

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

**Crickhowell High School
New Road
Crickhowell
Powys
NP8 1AW**

School Number: 6664024

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by

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- * secondary schools;
- * special schools;
- * pupil referral units;
- * independent schools;
- * further education;
- * adult and community-based learning;
- * youth support services;
- * LEAs;
- * teacher education and training;
- * work-based learning;
- * careers companies; and
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Crickhowell High School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents information about the performance of their child's school.

The inspection of Crickhowell High School took place between 25/09/06 and 28/09/06. An independent team of inspectors, led by Miss Glynis Owen 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 special schools, pupil referral units and any new or amalgamated schools receive a full inspection.

This school received a **standard** inspection.

Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

A	Advanced
CAD	Computer-Aided Design
CAM	Computer-Aided Manufacture
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GTCW	General Teaching Council for Wales
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IEPs	Individual Educational Plans
INSET	In-service Training
IT	Information Technology
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
KS	Key Stage
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
NC	National Curriculum
NQT	Newly-Qualified Teacher
PPA	Planning Preparation and Assessment
PSE	Personal and Social Education
SDP	School Development Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TLR	Teaching and Learning Responsibility
UA	Unitary Authority
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
WRE	Work-related Education
Y (1-13)	Year (1-13)

Context

The nature of the provider

1. Crickhowell High School is an 11-19, co-educational comprehensive school, maintained by Powys UA. There are 667 pupils on roll, compared to 587 at the time of the last inspection in March 2001. Of these, 101 are in the sixth form, which is similar to the number five years ago.
2. Pupils come from the town of Crickhowell, from the surrounding villages and from the rural community. A significant number chooses to come across the border from Monmouthshire. Whilst pupils come from the full range of socio-economic circumstances, the vast majority comes from backgrounds which are socially and economically advantaged. Five per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, well below the national average of 16.6%.
3. Whilst pupils represent the full range of ability, the vast majority is of average ability and above. Twenty-two pupils have statements of SEN and a further 43 have been identified as needing some support. Overall, this is well below the proportion nationally, though the percentage with statements is higher.
4. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language. A very small minority comes from minority ethnic heritages, including a few who receive teaching in English as an additional language.
5. The headteacher and two assistant headteachers were in post at the time of the last inspection and are well established at the school. A deputy headteacher took up her post in September 2006, appointed from outside the school. A new head of sixth form, appointed from within the school, also took up her post this term.

The school's priorities and targets

6. The school's crest carries the words "With Best Endeavour" and they have become the school's mission statement. There is an annual school development plan, with targets related to the seven key questions of the Common Inspection Framework.
7. Numerical targets for examinations in 2007 are also set, that
 - over 60% of pupils should reach at least level five in all three core subjects combined at the end of KS3; and
 - over 70% of pupils should gain at least five grades A*-C in the GCSE at the end of KS4.

Summary

8. Crickhowell High School is a good school with a significant number of outstanding features in key areas.

Table of grades awarded

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

9. The grades of the inspection team match those which the school awarded itself, in its self-evaluation report, in key questions 4, 6 and 7. In the other four questions, the school had awarded grade 2s, affirming its drive for continuing improvement. The inspection team has awarded grade 1s, recognising the current outstanding features, and not precluding further improvement.

Standards of achievement

10. In the six subjects inspected, the following grades were awarded:

Subject	KS3	KS4	Sixth form
English	2	2	1
Welsh second language	2	2	2
Design Technology	2	2	2
Information Technology	2	3	-
History	2	1	1
Religious Education	2	2	2

11. There are several **outstanding features** in learners' achievement.
12. The most striking feature of the school is its strong ethos of learning, in which very good behaviour is the norm and motivation is high. In this atmosphere, pupils' and students' development – academic, spiritual, moral, social and cultural - through curricular and extra-curricular experiences, is exceptionally good. They gain in confidence and their maturity, sociability and sensitivity to others are notable.
13. Since the last inspection, there has been significant improvement in examination results at all key stages. They have been well above the national average. In the latest comparisons, 75% of pupils reached at least level 5 in all three core subjects combined, at the end of KS3, compared to 57% nationally. 72% gained

at least five grades A*-C at GCSE, compared to 52% in Wales. At A level, the average points score was 25, compared to 20 nationally. In comparison to schools of a similar intake, results have been above or well above average, in all indicators at KS3 and above in several indicators at KS4.

14. The improvement in boys' performance in public examinations in 2006 was outstanding and their results surpassed those of girls in each key stage.
15. The consistency between subjects across the curriculum, with rare exception, in examination results, and in standards and key skills as observed during the inspection, represent very good performance. The consistency in standards between the key stages is also notable. This indicates that performance at KS3 is much better than the picture nationally.
16. The grades awarded for the 72 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected are well above the WAG targets for 2007, that 65% of lessons should be graded 1 or 2. They are also well above the grades awarded in all inspections in Wales in 2004-5, in which 63% of lessons were graded 1 or 2. In no lesson observed were there shortcomings in important areas (grade 4 or 5).

Key Stage	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3 and KS4	5%	82%	13%	0%	0%
Sixth form	18%	64%	18%	0%	0%
Total	8%	78%	14%	0%	0%

17. There are also many **good features** in the standards achieved.
18. Pupils of differing abilities all achieve well, regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background.
19. Particularly in setted groups, and in most subjects, the most able achieve well and the school is currently focussing on ways to extend them further. Pupils with SEN achieve well in both small groups and in mainstream classes, particularly when there is learning support available. Pupils of average ability, both boys and girls, also do well.
20. Pupils have good key skills in communication and numeracy; their skills in listening and in writing are particularly good. The school gained the Basic Skills Quality Award in 2004. Pupils co-operate well in group work and are keen to improve the standard of their work. Bilingual skills are developing well.
21. Pupils attend regularly and the annual attendance rate is higher than in most schools. They are punctual to school and to lessons.
22. Only one pupil has been permanently excluded since the last inspection, and a relatively small number temporarily.
23. Despite the overwhelmingly good and outstanding features, there are some **shortcomings** in standards achieved.
24. Whilst pupils have good ICT skills, the vast majority does not enhance these skills through timetabled lessons in IT after Y8. Nor do most pupils gain accredited qualification in IT at KS4 or in the sixth form.

25. The number taking short-course GCSE options in Welsh second language and religious studies is also limited. Thus pupils' GCSE average score compares unfavourably with that of pupils in similar schools.
26. The most able, gifted and talented do not think independently to a sufficient extent in some classes, albeit a minority, particularly those of mixed ability. Some pupils of lower ability do not succeed as well as they might if they do not have resources of learning support in mainstream classes.

The quality of education and training

27. The **outstanding features** encompass a range of provision.
28. Teaching is a strength of the school. The following grades were awarded for the 72 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected and the 33 lessons observed in all other subjects:

Subjects	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6 subjects	20%	68%	12%	0%	0%
Other subjects	30%	64%	6%	0%	0%
Total	23%	67%	10%	0%	0%

29. Whilst there is a difference in the size and nature of the sample from that in the last inspection, it is clear that teaching has improved enormously. At that time, 56% of lessons were graded 1 and 2, compared to 90% now. These figures compare favourably with those awarded in all inspections in Wales during 2004-5, in which 81% were graded 1 and 2.
30. The quality of pastoral care given to pupils is also outstanding. The headteacher, members of the leadership team and many staff know each pupil as an individual.
31. The quality of PSE is also very strong and makes a significant contribution to pupils' development into mature young adults with empathy.
32. For a small school, the breadth of extra-curricular provision is outstanding, particularly in sport, music, drama and visits abroad. There is a whole-school focus on sustainable development and the environment, with the school being one of the first in Wales to receive the Eco-Schools' Green Flag Award.
33. There are many **good features** in the quality of education which pupils receive.
34. For a school of its size, the school offers a good range of examination courses at KS4 and in the sixth form. The provision of three sciences and two modern foreign languages is good and, through links with local colleges, there are increasing opportunities for courses of a vocational nature.
35. Work-related education and careers guidance are good and prepare pupils well for lifelong learning and for employment.
36. Transition arrangements are appreciated by pupils and ensure smooth entry into the school. The wide range of primary schools from which pupils come provides particular challenges which the school meets.
37. The school has an inclusive ethos. Provision for pupils with SEN is good and support has been maintained despite the long-term illness of the SEN co-ordinator during the last academic year. Disabled learners receive good quality

support and easy access to nearly all parts of the building through the provision of a lift.

38. There are also a few **shortcomings** in the quality of education.
39. Despite the overall high quality of teaching, the range of strategies used in teaching and learning is sometimes too narrow, with limited use of the new technologies.
40. Whilst formal assessments are good, the day-to-day marking of pupils' work is variable in quality. Pupils are not sufficiently involved in assessment in some subjects, nor in the setting of their targets for improvement.
41. Though the new KS4 curriculum, from September 2006, offers a better balance and range of courses, there are still some anomalies at KS3, for example the limited time for IT.

Leadership and management

42. There are several **outstanding features** in the leadership and management of the school.
43. The headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team and staff, has established a strong, corporate ethos, in which expectations are clear and pupils develop well academically, personally and socially. He leads with vision and by example to maintain standards and good relationships. Each member of the leadership team is effectively deployed to contribute to initiatives and support the ethos.
44. There has been significant development, since the last inspection, in the contribution which governors make to the strategic leadership of the school. Their expertise and input, in long-term planning and financial management, are now substantial.
45. The value for money which the school gives is outstanding. The high proportion of the budget allocated to support an experienced staff results in limited spending on resources and small reserves. The successful outcomes, across the spectrum of activities, given its limited resources, are testament to very good use of the available assets.
46. There are also many **good features** in the leadership and management of the school.
47. Continuing professional development has kept staff abreast of recent developments in their field and trained middle managers to fulfil their role, for the most part, effectively. The quality of both departmental and pastoral management is generally good and sometimes very good.
48. Since the last inspection, the school has implemented all the WAG priorities and these are largely embedded.
49. Spending on resources has been carefully matched to priorities for improvement and these resources are very well used. Financial planning has been prudent and financial control recognised as effective by external auditors.
50. The building and large grounds are attractive, well maintained and well kept. The school makes very good use of the available space.

51. The **shortcomings** relate to inconsistency in self-evaluation and planning, and to shortages in resources, including accommodation.
52. Whilst the headteacher has a detailed knowledge of the school, and much self-evaluation in a small school can be informal, the formal systems, introduced recently, are not yet embedded. Links between whole-school systems and those in each area of the school, and links between monitoring and planning for improvement are not yet established effectively.
53. Funding is at a critical level. There are some shortages in resources in departments and insufficient ICT facilities for the introduction of examination courses and regular cross-curricular usage.
54. Increased numbers mean that there is no spare capacity, and there are specific shortcomings in the quantity and quality of accommodation. There is not enough space for ICT facilities, the resources centre, performing arts, the sixth-form base, and physical education changing rooms, in particular.

Progress since the last inspection

55. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection in standards, teaching and examination results. In relation to the key issues from the last report, there has been very good progress in:
 - standards in music;
 - the role of governors; and
 - the meeting of statutory requirements.
56. There has been good progress in:
 - the use made of IEPs;
 - the acquisition and use of ICT skills;
 - health and safety issues;
 - the school development plan; and
 - staff development.
57. In all other key issues, there has also been good progress, though many of these issues remain on-going developments for the school, such as:
 - assessment;
 - the KS4 and sixth-form curriculum;
 - links between senior and middle managers; and
 - ICT.
58. Progress in self-evaluation and planning has been recent but is now gathering momentum.

Recommendations

In order to extend the current good and outstanding practice further, the school should focus on the following priorities, among the targets of its school development plan:

- R1. Continue to improve standards and examination results generally, and in particular:
- sustain the improvement in boys' results; and
 - increase the percentage gaining a qualification at KS4 in IT, Welsh second language and religious studies.
- R2. Ensure that the quality of all teaching and assessment matches that of the best practice in:
- using a variety of teaching strategies, including new technologies;
 - meeting the needs of differing abilities within the group;
 - monitoring day-to-day marking regularly; and
 - involving pupils more closely in the assessment of their work and the setting of targets for improvement.
- R3. Implement, fully, the changes in the curriculum at KS4 and review the curriculum at KS3, to ensure better balance.
- R4. Promote greater consistency in self-evaluation and development planning through:
- rigorous monitoring of classroom practice and pupils' work, and sharing of good practice;
 - linking monitoring to planning effectively; and
 - ensuring that whole-school plans link to those in each area of the school.
- R5. Work with external funding agencies to secure additional learning resources and accommodation.

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

59. The school awarded itself a grade 2 in its self-evaluation report, reflecting its drive for continuing improvement. Inspectors awarded a grade 1, recognising current outstanding features and not precluding further improvement.

Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

60. There are a number of **outstanding features** in provision and outcomes.
61. The striking feature of the school is the strong ethos of learning, in which pupils develop academically, spiritually, morally, socially, and culturally, as described in the box below.
62. Since the last inspection, there has been significant improvement in examination results at both key stages.
63. In the NC tests at the end of KS3, the percentage of pupils gaining at least level 5 in all three core subjects combined, has risen from 65% to 75%. This is well above the latest national comparator of 57% and local average of 62%. Compared to similar schools, results have been consistently above average or in the top quartile, in the last four years, in each of the three subjects, as well as in the three combined.
64. At GCSE, the percentage of pupils gaining at least five grades A*-C has risen from 59% to 72% since the last inspection, compared to a rise of three percentage points nationally. The figure of 72% is well above the latest national comparator of 52% and local average of 60%. It has been above average compared to that of similar schools in three of the last four years. Performance has been particularly strong in English, mathematics, history and religious studies in recent years.
65. The percentage of pupils gaining a grade A*-C in the three core subjects combined was also well above the figure nationally and above that of similar schools until 2005. It fell in 2006, because of results in science, particularly those of girls.
66. The improvement in boys' results in external tests and examinations, at both key stages, in 2006 is outstanding. Boys did better than girls, contrary to the trend nationally, after several years in which they had done much less well.
67. The consistency, with rare exception, between subjects across the curriculum, in examination results, and in standards and key skills as observed during the inspection, represents very good performance. The consistency in standards observed, between the key stages, is also very good. This indicates that performance at KS3 is much better than the picture nationally.
68. The grades awarded for standards in the 54 lessons observed in the six subjects at KS3 and KS4 are very good. 87% of lessons were judged as grades 1 and 2, compared to the WAG target for 2007 of 65%. They are also well above the grades awarded in all inspections in Wales in 2004-2005, in which 60% of lessons, at KS3 and KS4, were graded 1 and 2. In no lesson observed were there shortcomings in important areas (grades 4 and 5), compared to 6% nationally.
- | Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 | Grade 4 | Grade 5 |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 5% | 82% | 13% | 0% | 0% |
69. Only one pupil has been permanently excluded since the last inspection, and few temporarily, compared to most schools.

Outstanding feature:

70. Pupils' development, academic, spiritual, moral, social and cultural is outstanding. There is a strong, inclusive learning culture where very good behaviour is the norm and motivation is high.
71. Through curricular and extra-curricular activities, pupils gain in confidence. They are mature, sociable young adults who engage politely, naturally and enthusiastically with visitors and express their views objectively and cogently.
72. They are also sensitive to others' needs in class and have a well-developed social conscience. Their awareness of the world around them and their readiness to take an active role in it, for example, conserving the environment, show a good sense of responsibility.

Pupils' success in attaining agreed learning goals

73. In addition to the above outstanding features, there are many **good features** in learners' achievement.
74. Pupils of differing abilities all do well. Particularly in setted groups, and in most subjects, the most able achieve well. The current focus on the most able, gifted and talented intends to monitor and improve their performance further.
75. Pupils with SEN also achieve well both in small groups, which boost their literacy and numeracy skills, and in mainstream classes, particularly when there is learning support available. Very few pupils leave school without qualifications.
76. Pupils of average to lower ability, both boys and girls, also do well in the strong culture of learning and achievement.
77. Pupils succeed regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background. The strong pastoral support, together with some support in English as an additional language, contribute effectively.
78. Numerical targets for results in external tests and examinations have been surpassed in most indicators and most pupils meet or exceed their individual targets.
79. Pupils' consistently good key skills are a strong contributory factor to good achievement. Listening and writing skills are very good. Pupils listen attentively and their writing shows very good technical accuracy and fluency, in relation to ability.
80. Speaking and reading skills are good, though there is a small minority of pupils who are reticent, and this is not challenged sufficiently. Standards in numeracy are good and numbers are applied competently in subjects across the curriculum.
81. Pupils have good skills in using ICT. In Y7 and Y8, timetabled lessons develop these skills well. They make use of these skills in some classes across the curriculum, in these and other years and many develop and use these skills through using facilities at home.
82. Pupils work together well in groups, in creative and problem-solving activities across a range of media. They are keen to improve the standard of their work. Bilingual skills are developing well, through Welsh second language lessons, the

Welsh dimension in varied subjects and extra-curricular opportunities, such as the annual Eisteddfod.

83. Despite the overwhelmingly good and outstanding features, there are some **shortcomings** in the standards achieved.
84. Whilst pupils have good ICT skills, the vast majority does not enhance these skills through timetabled lessons in IT after Y8, nor do most pupils gain accredited qualification in IT at KS4 or in the sixth form. The school lacks sufficient ICT facilities for it to be able to introduce accredited courses and for regular use of ICT to raise standards across the curriculum.
85. The number taking short-course GCSE options in Welsh second language and religious studies is also limited. Their GCSE average score, whilst above national averages, compares unfavourably with that in similar schools.
86. The most able, gifted and talented do not think independently to a sufficient extent in some classes, albeit a minority, and particularly those of mixed ability. The same task is set for the whole group and is not open-ended enough to challenge more creative approaches and individual responses.
87. Some pupils of lower ability do not succeed as well as they might, in mainstream classes, if they do not have resources of learning support.

Their progress in learning

88. Pupils achieve equally **good standards** in acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills. They show good recall of previous work, use subject-specific terminology appropriately, ask questions to probe their understanding and develop a range of skills – key skills, subject-specific skills and practical skills.
89. Pupils also develop their skills very well in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly good for a school of its size, including sport, public-speaking, music, and the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. Since the last inspection, the school orchestra has promoted musical talent, and, in the UK Performing Arts Rock Challenge, a popular activity, the school has been national winner and a finalist four times. There has also been annual success in the UK Mathematics Challenge.
90. At the end of KS4, the large majority continues in full-time education, with many staying on at the school. Pupils are ambitious and confident learners, with an understanding of the part they can play in society in the future.
91. Pupils generally understand how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.
92. However, the **shortcoming** is that there is little parity in the systems of marking and grading in different subjects, so comparisons are difficult for pupils to make. Whilst the quality of formal assessments is good, the quality of day-to-day marking is variable and does not always give pupils clear feedback on their performance. Nor are pupils sufficiently involved in assessment and in the setting of their targets for improvement.

The development of their personal, social and learning skills

93. In addition to the several outstanding features described earlier, there are **good features** in the development of pupils' personal, social and learning skills.

94. Pupils attend regularly and the annual attendance rate consistently averages at 92%, which is higher than in most schools. Punctuality is very good. The vast majority of pupils are punctual to school. The return to classes after morning break and lunchtime, and the movement between lessons show a business-like sense of urgency, so that lessons begin on time.
95. Pupils learn to work independently at home and to do research for projects and coursework.
96. They gain a good understanding of the diverse nature of society, particularly through lessons, especially religious education and PSE, and through assemblies and the Thought for the Day. The link with a school in Uganda, and the regular visits there, is one of many effective ways by which pupils become aware of the needs of others, and learn of other cultures.
97. Similarly, pupils are effectively prepared for participation in the workplace and community. Many links with outside bodies, careers advice and work-related education result in pupils being well-informed and also gaining early experience in these fields.
98. There are no significant **shortcomings**.

Sixth form

99. As at KS3 and KS4, the **outstanding features** are:
 - students' personal, social and learning skills;
 - the improvement in and success of the A level results;
 - the consistently high level of performance between subjects, in examination results and in standards and key skills observed; and
 - the grades awarded for lessons observed during the inspection.
100. Students are mature young adults who talk engagingly about their work and who have a social conscience. They play a considerable part in the life of the school and in helping younger pupils, and a leading role in many extra-curricular and community activities.
101. The average points' score at A level has improved steadily since the last inspection, from 20 to 25. This is well above the national average of 20 and the local average of 22. In 2005, the percentage of students gaining at least two grades A-C reached 93%, compared to 68% nationally. Boys have done better than girls in most years.
102. The grades awarded for lessons in the six subjects observed formed a small sample and comparisons with national figures are therefore not wholly reliable. 82% of lessons were graded 1 or 2, compared to 77% nationally. The consistency between subjects in standards and also in key skills in other subjects observed is very good. In no lesson observed were there important shortcomings.

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
18%	64%	18%	0%	0%

Their success in attaining agreed learning goals

103. In addition to the above outstanding features, there are many **good features** in students' performance.
104. They gain in knowledge through good teaching, individual research and through other students' good presentations, often using ICT. They probe their understanding by asking searching questions and develop skills in a range of subjects.
105. Their key skills develop well and students track their use in portfolios which they compile. Skills in communication, numeracy and ICT are good, though much work using ICT is done at home. Students co-operate well and reach good standards in creative and problem-solving activities. They take a leading role in the Eisteddfod, using their bilingual skills.

Their progress in learning

106. Students of differing abilities make good progress in the sixth form, in traditional and vocational A levels. Support in English as an additional language has been effective in raising performance for the few students who have needed extra help.
107. Students' abilities to improve their own learning are better than at KS3 and KS4 because they have more detailed feedback from the marking of their work and their progress is monitored more frequently. Students are also well aware of their target grades and to what extent they are on course to meet them.
108. Students have appropriate aspirations for continuing into Higher Education. They are well informed about the opportunities available to them and the vast majority moves onto the next stage, with successful applications to a wide range of universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.

The development of their personal, social and learning skills

109. As described previously, this aspect of students' development is outstanding. There are also many **good features** about their progress.
110. There is a business-like approach to sixth-form study, with good standards of punctuality and attendance.
111. Students gain confidence in working independently in preparing for lessons and in follow-up work. They feel that the school prepares them well for Higher Education.
112. They are aware of a range of social issues and empathise well with others. Sixth-form students have taken a leading role in the link with and visits to Uganda. They are also involved in numerous activities locally and nationally, in which they show a well-developed sense of responsibility to others.
113. Work-experience placements and careers advice inform and prepare them well for the workplace and for Higher Education.
114. There are no significant **shortcomings**.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

115. The school judged its teaching and assessment to be a grade 2. The team recognised several outstanding features, particularly in the teaching, and awarded a grade 1.

Key Stages 3 and 4

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

116. The **outstanding features** are that:

- there is mutual respect between teachers and pupils and these very good relationships have a positive impact upon pupils' attitude to work;
- there are clear objectives for what pupils have to learn, the way these are communicated, and the way lessons are set into a well-structured sequence; and
- teaching has contributed to the significant increase in boys' levels of achievement throughout the school.

Outstanding feature :

117. The quality of teaching makes a significant contribution to pupils' academic and personal development.

118. The following grades were awarded in the 81 lessons observed at KS3 and KS4, in the six subjects and other subjects:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6 subjects	18%	71%	11%	0%	0%
Other subjects	35%	57%	8%	0%	0%
Total	23%	67%	10%	0%	0%

119. Although the size and nature of the sample are different, this represents a significant improvement since the last inspection, when 56% of lessons were graded 1 and 2, compared to 90% now. They are also above the 81% of lessons graded 1 and 2 in Wales as a whole, for the year 2004-2005.

120. In the best lessons, teachers:

- create a very good learning atmosphere, gaining the attention and respect of pupils in class;
- provide a wide range of well-planned activities that include all pupils; and
- explain very clearly to pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

121. In most lessons, teaching has the following **good features**:

- a high level of challenge and motivation of pupils;
- a range of teaching strategies employed to ensure pupils apply themselves to work with self-confidence; and
- very good subject knowledge, by teachers, in teaching the content of their programmes of study.

122. In the large majority of lessons, where there are no important shortcomings, lessons:

- are introduced with skill and imagination;
- the quality of discussion enhances pupils' understanding; and
- lessons are planned so that they meet the learning needs of all pupils and ensure their full participation.

123. However there are some **shortcomings** in teaching in a minority of lessons. When present, the effectiveness of teaching is limited by:

- an imbalance between the length of teachers' presentation and the amount of time given for pupils to participate orally and complete the tasks set;
- the setting of the same task for all abilities in the group, without sufficient challenge to the most able and support for the least able;
- an insufficiently wide range of teaching strategies employed, particularly lack of use of new technologies; and
- insufficient feedback to pupils of all abilities on the way in which they can improve their work.

The rigour of assessment and its use in planning and improving learning

124. There are **good features** in the quality of assessment overall and particularly in some departments.

125. The school has established procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress and the planning and improvement of their future learning which meet the statutory requirements.

126. Where these procedures are good, they:

- are based on clear criteria for learning objectives;
- are efficiently collated and analysed so that they inform the future planning of lessons;
- are consistently applied by teachers; and
- enable pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their work and make progress.

127. The school issues two reports a year to parents and carers, one interim and one full. Reports are produced electronically and are in a clear and useable format for both teachers and parents/carers. Parents and carers receive a letter from the school explaining the grades and levels awarded.

128. The best examples of reports contain subject-specific targets as well as general targets for improvement. They also include helpful comments from both subject teachers and form tutors.
129. NC reporting requirements are met.
130. Mentoring of pupils in KS4, in particular, is effective and encourages achievement.
131. There are, however, **shortcomings** in the way in which assessment procedures are applied, particularly, though not exclusively, in KS3.
132. The day-to-day assessment, which is good or outstanding in some departments, is not working effectively in a number of departments.
133. Too many teachers' comments on pupils' work do not get to the heart of what the weakness is, and how the pupil could put it right.
134. Teachers in some departments miss the opportunity of pupils evaluating their own and each other's work.
135. Different grading systems on reports do not allow easy comparisons between subjects.

Sixth Form

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

136. Many of the **outstanding** and good features are similar to those in lessons in KS3 and KS4.
137. In the 24 lessons observed in the sixth form, the following grades were awarded:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6 subjects	23%	59%	18%	0%	0%
Other subjects	14%	86%	0%	0%	0%
Total	21%	67%	12%	0%	0%

138. Sixth-form teaching is a strong feature of provision. Whilst the sample is very small, and comparisons are not wholly reliable, these figures compare favourably with those of the last inspection and those recorded in all inspections in Wales 2004-2005.
139. In the sixth form, the **good features** are that, in nearly all lessons, teachers:
- use their good subject knowledge to explain complex matters with clarity;
 - stress the importance of self-discipline, self-motivation, and self-organisation so that students become independent learners;
 - guide, challenge, and encourage students to deepen their understanding; and

- plan carefully so that examination specifications are covered in detail and students understand the requirements.

140. However, the **shortcoming** in the sixth form is that the teaching sometimes relies too much on teachers' input rather than the employment of a varied range of activities that encourage students to reflect on their own opinions and develop their own responses.

The rigour of assessment and its use in planning and improving learning

141. The arrangements for the monitoring of students' performance and the quality of the guidance which students receive are a **good feature** of the sixth form.

142. In the sixth form, teachers:

- share with students the objectives for learning and the criteria for success in examinations;
- have a good knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses, which enables them to plan activities which will improve the weaker aspects of students' work; and
- enjoy very good relationships with students, that enable them to understand the purpose of assessment and plan their own progress and improvement.

143. In addition, the head of the sixth form and sixth-form tutors:

- have an accurate overview of students' achievements and effort;
- hold regular interviews with students and involve them in setting targets for improvement;
- mentor students who are not making satisfactory progress;
- support students' self-assessment of their own performance; and
- inform parents and carers regularly of students' progress and achievement.

144. There are no significant **shortcomings**.

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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145. The grade awarded by the inspection team is one grade above the school's self-evaluation grade as the inspection team identified a number of outstanding features.

146. The **outstanding features** are in both the curricular and extra-curricular learning experiences.

147. There is a wide range of extra-curricular sporting, musical and performing arts activities such as the National Performing Arts Rock Challenge Competition, regular drama productions and orchestral concerts. Several trips abroad have included the biennial World Challenge Expedition to Mongolia in 2005 and the proposed expedition to India in 2007. Other activities include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, Focus Activity Days and the sixth-form Service Scheme. This is outstanding provision for a school of its size.

148. The well-planned, detailed PSE programme, alongside the extended curriculum, ensures the acquisition of highly acceptable spiritual and moral values. Pupils display a very caring attitude and a genuine concern for others. They work together showing mutual respect and building positive relationships, showing very good social development.
149. The curricular link with St Peter's School in Namwendwa, Uganda, plays a significant role in developing the pupils' cultural awareness and understanding, as described below.
150. The school is very successful in ensuring that pupils of all abilities have access to a range of courses, advice and support to help them acquire the appropriate knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes to participate fully in the life of the school and the wider world.

Outstanding feature

151. The promotion of pupils' awareness and understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship is a key feature of the school. The school established an active link with St Peter's School in Namwendwa, Uganda in the early 1990s and has developed a strong working partnership with the school and community. Money is raised weekly through the selling of fair-trade products in school to support them. Sixth-form students and staff visit St Peter's School on a regular basis in the summer holidays to help in community and school projects.
152. The school achieved the Green Flag status as an Eco-School in October 2004. It promotes with unprecedented success the selling of fair-trade products, litter collection, the conservation of water and energy, the recycling of cardboard, paper, plastics and cans. The Riverside Rescue programme has set targets to clean up the river environment for the benefit of the wildlife and the community. It serves to raise pupils' awareness of the importance of protecting our environment for future generations.
153. Schemes are in place to encourage walking and cycling to school, to develop the school garden and tree planting scheme (awarded the Community Green Tree Award in 2005), to promote the healthy living agenda, and to encourage walking, using maps and the countryside code.
154. The above features are being actively built into the learning programmes in appropriate subject areas.

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

155. The formal curricular provision has a number of **good features** to meet the needs and aspirations of its pupils.
156. The curriculum provides equality of access to all pupils with the opportunity to achieve accreditation. It is broad and flexible, designed to maximize pupils' curricular experiences.
157. In KS4, pupils study the statutory core subjects, religious education, PSE and physical education along with a programme of optional subjects that includes vocational courses. These vocational options are provided off-site at Coleg Powys in Brecon. The provision of three sciences and two modern foreign languages at KS4 is good.

158. Sixth-form students are able to follow a good range of academic courses provided on site and at Coleg Gwent. There is a limited number of vocational courses available at the school.
159. The school provides an effective basic and key skills programme incorporated into subject schemes of work. The scheme, which is well managed and co-ordinated, places considerable emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Specialist teaching packs on both numeracy and literacy are delivered to selected pupils, based on needs, by trained members of the sixth form and the school's LSA team. The school received the Basic Skills' Quality Award in December 2004.
160. There are strong, effective links with parents, the local community, business and commerce. The school has forged close working partnerships with a number of colleges and is an ITT partnership school with the University of Aberystwyth. Such arrangements have positive and beneficial effects in respect of curriculum development and widening pupils'/students' horizons.
161. Transition arrangements at the end of KS2 are effective. The school meets the challenge of having pupils from a very wide range of primary schools.
162. The curriculum complies with statutory requirements including the daily act of collective worship.
163. Despite these many good and outstanding features the curriculum has a number of **shortcomings**:
164. The balance of the KS3 curriculum, in terms of the generous time allocated to the core curriculum, prohibits the provision of a suitably timetabled second modern foreign language and the inclusion of discrete IT in Y9. The lack of timetabled lessons in IT creates difficulties in terms of continuity and progression into KS4.
165. The provision of three separate sciences adversely affects the time available for the effective delivery of the Welsh short course and the inclusion of an IT course within the option framework. There is insufficient opportunity for pupils to gain appropriate qualification and accreditation in IT in KS4 and the sixth form.
166. There is a number of large classes in KS3 and KS4 especially in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages.

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

167. There are several **good features** of provision.
168. The school organises an effective WRE programme in partnership with Careers Wales as an integral part of its meticulously planned and organised PSE scheme. The Careers Wales advisor is based in school four days per week. All pupils and students are trained in the use of the Careers Wales online web-site.
169. The school delivers an extensive careers education and guidance programme of good quality throughout the key stages. It organises a comprehensive, meaningful work-experience programme for all Y11 pupils and Y12 students. All Y10 pupils are engaged in a wide range of work-related activities during a week in July of each year. This serves as an ideal platform to raise awareness of many aspects of the world of work.

170. The promotion of bilingualism is achieved by the adoption of a number of strategies. These include:

- the provision of full and short courses in Welsh second language for all pupils in KS4, adding to pupils' prior attainment at KS3;
- at appropriate intervals the delivery of some parts of the morning assembly through the medium of Welsh;
- the organisation of an annual school eisteddfod; and
- '*Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig*', which is well embedded into subject schemes of work and is given prominence in the teaching programmes of most subjects.

171. The range of available curricular courses, extra-curricular opportunities and work-related education ensures that learning experiences reflect the national priorities for lifelong learning and responsible citizenship.

172. The only **shortcoming** in the school's WRE programme is the limited provision for entrepreneurial activities. These are confined, in the most part, to the Business Dynamics activity in the sixth form and the Dynamo Project in KS4.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

The quality of care, support and guidance for learners

174. The quality of pastoral care is an **outstanding feature**.

175. All pupils are known individually to the headteacher, members of the leadership team and many staff. This gives pupils a sense of security. It gives them confidence which reflects in their attitudes, work and achievement. The well-planned and well-delivered programme of PSE, from Y7 to the sixth form, reflects and reinforces this ethos and successfully guides pupils to make informed choices.

176. There are also many **good features**.

177. The school support officer is available to all pupils. This role draws together many support systems which operate in the school. Pupils see the support officer as an asset.

178. The transition manager has a well-planned programme of induction for Y6 pupils which helps them settle quickly into school routines.

179. Heads of year work closely with their respective team of tutors monitoring their pupils on a daily basis.

180. A "drop-in clinic" run by the school nurse offers specialist advice to all pupils.

181. A daily homework club run by the team of LSAs gives pupils a quiet area in which to work.

182. The school council provides an effective voice for pupils and a sense of how democracy works.

183. Staff have received some training in child protection issues; two named staff act as co-ordinators for the school.

184. There are no **shortcomings**.

The quality of provision for additional needs

185. There are many **good features**.

186. The SEN department ensures that early identification and assessment target the pupils with greatest need.

187. Pupils' work is carefully matched to their abilities so that achievement brings success.

188. There is a sense of staff commitment which builds confidence in pupils.

189. There is an inclusive ethos.

190. Other good features include:

- the support given to statemented pupils and those at School Action Plus by the team of dedicated LSAs;
- close contact with parents and the effective use of outside agencies;
- effective implementation of the SEN Code of Practice; and
- small withdrawal groups particularly for literacy, which are helping pupils to improve their key skills.

191. However, the **shortcoming** is that there are some pupils, not statemented nor at School Action Plus, who are experiencing difficulties in mainstream. These pupils do not receive sufficient support at present.

192. Also, whilst there has been emphasis on promoting the Gifted and Talented, this initiative is not yet embedded in subjects across the curriculum.

The quality of provision for equal opportunities

193. There are many **good features**.

194. Pupils are aware of the procedures to deal with bullying and feel confident that incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively.

195. Pupils from minority ethnic groups integrate naturally.

196. All pupils through various subjects and whole-school activities are encouraged to respect diversity, with success.

197. The off-site vocational enhancement programme at KS4 supports pupils who may otherwise become disaffected.

198. Pupils with disabilities are fully integrated into school life, having access to almost every part of the school.

199. There are no **shortcomings**.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

200. This is one grade higher than in the school's self-evaluation report. Inspectors recognised outstanding features, as described below. The shortcoming is in the inconsistency of self-evaluation and planning for improvement, and that is described in key question 6.
201. There are several **outstanding features** in the leadership and strategic management of the school.
202. The strong, corporate ethos, as described in the box below, with its effects in practice, is the key feature of the school.
203. The aims and values of the school are explicit in policy and are largely fulfilled. The motto "With best endeavour" is understood by pupils, parents and those associated with the school. The ethos is inclusive and pupils of all abilities have a good work ethic. There was a very high level of satisfaction from parents, in the pre-inspection questionnaires, that their children liked school.
204. Since the last inspection, there has been significant development in the contribution which governors make to the strategic leadership. They bring considerable expertise and make a substantial input in long-term planning and financial management.

Outstanding feature:

205. The headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team and staff, has established an atmosphere in which expectations are clear and realised in practice. The standards, examination results, quality of teaching and standards of behaviour are testament to the effectiveness of leadership.
206. The headteacher knows every pupil as an individual and teaches them all, in rota. Members of the senior leadership team also know each pupil and teach all or many of them. They are all a strong presence around the school to offer pastoral care and maintain the high standards of behaviour. Many staff also know each pupil and they reinforce expectations. In this context, pupils feel secure and are able to develop academically, personally and socially.
207. The results are clearly evident in pupils' maturity, sociability and sensitivity to others' needs.

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

208. There are also many **good features** in leadership and management.
209. Continuing professional development has kept staff abreast of recent developments in their field. Members of the leadership team are linked to departments and these links are valuable. The further development of self-evaluation and planning, already at draft stage, will enhance this system.

210. The quality of middle management, both academic and pastoral, is generally good and sometimes very good. This is because middle managers:
- give clear direction, resulting in a large measure of consistency in practice in both standards and teaching;
 - communicate effectively within teams, both formally and informally; and
 - are developing an increasingly reflective approach, even though the processes are not yet stringent enough.
211. Working groups of staff have taken initiatives forward. There have been innovations in a number of areas. The WAG priorities have all been implemented, with outstanding achievement in sustainable development and global citizenship.
212. Other priorities, such as social inclusion, transition between the key stages, personal, social and work-related education and healthy living are all embedded in the school's life and work.
213. The headteacher knows the school very well and appropriate priorities have been set, as targets, in the school development plan. There is a drive for continuing improvement in the school's culture. Numerical targets for examination success have been met or exceeded in most indicators.
214. Despite the outstanding and good features, and the overall effectiveness of the leadership, there are some **shortcomings**.
215. The long-term illness of the SENCO has restricted progress in linking the SEN department to all subject areas, to develop and monitor teaching strategies and the quality of resource materials.
216. The IT department has lacked a co-ordinator in overall charge of innovation in IT and ICT.
217. The school, sports' centre and community centre are all housed on the same site but have three different management systems. This entails additional communication, to ensure that resources are efficiently used.

How well governors or other supervisory bodies meet their responsibilities

218. The role of governors in strategic management has been highlighted as an **outstanding feature**, above.
219. There are **good features** in their monitoring of provision. They are well informed and ask pertinent questions of senior management and of the data presented to them. Their knowledge of the school's life and work is comprehensive and detailed and they are objective, 'critical friends'.
220. It is also a developing role, in that they are increasingly linked to subject areas and able to gain a first-hand knowledge of the department to which they are linked.
221. Regulatory and legal requirements are met.
222. There are no significant **shortcomings**.

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

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

How effectively the school's performance is monitored and evaluated

224. There are **good features** in monitoring and evaluation.

225. The school's self-evaluation report is an honest, detailed and accurate analysis of the good features and shortcomings of the school.

226. It was drawn up after extensive consultation with the school staff, governors and representatives of the UA.

227. The inspection team agreed with the school's grades in three key questions (4,6 and 7). It raised the other four grades, not disagreeing with the school's drive for further improvement, but recognising outstanding features in standards, teaching, provision and leadership.

228. Heads of department analyse examination results in depth and report on these to the leadership team and governors. Some departmental reports are rigorous in their analysis of data and provide a very detailed and accurate picture of their respective departments.

229. The increasing role of the school council in reflecting pupils' voice within the school is becoming part of the self-evaluation process.

230. Surveys of pupils' and parents' views have been conducted, and their views taken into account.

231. Recently, the various strands have been drawn together and a whole-school cycle of self-evaluation and planning has been established, soon to be implemented.

232. There are also some **shortcomings**.

233. The culture of self-evaluation and review is not yet consistently embedded. Middle managers are not yet sufficiently involved in the processes and there is inconsistency in the outcomes.

234. The extent to which the data available to staff are analysed and summarised, as part of the self-evaluation process, is also inconsistent at present and is not linked closely enough to target-setting, especially at KS3.

235. The role of the leadership team and middle managers in monitoring teaching and learning, through lesson observation and scrutiny of pupils' work, to inform the self-evaluation process, is not yet fully developed.

236. Most self-evaluation reports within departments lack rigour and are not based on first-hand evidence. They vary in format and quality, between departments, and best practice is not identified and shared.

The effectiveness of planning for improvement

237. There are several **good features** in development planning.

238. Strategic planning at whole-school level identifies appropriate priorities for further improvement. It focuses clearly on standards and sets out a clear direction for the school.
239. Resources are clearly linked to the SDP to ensure that priorities and objectives are met.
240. Despite some inconsistencies, the increasing use of data, especially at KS3, is beginning to inform the planning of teaching and learning in the classroom.
241. There are also **shortcomings** in planning for improvement.
242. The school's SDP is annual, and there is not a longer-term plan.
243. The school's self-evaluation processes do not link effectively into those for developmental planning.
244. Not all departments are planning for improvement in a consistent and rigorous way.

Progress since the last inspection

245. Overall, there has been **very good** progress in
- standards, examination results and teaching;
 - standards in music;
 - the role of governors; and
 - the meeting of statutory requirements.
246. Progress since the last inspection has been **good** in:
- the use made of IEPs;
 - the acquisition and use of skills in ICT;
 - health and safety issues;
 - a much more cohesive and strategic SDP; and
 - the targeting of staff development which reflects staff needs.
247. However, whilst there has been good progress in the following issues, they remain on-going developments for the school:
- assessment procedures, especially at KS3;
 - the lack of hardware, software and time allocation for ICT;
 - the KS4 and sixth-form curriculum; and
 - links between senior and middle managers in developing self-evaluation and planning.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

249. The **outstanding feature** is the very good use the school makes of all its resources to give value for money. The governors play a strategic role in this process and work productively with the headteacher and staff. Resource use is annually assessed in the light of curriculum need. The external auditor's report of July 2006 stated that records and procedures in operation at the school are good.

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

250. The school has many **good features**.

251. There are sufficient qualified, specialist teachers. Teaching staff are very experienced. They are supported in their work by a substantial number of learning support assistants, technicians, administrative staff and cover supervisors.

252. Skilful use of timetable blocking, by department/faculty, ensures a very effective use of staff, in providing pupils with a range of curricular experiences at all key stages.

253. The school's buildings and grounds are well maintained and lie in a delightful setting. There are many good features of the accommodation, such as:

- the respect pupils show for their environment, evidenced by good standards of hygiene in toilet areas, a lack of litter and an absence of graffiti;
- a rolling programme of refurbishment;
- many good-sized classrooms, well decorated;
- display work of good quality around the school;
- an attractive entrance hall; and
- extensive sports' fields.

254. The implementation of health and safety policy has been tightened since the last inspection. This is shown by:

- the correct operation of fire doors, the regular testing of fire alarms and fire drills at least once a term;
- the proper keeping of safety logs, which note the required action and the date it was carried out;
- regular monitoring of asbestos;
- annual electrical testing of equipment; and
- regular inspection of plant for legionella.

255. The library and the careers library are well stocked and successfully managed by a member of the support staff. The provision supports pupils' learning by:
- providing frequent opportunities for reading and research;
 - attracting large numbers of pupils and students across the key stages;
 - having the active support of the teaching staff; and
 - providing a suitable range of books, newspapers and events.
256. The school provides photocopied resources of good quality to support pupils' and students' learning and to supplement the provision of textbooks.
257. However, there are some **shortcomings**.
258. Accommodation is inadequate in certain areas and there is no spare capacity. All available classroom space is in use at certain times on some days.
259. The library is too small to meet the demands placed upon it. Neither is there sufficient space to house all the available stock. Sixth formers have to use the careers library for private study and there are very limited IT facilities with outdated software. Teaching staff also use the library as a work area.
260. There is no large space or large hall where pupils can be supervised during inclement weather, particularly during the lunch hour. The current hall, which is small, presents a conflict of interest in that it is used for both teaching the performing arts and as a dining hall. This causes the interruption of some lessons.
261. Changing rooms for physical education do not provide sufficient space for the year group to safely change. As a result, pupils in KS4 are forced to change in two groups, which reduces the amount of curricular time available.
262. The sixth-form base is not an attractive setting and does not have adequate facilities for study or for light refreshments.
263. Provision for ICT across the school is inadequate for regular use and for introducing examination courses. Also, there are not enough opportunities for teachers and pupils to experience new technologies. For example, in design and technology, lack of basic ICT facilities and networked CAD/CAM machines hinder pupils' wider experience.

How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money.

264. There are many **good features**.
265. The school has effectively implemented the workload agreement, including planning, preparation and assessment time for teaching staff. Workforce remodelling has been thoughtfully carried through and it demonstrates a cost-effective use of teaching and support staff.
266. Continuing professional development is well managed, with input from a staff committee. It is linked to the SDP and performance management needs and it is undertaken by all staff. Its features include:
- good training for additional qualifications by senior and middle management;

- a significant number of successful applications from staff for funding from the GTCW;
- a planned annual programme of in-service training days; and
- good provision for NQTs and the successful completion of those on the graduate teacher training programme.

267. All staff are checked on appointment by the Criminal Records' Bureau and this is very closely monitored by the headteacher.

268. Current resources within departments are used effectively to promote teaching and learning.

269. Available space is used well to meet curricular needs and to provide an attractive learning environment.

270. However, there are some **shortcomings**.

271. Funding is at a critical level. The large number of experienced staff results in high demands being placed on the budget, and in consequence, the amount spent on classroom resources is low.

272. The site has three independent management systems in operation, which results in additional pressures on time and resources.

273. The current deployment of staffing, to provide a good range of courses in the sixth form, adversely affects the size of some teaching groups at KS3.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English

Key Stage 3: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 3

Good features

274. Pupils have a growing awareness of the range of purposes, audiences and contexts of the use of language and how to adapt their own use for a variety of audience and readership.

275. Pupils listen purposefully and have good recall of what they have learned previously.

276. Pupils speak clearly and with increasing confidence, giving extended oral response to questions in a confident, articulate manner.

277. Most pupils are able to read accurately, fluently and with appropriate expression and demonstrate a clear understanding of what they read.

278. Pupils are able to respond orally and in writing to texts of increasing complexity.

279. More able pupils demonstrate understanding of implicit as well as explicit meanings.

280. Pupils effectively plan work, analyse texts and respond to each other's writing, in pairs and small groups.

- 281. Pupils are able to write in a variety of forms for different purposes and audiences.
- 282. Pupils are increasingly able to produce purposeful and sustained writing, using accurate spelling, punctuation and appropriate presentation.
- 283. More able pupils are able to use a range of styles and language registers.
- 284. Pupils revise and redraft their writing and present it appropriately.
- 285. More able pupils are increasingly able to reflect and comment on what they have written.

Shortcomings

- 286. During discussion a small minority of pupils lacks confidence.

Key Stage 4

Good features

- 287. Pupils listen purposefully to one another and to the teacher.
- 288. Pupils respond at length orally, using technical language with increasing ease.
- 289. Pupils collaborate well in group work and are able to respond to texts of increasing complexity and genres.
- 290. Pupils make good progress in developing their understanding of what they read. They have good analytical and interpretative skills. They are able to use quotation and reference to support their opinion.
- 291. Pupils write convincingly in an increasing range of styles, adapting to a range of audiences and purposes.
- 292. Pupils are aware of the drafting process and most pupils redraft work conscientiously. They are able to use notes, or to select from support frameworks, in order to construct paragraphs that show exploration of texts.
- 293. Pupils make good progress, particularly in small groups, and engage well with appropriate aspects of the GCSE curriculum.
- 294. More able pupils produce good standards in coursework with well-crafted essays, particularly in response to literary text.

Shortcomings

- 295. A small minority of pupils lacks confidence during discussion.

Sixth Form: Grade 1 - Good with outstanding features

Outstanding features

- 296. Most students are able to engage confidently with critical debate.
- 297. They are able to analyse language and concepts in complex texts and make detailed comparisons between texts.
- 298. They write critically, analysing a wide range of text, including poetry, drama, prose and critical secondary sources.

Good features

- 299. Students are articulate and respond thoughtfully to questions.

300. They are confident with close textual analysis.

301. They are able to produce sustained written assignments that demonstrate understanding of a range of texts.

Shortcomings

302. There are no significant shortcomings.

Welsh second language

Key Stage 3: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

Good features

303. All pupils listen well to the target language and respond appropriately.

304. Most pupils:

- speak with appropriate pronunciation and intonation;
- produce good quality written work, neatly presented, giving due attention to spelling and grammar;
- use a variety of language structures and vocabulary commensurate with their ability;
- answer questions fully; and
- form questions and answers in oral tasks, successfully, in pairs.

305. More able pupils:

- transfer language from one context to another; and
- write at length in a variety of forms and for a range of purposes.

306. Some pupils make very good use of dictionaries.

Shortcomings

307. A minority of pupils settles for the bare minimum, using only elementary sentence patterns when responding.

308. At KS4, too many pupils leave without a qualification. This represents underachievement.

Sixth Form: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

309. Students usually:

- make good progress, sometimes exceeding expectations;
- respond well to lessons delivered in Welsh, speaking with good pronunciation and intonation;
- read aloud with understanding and meaning; and

- produce extended and varied pieces of writing for a range of purposes, showing the ability to elaborate and develop ideas coherently. They produce creative work that makes use of stylistic devices.

310. Sometimes, students:

- make use of extensive vocabulary and a good range of sentence structures transferring language from one context to another and using language beyond learners' structures;
- speak at length, justifying observations with well-thought-out reasons; and
- write accurately paying due attention to spelling and grammar.

Shortcomings

311. Sometimes:

- there is a lack of confidence to respond spontaneously and at length; and
- some written work is prone to error with only limited use being made of more complex structures.

Information technology

Key Stage 3: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 3 - Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key Stage 3

Good features

312. Almost all pupils:

- show good practical skills in managing a computer when using the mouse and keyboard to manipulate icons, menus and functions;
- load programmes, retrieve, save and print their work very confidently;
- have a good understanding of the theoretical aspects of their tasks and are able to explain and discuss their work using an appropriate level of technical vocabulary;
- communicate information effectively using word-processing and desktop-publishing applications; and
- can find, select, manipulate and use information obtained from the Internet proficiently in their presentations.

Shortcomings

313. Although most pupils can create a basic database, they have insufficient depth of knowledge and understanding of queries, sorts, and report generation.

Key Stage 4

Good features

314. Most pupils:

- readily and skilfully access the network, load and use a range of computer software with little need of help from their teachers;

- word process documents with high levels of confidence and competence;
- combine text and images selected from a variety of sources effectively in their projects; and
- readily use search tools to research topics on the Internet. They use their findings to good effect in their work.

315. Pupils with SEN achieve very well in their work.

Shortcomings

316. Not all pupils can use the more complex formatting facilities of software in some tasks.

317. Higher-order communication and presentation skills are generally underdeveloped.

318. Pupils do not design, implement, test and evaluate ICT systems for use by others.

Sixth Form

319. There is no provision currently.

Design technology

Key Stage 3: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 3

Good features

320. Most pupils can understand the design process and follow it, to design and make a variety of products in food and resistant materials.
321. Pupils' research skills are well developed and the pupils can collect and make use of relevant material to make decisions.
322. Designing skills are well developed, particularly within resistant materials, where ideas are recorded and developed into a final solution.
323. There is a good range of media used within folders, with many good examples of the use of ICT work, particularly within resistant materials.
324. A number of pupils make good use of CAD packages to produce drawings which show how their final product will look when manufactured.
325. Pupils' practical work is of a good standard in both food and resistant materials, with pupils displaying a good range of skills and processes through their products.

Shortcomings

326. Pupils do not annotate their design sketches as frequently as they should, leaving a number of ideas with little explanation.
327. Pupils do not always evaluate their practical work against a specification.

Key Stage 4

Good features

328. Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of the design process through their folder work.
329. Pupils can identify problems to which they can produce solutions using their designing and making skills.
330. Research skills are well developed and most pupils can use their research to make decisions and produce their own specifications.
331. Design work is of a good standard. Most pupils show a range of ideas which are well developed into a final design solution.
332. Most pupils display a very good knowledge in the use of IT and CAD, using their skills to:
- collect research material to help them make decisions; and
 - produce plans from which they manufacture their products.
333. Practical outcomes are of a good standard and display a sound knowledge of traditional skills and processes.
334. Pupils can evaluate their products against their own specifications and identify any improvements that could be made to their solutions.

Shortcomings

335. Pupils do not make sufficient use of quick freehand sketches, with annotations, to record their initial ideas and broaden their range of presentation skills.
336. The range of skills and processes pupils display in making their products is sound, but traditional. New manufacturing processes are not being used, through lack of resources.

Sixth Form: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

337. Most students can demonstrate a sound knowledge of the design process and are able to design and make products in a good range of materials.
338. Students display well-developed designing skills, which are used effectively to show solutions to problems.
339. Most students show a good grasp of a variety of media, which are used well within folder work.
340. Freehand sketching is annotated and leads to more advanced drawing, often produced with the aid of CAD packages.
341. The use of CAD is evident in most students' work and, in a number of cases, the students' skills are very well developed.
342. Students can plan their time well, using relevant methods which help them to meet deadlines with their practical work.
343. Students' practical work is of a good standard and displays a good grasp of traditional skills and processes.

344. Students are able to relate what they do in school to what is done in industry and show a knowledge of industrial practices.

Shortcomings

345. Students' practical work is limited to traditional skills and processes, with little evidence of new technologies being used in the production of their products, through lack of resources.

346. Students' knowledge and understanding of broader issues within design and technology are not sufficiently well developed. During sessions when these issues are discussed, some students show a reluctance to contribute.

History

Key Stage 3: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 1 - Good with outstanding features

Key Stage 3

Good features

347. Standards in history have improved significantly since the last inspection.

348. Pupils have good levels of knowledge and understanding and demonstrate that they are:

- secure in their recall of previous learning;
- aware of chronology and able to use timelines;
- able to use historical terms correctly; and
- able to understand historical concepts, such as cause and effect, change and continuity.

349. Most pupils are able to extract information from historical sources and understand how evidence relating to the personality of Henry VIII, for example, changed over time. Pupils are then able to make appropriate and balanced judgements.

350. Pupils demonstrate good understanding of social changes during the Industrial Revolution by investigating census evidence. They make deductions by analysing a computer database.

351. Most pupils are able to recall previous learning about the native Americans from their use of an ICT programme earlier in the key stage.

352. Pupils show good skills of investigation throughout the key stage. They use evidence effectively to compare and contrast interpretations of historical events and personalities. Most pupils are also confident in evaluating sources for usefulness and reliability.

353. More able pupils present their work effectively. They organise material well and produce extended writing of a good quality.

Shortcomings

354. There are no significant shortcomings.

Key Stage 4

Outstanding features

355. Many pupils are able to evaluate sources of evidence and comment on the validity of different interpretations of life in Hitler's Germany. Their standards of achievement are enhanced by a very good understanding of assessment objectives and examination techniques.
356. Many pupils are able to demonstrate both breadth and depth of understanding on topics such as American foreign policy. They can describe successes, failures and changes before presenting balanced conclusions with appropriate evidence to support their judgements.

Good features

357. Pupils in Y10 understand the impact of the Depression in the USA by analysing a wide range of source material including written, visual, musical and film stimulus. More able pupils also consider the underlying economic and political issues relating to life at that time.
358. Boys and girls from across the ability range make good progress in historical knowledge and understanding. This includes:
- above average pupils who produce coursework and extended writing of a high standard; and
 - pupils with SEN who demonstrate good levels of understanding of topics such as Hitler's Germany.

Shortcomings

359. There are no significant shortcomings.

Sixth Form:- Grade 1 Good with outstanding features

Outstanding features

360. Students are able to evaluate sources of evidence to a high standard in both British and European history. This is based on a breadth of understanding and historical perspective. They can present, with confidence:
- appropriate explanations of historical interpretations; and
 - valid interpretations of their own.
361. A level coursework is consistently of a very good standard. Students are able to use their understanding of the broader historical context to make judgements and present their conclusions effectively.

Good features

362. When considering the views of different historians on Hitler's foreign policy, students communicate their views convincingly during class and group discussions.
363. Students are able to demonstrate good understanding of the different causes and the level of success achieved by events such as the Rebecca Riots.
364. Students undertake investigations enthusiastically and research widely to gather appropriate evidence, which is then developed further in groups, leading to class

presentations on issues such as the Great Reform Act or the Great Powers of 19th Century Europe.

Shortcomings

365. There are no significant shortcomings.

Religious education (including religious studies)
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Key Stage 3: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 3

Good features

366. Pupils across the ability range have good factual knowledge and understanding of the units of work studied, which reflect the local agreed syllabus.

367. Pupils have a good knowledge of the major beliefs of Christianity and major world religions.

368. Pupils have a good knowledge of how religious belief influences behaviour. They can accurately describe religious practices such as worship, meditation and pilgrimage.

369. Pupils use a good range of religious vocabulary appropriately. Many pupils show a good understanding of values such as respect, honesty and trust both in the school and the community at large.

370. Pupils have a good knowledge of environmental issues and the moral and religious questions they pose.

371. Pupils with SEN have an appropriately secure factual knowledge and a good conceptual understanding.

Shortcomings

372. A small minority of pupils fails to respond to the opportunity to enter into whole-class discussion.

Key Stage 4

Good features

373. Pupils across the ability range have good factual knowledge and understanding of the units of work studied, which reflect the local agreed syllabus.

374. Pupils have a good knowledge of the major beliefs of Christianity and major world religions and a good understanding of the personal and social challenges faced by contemporary society.

375. All pupils demonstrate an awareness of the way in which religious belief shapes the identity of believers.

376. Pupils benefit from the many opportunities provided to visit places of worship and meet individual members of faith communities. They respond well particularly in their understanding of how religious belief influences behaviour and are able to empathise with their various points of view.

377. Many pupils of average ability achieve high standards in their work. They respond well to clear teacher direction and a high degree of challenge and stimulus in lessons. The more able pupils write accurately and at length.

378. By the end of KS4, pupils acquire a range of skills that enables them to explore religion and human experience for themselves and express their own responses to such issues as the Hindu belief in reincarnation and the caste system in India.

Shortcomings

379. A small minority of pupils fails to respond to the opportunity to enter into whole-class discussion.

380. The school has only recently made appropriate plans to meet the statutory requirements for the provision of religious education in KS4, which has impacted adversely on pupils' achievement.

Sixth Form: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

381. Students develop a good factual knowledge of Buddhist history and tradition. They have a good insight into the way religious belief influences the everyday life of adherents.

382. Students have a secure knowledge of the differences between Orthodox and Reform Judaism. They are aware of the complex issues faced by Jews in Israel, Wales and the wider world as they seek to relate religious issues to all aspects of human experience

383. Students respond well to a high level of challenge and expectation which has a significant effect on the standards of their work.

384. The standard of students' written work is high. They have a good grasp of the assessment criteria which they use to good effect.

Shortcomings

385. Some students do not participate orally in paired, small-group and whole-class discussion.

386. The school has only recently made appropriate plans to meet the statutory requirements for the provision of religious education in the sixth form, which has impacted adversely on students' achievement.

School's response to the inspection

The headteacher, staff and governors of Crickhowell High School welcome the Estyn report following the inspection undertaken in September 2006, particularly the opening statement that **'Crickhowell is a good school with a significant number of outstanding features in key areas.'** The awarding of grade one in four of the seven key questions confirms the professional and positive manner with which the teaching staff, support staff and governors discharge their duties, and recognises the drive for continuing improvement.

Learning and teaching have long been recognised as our core function, and it is therefore particularly pleasing to report the exceptional standards observed by inspectors, when 90% of lessons were judged to be at grade one or two.

The school places significant emphasis on our students' performance in external examinations, and it is pleasing to note that inspectors recognise this as an outstanding feature. Since the previous inspection, our results have significantly improved and are well above the national average in Wales. It was also gratifying to note that the provision of extra-curricular activities was judged to be an outstanding feature.

We are particularly pleased that the inspection team recognised that **'the most striking feature of the school is its strong ethos of learning in which very good behaviour is the norm and motivation is high. In this atmosphere, pupils' and students' development – academic, spiritual, moral, social and cultural – is exceptionally good,'** and that **'the quality of pastoral care is outstanding'**. This underpins all our work at Crickhowell.

We strongly believe that it is essential that leadership, in the complex management of schools, be both visionary and by example. It is, therefore, gratifying that the team found this to be the case with the corporate ethos of learning, discipline and high achievement, effective links with the wider community, together with the very good use of all resources to give value for money, judged to be outstanding features.

We are pleased to note that inspectors have commented most positively on the progress made on the key issues following the last inspection. To enhance learning, our development plan already includes the 'assessment for learning' agenda, which highlights the need to use formative marking and assessments more effectively to set targets. We also note the potential of further sharing of what has been identified as good practice across all areas of the school.

We accept the recommendations of the report to allow us to build upon present success. Most of these recommendations are already highlighted in the School Development Plan and the inspection process has been very valuable to us in planning for the future. We will strive to seek additional funding opportunities to provide more accommodation.

Finally, as a school community, we would like to express our sincere gratitude, particularly to the Registered Inspector, Miss Glynis Owen, for the highly professional manner in which she undertook her duties. The positive endorsement of our school means that we can confidently move forward and build on the significant outstanding features highlighted in the report, for even further improvement.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Crickhowell High School
School type	Community
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	New Road Crickhowell Powys
Postcode	NP8 1AW
Telephone number	01873-813500
Headteacher	Mr A J Timpson
Date of appointment	1.9.1993
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Mr R. Morrison
Reporting inspector	Miss G M Owen
Dates of inspection	25.9.2006 – 28.9.2006

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y 10	Y 11	Y 12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	121	113	96	118	118	51	50	667

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	35	6	39.2

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	17.21:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	
Average teaching group size	22.2
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	84%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole School
Summer Term 2006	91.6	90.6	87.1	86.5	95.9	83.0	83.0	88.24
Spring Term 2006	91.3	92.2	91.7	91.5	89.0	91.2	91.6	91.21
Autumn Term 2005	94.9	95.2	93.3	93.4	92.5	94.1	94.0	93.91

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	5%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	6 temporary 0 permanent

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of Key Stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2006														
Total number of pupils in Y9:			118											
Percentage of pupils at each level														
			N	D	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	1	3	13	39	32	12	1	0
		National	1	0	0	0	2	8	21	35	24	8	0	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	2	14	32	35	18	0	0
		National	1	0	0	0	1	6	18	24	32	15	0	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	3	8	49	29	11	0	0
		National	1	0	0	0	0	6	19	33	27	12	0	0

- N Not awarded a level for reasons other than disapplication
D Pupils excepted under statutory arrangements from part of the National Curriculum
W Pupils who are working towards level 1
EP Exceptional Performance, where pupils at Key Stage 3 perform above level 8

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment			
In the school	75	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 2005	99
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	47

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2005:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	94	91	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	72	60	52
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	94	85	85
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	59	46	38
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	97	97	97
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	92	82	76
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	97	95	93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	3	5	7
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	0	2	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 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs	
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2005	102
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2005	41
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2005	5

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	93	72	68
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	98	96	94
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	25	22	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	-	-	-
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	-	-	-

UA Unitary Authority

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Inspectors spent a total of 40 days in the school and were joined by the school's assistant headteacher as nominee. They held a meeting before the inspection.

During the inspection, inspectors visited:

- 72 lessons in the six subjects inspected and 33 lessons in other subjects;
- registrations and assemblies;
- some extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team met with:

- staff, parents and governors before the inspection.
- senior managers, middle managers, teachers, support assistants and administrative staff;
- groups of pupils representing each year group; and
- representatives of the school council.

The team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- 95 replies to the parents' questionnaire;
- comprehensive documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection;
- samples of pupils' reports; and
- a range of pupils' work.

After the inspection, inspectors held meetings with departments, senior managers and governors.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Miss Glynis Owen	Rgl: Context, Summary, Recommendations, KQ1, KQ5, Appendix
Mr Peter Harris	Core: KQ2 & Religious Education
Mr Huw Llewelyn	Core: KQ3
Mrs Ann Norbury	Core:KQ4
Mr Dylan Gwyer Roberts	Core: KQ6
Mr Angus Dunphy	Core: KQ7
Mrs Janice Davies	Lay Inspector
Ms Susan Beardmore	English
Ms Bethan Clement	Welsh second language
Mr Hywel Buckland	Design Technology
Mr Keith Hopkins	Information Technology
Mr Graham Longster	History
Mrs Sally Dawkins	Nominee

Acknowledgement

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

The contractor was:
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