headteachers. Three of the four assistant headteachers each manage one of the three key stages.

The school's priorities and targets

6. The school seeks to enable all children to achieve their potential. The school has a comprehensive set of aims to promote pupils' academic, personal and social development. The school aims are to:
 - ensure that all students work to the limits of their ability to foster to the full their intellectual, moral and physical development;
 - lay the foundations of good study skills – to encourage students to become successful independent learners;
 - foster personal skills to enable students to assess realistically their own development;
 - encourage the acquisition of interests and skills which will be of value in adult life; and

- operate as a harmonious community where caring for others and respect for the individual assume the highest priorities.
7. The school's development plan for 2006-7 lists its main priorities as:
- improving the assessment systems at all key stages;
 - reviewing and improving the policies, systems and programmes for assessment of pupil achievement at the end of KS3, following the cessation of statutory tests;
 - reviewing, and improving, the current arrangements for the delivery of key skills at each key stage;
 - to improve the leadership in teaching and learning by developing the profile of all middle level leaders and post-threshold teachers; and
 - to work closely with the Vale of Glamorgan Council to plan and prepare for new school premises by 2010.
8. The schools' current development plan (2007-2008) has three key targets which focus on personalising the curriculum, learning and teaching and the professional development of all staff.

Summary

9. Cowbridge Comprehensive is an outstanding school where pupils and students achieve exceptionally high standards as a result of excellent teaching and leadership. These standards are especially notable because they are achieved in poor accommodation that is not appropriate for the needs of modern learning and teaching.
10. The following grades were awarded in the seven key questions.

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

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

Standards of achievement

KS3 and KS4

12. There are many outstanding features in the standards that pupils achieve.
13. With very few exceptions all pupils achieve very high standards. Overall, results in external examinations are outstanding. Pupils achieve extremely well in relation to their ability. A notable feature of the attainment in all key stages is the extent to which pupils make progress as they move through the school.
14. Results in teacher assessments at the end of KS3 have consistently improved year on year. In 2006, just over 83% of pupils reached the expected level in all three core subjects combined. In the last three years, on average, almost 95% of pupils reached at least level five in mathematics and science and 84% of pupils reached this level in English. These results are outstanding because, in the past three years:

- pupils' attainment in relation to all indicators has been at the upper end of the top quarter 25% of similar schools in Wales;
 - more than 25% of pupils achieved the highest levels in all three core subjects; and
 - results have been consistently well above local and national averages.
15. At KS4, attainment in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) has been well above local and national averages for a number of years. Results are outstanding in relation to all key indicators. Over the past four years and without exception, these results placed the school at the upper end of the top quarter of schools with a similar intake.
16. In 2006, 85% of pupils gained at least five GCSE A*-C grades, compared to 54% nationally, and 81% at the time of the last inspection. Since the last inspection:
- almost all pupils have been entered for examinations;
 - almost all pupils have gained at least five GCSE A*-G; and
 - very few pupils have left school without a qualification.
17. A particularly outstanding feature is the high percentage of pupils achieving GCSE A* and A grades in subjects across the curriculum.
18. As at KS3, pupils' performance at GCSE in the three core subjects combined is well above the average nationally and in similar schools. Results in all core subjects are exceptionally high and exceed local and national figures by a considerable margin.
19. Similar success has been achieved in almost all other subjects. Results show that pupils consistently achieve well when compared to prior attainment.
20. A particularly outstanding feature is the consistency in attainment across subjects at both key stages. In all subjects pupils achieve very high standards both in lessons and in teacher assessments and examinations. This is because of the high expectations that are set for pupils and their belief that they can achieve their potential.
21. 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' communication skills are particularly strong. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection in the development of pupils' key skills.
22. Pupils' bilingual competence in English and Welsh is good overall. Many pupils achieve well in Welsh second language lessons.
23. Overall, the ability of pupils on entry is above average. In comparison with attainment on entry, pupils make excellent progress. Generally, boys and girls

achieve similar standards. Teachers are very good at strategically organising pupils in lessons to enable them to achieve of their best.

24. In both key stages, almost all pupils of differing abilities, including those with special educational needs, achieve extremely well regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background. The opportunity for the most able pupils to move more quickly on to the next stage in their learning is an outstanding feature. A very small minority of KS4 pupils have difficulty engaging with their learning and make slower progress.
25. There is a very good focus across the school on providing a rounded education for all pupils, which is not just centred on academic achievement. As a result, most pupils have excellent personal, social and learning skills and show very positive attitudes to their work.
26. The behaviour of most pupils in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils show respect for each other, their teachers and visitors to the school.
27. Pupils make very good use of the varied opportunities provided to help their moral, social and cultural development. They show very good awareness and understanding of moral issues and of different lifestyles, beliefs and cultures. However, inconsistency in the quality of form tutor periods at the start of the school day impacts adversely on pupils' spiritual development.
28. Attendance at almost 94% is very good and is above the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) target of 92%.
29. Work related education and careers education prepare pupils well to play a full part in society.

The quality of education and training

30. The standard of teaching is excellent. An extremely high proportion of lessons (41%) were awarded a grade 1 and all lessons were graded 3 or better. The figures are well in excess of comparative figures for schools inspected in Wales in 2005 – 2006.
31. There are many outstanding features in the teaching. Teachers have exceptional, up-to-date subject knowledge. Many use this extremely effectively to capture pupils' interest and generate their enthusiasm in lessons. This creates an excellent atmosphere for learning in many lessons where pupils are treated with a considerable degree of respect.
32. A very impressive feature is the way in which most teachers secure the participation of all pupils in many lessons. They use questions skilfully and give excellent opportunities for pupils to share their ideas through paired or group tasks.

33. There are no important shortcomings although a very small number of teachers do not always establish high quality relationships with pupils that foster learning. There is also some inconsistency in the quality and regularity of homework.
34. Personalised learning is at the heart of the school. The needs of all pupils are considered individually. A major contributory factor that helps pupils achieve so well is the way in which teachers and managers track pupils' academic progress.
35. There are outstanding features in the procedures for assessing pupils' achievements. Their achievements are recorded on a whole school database that is comprehensive, very user friendly and easily accessible to all teachers. Overall assessment is used very successfully to promote high standards of pupils' achievement.
36. Pupils are assessed regularly and systemically throughout the school year. Generally pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve although this does vary across subjects. There is also some inconsistency in the quality and regularity of the day to day marking of pupils' work
37. There are outstanding features in the extent to which learning experiences meets learners' needs. These include:
 - the opportunity for some pupils to be entered early for GCSE examinations in music, mathematics and Welsh second language; and
 - the particularly well-constructed and effectively delivered PSE programme.
38. The extra-curricular sports programme is also an outstanding feature. Large numbers of girls and boys take part and most achieve exceptionally high standards. A wide range of other extra-curricular activities, which includes subject and homework clubs, chess, revision opportunities, eco groups, the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, fieldwork and musical and dramatic experiences are available for all pupils and most are well attended.
39. The development of key skills is coordinated very effectively and is embedded in pupils work across the curriculum.
40. Partnerships with parents, the community, employers, partner primary schools and other providers of education, particularly initial teacher education and training institutions, are exemplary.
41. The school continuously looks to improve the curriculum on offer. There have been improvements in recent years in the delivery of a number of subjects and the inclusion of vocational options. Overall there is too narrow a range of vocational options provided for pupils.
42. Although the daily act of collective worship meets statutory requirements, the quality of the provision, particularly in the form tutor period is too variable.

43. There are outstanding features in the extent to which learning experiences respond to the needs of employers and the wider community. These include the quality and coverage of work-related and careers education and guidance, together with opportunities for many pupils to gain enterprise experience. There are several good features. These include:
- provision for the development of pupils' and students' bilingual skills;
 - the opportunity for pupils to experience and contribute to activities relating to sustainable development and global citizenship (ESDGC); and
 - the setting up of the Cowbridge Learning Cluster which has established better links between primary partner schools, the youth development officer and the local Health Authority.
44. There are outstanding features in the way pupils are cared for, guided and supported. There is a strong and highly effective pastoral system that is embedded in the school and which supports personal, social and academic development. Leaders at all levels and form teachers work together effectively to provide the best possible outcomes for both pupils and students.
45. Transition procedures between all key stages, including transfer from the lower school to the middle school, are carefully planned and managed. The induction programme for pupils transferring from primary to secondary school is particularly strong.
46. The school has well established procedures for monitoring and tracking pupil performance, which allow staff to note underachievement. This enables them to provide appropriate support and guidance in order to maintain expectations and high standards.
47. The school successfully encourages pupils and students to be healthy and to pay attention to healthy eating and healthy exercise.
48. The quality of provision for pupils with additional learning needs has many outstanding features. Teachers diagnose pupils' needs carefully and implement a range of highly effective support strategies, which enable all pupils on the SEN register to leave school with a recognised qualification.
49. Equal opportunities are a high priority in the school. The school very successfully promotes gender equality and respect for diversity.
50. There is a comprehensive anti-bullying policy that is used effectively to deal with minor incidents of bullying. Sixth form peer counsellors successfully reinforce these procedures.

Leadership and management

51. The leadership and management of the school are outstanding at all levels. A very strong ethos and clear sense of purpose pervade the school.

52. The headteacher leads by example, providing clear direction and outstanding leadership. She sets exceptionally high standards for staff and pupils within clearly understood guidelines. She motivates staff and pupils into high levels of achievement within clearly focused routines and in an atmosphere of relaxed and effective discipline.
53. The senior leadership team is exceptionally strong. They provide clear vision and very effective leadership. They have a good range of complementary skills and talents which bond them into a very strong team. Leadership and management at middle management level are also exceptionally good. There is a remarkably strong team of middle managers.
54. High expectation is deeply embedded in the culture of the school. Everyone is expected and encouraged to work to the best of their ability and nearly all do. The high levels of empowerment and trust enhance the loyalty that staff, pupils and students feel towards the school.
55. The school has strong procedures to enable managers to know the quality of work delivered by their teams. Reviews of departments are planned systematically and provide detailed performance information. Planning is exceptionally good and shows clear links between departmental development plans and the school development plan.
56. There is a clear identification of staff development needs and an understanding of how it can improve standards and overall quality.
57. Overall national priorities have been addressed, although some are 'work in progress', for example, Welsh second language, the 14-19 curriculum and sustainable development.
58. Governors understand their roles and have an excellent knowledge of the running of the school. They are well informed on all aspects of school performance. They monitor progress very carefully and perform an extremely valuable role as 'critical friends' of the school. They provide a major contribution to planning through staffing, buildings, finance, pupil affairs and school development committees.
59. Governors have very good relationships with staff and pupils. Relationships have been strengthened by the governors' leadership in generating the vision for a new school. This vision is supported actively by parents, pupils and the local community.
60. The very well developed culture of self-evaluation in the school is an outstanding feature. Self-evaluation is extremely well embedded into the work of leaders, managers and teachers.
61. Evaluations focus very well on improving standards, learning and teaching, and on enabling pupils and students of all abilities to achieve their potential.

62. Reviews of departments, pastoral teams and key initiatives relating to learning and teaching contribute very well to the overall self-evaluation of the school.
63. Development planning in the school is of high quality. There is a very good link between school and departmental development planning, financial planning and the integration of the outcomes of self-evaluation into the planning process.
64. Plans give appropriate priority to those actions that focus on raising pupils' achievement and enabling them to realise their potential. The school improvement plan is of very good quality. Departmental plans are of at least good quality; the best departmental plans are outstanding.
65. The school's work on self-evaluation and improvement planning is extremely effective. It has led to notable improvements since the last inspection in several important areas.
66. The number of staff is sufficient for the school to run efficiently and to enable the curriculum to be taught very effectively to all pupils and students. All teachers have access to a carefully planned and well-coordinated programme of professional development.
67. Highly competent, capable and experienced support staff enable all aspects of the school to function effectively and efficiently. The very creative deployment of the small team of curriculum assistants is outstanding.
68. Overall, the school manages its resources effectively, efficiently and prudently to give outstanding value for money.

Standards of achievement

Sixth Form

69. Results in external examinations are outstanding. This is because, without exception, students achieve well above local and national figures. An exceptional feature is the percentage of students achieving the highest grades. Overall, results are of a consistently high standard year on year.
70. A very high percentage of Y11 pupils continue their education in the sixth form. The new school, scheduled to open in 2010, will enable all students to stay on in the sixth form.
71. Most students have developed an extremely positive attitude to learning before they enter the sixth form. They understand what is expected of them and strive to achieve of their best in everything that they do.
72. Students achieve very good standards in the key skills of the use of number and IT. They apply these skills well to inform and enhance their learning across subjects. Students have outstanding communication skills.

73. Teachers make very good use of students' prior attainment to help set challenging targets for improvement. Students receive regular feedback on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. With few exceptions, students make excellent progress and achieve very high standards.
74. A significant feature that contributes greatly to students' achievement is the very positive relationships that exist between students and their teachers. There is very good teamwork and high levels of respect. Students and teachers work together enthusiastically and thrive on the challenges they create for one another.
75. Students are mature young people with outstanding personal and social skills. The high levels of co-operation between students and the extent to which they engage with their own learning is an outstanding feature. The way that they help and support each other in lessons is outstanding.
76. An extensive range of enrichment activities enables students to develop a wide range of personal and social skills. They readily apply these in different contexts, for example, when working with younger children in the school or taking on leadership responsibilities as prefects or members of the school council.
77. Students engage fully in the many opportunities available to them to demonstrate their well-refined understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. This includes an extensive range of charity work which raises large sums of money.
78. Attendance is good overall. The punctuality of most students is good although a small minority of students occasionally arrive late to lessons.
79. Students are very well prepared for the next stage in their education. With few exceptions, students achieve their targets and move on to higher education in the university of their choice. All most all achieve of their best by the time they leave school.
80. Overall, as a result of the way in which individual pupils and students are monitored and cared for, this is a school where it is virtually impossible to fail.

The quality of education and training

Sixth form

81. Teaching is outstanding in the sixth form. Many teachers have an exceptional passion for their subject. They inspire students by conveying this passion with vigour and expertise in their teaching. The vast majority promote excellent working relationships with students that are instrumental in nurturing high quality learning experiences.
82. Assessment is very successful in monitoring students' achievements and ensuring that they achieve their potential. Teachers usually provide excellent,

regular feedback to students that enable them to have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

83. The school looks continuously to improve the curriculum on offer. There have been improvements in recent years in the delivery of a number of subjects, the inclusion of vocational options and the Welsh Baccaalaureate. Nevertheless, there are too few vocational options for pupils and students.
84. Students are cared for, guided and supported exceptionally well. The strong and highly effective pastoral system supports students' personal, social and academic development. The management team in the sixth form works together effectively together to ensure that students achieve their potential.

Leadership and management

85. The outstanding features of leadership and management in KS3 and KS4 are also evident in the sixth form.

Progress since the last inspection

86. The school's work on self-evaluation and improvement planning is extremely effective. It has led to notable improvements since the last inspection in several important areas. These include:
 - further improvement in the attainment of pupils from the high levels reported at the time of the last inspection;
 - the substantial increase in the proportion of lessons in which teaching is good with outstanding features;
 - significant improvement in opportunities for pupils to engage in extra-curricular events involving the arts;
 - provision of greater opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of ICT across the curriculum; and
 - more effective promotion of Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig.
87. Suitable attention has been given since the last inspection to improving the provision for design technology and music in KS3, and for religious education in the sixth form.
88. Not enough progress has been made in ensuring that pupils are provided with daily acts of collective worship of consistently good quality.
89. Careful planning and management enable the school to make very good use of existing accommodation. In spite of this, there has been insufficient progress in improving the poor quality of much of the accommodation, including the library facilities, noted in the last inspection.

Recommendations

In order to build on its exceptional success, the school should implement the following recommendations.

- R1 Continue to work with the Vale of Glamorgan Unitary Authority to achieve its vision to build a new school by September 2010.
- R2 Continue to develop plans to provide high quality 14-19 vocational options for pupils and students.
- R3 Use best practice to improve the quality of the daily act of collective worship across the school.

Aspects of recommendations one and two are addressed in the current school development 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. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade.

KS3 and KS4

91. There are many outstanding features in the standards that pupils achieve.

92. Overall, results in external examinations are outstanding. With very few exceptions, pupils achieve extremely well in relation to their ability.

93. Results in teacher assessments at the end of KS3 have consistently improved year on year. In 2006, just over 83% of pupils reached the expected level in all three core subjects combined. Results have been consistently exceptionally high for a number of years. In the last three years, on average, almost 95% of pupils reached at least level five in mathematics and science and 84% of pupils reached at least level five in English. These results are outstanding because, in the past three years pupils' attainment in relation to all indicators has been at the upper end of the top 25% of similar schools in Wales. Results have also been consistently well above local and national averages.

94. At KS4, attainment in the GCSE has been well above local and national averages for a number of years. Results are outstanding in relation to all key indicators. Over the past four years and without exception, these results placed the school at the upper end of the top quarter of schools with a similar intake.

95. In 2006, 85% of pupils gained at least five GCSE A*-C grades, compared to 54% nationally, and 81% at the time of the last inspection. With very few exceptions since the last inspection:

- almost all pupils have been entered for examinations;
- almost all pupils have gained at least five GCSE A*-G passes; and
- very few pupils have left school without a qualification.

96. At GCSE, as at KS3, pupils' performance in the three core subjects combined is well above the average nationally and in similar schools. Results in all core subjects are exceptionally high and exceed local and national figures by a considerable margin.

97. Similar success has been achieved in almost all other subjects. When compared to prior attainment, results show that pupils consistently achieve well.

98. Overall, results are outstanding and reflect the consistently high standards that pupils across the ability range achieve on a regular basis. A particularly

outstanding feature is the high percentage of pupils achieving GCSE A* and A grades in subjects across the curriculum.

99. A particularly outstanding feature is the consistency in attainment across subjects at both key stages. In all subjects pupils achieve very high standards in lessons as well as in teacher assessments and examinations. This is because teachers set high expectations and pupils believe that they can achieve their potential.
100. 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' communication skills are particularly strong. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection in the development of pupils' key skills.
101. Pupils listening skills are outstanding. They listen very attentively to their teachers and provide thoughtful and reflective answers to questions. They listen intently to the high quality responses of other pupils in the class and learn a great deal from each other as a result. They apply what they hear successfully to improve their performance.
102. A significant feature of nearly all lessons is the extent to which teachers enable pupils to discuss aspects of their work. Pupils willingly answer questions confidently and fluently. They think about their responses carefully, express their opinions well and provide extended answers that show their understanding of often complex tasks. They use subject specific terminology accurately. Their use and understanding of different languages is outstanding.
103. Most pupils are prepared to read aloud in class. They do so fluently, with expression and high levels of accuracy. They are able to extract information accurately from different text and use what they read to improve their written work. Overall, most pupils' take pride in their work and present it neatly and accurately. In many subjects, pupils' extended written work is technically accurate, fluent and of very high quality.
104. Pupils' numeracy and IT skills are good and they use them well in a variety of subjects across the curriculum. Most pupils use the skills they develop in IT lessons effectively to research aspects of their work.
105. There is a very strong emphasis on pupils working together to solve problems innovatively. Pupils respond particularly well to the many opportunities to work creatively and collaboratively to make decisions about the most effective techniques for improving their work. They refine their work to ensure that it is of the highest standard.
106. Pupils' bilingual competence in English and Welsh is good overall. Many pupils achieve well in Welsh second language lessons.
107. Overall, the ability of pupils on entry is above average. Pupils make excellent progress in comparison with their attainment on entry. A particular strength is the extent to which all pupils make progress as they move through the school.

Most pupils achieve very high standards in all aspects of their work. Some achieve well beyond expectation.

108. Overall, boys and girls achieve similar standards. Teachers are very good at organising pupils in lessons to enable them to achieve of their best.
109. In both key stages, almost all pupils of differing abilities, including those with additional learning needs, achieve extremely well regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background. The opportunity for the most able pupils to move more quickly on to the next stage in their learning is an outstanding feature. However, a very small minority of KS4 pupils have difficulty engaging with their learning and make slower progress.
110. There is a very good focus across the school on providing a rounded education for all pupils, which is not just centred on academic achievement. As a result, most pupils have outstanding personal, social and learning skills and show very positive attitudes to their work. They are proud to represent their school and do so very well indeed in the wide range of enrichment activities available to them. The behaviour of most pupils in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils show respect for each other, their teachers and visitors to the school.
111. Pupils make very good use of the varied opportunities provided to help their moral, social and cultural development. They show very good awareness and understanding of moral issues and of different lifestyles, beliefs and cultures. However, inconsistency in the quality of form tutor periods at the start of the school day impacts adversely on pupils' spiritual development.
112. Attendance at almost 94% is very good and is above the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) target of 92%.
113. Pupils are well motivated to work independently. They are prepared well to play a full part in society. The recently introduced Preparation for Working Life Qualification is indicative of the extent to which the school prepares pupils for lifelong learning and employment. Pupils develop outstanding skills, knowledge and understanding in the high-profile personal and social education and work-related education programmes available to them in both KS3 and KS4.

Sixth form

114. Results in external examinations are outstanding. This is because in 2006:
 - 78% of students achieved A-C grades in two or more Advanced (A) level examinations, well above the national average of 68%;
 - 97% 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.
115. An exceptional feature is the percentage of students achieving the highest grades. Overall, these results are indicative of the consistently high standard of attainment year on year.

116. A very high percentage of Y11 pupils continue their education in the sixth form. The new school, scheduled to open in 2010, will enable all students to stay on in the sixth form.
117. Most students have developed an extremely positive attitude to learning before they enter the sixth form. They understand what is expected of them and strive to achieve of their best in everything that they do. As a result they have excellent personal skills that they apply extremely well in their studies and other activities.
118. Students achieve very good standards in the key skills of the use of number and IT. They apply these skills well to inform and enhance their learning across subjects. Students have outstanding communication skills. They are very articulate, speak confidently and are able to express their opinions and ideas clearly. They are able to talk about complex ideas with a high degree of accuracy. Students listen with interest. They stimulate each other in class by asking challenging questions and providing thoughtful answers. As a result, they learn a great deal from one another in lessons.
119. Students engage with their learning very quickly and make good use of the time available in class to enhance their understanding. Students regularly challenge each other's thinking when working together to solve problems. They have good independent research skills, which allow them to reflect on aspects of their work in a very mature manner.
120. Teachers make very good use of students' prior attainment to help set challenging targets for improvement. As a result of the careful tracking of student progress, excellent academic support and guidance and the high expectations that permeate the sixth form, students of all abilities achieve extremely well.
121. With few exceptions, students make excellent progress and achieve very high standards. Teachers recognise students' difficulties very early and they intervene quickly to get students back on track. Most students enjoy the increased level of challenge and independent research expected of them in the sixth form.
122. A significant feature that contributes greatly to students' achievement is the very positive relationships that exist between students and their teachers. There is a real sense of team work and high levels of respect. Students and teachers work together enthusiastically and thrive on the challenges they create for one another. Students confidently ask searching questions that enable them to extend their knowledge. Teachers consider students to be delightful young people who are a real pleasure to work with.
123. Students are mature young people with outstanding personal and social skills. The high levels of co-operation between students and the extent to which they engage with their own learning is an outstanding feature. The way that they help and support each other in lessons is outstanding.

124. An extensive range of enrichment activities enables students to develop a wide range of personal and social skills. They readily apply these in different contexts, for example, when working with younger children in the school or taking on leadership responsibilities as a prefect or member of the school council. They take these roles very seriously and do a very good job. The work that students do with other pupils, for example reading support for Y7 pupils, contributes greatly to the positive ethos that is generated across the school.
125. Students engage fully in the many opportunities available to them to demonstrate their well-refined understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. This includes the Faith Forum, which is part of the religious studies programme, and the Christian Union set up by students for pupils across the school. The extensive range of charity work that students are actively engaged in further develops their awareness of others less fortunate than themselves. Students raise large sums of money for different charities.
126. A particularly outstanding feature is the way in which Y12 students undertake twelve weeks of community service, for example, working for local charities or providing classroom support in partner primary schools. This has a very positive impact on the development of their personal and social skills.
127. Attendance is good overall. The punctuality of most students is good although a small minority of students occasionally arrive late to lessons.
128. Students are very well prepared for the next stage in their education. With few exceptions, students achieve their targets and move on to higher education in the university of their choice. Almost all achieve of their best by the time they leave school.
129. Students receive outstanding careers guidance that enables them to make informed decisions about their career. As a result of this high quality support, they understand that they can go for any job regardless of their gender.
130. Overall, as a result of the way in which individual pupils and students are monitored and cared for, this is a school where it is virtually impossible to fail.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

131. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade.

KS3 and KS4

132. Overall grades for the quality of teaching in 56 lessons observed were:

Grade1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
41%	43%	16%	0%	0%

133. In 41% of lessons teaching was judged to be outstanding (grade1). This exceeds by far the comparative figure (17%) for other secondary schools in Wales inspected in 2005-2006. In all lessons good features outweigh shortcomings.

134. Teaching has many outstanding features that include:

- highly interactive lessons that capture pupils' interests and enthusiasm;
- very skilful use of questions that probe and challenge pupils' knowledge and understanding;
- very high expectations for all pupils and efforts to ensure that they achieve them; and
- the use of stimulating and innovative individual and group tasks to meet the needs of all pupils.

135. Teachers have very good up to date subject knowledge. They make outstanding use of this in their teaching, which inspires pupils to give of their best. The vast majority of teachers present ideas to pupils in stimulating and challenging contexts and intervene sensitively and highly effectively to support pupils' learning.

136. Relationships between teachers and pupils are nearly always good and are often excellent. Teachers set high expectations for pupils' behaviour and attitude to work. Pupils fully meet these expectations in the vast majority of lessons. Pupils have a high regard for nearly all teachers and feel well supported by them in their learning.

137. Many teachers promote an excellent atmosphere for learning in their lessons through very skilful use of both open and closed questions. An impressive feature is the way in which pupils are given appropriate time to answer the questions presented to them. Often pupils discuss their responses in small groups and then share them as a whole class. Teachers conduct the questioning sensitively and in a non-threatening atmosphere where all

contributions are valued and expected. The process is highly effective in promoting pupils' oral communication skills.

138. Virtually all lessons are planned effectively and structured well. Teachers explain objectives clearly and ensure that pupils have a very good understanding of what is expected of them. Teachers are usually highly responsive to pupils' needs and adapt their lessons accordingly to meet these needs. Homework is often used well to consolidate and extend pupils' learning.
139. A very good range of resources and tasks are used in many lessons. An outstanding feature is the way in which teachers use pair or group tasks to facilitate pupils' learning. The tasks are usually challenging and enable pupils to undertake some self-assessment or peer-assessment. For example, at KS4, pupils are often asked to assess the work of others in order to identify the good features and aspects for improvement. This is very effective preparation for GCSE examinations.
140. Normally, teaching successfully promotes equal opportunity. Often, pupils are organised into groups of different abilities and of mixed gender. In many lessons, teachers skilfully direct questions to pupils and secure the active involvement of all.
141. There are bilingual posters in many classrooms and some teachers make use of basic incidental Welsh in their teaching. Occasionally, however, opportunities to promote the Welsh language and the culture of Wales are not developed fully enough across subjects.
142. Although there are no significant shortcomings, a very small number of teachers do not always establish high quality relationships with pupils to extend their learning. There is also some inconsistency in the quality and regularity of the homework set for pupils. The amount of homework occasionally varies considerably and tasks are not always sufficiently challenging for all pupils.
143. Procedures for assessing pupils' achievements are outstanding. Pupils are assessed regularly and systemically throughout the school year. Their achievements are recorded on a whole school database that is comprehensive and easily accessible to all teachers.
144. Personalised learning is at the heart of the school. The needs of all pupils are considered individually. A major contributory factor that helps pupils achieve so well is the way in which teachers and managers track pupils' academic progress. Potential underachievement is identified early and intervention strategies are implemented quickly and effectively at all levels. This ensures that all pupils have the best opportunity to achieve the highest standards.
145. Assessment is very successful in promoting high standards because teachers:
 - make excellent use of prior assessment information;
 - monitor the progress of pupils of all abilities extremely effectively;
 - analyse recorded information rigorously across subjects and classes; and

- make sure that pupils understand clearly what is expected of them; and
 - deal with matters requiring attention swiftly and efficiently.
146. At KS3 pupils normally complete six formally assessed tasks in each subject. These are marked thoroughly with detailed comments that indicate strengths and aspects for improvement. Teachers make good use of NC levels in KS3 to assess pupils' work.
147. Generally pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve although this does vary across subjects. There is some inconsistency in the quality and regularity of the marking of pupils' work
148. In most subjects pupils are involved purposefully in evaluating their own learning through both self-assessment and peer-assessment. These procedures are well embedded in many lessons and are used well by teachers to ensure pupils reflect critically on their work.
149. Statutory requirements in relation to assessing and reporting on national curriculum subjects are met at KS3. Teachers also meet the regulations of examining boards for subjects at KS4.
150. Reports to parents and carers are excellent in terms of their presentation, clarity, and content. Subject teachers provide detailed and usually well focussed comments that identify pupils' strengths in the subject. Teachers also include useful information relating to areas for improvement. In most cases these are clear and subject specific. Very occasionally, however, targets for improvement are too general and teachers do not indicate clearly enough how the pupil can improve in the subject itself.

Sixth form

151. Overall grades for the quality of teaching in the 21 lessons observed were:

Grade1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
74%	26%	0%	0%	0%

152. All lessons were graded one or two. These are highly impressive figures and indicate excellent standards of teaching with outstanding features in nearly three quarters of lessons.
153. Many teachers have an exceptional passion for their subject. They inspire students by conveying this passion with vigour and expertise in their teaching. The vast majority promote excellent working relationships with students that are instrumental in nurturing high quality learning experiences.
154. Lessons are often highly interactive with teachers making skilful use of questions that probe students' knowledge and understanding. Teachers are very successful in securing full participation from students. This is an expectation in nearly all lessons and reflects the high levels of respect between students and teachers.

155. Teachers make excellent use of resources in many lessons. They often set challenging tasks to groups of students and encourage them to share their ideas with each other before presenting them to the whole class. This strategy is very successful in promoting students' communication skills as well as extending their subject knowledge and understanding.
156. Teachers assess students work accurately and regularly throughout the school year. They record their achievements on a central database and, this is used very effectively to monitor individual progress and to analyse the performance of classes and subjects. Overall the process is outstandingly effective in promoting high standards.
157. Most students have a clear awareness of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers provide regular helpful written and oral feedback to students that enables them to reflect on their own performance and plan for improvement.
158. In many lessons, teachers set tasks that require students to engage in self-assessment or peer-assessment. Teachers often require students to work in small groups and to reflect critically on their own work and that of others. This is an outstanding feature and is very valuable in assisting their preparation for external examinations.
159. All requirements of examination boards are met. Teachers ensure that students are prepared extremely thoroughly for their examinations.
160. Annual reports to parents and carers are outstanding in terms of their presentation, clarity and content. Comments from subject teachers are detailed, focus very well on strengths and indicate targets for improvement. In most cases, the targets provide specific information that indicates how the student can improve.

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
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161. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade.
162. The extent to which the school is committed to supporting individuals' learning needs is outstanding. The school goes to great lengths to provide a wide range of curriculum experiences that are very well matched to the needs of individual pupils and students. This includes options to study additional subjects both on and off site. Learning experiences are outstanding because:
- pupils in KS4 and students in the sixth form have access to an open option programme that enables them to study the subjects of their choice;
 - pupils and students are able to enter examinations in music, mathematics and Welsh second language early

- pupils who require additional support are exceptionally well catered for and often achieve beyond expectation; and
 - pupils and students are able to undertake additional studies or experiences within and beyond the curriculum.
163. Continuous improvement of the curriculum on offer is a feature of the school. There have been improvements in recent years in the delivery of design and technology and music. Drama has been added to what is on offer in all key stages along with childcare in KS4 and psychology to the sixth form. Welsh second language provision has improved and forms a very useful part of pupils' learning experiences.
164. From September 2007 all Y12 students are following the Welsh Baccalaureate. This gives them a wider breadth of experience and opportunity to gain additional accreditation.
165. Links with other schools and the local college of further education are good. The headteacher chairs a group that is planning to provide high quality 14-19 education for all pupils and students across the local authority. Currently there are too few vocational opportunities for pupils and students to follow. Although level two courses in aviation, public service, art and design and sport, were offered there was no take up.
166. The personal and social education programme is outstanding. The heavy involvement of senior managers in teaching the well-thought-out programme gives it appropriate status in the eyes of pupils, students and other teachers. Pupils and students value the experience and appreciate the very positive impact that it has on the development of their personal and social skills. All pupils in Y11 in 2007 gained qualifications in personal and social education.
167. The extra-curricular sports programme is outstanding. The numbers of girls and boys taking part and the standards they reach are exceptional. The programme is accessible to all pupils and students regardless of their ability. Very large numbers of pupils go on to represent their county and Wales in a wide range of sports.
168. The recently appointed key skills coordinators are starting to make a significant contribution to the provision across the curriculum. They have planned programmes well to ensure that the learning experiences for pupils and students are coherent and lead to appropriate accreditation. Teachers build key skills into departmental schemes of work successfully. All KS3 and KS4 pupils are timetabled for information technology lessons to develop their skills for subsequent application in other subjects.
169. Teachers give generously of their time in providing a range of extra curricular activities, which includes subject and homework clubs, chess, revision opportunities, eco groups, the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, fieldwork and musical and dramatic experiences.

170. The school has developed strong and effective partnerships. The energy and commitment of the parent teacher association is a notable feature. It makes a significant contribution to funding the needs of pupils and students. The interest shown by many parents in their children's learning is another strong feature of the school. There are also strong partnerships with employers, the universities and partner primary schools. The transition arrangements at all key stages are very strong.
171. The provision of acts of collective worship for year groups, delivered by a member of the senior management team or head of year, is good overall. However the lack of a suitable hall impacts negatively on this provision. Acts of collective worship during form tutor periods are too variable in quality. Senior staff and heads of year do not monitor the quality of this provision carefully enough.
172. There are outstanding features in the extent to which learning experiences respond to the needs of employers and the wider community. The carefully constructed and planned programme of work-related and careers education and guidance is outstanding. All pupils and students have access to this high quality and progressive programme which includes enterprise experience. Y6 pupils from partner primary schools visit the school to take part in an annual enterprise initiative.
173. Links with Careers Wales and employers are strong. Pupils and students understand the career options available to them. As a result they make informed decisions about which subjects to study. In 2007, the school achieved the Careers Wales Most Valued Partner Award.
174. A further outstanding feature is the inclusive nature of the school. The headteacher gives a strong lead, but all staff readily ensure that this comprehensive school is comprehensive by nature. The school does not allow any pupil to lose out because of circumstance. Notable features of the inclusive ethos are:
- the high achievement and attainment of pupils;
 - the supportive pastoral systems; and
 - strong assessment, targeting and mentoring systems.
175. There are numerous opportunities for pupils and students to use their bilingual skills. They include, increased signage across the school, an annual eisteddfod and the opportunity for some Y7 pupils to attend the Urdd centre at Llangrannog. There are firm plans in place to continue to develop bilingualism across the school. There are some good examples of Y Curriculum Cymreig. These include the:
- numbers of pupils in representing their country and county in sport;
 - increasing number of subjects which provide appropriate Welsh contexts to aspects of their work;
 - growing use of incidental Welsh within the school day; and
 - introduction of the Welsh Baccaulaureate.

176. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to experience and contribute to education for sustainable development and global citizenship. These include:
- elements of the geography and personal and social education programmes;
 - eco and recycling schemes;
 - assembly topics;
 - support for those less fortunate than themselves through charity work; and
 - practical tasks, and the running of mock elections.
177. Although the school holds several awards in this area and much of its work is impressive, it is not currently co-ordinated to ensure full and efficient coverage.
178. The Cowbridge Learning Cluster has recently been set up. The members include the primary partner schools, the youth development officer and the local Health Authority. In its first year it has had a number of successes, for example, the arts week. It seeks to enhance the variety of opportunities available for pupils outside of normal school hours.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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179. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade.
180. A strong and highly effective pastoral system supports personal, social and academic development. The extent to which middle level leaders and form teachers work together to provide effective pastoral care for pupils and students is outstanding. The positive ethos of mutual respect evident within the school community is also outstanding.
181. Transition procedures between all key stages, including transfer from the lower school to the middle school, are very carefully planned and managed. Y8 pupils transferring to Y9 are invited to the Enterprise Week activities in the middle school. Special arrangements are made for vulnerable pupils to undertake extra visits.
182. The school provides good quality guidance is provided for pupils when choosing appropriate courses at KS4 and in the sixth form. Comprehensive and informative documentation, individual interviews, open evenings and careers education activities enable pupils to make well informed choices.
183. The induction programme for pupils transferring from primary to secondary school is outstanding. These arrangements ensure that pupils are able to build on the momentum established in KS2. As a result they make rapid progress. The very positive relationships with the ten partner primary schools include effective pastoral and curriculum links. Summer reading packs and curriculum links ensure continuity of the learning experience for pupils. Detailed analysis of available pupil data is used comprehensively to ensure that pupils' needs are met as soon as they transfer to the school. The cluster manager and local authority transition officer provide valuable support to the school. This together

with the detailed transition plan further reinforces the joint agreement between the cluster.

184. The high quality personal and social education programme exemplifies the very effective guidance provided by the school. It encourages pupils to express themselves appropriately and develop mutual trust. The delivery of the programme by a dedicated team of teachers is outstanding. Teachers are experienced in personal and social education issues and ensure that the delivery is both interesting and appropriate at each key stage.
185. The quality of careers education and guidance, embedded throughout the school from Y6 induction to the sixth form, is also outstanding and complements the personal and social education programme. Very positive relationships have been established with Careers Wales. The range of activities includes:
 - Real Game Day;
 - Enterprise Week;
 - mock interviews by local employers; and
 - Dynamo enterprise activities.
186. The monitoring of individual pupils performance is a particularly outstanding feature. The school has established procedures for regularly monitoring and tracking pupil performance and progress. This allows staff to note any early underachievement and provide immediate and effective intervention, support and guidance. These procedures help to raise expectations and maintain standards. The mentoring of pupils at three different levels to identify underachievers, track progress and challenge high achievers is extremely effective.
187. The development of a healthy school ethos is a high priority. The school successfully encourages pupils and students to be healthy and to take an active interest in healthy living. The emphasis is placed firmly on developing the whole person through healthy eating and exercise. These feature prominently in the physical education programme and are reinforced by appropriate modules within the personal and social education programme. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award.
188. An enthusiastic school council has contributed very effectively to developments in the school and has initiated positive changes. These include changes to the anti-bullying policy, promoting healthy living and contribution to discussions about the proposed new school.
189. Child protection procedures are effective. A number of staff including a designated member of the senior management team have received regular updated and refresher training.
190. There are many outstanding features in the quality of provision for pupils and students with additional learning needs. The department has comprehensive documentation, which includes a detailed departmental handbook that contains the special needs policy. Highly effective partnerships with primary schools,

which includes the sharing of consistently high quality information, allows for an early, sensitive and careful diagnosis of individual pupil needs.

191. The head of learning support is enthusiastic, organised and experienced. Pupils on the special needs register make outstanding progress and all leave school with a recognised qualification. An effective team of learning support assistants use literacy and numeracy intervention strategies well to provide very effective support for pupils.
192. An integrated approach throughout the whole school includes a range of flexible and targeted strategies to improve literacy and numeracy skills. All Y7 pupils, including the most able and talented, are involved. The strategies include, the Better Reading Partnership, Catchup, Successmaker and Number Workout.
193. The school has consistently high expectations of all pupils including pupils with additional learning needs. Teachers plan lessons very carefully and use appropriate teaching strategies to meet the needs of individual pupils. Progress of pupils with additional learning needs is regularly monitored and recorded. All staff across the school use detailed individual education plans and the special educational needs register effectively to plan appropriate programmes of work. This includes successful support for a few disaffected pupils in KS4.
194. Support from outside support agencies is constructive. The curriculum in KS4 is appropriate and includes partnerships with further education colleges for targeted pupils. Good support is also provided for a small minority of pupils with behavioural difficulties.
195. The quality of the provision for equal opportunities is good with outstanding features. Issues of equal opportunity are very prominent in the personal and social education, the religious education programmes and school assemblies. The positive and inclusive nature of the school, which is based on equality and mutual trust, is an outstanding feature. All pupils are fully integrated into the curricular and extra-curricular life of the school and the school has very high expectations for pupils of all abilities.
196. The high priority given to promoting gender equality through positive efforts to challenge stereotyping is another outstanding feature. This includes the classroom organisation that assures pupils learn in mixed gender groups.
197. The school has a very comprehensive anti-bullying policy that has recently been reviewed by governors, parents, staff and pupils. The whole school community knows and understands the anti-bullying procedures. The sixth form peer counsellors successfully reinforce pupils' understanding of these procedures.
198. The high levels of support for both local and national charities reinforce the importance of promoting diversity and respecting others. The school has used its racial equality protocol effectively to log, monitor and investigate thoroughly recorded isolated incidents.

199. A staged disability access plan has appropriate targets and there is a detailed disability equality scheme. The school uses these well to promote disability equality in buildings that do not lend themselves to easy access.
200. The school has established numerous international links that further enhance learning opportunities for all pupils.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

201. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade.
202. There are many outstanding features in the leadership and management of the school at all levels. A very strong ethos and clear sense of purpose pervade the school. There is a contagious enthusiasm across the school. All staff and most pupils have a clear focus and a common purpose which is based on the achievement of excellence at all levels.
203. The school has made considerable progress since the last inspection, further improving on previously high standards. The headteacher has been the main driving force behind this improvement. She leads by example, providing clear direction and outstanding leadership. She sets exceptionally high standards for staff and pupils within clearly understood guidelines. She is able to motivate staff and pupils to achieve the highest standards within clearly focused routines and in an atmosphere of relaxed discipline.
204. The senior leadership team is exceptionally strong. They provide clear vision and very effective leadership. They are a very strong team with a very good range of complementary skills and talents. All their roles are clearly defined and executed well. They make a major contribution to the day to day running on all sites and offer a considerable presence around the buildings at important times.
205. High expectation is a remarkable feature across the school and is deeply embedded in its culture. Everyone is expected and encouraged to work to the best of their ability and nearly all do. Expectations of governors, staff, pupils and parents are exceptionally high. This generates confidence and the knowledge that personal excellence is valued and can be achieved.
206. Teachers and pupils highlight core values of learning, behaviour and relationships as being of paramount importance. This is a shared concept. Everyone in the school is treated with respect and has a contribution which is valued. There are high levels of empowerment and trust which enhance the senses of ownership and belonging.
207. Equality of opportunity is a high priority. There is an expectation that all pupils will achieve and extend their potential. This expectation is met in a very high proportion of pupils.

208. Leadership and management at middle management level are also exceptionally good. There is a remarkably strong team of academic and pastoral middle managers. They are committed to constant improvement based upon common goals and outstanding teamwork. The level of commitment of almost all members of staff in the school is remarkable. Staff are encouraged and empowered to try and test new initiatives.
209. There are strong procedures to enable managers to know the quality of work delivered by their team. These formal and informal procedures are well established, valued and effectively implemented. All members of staff are responsible and accountable at all times. Reviews of departments are planned systematically and provide detailed performance information. These reviews enable staff at all levels to generate plans to improve standards and to set clear targets for improvement.
210. Very good procedures for monitoring performance are in place. These generate challenging targets for staff and teams, leading to relevant support and training and followed by an evaluation of resulting improvements. There are high levels of accountability and ownership of the annual review cycles. Strengths and weaknesses are shared.
211. Teachers are committed to staff development. There is clear identification of training needs and an acceptance of how staff development can improve standards and overall quality. Performance management and teacher appraisal programmes are in line with Welsh Assembly Government requirements. In addition, several staff benefit by 'shadowing' more senior colleagues. This includes assistant year tutors working closely with heads of year and middle managers being co-opted onto the senior leadership team for periods of time.
212. National priorities have been addressed. Some are 'work-in-progress', for example, the development of Welsh second language, the 14-19 curriculum and sustainable development.
213. Governors understand their roles and have an excellent knowledge of the running of the school. They are well informed on all aspects of school performance, particularly academic, sporting and cultural achievements.
214. They monitor the high quality of provision through regular updates and informed discussion. They provide a major contribution to planning through committees that focus on staffing, buildings, finance, pupil affairs and school development.
215. Governors have very good relationships with staff and pupils. Relationships have been strengthened by the governors' leadership in generating the vision for a new school. This vision is supported actively by parents, pupils and the local community.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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216. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade. The findings of the inspection team match closely those of the school in all of the seven key questions.
217. The very well developed culture of self-evaluation in the school is an outstanding feature. Self-evaluation is extremely well embedded into the work of leaders, managers and teachers. It has been a feature of management in the school for many years and the self-evaluation procedures have themselves been subject to appropriate review and revision.
218. Teachers at all levels show outstanding awareness of the part self-evaluation and development planning have to play in improving standards and quality. Evaluations focus very well on improving standards, learning and teaching, and on enabling pupils and students of all abilities to achieve their potential.
219. The school produces an extensive annual self-evaluation report that is detailed and evaluative. It identifies clearly strengths and areas for development in all key questions of the inspection framework. The report refers to a good range of evidence to support self-evaluation, including very detailed analysis of assessment and examination data and first hand observations of the work of teachers and pupils in their classes. The outcomes of self-evaluation are used very effectively to inform development planning.
220. Self-evaluation of departments, pastoral teams and key initiatives relating to learning and teaching contribute very well to the overall self-evaluation of the school.
221. The procedures for self-evaluation ensure that senior and middle managers have very good, and often outstanding, knowledge of the strengths and shortcomings in the areas for which they are responsible. This knowledge is enhanced by the effective link manager role that senior managers undertake with departmental and pastoral teams. This provides senior managers with a clear overview of each team's work. The constructive feedback that middle managers receive from senior managers, as part of the self-evaluation process, greatly enhances the team's understanding of its strengths and the areas that require development.
222. Leaders attach considerable importance to the views of pupils, parents and partners in the wider community served by the school. Their views are sought, and acted upon, in relation to many significant aspects of the school's work. The school development plan for the current academic year appropriately includes the further development of procedures for listening to learners as a priority.
223. Many support staff are involved effectively in reviewing their immediate areas of work, particularly in relation to work with the learning support department. The school recognises that the involvement of some support staff in self-evaluation and development planning is not extensive enough.

224. Development planning in the school is of high quality. There is very good synergy between school and departmental development planning, financial planning and the integration of the outcomes of self-evaluation into the planning process.
225. Plans give appropriate priority to those actions that focus on raising pupils' achievement and enabling them to realise their potential. The school improvement plan is of very good quality. Resource implications of planned actions are clearly highlighted. Very good attention is given to highlighting the staff responsible for implementing, monitoring and evaluating initiatives. Senior and middle managers on the School Improvement Group play an important role in monitoring planned action in the school development plan, to help to ensure the successful implementation of key priorities. Departmental plans are of at least good quality; the best departmental plans are outstanding.
226. On occasions, within development plans, success criteria do not identify the intended outcomes of actions to be taken as clearly as they might. This reduces the rigour with which the impact of these actions can be evaluated.
227. The school's work on self-evaluation and improvement planning is extremely effective. It has led to notable improvements since the last inspection in several important areas. These include:
- further improvement in the attainment of pupils from the high levels reported at the time of the last inspection;
 - the substantial increase in the proportion of lessons in which teaching is good with outstanding features;
 - significant improvement in opportunities for pupils to engage in extra-curricular events involving the arts;
 - provision of greater opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of ICT across the curriculum; and
 - more effective promotion of Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig.
228. Suitable attention has been given since the last inspection to improving the provision for design technology and music in KS3, and for religious education in the sixth form.
229. Not enough progress has been made in ensuring that pupils are provided with daily acts of corporate worship of consistently good quality.
230. Careful planning and management enables the school to make very good use of existing accommodation. In spite of this, there has been insufficient progress in improving the poor quality of much of the accommodation, including the library facilities, noted in the last inspection.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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231. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade.

232. The efficiency of leaders and managers in using resources is good with many outstanding features despite the school's inadequate and very poor multi-sited accommodation.
233. The accommodation in many parts of the school is in very poor condition. The school is seriously deficient with respect to specialist accommodation. This means that significant resources and management time are diverted into overcoming the many inadequacies of the premises. The accommodation, spread over three sites, is not appropriate to the needs of learning and teaching. The nature of the sites, condition of the buildings and fragmented premises creates a significant source of stress and frustration for staff that are required to travel between the sites and adapt their teaching styles and strategies to the spaces available rather than the needs of learners.
234. The number of staff is sufficient for the school to run efficiently and to enable the curriculum to be taught very effectively to all pupils and students. Teachers are well qualified, knowledgeable and highly committed with a good balance of the very experienced and those relatively new to the teaching profession. They are deployed effectively and, almost without exception, all teach their specialist subjects.
235. The school deploys the well-qualified learning support assistants effectively and efficiently in a range of activities that enhances pupils' learning. The work of highly competent, capable and experienced support staff enables all aspects of the school to function effectively and efficiently at all times. The education welfare officer provides effective support.
236. The way in which almost all staff takes a pride in their work, expect very high standards and care about the school is outstanding. They display infectious enthusiasm and commitment for the school and its aims and values.
237. The school fully meets the statutory requirements for workload remodeling and each member of the teaching staff is allocated appropriate planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time and resources. These arrangements are well established and appropriately used for their intended purpose.
238. The school's carefully developed and agreed workforce restructuring plans have been implemented effectively. All members of staff have well structured job descriptions.
239. The very creative deployment of the small team of curriculum assistants is outstanding. They work extremely effectively in conjunction with teachers in the preparation and provision of learning resources in advance of lessons.
240. Caretaking staff contribute very effectively to day-to-day maintenance of the schools buildings on three sites. The extensive maintenance programme is detailed and appropriately prioritised.

241. An outstanding feature in the schools' provision for learning resources is the extensive investment in ICT facilities. This includes a large increase in the number of computers equipping nine very well used computer suites and providing a fully equipped mobile trolley containing twenty laptop computers. An increasing number of classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards. Overall, this has helped many teachers to develop and use innovative teaching and learning techniques.
242. The school makes outstanding use of an extensive range of external resources to enrich the curriculum and enhance opportunities for pupils and students. These include field trips, exchange visits and numerous visits to places of educational interest. The school also uses Cowbridge Leisure Centre, the Youth Centre and the local church appropriately to supplement the inadequate facilities in the school.
243. Bright, colourful and stimulating displays of pupils' work and achievements help improve the learning environment.
244. The shortcomings in accommodation have an adverse effect on the school's ability to:
- provide as wide a range of learning experiences for pupils as they would like;
 - further develop access to the school and curriculum for people with certain types of physical impairment;
 - ensure safety and security for all users of the school;
 - provide sufficient, suitable space for a dedicated library or learning resource centre and an adequately sized school hall;
 - cluster rooms into department suites, and
 - provide classrooms that are large enough to cater for the number of pupils in some classes.
245. Despite these shortcomings pupils and students in the school achieve exceptionally high standards.
246. The school has been extremely proactive in making best use of their accommodation to ensure that the standards that pupils and students achieve are not compromised.
247. The senior management team, governors and parents have campaigned tirelessly over many years to secure accommodation that is fit for purpose. Recently the Vale of Glamorgan County Council has confirmed that the building of a new comprehensive school in Cowbridge is their first priority and that the school will be built and occupied by 2010.
248. The outstanding features in how effectively resources are managed to achieve value for money include the extent to which:
- prudent management of resources is intrinsically linked to the school's priorities for improvement;

- meticulous financial management procedures help maximise the cost effectiveness of school's expenditure and investments;
 - senior managers and the governors' finance committee frequently monitor and review spending decisions; and
 - the strong links between department development plans and allocated budgets are closely monitored.
249. Every member of the teaching staff has ready access to a carefully planned, well-coordinated and bespoke development programme. This is an outstanding feature. There is very good transition from newly qualified teacher induction to early professional development and continued professional development.
250. Staff training is linked closely to the school's priorities for improvement and to individuals' professional development aspirations. This programme enables staff to shadow senior managers, undertake periods of secondment, share experiences with other colleagues and provide pupils and students with very high quality learning experiences.
251. The personal development plans and annual interviews for non-teaching staff are at an early stage of development and implementation.
252. The school funding per pupil is consistently one of the lowest in Wales. Although the school has been unable to retain any contingency reserves for unforeseen circumstances and future planned projects, it has secured an appropriate short term loan with the local authority for this purpose.
253. The school pursues many ways of raising additional funds and has been successful in securing grants and sponsorships. These additional funds including those raised by the active parent teacher association and from the Thomas Franklen Mansell Trust, are used very well to enhance learning opportunities for all pupils and students and for the professional development of staff.
254. The sixth form is large, successful and economic.
255. The very few recommendations contained in the most recent audit report have been appropriately dealt with.
256. Given the very high standards pupils achieve and the excellent quality of teaching, support and guidance provided, the school manages its resources effectively, efficiently and prudently to give outstanding value for money.

School's response to the inspection

257. The Headteacher, staff and governors at Cowbridge Comprehensive are delighted that the inspection report confirms that this is an outstanding school which strives to provide the very best quality of education for all our pupils and students. The report awards the school the highest grade in each of the seven key areas of performance and recognises the very good progress which has been made in most areas since the last inspection. We are particularly pleased that the report recognises the excellent relationships which exist between teachers and students and the fact that these relationships create a highly collaborative atmosphere in which our young people thrive and aspire to achieve their best.
258. The report also recognises that the quality of teaching is a particular strength and that the skills and enthusiasm of teachers play a key role in engaging and challenging pupils and students so that they have a confident belief in their own abilities and that they will succeed. We are delighted that the report notes our commitment to personalised learning and a fully inclusive approach and the steps we are taking to continue to broaden and develop the curriculum in order to meet the needs and aspirations of all learners. The part played by our extra-curricular provision is also commended, particularly the quality of the provision and the ways in which it helps to develop confident, articulate and caring young people.
259. The support and guidance provided for learners is also judged to be outstanding. This reflects the strong emphasis we place on meeting individual needs and on providing timely and effective support wherever it is required. We are also very pleased that the report recognises the quality and effectiveness of our transition arrangements and the strength of our relationships with partner primary schools and the wider community.
260. We also welcome the fact that the report clearly endorses the fact that many of our successes are achieved in spite of the severe constraints imposed upon us by the nature and condition of our sites and premises. We are especially pleased that the report recognises the determination of staff and governors not to allow the inadequacies and constraints of our facilities to adversely impact on the quality of education provided. We too, are very disappointed that progress to improve our premises and facilities has been slow.
261. Our current School Development Plan and the Vale of Glamorgan Council's School Investment Strategy, already includes proposals to address the recommendations of the inspection team. We will continue to have the highest aspirations for all our young people and to place these aspirations at the heart of the planning process.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Cowbridge Comprehensive School
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Aberthin Road Cowbridge Vale of Glamorgan
Postcode	CF71 7EN
Telephone number	01446 775357

Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Evans
Date of appointment	November 2003
Chair of governors	Mr Peter Lewis
Reporting inspector	Mrs Julia Longville
Dates of inspection	24 – 28 September 2007

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	196	195	207	199	214	154	131	1296

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	66	9	75.4

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	17.2:1
Average teaching group size	23.3
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	73.7%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	94	93.8	93.2	92.5	96.4	92.6	88	93.4
Term 2	95.1	94.3	93.7	93.2	91.9	93.6	89.2	93.1
Term 3	94.2	93.8	92.7	93	93	93.6	89.6	92.8

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	3%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	12 (temporary) 0 (permanent)

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2007															
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	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	31	36	20	0	0
		National	0	1	1	0	0	2	8	21	35	24	8	0	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	22	33	30	10	0
		National	0	5	1	0	0	1	6	18	24	32	15	0	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	36	38	21	0	0
		National	0	1	1	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	by test
In the school	84
In Wales	58

Public Examination Results:

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ	
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2007	214
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	61.7

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2007:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	99	94	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	84	63	54
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	99	91	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	67	44	40
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	100	98	98
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	99	84	77
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	100	96	93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	0	4	7
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	0	1	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 2007	131
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2007	133
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2007	0

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	80	74	67
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	100	97	94
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	25	23	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 for the inspection

Nine inspectors, including the school's nominee, spent a total of 39 days in the school and met as a team before the inspection.

These inspectors visited:

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

Members of the inspection team met with:

- staff, governors and parents before the inspection began;
- senior managers, middle level leaders, teachers, support and administrative staff;
- a representative from the local authority;
- representatives of the community and other partners; and
- groups of pupils and students.

The team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- 269 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 leadership team and governors.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Julia Longville	Registered Inspector Context, Summary, Recommendations Key question one, Appendix
David Williams	Key question two
Angus Dunphy	Key question three
Gwyn Griffiths	Key question four
Ronald Graham	Key question five
Alan Lowndes	Key question six
Kerry Jones	Key question seven Lay Inspector
Prudence Davis-James	Supporting key question 2
Alan Fowles	Nominee

Acknowledgement

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

Contractor

E.L.L.I.S. (Cymru)
Willastones
13 Heol Pentre'r Felin
Llantwit Major
Vale of Glamorgan CF61 2XS