

**Inspection under Section 10 of the
Schools Inspections Act 1996**

**FERNDALE COMMUNITY SCHOOL
FERNDALE
RHONDDA**

School Number: 674/4083

Date of Inspection: 22ND – 26TH NOVEMBER 2004

by

**MISS G OWEN
W110 8205**

Date: 27TH JANUARY 2005

Under Estyn contract number: T/14/04

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Ferndale Community School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose 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 more information about their child's school. A copy of this summary is sent to every family with a child at the school. The full report can be obtained from the school.

The inspection of Ferndale Community School took place between 22 – 26 November 2004. An independent team of inspectors, led by Miss G 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. This summary report may be reproduced for non-commercial educational purposes but only as a whole and provided it is reproduced verbatim without adaptation and the source and date thereof are stated.

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

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.

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years 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 attain the age of 5 during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who attain the age of 6 during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who attain the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The national curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Ferndale Community School is an 11-18 mixed school serving the areas of Ferndale, Maerdy and Tylorstown (including the village of Penrhys), in the unitary authority of Rhondda, Cynon, Taf. There are 772 pupils on roll, including 113 in the sixth form. Since the last inspection, sixth form numbers have increased and the number in years 7 – 11 has decreased.
2. The areas served by the school are economically disadvantaged, some particularly disadvantaged in national terms. Thirty-seven per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, a proportion significantly higher than the national average of 15.7%.
3. All pupils speak English as their first language. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic heritages.
4. Twelve pupils have statements of special educational need (SEN) and a further 134 pupils have been identified as requiring further support. This compares broadly with the national average.
5. The school has formed partnerships with local schools and the college in order to broaden provision from 14-19. As yet relatively few students are involved but these links are growing.
6. The headteacher took up his post in January 2001. Other members of the senior management team are mostly well established at the school.

The school's priorities and targets

7. The school has a clear mission statement to provide an education of the highest quality and aims to do this by promoting a culture of achievement in partnership with all sections of the school and wider community. Its development plan, on a three-year and annual basis, has seven priorities:
 1. To improve standards of attainment and achievement
 2. To further develop high quality teaching and learning experiences
 3. To actively develop a positive, caring and achievement ethos
 4. To develop the curriculum to meet all needs
 5. To upgrade the physical environment and resources
 6. To further develop external links and communication
 7. To further develop self-evaluation and review procedures to support improvement.

Summary

8. Ferndale Community School is a good school with a significant number of outstanding features. These include the dynamic quality of the leadership and of a sizeable proportion of the teaching; the culture of learning and achievement in which everyone is expected to do his or her best; the wide range of courses and extra-curricular activities; the quality of personal, social and work-related education; and the amount of care and support given to all pupils, especially to those with wide-ranging and complex needs. The confidence which pupils and students gain is notable. The school is also growing as a focal point of the local community and its development.

Table of grades awarded

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

9. The grades for key questions 1,2,4,6 and 7 match the school's self-evaluation grades. The school had been cautious in awarding itself a grade 2 for key questions 3 and 5.

Standards

Standards in subjects inspected			
Subject	KS3	KS4	Sixth Form
English	2	2	2
Welsh second language	2	3	2
Geography	2	2	2
Art	2	1	2
Music	2	2	2
Physical Education	2	3	3

KS3 and KS4

10. In the six subjects inspected at key stage (KS) 3, pupils achieved good standards with no important shortcomings. At KS4, there were good and outstanding features in art, good features with no shortcomings in English, geography and music, and good features which outweighed shortcomings in Welsh second language and physical education.
11. In the lessons inspected in those six subjects, the following grades were awarded:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
9%	68%	19%	4%	0%

12. These are high figures, well above the current national target for at least 50% of lessons to be graded 1 or 2.
13. Pupils reach good standards in the key skills of communication, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT). There has been a strong drive to improve key skills, particularly communication, with good results and pupils are aware of their importance.
14. Pupils of all abilities do well. The most able are challenged to produce extended responses orally and in writing. Those with SEN receive appropriate support to make good progress.
15. Results in the national curriculum (NC) tests have risen year by year and are now well above average compared to schools with a similar intake. Results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) have fluctuated somewhat but have shown a generally improving trend, above local averages and above those of schools with a similar intake.
16. Pupils gain in maturity, personally and socially, through the school's encouragement and support. The vast majority of pupils are well motivated and behave well in lessons and around the school. Good behaviour is the accepted norm. A small minority, particularly at KS4, can interrupt the learning of others on occasions, but the school has systems to deal with incidents.
17. The small minority of pupils who are disaffected at KS4 achieve well in a number of vocationally orientated courses, offered in partnership with other providers. Through this flexibility and the school's outstanding pastoral support, they acquire the personal, social and lifeskills to succeed in the workplace and the community.
18. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school. The factor which hampers this progress, particularly at KS4, is the absence of a

significant minority of pupils, despite the school's sustained efforts to improve pupils' attendance.

The quality of education and training

19. In the six subjects inspected, the grades awarded for teaching were as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
25%	59%	11%	5%	0%

20. These are significantly high figures and surpass the national target of grades 1 and 2 in 50% of lessons. The quality of teaching in lessons given by other teachers in the school matched this high quality. There is a vibrant quality in much of the teaching.
21. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils, provide a range of challenging activities and use resources well. There are very good relationships in class and teachers give generously of their time to support individuals.
22. Very good use is made of comprehensive data on pupils' attainment to monitor progress and identify underachievement. The quality of marking varies within and between departments. At best, it is diagnostic and sets targets for improvement. Reports to parents are good overall, but subject-specific targets are not always sufficiently rigorous.
23. The curriculum is broad, balanced and flexible in meeting the needs of differing abilities and aptitudes. There have been imaginative additions at KS4 in vocational courses and in varied alternative curricula. There are also wide-ranging extra-curricular opportunities, extra sessions to support learning, and visits in the United Kingdom and abroad.
24. Work-related education prepares pupils very effectively for the world of work. A wide range of work placements, appropriate for individual needs, also provides good preparation for future career aspirations and employment.
25. Personal support and guidance, including a comprehensive personal and social education programme, are of the highest quality. Pastoral care and the extensive use of outside agencies provide outstanding support for pupils of all abilities and needs, including some very challenging individual needs. Pupils' personal development is very well promoted in numerous ways. Reasonable steps are taken to provide a daily act of collective worship, though not all pupils receive this daily.
26. Equality of access to the curriculum, measures to counteract bullying and racism and the care of disabled pupils are exemplary. There is a purposeful but relaxed atmosphere throughout the school day, with pupils trusted to remain in the building at break and lunchtimes and respect the environment.

Leadership and management

27. The extent to which the school's aims and values are shared between all sections of the school and wider community, and the extent to which they are embedded in practice are outstanding features of the school's leadership. The headteacher leads with vision, drive and clear direction, ably supported by key senior and middle managers.
28. Governors are fully involved in strategic planning and evaluation of performance and are strongly supportive of the school.
29. The enthusiastic, committed and reflective attitudes of the staff attest to the high quality of leadership and the success of continuing professional development.
30. Senior managers and staff are a strong presence around the school to promote good standards of behaviour. They are also on call, in a rota, to attend any lesson where a pupil's behaviour is disrupting the learning of others.
31. Leaders and managers use a good combination of methods to gather reliable information about pupils' achievements and the quality of education provided by the school. These methods are systematic and thorough. The school works hard to seek the views of all involved, including pupils and their parents. These views are valued and good use is made of them to inform self-evaluation.
32. Plans for future progress have clear priorities and focus on standards of achievement. Development planning is instrumental in improving standards and quality.
33. Teachers are well qualified and supported by a wide range of other staff to ensure that the school functions efficiently in all respects. There are sufficient learning resources overall and ICT provision is very good. However, the stock in the library and access to it are limited.
34. There is sufficient accommodation and it mostly provides an attractive learning environment. However, there are shortcomings in the facilities for physical education. The reception area is warm and welcoming. The lifts installed in the building provide good access for those with disabilities.
35. Staff are deployed efficiently and the acquisition of resources is closely matched to the school's priorities for development. Senior managers monitor provision and spending effectively to ensure value for money.

SIXTH FORM

Standards of achievement

36. In the six subjects inspected, students achieved good standards with no important shortcomings in five subjects and good features outweighed shortcomings in one subject.
37. The grades awarded in these subjects were as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
9%	64%	27%	0%	0%

38. These statistics are, however, based on a very small sample of lessons.
39. Increasing numbers of students, from a wide range of abilities, choose to stay at school for sixth form courses, for one or two years. They achieve success at various levels and in both traditionally and vocationally based courses.
40. They also mature as individuals, through the continuing support of their teachers and the range of challenging opportunities offered to them. They become increasingly independent learners, with a range of personal and social skills. They understand how well they are progressing and the importance of good attendance. Increasing numbers choose to enter Higher Education each year.
41. Students develop good analytical, research and communication skills and this is recognised in the success achieved in the communications module of key skills accreditation. Whilst students also have good skills in numeracy and ICT, these are not yet promoted as extensively nor accredited.
42. Advanced (A) level results have been generally above local averages and just below the national average in recent years. In 2002, results peaked and were above the national average. In all years, the most able students have been very successful, gaining top grades in all their subjects. Vocational results have also been good.

The quality of education and training

43. The grades awarded for the quality of teaching in the six subjects were as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
46%	36%	18%	0%	0%

44. These grades are based on a very small sample of lessons, but the high quality of teaching was confirmed by teaching seen in other subjects.

45. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and provide challenging and stimulating materials to enhance learning. There are very good relationships in classes.
46. Students are involved in the assessment of their progress on a regular basis with subject teachers and personal tutors. Data are used effectively to predict grades. Students' work is marked in detail, giving them useful and supportive feedback.
47. Students have access to a good number of courses which prepare them effectively for Higher and Further Education, training and employment. The flexible timetabling arrangements enable them to study their chosen combination in most cases. The school extends this provision through consortia arrangements with local schools and the college, though numbers participating currently are small.
48. In addition to examination courses, students have lessons in key skills (communication), religious education, careers education and personal and social education. This is good provision and students respond well.
49. Students involve themselves in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including competitions and visits. The sixth form is a cohesive unit, with good relationships and shared interests. Students feel that the relatively small numbers encourage this mutually supportive atmosphere. They readily accept responsibilities for helping younger pupils in school, which enhances their personal and social skills.
50. Students receive very good pastoral support from personal tutors and the close links with a range of providers in the community enable students to gain advice and learn of the many opportunities available to them.

Leadership and management

51. The sixth form is successfully managed by the two joint heads of sixth form, within the management of the whole school. There is clear vision to provide appropriately for the needs of all who will benefit academically, personally and socially from staying on at school, for one or two years. Senior managers exert an appropriate balance of rigour and flexibility, which promotes an atmosphere of mutual respect.
52. Effective systems are in place to monitor the quality of provision, as well as students' progress. These systems are based on first-hand evidence.
53. Managers use questionnaires to investigate students' views, which are also represented through the sixth form council. Their views, and those of others with key roles within and beyond the school, are fully considered in self-evaluations.

54. Effective plans for developing quality and continuing to improve standards in the sixth form are informed by critical and reflective self-evaluation. They have led to significant improvements.
55. Staff are highly qualified and have good expertise and experience to deliver the sixth form curriculum. Students have good access to learning resources that facilitate independent learning. The accommodation provides a suitable environment for teaching and learning.
56. The financial constraints of providing breadth for relatively small numbers in the sixth form are addressed well by senior managers. Resource implications are reviewed rigorously and regularly to ensure that provision is of high quality and gives value for money.

Progress since the last inspection

57. There has been good progress in addressing the key issues on standards from the last report. The drive on improving pupils' key skills of speaking, writing and ICT has been successful and standards in music at KS3 have also improved considerably. Target-setting has increased though is not yet fully effective. Despite much effort, attendance rates are still a cause for concern. The school library is under-resourced and under-used and the school does not comply with the daily act of collective worship. However, the school as a whole has moved forward significantly in many important areas since the last inspection.

Recommendations

58. In order to build on current good practice, the school should focus on the following areas, identified within its school development plan:
 1. Continue to improve standards and examination results and address the shortcomings identified in this report.
 2. Continue the efforts to improve attendance.
 3. Ensure that the marking of pupils' work and reports to parents identify clearly the ways in which pupils can improve the standards of their work.
 4. As funds become available, implement plans to improve the facilities, particularly in physical education and the library.
 5. Meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

Standards

Key question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

Pupils' success in attaining agreed learning goals

KS3 and KS4

60. In the six subjects inspected at KS3, pupils achieved good standards with no important shortcomings. At KS4, there were good and outstanding features in art, good features with no shortcomings in English, geography and music, and good features which outweighed shortcomings in Welsh second language and physical education.

61. In the lessons inspected in those six subjects, the grades awarded were as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
9%	68%	19%	4%	0%

62. These are high figures, well above the national target for at least 50% of lessons to be graded 1 or 2.

63. Pupils of differing abilities do well in both setted and mixed ability classes. The most able are challenged and produce good extended oral responses. Some of their writing is outstanding, based on research and sharp analytical skills. They achieve the top grades in public examinations.

64. Pupils of average to lower ability also make good progress. Good teaching, strong pastoral support, the learning culture and teachers' organisation and storage of their work all impact on progress. Pupils with SEN receive, in addition, specific help to boost their skills and also achieve well.

65. The emphasis on key skills since the last inspection has had very positive results. In particular, communication skills have improved considerably, speaking and writing being identified as key issues in the last report. Pupils now speak with much greater confidence and more extensively. Specific teaching on grammar and spelling, together with cross-curricular reinforcement, have resulted in higher standards of writing.

66. In the other communication skills of listening and reading, pupils also achieve well. They mostly listen with respect and attention. Those with reading difficulties receive effective support and pupils generally read well, to an

audience, in skimming and scanning and more extensively for research. However, the limited stock in the library and limited access are restrictive.

67. Numeracy skills are also well developed and used effectively in a number of subject areas. Very good ICT facilities, discrete lessons in KS3, good take-up at KS4, and regular cross-curricular usage in most subjects result in pupils having good ICT skills.
68. In the key skills of collaboration and response to creative and problem-solving opportunities, pupils achieve well in numerous opportunities on a regular basis. Whilst they know how to improve their work in general terms, written comments on marking and targets on reports are not always sufficiently precise to enable them to develop further their skills in particular subjects.
69. Pupils' skills in bilingualism are developing, with greater progress and confidence at KS3 than at KS4. Outside Welsh lessons, however, there is very little use of Welsh.
70. The school sets itself very ambitious targets for examination success and, as such, does not always meet these targets in all indicators. Nonetheless, pupils are achieving well. A small minority has wide-ranging and complex needs and the school provides outstanding pastoral support. However, in KS4 in particular, a significant minority does not always respond to the school's sustained efforts to ensure that they are in school and keeping up with their work.
71. Results in the NC tests at the end of KS3 peaked in 2004, when 50% of pupils gained at least level five in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This compares with 24% in 1999. The 2004 results, whilst below the national comparator, compared very favourably with those of schools with a similar intake. Results in English have been highest of the three subjects in most years recently. In 2004, overall, there was less difference between boys' results and girls' than nationally.
72. At GCSE, results have fluctuated more, but have shown a generally improving trend. In 2003, 41% of pupils gained at least five grades A*-C, compared to 29% in 1998. Boys' results remained the same in 2004, but girls' results fell, due to specific external factors. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C, and gaining success in the core subjects has compared very favourably with that of schools with a similar intake in most years.
73. The proportion of pupils gaining five subjects at GCSE across the full range of grades (A*-G) has compared less favourably with that of similar schools, though the number gaining at least one subject has been high, and very close to the national average. Results in vocational qualifications have also been good, with few pupils leaving school without qualifications. There is no established pattern in the difference between boys' results and girls'.

Sixth form

74. In the six subjects inspected, students achieved good standards with no important shortcomings in English, Welsh second language, geography, art and music. Good features outweighed shortcomings in physical education.
75. In the small sample of sixth form lessons seen, the grades awarded were as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
9%	64%	27%	0%	0%

76. Increasing numbers of students are staying on into the sixth form, year by year. They represent a wider range of ability than previously as the school wants all those who will benefit academically, personally and socially, to gain from the experience, particularly those who might otherwise not stay in education. Thus, not all stay for two-year courses; some stay for one year courses and some for preparation for employment.
77. Students of differing abilities make good progress in the sixth form. Their progress is regularly reviewed by subject teachers and personal tutors, with targets set. The most able students achieve very well and gain the top grades in all their subjects. In 2003, students of all abilities were successful in gaining a grade A-E, in all their subjects, at A2 level.
78. The emphasis on key skills, in the school as a whole, applies equally to the sixth form. Lessons to promote communication skills, students' awareness of their importance and gathering of evidence to submit portfolios for accreditation all have a positive effect on the development of good key skills. Students gain in confidence in giving presentations and their analytical and research skills are well developed.
79. All students who submitted portfolios for the communications module of key skills' accreditation were successful last year, at levels two or three. However, there is currently no provision for or accreditation of numeracy and ICT skills. Nevertheless, students use numbers effectively in relevant subjects and use ICT facilities competently.
80. Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level results have improved year by year and peaked in 2004. A2 level results have generally been above local averages and just below the national average over recent years, though numbers have been small. However, in 2002, results were also above the national average. These results, and those of vocational courses, represent good progress in the sixth form.

Progress in learning

KS3 and KS4

81. Pupils at KS3 cite the development of their key skills in a planned, systematic way as the key to their progress, together with lively teaching and individual support. Inspection confirms that these factors significantly improve their progress.
82. Planning over the key stage and detailed planning in lessons show progression. In music and geography there has been particularly rapid progress, with new schemes of work this year. Pupils respond well to teachers' expectations, which are appropriately challenging for differing abilities in most lessons.
83. Where pupils fail to make the progress of which they are capable in Y9 or at KS4, the school is flexible in drawing up modified curricula, in order that pupils should achieve. Results at the end of KS3 and KS4 confirm progress in varied fields of knowledge and skills.
84. Pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve in broad terms and in greater depth in some subjects than in others. In the best practice there is specific oral and written feedback, self-assessment and written targets for improvement. This practice is not yet consistently very good across the curriculum but neither are the shortcomings significant.
85. More prevalent is the strong learning culture in which the vast majority of pupils expect to succeed and achieve their ambitions. They acknowledge that the school gives them confidence to aim high and to believe that they will be successful.

Sixth form

86. Students' confidence develops further in the sixth form. Increasing numbers each year enter Higher and Further Education, and those who re-visit the school acknowledge the contribution which the school made in their continuing success.
87. In subjects, students work independently, using research to supplement teachers' presentations and resource materials. The varied competitions which they enter, outside curricular time, also give them opportunities to present their views, think creatively and solve problems. Students have been successful at a local and national level in situations which require enterprise.
88. They have a comprehensive and detailed knowledge of their progress and future targets, through regular reviews with subject teachers and personal tutors and from good quality feedback on their assignments.

The development of personal, social and learning skills

KS3 and KS4

89. The vast majority of pupils are well motivated, behave well and show respect for others. Good behaviour is the norm in class and pupils show good self-discipline overall. They are also trusted to remain in the building at break and lunchtime and to respect the environment. This trust is only rarely abused.
90. A small minority of pupils have wide-ranging and challenging needs and, particularly at KS4, they can interrupt the learning of others on occasions, particularly if classroom management is insecure. The senior managers and some key staff are on duty, on rota, to deal with such incidents. Pupils know what behaviour is appropriate in class.
91. External factors also impact on a small minority of pupils' motivation and attendance, particularly at KS4. The school works very hard to ensure that pupils remain engaged in school and make progress, but the annual attendance rate averages at 87%. Figures at KS3 at the beginning of the academic year are satisfactory, but attendance drops in KS4 and as the year progresses.
92. Through a variety of alternative curricula, disaffected pupils at KS4 succeed in vocationally based, accredited courses, some in conjunction with other providers in the area. They gain the personal, social and lifeskills to succeed in the workplace and the community.
93. Work-related education equips all pupils well for future careers and employment. Lessons, individual guidance and work placements all enable pupils to make appropriate choices about the future.
94. The school has few pupils or adults from minority ethnic heritages and pupils' awareness of racial diversity is less well developed than other aspects of their personal development. However, opportunities are taken to learn of other cultures in some subjects of the curriculum and in assemblies.
95. Pupils are helpful to those with disabilities. There is a general spirit of co-operation within the school; boys and girls work together well in groups and pupils feel that any incidents of bullying will be dealt with.

Sixth form

96. Students are mature and friendly young adults. They are confident, independent learners who form a cohesive unit and are mutually supportive. Students find this closeness a key feature in their sixth form experience and value it.
97. The atmosphere is one of mutual respect between teachers and students. The head boy, head girl, their deputies and sixth form council members play

a leading part in ensuring that sixth formers act responsibly and meet the school's expectations in following routines and respecting the facilities.

98. Systems of recording attendance are both flexible and rigorously monitored to ensure that students attend regularly. Attendance has improved and students' attitudes have also become more responsible.
99. Sixth formers represent the school in the community and are good ambassadors for the school. They gain experience of organising fund-raising events and of liaising with older members of the community.
100. They also gain experience of leadership by helping younger pupils. Students volunteer enthusiastically to join registration groups of Y7, to help in lessons in some subjects and to direct groups of pupils in extra-curricular activities. They are good role models for younger pupils.
101. Students have greater understanding of racial diversity than younger pupils but imply that they would like to learn more. In other respects, they show good awareness of the wider community and the working world. They debate vigorously a number of relevant current issues in lessons in religious education. In careers education and work placements, they learn of the many opportunities available to them post-18.
102. Students gain much from their experience in the sixth form and develop personally and socially as well as academically.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

KS3 and KS4

104. The grades awarded for the quality of teaching in the six subjects were as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
25%	59%	11%	5%	0%

105. These are significantly high figures and surpass the national target of grades 1 and 2 in 50% of lessons. The quality of teaching given by other teachers in the school matched this high quality.
106. The quality of teaching is good overall. Most teachers are very good role models that have high expectations of their pupils. They use a range of stimulating and often original strategies, to engage and challenge pupils to achieve the highest standards. In the best lessons, teachers systematically guide pupils through their work and recognise quickly when to introduce a new challenge to keep pupils motivated.
107. Most teachers set tasks that are well matched to pupils' level of ability. They explain things well and go over work that is not understood. They encourage pupils to work together to solve problems and use questioning effectively to check pupils have understood the work being covered in class. In a very small minority of classes pupils are not challenged sufficiently to demonstrate what they know and can do.
108. The very high levels of respect and positive relationships between teachers and their pupils have a significant influence on pupils' attitude to learning. Teachers know their pupils well and give generously of their time to provide well-targeted support that allows pupils to make good progress. Communication between teachers and pupils is particularly strong. Minor incidents of inappropriate behaviour in class are dealt with quickly and rarely disrupt learning.
109. Almost all teachers have good and up-to-date subject knowledge. An increasing number of teachers successfully use ICT resources such as video cameras and electronic whiteboards to enhance their teaching and pupils' learning.
110. Most teachers plan their lessons well. They explain learning objectives to pupils and relate these effectively to work previously covered. A few successfully use samples of other pupils' work to exemplify what is expected in lessons. In a small minority of lessons, pupils do not understand what they are expected to achieve because the learning objectives are not explained at the start of the lesson.
111. Teachers and learning support assistants work well together to provide good quality support for pupils with special educational needs. In the best examples, teachers make good use of individual educational plans (IEP)s to set targets and monitor progress.

Sixth form

112. The grades awarded for the quality of teaching in the six subjects in the sixth form were as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
46%	36%	18%	0%	0%

113. These grades are based on a very small sample of lessons, but the high quality of teaching was confirmed by the teaching seen in other lessons.
114. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers know their students very well and continually strive to ensure that they reach their potential. They set high standards and expect students to demonstrate commitment and enthusiasm in their work. Teachers achieve this by stimulating and challenging students to engage fully in their studies both in the classroom and in their independent research between lessons.
115. Teachers' questioning encourages students to provide extended answers that demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the subject. In a very small minority of classes, lack of pace and challenge and reliance on dictated notes prevent students demonstrating what they have understood.
116. In most lessons, teachers and students work together to create a very positive atmosphere that enhances learning. The very high levels of respect and positive relationships between teachers and their students have a significant impact on students' learning.
117. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of their subject. They use a range of resources including the interactive white board, good quality worksheets and stimulating materials to enhance learning. Most lessons are well structured and include clear and consistent learning objectives that are tailored to students' needs.

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

KS3 and KS4

118. Assessment procedures meet statutory requirements and those of awarding bodies for recording and accrediting learners' achievements. Statutory reviews for pupils with special educational needs are held annually and progress is carefully monitored. All teachers are made fully aware of pupils' needs. The school adheres to the revised Code of Practice as well as recent legislation on disability and inclusion.
119. Teachers make very good use of strategically prepared data to monitor pupils' progress carefully. Pupils' attainment is effectively tracked from Y5 in the primary school. Teachers regularly evaluate pupils' achievement, effort in class and attitude to learning. They use this information well to establish whether pupils are working to their potential.
120. Underachievement across the ability range is identified early and pupils requiring support are carefully mentored. Data are also used to identify the preferred learning styles of pupils. This well refined and continually reviewed system to monitor pupils' progress is a strong feature of the school.

121. The majority of teachers mark pupils' work regularly and include written feedback that helps pupils understand what they are expected to do to improve their work. In a small minority of subjects pupils contribute to the assessment of their own and others' work. Marking is particularly good in English, history, geography, French and religious education.
122. In a small minority of subjects, marking is less regular, tends to be over-generous and provides little diagnostic feedback. Advice focuses too much on effort and completion of work. In a few subjects, pupils' work is incomplete and is not followed up by the teacher. Overall, there is lack of consistency in the quality of marking within and between departments.
123. The school regularly informs parents of their child's progress. As well as the annual report, parents receive interim reports every term. The format of the written reports provided at the end of the academic year is good. However, not all departments provide detailed subject-specific targets for improvement.

Sixth form

124. In most subjects, teachers continually monitor students' progress, drawing attention to possible errors before they occur. They regularly assess students' work and celebrate the good work that many students produce. They also identify underachievement early and provide well-timed and focused support that has an impact on the overall attainment of the student.
125. Data are used very well to predict students' grades and to monitor students' progress. Underachievement is identified early and swift action is taken to address the problem.
126. Students' work is marked promptly. Written feedback is generally supportive and provides useful indicators of how the work could be improved. Students have plenty of opportunity to discuss the quality of their work with teachers in most departments.
127. In a few subjects the quality of feedback is outstanding. In these subjects, marking is linked explicitly to grade criteria, clear explanations are provided about why particular marks have been awarded together with sound advice on how to improve and make progress. In a small minority of subjects, assessment is less regular, tends to be over generous and provides little diagnostic feedback.
128. A termly progress report is produced for all students. Subject teachers provide a grade for attendance, punctuality, attitude to work in class, homework and overall progress. These grades are carefully collated and regularly reviewed through an effective personal tutor system.
129. Students benefit from the support they receive from their personal tutor. Progress reports are collated termly and parents of any student who is underachieving are informed. Good communication at all levels allows senior

managers to have a very good understanding of how students are progressing.

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

130. The grade awarded is higher than the grade given by the school in its self-evaluation. The provision for personal and social education, work-related education, careers education, tackling social disadvantage and stereotyping, and ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all learners are judged to be outstanding features.

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

131. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and reflects the aims set out for pupils of statutory age in the Education Act 1966. The curriculum is accessible to all pupils including those with SEN and it offers them the opportunity to obtain appropriate qualifications.
132. The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides progression between years and key stages. It is flexible enough to meet the needs of individual pupils. At KS4, a number of vocational courses are offered and groups of pupils successfully and enthusiastically follow an alternative curriculum which is well planned and effectively delivered.
133. Sixth form students have access to a good number of courses and choose from a variety of AS, A2 and vocational courses. These courses prepare students effectively for Higher and Further Education, and for employment and enterprise. The school further extends its curriculum provision by developing links with local schools and the college though numbers currently participating are small.
134. The school places high emphasis on developing pupils' key skills and was awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark this year. Pupils have a good understanding of key skills and there is considerable evidence of this in the majority of subjects, in particular in promoting pupils' literacy skills.
135. In the sixth form, students develop their personal and key skills, and, in timetabled lessons they extend their communication skills and gain accreditation.
136. Pupils and students across the school participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities held during lunch break and after school hours. In addition to the many subject-based clubs and team activities and competitions, there are also learning support sessions organized by teachers. Departments arrange a variety of visits to different places and events at home and abroad which greatly enrich pupils' learning experiences.

137. The school effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by means of a comprehensive and very well-designed personal and social (PSE) programme supported by contributions by other subjects.
138. School assemblies and areas of the curriculum, most notably religious studies, promote pupils' spiritual development. Pupils are encouraged to think and reflect on their own and other people's lives and beliefs.
139. In lessons, pupils discuss moral and ethical issues. The emphasis which the school places on trust, working together, respect and responsibility helps promote pupils' moral development. Fund-raising events for various charities locally and the help given to less fortunate children abroad highlight pupils' concern for people less fortunate.
140. Within the school there is a strong community spirit and pupils mix well. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and members of staff are good. This is a strong feature of the school.
141. Pupils' cultural development is fostered within departments and by a range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils visit art galleries, museums, theatres, sporting events and Welsh language centres and are made aware of their own and other cultures.
142. The school's determination to develop community links is a notable feature. The school newsletter is circulated to every home in the catchment area and school news, achievements and the success of pupils are widely celebrated. Parents attend parents' evenings to discuss pupils' progress and subject choice options as well as attending other events.
143. Pastoral links with the feeder primary schools facilitate transfer to the secondary school and developing curricular links further helps transition from KS2 to KS3.
144. The school has good links with initial teaching training institutions and welcomes a number of trainees annually.
145. In KS3, KS4 and in the sixth form, the curriculum overall meets legal requirements. The provision for personal and social education and for work-related education is very well planned and follows national guidance. The school does not comply with the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

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

146. Work-related education plays a prominent role in the school's curriculum across all key stages. The careers programme is detailed and well structured with various work-related activities and events planned for every year group. Pupils in Y11 and Y12 undertake work experience placements which are

carefully monitored by teachers. The careers co-ordinator works closely with external agencies and with the careers adviser of Gyrfa Cymru Careers Wales.

147. Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig features in many subjects and is included in schemes of work. Pupils learn about their locality and facets of Welsh life in general. They participate in many activities organized by the Welsh department including attending residential Welsh language courses.
148. The school succeeds in promoting equality of access to the curriculum. The alternative curriculum is successful in providing for pupils at risk of disengagement. All pupils are very well supported and encouraged throughout the school to give of their best and achieve their potential. Each pupil is treated as an individual.
149. Pupils' understanding and awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship are being developed. They understand the importance of recycling and are made aware of the significance of the healthy living and healthy eating initiatives being promoted by the school. The school is a designated Eco school.
150. The school has many impressive links with local employers who visit the school as guest speakers. Involvement with Compact and links with Education Business Partnership (EBP) reinforce pupils' awareness of the work place and ensure that teachers, parents and pupils are fully aware of the needs of employers.
151. Pupils develop problem-solving and decision-making skills in areas of the curriculum. They develop their entrepreneurial skills by participating in activities such as Industry Days, the Dynamo Project and a range of Enterprise Schemes.
152. The school seeks to develop pupils as independent learners by encouraging them to set their own learning targets. Through the wide range of courses available, the majority of pupils and students acquire the appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills to progress further and lay the foundations for lifelong learning both within a local and national context.

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

Grade 1 : Good with outstanding features

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

The quality of care, support and guidance to learners

154. The pastoral care system and an extensive range of support agencies and advisers provide outstanding care and support for pupils and

students of all abilities. Pupils, students and parents agree that the school is a caring community where the needs of the individual are known and catered for.

155. All members of the local community are kept well informed of the work of the school through newsletters. The daily use of pupil planners provides a useful link between school and parents.
156. Pupils and parents are informed of courses available at transition stages through well-designed brochures. Subject choices of pupils are discussed at parents' evenings in years 9 and 11 and the school develops appropriate programmes of learning to match the needs of pupils.
157. Effective procedures, including staff links with primary schools, visits by year 6 pupils and support from the 'On Track' team, ease the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary school. A further induction programme and the use of sixth form peer mentors help pupils to settle quickly into the life and routine of their new school.
158. Pupils are well known by their form tutors and year heads. A calendar of assessment opportunities enables tutors to track the progress of pupils, identify underachievement and put effective remedial action in place.
159. In the sixth form an enrichment programme enhances key skills and gives appropriate advice on careers. Experienced personal tutors monitor progress, check targets and give sound advice to the growing number of students applying for higher education.
160. The school's procedures for monitoring punctuality and attendance and the strategies used to improve them are rigorous. However, attendance overall falls short of the Welsh Assembly Government benchmark of 90%.
161. Most teachers adopt the school's procedures for dealing with incidents of poor behaviour. Duty staff are always on call. The use of alternative curricula and the involvement of outside agencies such as Skillforce, the Eye to Eye counselling service and Rhondda Cynon Taf Behaviour Support provide effective help to pupils who are experiencing difficulty at school.
162. Links with Careers Wales and with an extensive range of employers provide valuable support to the school's guidance programme for choices at the transition stages. Appropriate work experience is undertaken in years 11 and 12 and school teams have an outstanding record of success in projects and competitions linked to business and industry.

163. Pupils and students feel safe and secure when in the school's care. School first aiders and the weekly visit from the school nurse provide satisfactory health cover. Pupils with medical conditions are well supported as are pupils in the care of the local authority. New initiatives are raising awareness of healthy lifestyles.
164. There is a designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection and the school's policy is understood and implemented by all members of staff. The Pupil Referral Panel meets regularly to ensure that pupils' and students' welfare is given the highest priority.

The quality of provision for additional learning needs

165. The learning support department makes very good provision for pupils with a wide range of physical, learning and behavioural needs. A variety of appropriate strategies are used to support pupils.
166. The learning support room acts as a multi-purpose area for the most vulnerable pupils. It is a breakfast room, "time out" facility, activities and teaching area.
167. Pupils in need of additional support are identified in year 6 through the effective 'On Track' initiative. This aids the KS2/KS3 transition. There is considerable outside agency expertise at the department's disposal.
168. The school meets statutory requirements. Parents are kept informed of their child's progress and are welcomed into school.
169. Plans for disability access are in place and pupils are successfully supported in mainstream.
170. Individual educational plans provide carefully selected targets. Most teachers are aware of these.
171. The department works well as a team. Ten learning support assistants work very well in both mainstream and the learning support department. Where necessary they adapt work for pupils who take part in the full range of National Curriculum subjects.
172. The vast majority of pupils fulfil their potential. There is a range of externally accredited examinations and KS4 pupils with SEN achieve a high pass rate.

The quality of provision for equal opportunities

173. The school monitors the performance of boys and girls in examinations. The school's policy on equal opportunities works well in practice and pupils and students have equal access to all school activities.

174. The school is unstinting in its commitment to tackling social disadvantage. The care shown by members of staff and the dedication of representatives from a wide range of outside agencies provide outstanding support for pupils and students from all social and educational backgrounds.
175. The school recognises its fundamental responsibility to promote racial equality. Through the curriculum, the PSE programme and links with overseas schools, issues of culture, diversity and racism are addressed successfully.
176. From responses to questionnaires by pupils, students and parents, it is apparent that incidents of bullying are relatively rare. When they do occur, the school responds quickly to resolve the problem, and if necessary involves the Restorative Justice counselling service.
177. For pupils with physical disabilities and those with other medical conditions, curriculum arrangements and the judicious use of learning support assistants ensure they are not disadvantaged.
178. By providing appropriate training for its staff and suitable learning opportunities for its pupils and students, the school promotes diversity actively and ensures equal access to all its activities.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

179. This grade recognises the outstanding features in leadership. The school had been cautious in giving itself a grade 2.

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

180. The extent to which the school's aims and values are shared between all sections of the school and wider community is an outstanding feature of leadership. Staff, pupils, parents and outside bodies know that the school wants every pupil to do his or her best and will provide the pastoral support to enable them to achieve this.
181. The extent to which these aims are achieved in practice in a strong learning culture and caring community is also unusually good and, to a large degree, consistently across the school.
182. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership, with clear vision of the future of the school and of its development as a focal point of the community's development. He also provides the day-to-day direction, setting high expectations regarding teaching, learning and achievement, and also

regarding the school's ethos and care for individuals. Leadership is dynamic; the school has moved forward significantly and has a real sense of purpose.

183. He is ably supported by key senior and middle managers, who have clear roles and responsibilities and who share the same values. They also promote these by a strong presence around the school to ensure that they are embedded in practice. Links between senior and middle managers are effective. Systems of communication and of monitoring and evaluation are clear and understood by all.
184. The enthusiastic, committed and reflective attitudes of the staff attest to the high quality of leadership and the success of continuing professional development. The school is self-critical in striving to provide the best quality of academic and pastoral provision for its pupils. It sets very challenging targets for itself in examination success, but does not manage to meet all of them.
185. Professional development is appropriately linked to whole-school aims, the work of departments and pastoral teams and to the needs of individual staff. There are good systems to share knowledge and experience, and to promote the skills of those new to teaching or new to the school.
186. Increasingly the school has sought partnership with other providers in the community, forming links to extend 14-19 provision and to extend the range of support services available. These links have been effective in practice, though, currently, relatively few students in the sixth form choose to attend courses elsewhere.
187. The sixth form is successfully managed by the two joint heads of sixth form, within the management of the whole school. There is clear vision to provide appropriately for the needs of all who will benefit academically, personally and socially from staying on at school for one or two years. Senior managers exert an appropriate balance of rigour and flexibility, which promotes an atmosphere of mutual respect.
188. The school has taken account of national priorities and implemented many good initiatives. Transition from KS2 to KS3 has improved. Key skills have been successfully promoted and the school has gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark. There has been emphasis on sustainable development, recognised in Eco-School status. Social inclusion is at the heart of the school and its vision extends to inclusion of the community with a view to regeneration.

How well governors or other supervisory bodies meet their responsibilities

189. Governors are fully involved in strategic planning. They meet in committees covering all aspects of the school's provision and discuss its future development. In this, they have detailed input from senior and middle managers, both in the form of presentations and in the form of written submissions.

190. Governors are also well informed about the headteacher's vision for community development. They have been supportive of the increased community dimension to date, for example the distribution of 2,000 copies of the school's newsletters to every home in its catchment area.
191. Governors have a good overview of the school's current stage of development, its good features and its shortcomings. Some governors have observed classroom practice; others use reviews by senior managers and outside consultants to inform them. Data on attendance and incidents concerning behaviour are analysed at each meeting of the governing body.
192. The sixth form provision and its financial implications are kept under regular review by the governing body to ensure that provision is of high quality and gives value for money.
193. Governors are strongly supportive of school events and attend many of its public functions.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

How effectively the provider's performance is monitored and evaluated

195. Senior managers are well informed about whole-school performance. They use a wide range of methods, including analysis of examination results and observations of teaching and learning to acquire detailed and reliable evidence. They know where good practice occurs in different subjects. The senior management team (SMT) uses this information to help improve both standards and quality.
196. Middle managers responsible for subjects contribute to the self-evaluation process by conducting regular reviews of their departments' performance. In most cases these reviews are systematic, thorough and useful. In a small minority of cases, however, reviews are less focused on explaining and improving the standards that pupils achieve.
197. Arrangements for critical and reflective self-evaluation are organised and co-ordinated well. These systems provide first-hand evidence from a comprehensive range of sources to monitor performance. Some aspects of these procedures have been introduced recently and their effectiveness across the school is still developing.

198. Managers work hard to find out the views of all parties interested and involved in the school's work. Questionnaires recently completed by pupils and students, and their parents, have been particularly useful. Views expressed by pupils and students in the school council and sixth form council are also considered. They help leaders and managers understand how recipients feel about the quality of education provided.
199. Other providers of education and training in the community served by the school also contribute to the self-evaluation process. The views of partners, for example from primary schools and colleges of further and higher education, are sought. Managers' awareness of these views helps them to co-ordinate their planning to address the needs of the community.

The effectiveness of planning for improvement

200. Information gathered through the self-evaluation procedures is used to identify the priorities for further development. Objectives are prioritised in the school development plan (SDP) and focus on improving standards of achievement of all pupils. Objectives are suitably challenging but targets for groups of pupils are not always specified clearly.
201. Departmental plans, often informed by consultations with advisors from the unitary authority (UA), are devised to address objectives from the SDP. Progress made towards achieving these goals is kept under review both within departments and by senior managers working with the departments to which they are linked.
202. Resources needed to tackle whole-school and departmental objectives are clearly identified in plans. Costs, timescales and staffing implications are all taken into account.
203. Actions taken as a result of self-evaluation and planning for improvement have already resulted in significant progress being made. There have been measurable improvements in recent years, for example in attainment at many levels and in increased use of ICT to support learning and teaching.
204. The systems used to review progress enable leaders and managers to demonstrate both the positive achievements made and the underlying momentum for continuing improvement.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

206. Teachers are well qualified and have good subject knowledge and expertise to cover all aspects of the school curriculum. There is a sufficient level of staffing to ensure that pupils and students of all ages and abilities are taught effectively. Arrangements to cover for absent teachers ensure that, wherever possible, appropriately qualified supply staff are used to meet the needs of pupils and students.
207. There are enough administrative and technical staff to enable the school to function effectively on a day-to-day basis. Very good use is made of classroom assistants to support pupils with SEN. Administrative, technical and support staff work very effectively with teachers and school managers to ensure that the needs of pupils and students are addressed fully.
208. Subject departments are generally well resourced in terms of books for class use. These are supplemented well in many subjects by good quality self-produced material for pupils and students to use in homework. The school also makes purposeful use of a broad range of resources beyond the school and these enrich learning experiences for pupils and students.
209. The level of provision for ICT is very good. There is ample whole-school provision and this is supplemented well by additional resources in many subject classrooms. Most subjects make effective use of ICT but in a minority, use of ICT is underdeveloped. The library is not fully stocked nor fully utilised but several subjects have their own additional reading material that is used well by students, particularly for independent work.
210. The overall quality and sufficiency of accommodation are good. Most classrooms provide attractive learning environments enriched by good quality displays of pupils' work. Specialist rooms are housed close to one another and this nurtures a good subject ambience. There are shortcomings in the overall quality of the small number of demountable classrooms but this does not impact significantly on teaching and learning in the subjects that use them.
211. The school buildings and grounds are largely well maintained and used to good effect. The lifts installed in the main building provide easy access for those with disabilities and the reception area is warm and welcoming. Most of the buildings are in a sound state of repair although there are deficiencies in the facilities for physical education. In particular, these relate to the condition of the roof in the gym, and to the floor, lighting and heating in the Dutch barn.

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

212. There are clear systems to ensure that the school is staffed and resourced efficiently and economically. The headteacher works in full consultation with senior managers and the finance committee of the governing body to manage

the budget effectively. Financial planning ensures that contingencies are held to meet any unforeseen circumstances and that the school's budget is used prudently to address priorities in teaching and learning.

213. Staff are deployed resourcefully to make best use of their expertise and time. Procedures for staff development are linked closely to outcomes arising from review and performance management and this works effectively to assure benefit to the school and to individual members of staff. There are two newly qualified teachers and their needs are met fully through well-planned and highly appropriate induction programmes.
214. In addition to a basic capitation, there is a bidding system that allows subject departments access to additional funding. This is scrutinised rigorously by senior management to ensure that any successful bids are matched distinctly to the school's priorities for development.
215. The school keeps its use of resources under regular review. Senior managers monitor provision regularly and systematically. Purposeful use is made of data for comparing overall costs with other schools. The financial constraints of providing breadth for relatively small numbers in the sixth form are addressed well to ensure that quality of provision in the rest of the school is not affected adversely.
216. Overall the school balances well the cost of provision against overall effectiveness. This enables pupils and students from a wide range of academic and personal backgrounds to receive a good quality education highly appropriate to their needs.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Subject 1 English

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

Good features

217. The great majority of pupils display good standards of work across all attainment targets
218. Most pupils make good progress in current work. They complete set tasks in lessons and display good levels of knowledge and understanding in their written and oral work.
219. The great majority of pupils are able to listen attentively and speak confidently in pair, small group and whole-class situations.

- 220. Most pupils are able to build on learning acquired in previous lessons- for example, ideas encountered in a unit of work or the reading of a class novel, such as *Across the Barricades* and *Buddy*.
- 221. Standards of reading are generally good and improve throughout the key stage. Pupils are able to read suitable texts with the accuracy and expression that indicate good levels of understanding.
- 222. Most pupils produce good written work that is commensurate with their indicated levels of ability. They are able to use an appropriate range of different styles of writing, such as recount, report, instructions, and they understand how to use planning, drafting and rewriting to improve their work.
- 223. More able pupils demonstrate that they are able to use a good range of vocabulary.

Shortcomings

- 224. A small proportion of pupils display some hesitancy in reading texts and their reading displays a number of miscues.
- 225. A small minority of pupils produce written work that contains technical errors, particularly with regard to spelling and punctuation.

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

Good features

- 226. The great majority of pupils have positive attitudes to English and work well in lessons; consequently, they make good progress in all three of the attainment targets.
- 227. Most pupils are well motivated and clearly put a good deal of effort into coursework to achieve good standards.
- 228. Pupils are generally articulate and are keen to express their views, for example in the debate about Christmas, where pupils fruitfully explored a range of ideas and arguments in mature and structured discussion with others.
- 229. Standards of reading are sound and pupils are able to read between the lines and use the skills of inference in finding implicit and explicit meanings in text.
- 230. Most pupils show that they are able to make the most of the opportunities provided for a range of writing (including extended writing) that develops them well for the demands of GCSE Language and Literature.
- 231. A few pupils produce word-processed work of a particularly good standard in their assignments for GCSE.

232. The majority of pupils display good analytical skills with regard to texts and demonstrate that they are able to articulate ideas encountered and to support their views with quotations and other evidence where appropriate, for example, in connection with Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men'.

Shortcomings

233. On a few occasions, a small minority of pupils' writing displays technical flaws – particularly with regard to spelling and punctuation.
234. A small minority of pupils exhibit off-task behaviour that makes them less productive in lessons both in terms of the oral and written work.

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

Good features

235. The majority of students are highly motivated and show good standards in their written and oral work.
236. Students are confident and articulate in expressing critical viewpoints. They are able to analyse the language and concepts used in complex texts such as Milton's *Paradise Lost* and offer thoughtful viewpoints.
237. They are able to work independently and conduct research effectively, to produce good assignments.
238. Students are speculative and imaginative in their oral responses.
239. The vast majority of students have insight and cope well with the well-conceived tasks devised to enhance their understanding of key themes within the historical and cultural contexts of texts.
240. Many make good use of ICT and produce assignments that are effectively word-processed.

Shortcomings

241. A small minority of written work is less polished and, though sound conceptually, displays superficial technical errors.
242. A small minority of students are more reticent in offering extended viewpoints orally.

Subject 2 Welsh Second Language

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

Good features

- 243. Pupils understand and respond appropriately in various situations. They use an increasing number of words, phrases, sentences and questions. They communicate well in pairs, and are confident when contributing to a group or class discussion.
- 244. Pupils are able to speak with intelligible pronunciation and intonation. Familiar sentence patterns are used effectively and pupils can apply them as a basis for developing more linguistic variety.
- 245. Pupils can read aloud accurately, confidently, with meaning and suitable expression. They can read their own work and other printed texts. They can understand the general sense of a range of materials. The more able pupils are developing as independent readers and express simple opinions on material read.
- 246. Various written texts are completed accurately in response to a variety of stimuli. Pupils can write for a variety of audiences and for different purposes. Written tasks consist of postcards, letters, dialogues, and descriptive paragraphs. Pupils can write pieces which express opinion.

Shortcomings

- 247. The recall of previous language, by a minority of pupils, is varied and can be uncertain. The use of incidental language is limited.
- 248. A minority of pupils' written work is prone to errors. Year 9 pupils' written work lacks challenge in terms of writing at greater length and with more detail.

Key stage 4 - Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features

- 249. Pupils can understand language used in a range of familiar situations. They are able to express an opinion and give reasons to support that view.
- 250. They can use an increasing range of phrases and sentence patterns to extend their contributions. There is an awareness of how to vary time and person of the verb correctly.

- 251. Pupils can read a range of material and will read aloud clearly and with meaning. They can show an understanding by selecting the main points from reading material.
- 252. Pupils can write purposefully and develop ideas. Written work produced is based on the needs of the external examination. They show a good grasp of organisation and sequence.
- 253. Pupils build on previous work and the more able are completing more extended tasks. They plan and improve their work by re-drafting.

Shortcomings

- 254. Pupils often understand more language than they use. They tend to rely on written notes to support their oral exchanges. Pupils show a limited proficiency in communicating in formal and informal situations.
- 255. Pupils lack confidence and fluency when reading their own work.
- 256. Pupils' written work contains a number of errors. Basic sentence patterns are used inaccurately. With the increase of vocabulary and phrases, they tend to have difficulty expressing themselves meaningfully on paper.
- 257. No pupils are being prepared for the short course. 20% of year 10 and 17% of year 11 are studying for the full GCSE examination course, a small percentage.

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

Good features

- 258. Students are making progress and building effectively on skills acquired in KS4. Standards are in line with their ability.
- 259. They are making progress in analysing texts and understanding the content and style of literary work.
- 260. Students are developing a good vocabulary and have a good understanding of grammar and syntax.
- 261. Writing skills show progress and year 13 students demonstrate maturity and creativity in their work.

Shortcomings

- 262. Some students tend to confine themselves to short answers when questioned. They lack the confidence to demonstrate the language skills that are evident in their written work.
- 263. The written work of some students contains grammatical errors.

Subject 3 Geography

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

Good features

- 264. Most pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of geographical facts with the ability to locate places accurately. The work by Y7 on the 'Passport to the World' is particularly good.
- 265. Pupils are competent in the use of atlases, statistical data, textbooks, information and task sheets to enable their acquisition of knowledge, understanding and subject specific skills.
- 266. The majority of pupils understand the impact and consequences of environmental factors on the activities of mankind.
- 267. Pupils demonstrate a grasp of geographical terminology and are able to apply terms with accuracy and in context.
- 268. Most pupils are able to read and understand weather map symbols to describe weather patterns experienced in selected parts of the United Kingdom.

Shortcomings

- 269. A minority of pupils find difficulty in using maps and atlases to locate places and transfer the information to the work sheet/outline map.

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

Good features

- 270. Most pupils' skills of enquiry and observation are developed and strengthened by fieldwork activities undertaken in the local area. The detailed individual studies completed by pupils in Aberdare enhance the pupils' understanding and knowledge of urban patterns and services.
- 271. The majority of pupils are confident in the use and interpretation of statistical and graphical data.
- 272. Many pupils have a secure knowledge of geographical terms and use them with increasing precision and accuracy.
- 273. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the key factors in their study of industrial change in South Wales. Most pupils have a secure grasp of the complex issues associated with industrial decline and its impact on the

people of South Wales. They understand the need for industrial re-generation and the acquisition of new skills by the indigenous work force.

274. The study of coastlines enhances the pupils' understanding of process and patterns in physical geography. They have a good knowledge of the erosional processes at work in shaping the associated coastal landform features. They understand the need for coastal protection policies in vulnerable areas and are able to explain the impact of such erosion on various groups of people.

Shortcomings

275. A minority of pupils has an insecure grasp of process in physical geography.
276. Some incomplete and missing work has an adverse effect on standards in the work of a small minority of pupils.

Sixth form - Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings.

Good features

277. Most students demonstrate considerable depth of knowledge, understanding and skill in the subject.
278. Many students use good research skills and acquire a wide knowledge of geographical terms to produce essays and studies of high quality.
279. Students display a good understanding of the impact of hurricanes on social, economic and environmental aspects of human activities.
280. The majority of students have a good knowledge of plate tectonic theory. They are able to apply the principles accurately to real world examples.
281. Students employ a wide range of statistical techniques, map skills and ICT applications to research, analyse, interpret and present conclusions in appropriate formats.

Shortcomings

282. The work of a minority of students is characterised by a lack of depth in response to tasks set.

Subject 4 - Art

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

Good features

283. Pupils investigate a range of media and processes with which they experiment practically and imaginatively, mostly with success.
284. Pupils develop their drawing skills well. They record thoughtfully and creatively from observation and imagination and use a range of source material (both primary and secondary) from which they develop and extend their visual investigations.
285. Pupils use their sketchbooks to collect ideas and experiments freely, in a personal way.

Shortcomings

286. Not all pupils are fully aware of how to use contextual resources or ICT for the generation and manipulation of images and ideas.

Key stage 4 - Grade 1 : Good with outstanding features

Good and outstanding features

287. Pupils build well upon the experiences they had at KS3 and achieve outstanding results at GCSE in comparison to local and national averages.
288. Pupils are keen to experiment freely and develop their ideas with individuality. They demonstrate an increasing confidence to select and experiment with a variety of 2D and 3D techniques and processes. All pupils show increasing skill in using materials and exercise control successfully in many cases.
289. Many pupils' sketchbooks are personal and thoughtful collections through which they discover and develop processes well.
290. Pupils show good levels of understanding of visual elements and work in expressive and imaginative ways.

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

Good features

291. Students record well from observation. They use drawing in a range of media well as means for analysing, exploring and developing their ideas. They are confident in their understanding of visual research and show a good command of skills and techniques in their chosen media.

292. Students demonstrate a sense of discovery and many show an emerging sense of their own personal style.
293. Students use their sketchbooks well to organise ideas and images and to generate and explore potential lines of enquiry.

Shortcomings

294. Students are developing an awareness of how to use the work of others to develop and extend their ideas but some show limited ability to analyse and critically evaluate sources (images, objects, artefacts and texts) and are not fully able to demonstrate an understanding of purposes, meanings and contexts.

Subject 5 Music

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

Good features

295. The great majority of pupils show good standards of work across all attainment targets of the NC.
296. Performance standards are good. In Y7 pupils respond enthusiastically producing good tone and expression in singing activities.
297. Standards of percussion and keyboard playing are usually good and ensemble skills are successfully developed in paired and group activity.
298. Pupils experience a good range of stimuli in composing. Standards achieved in group work, particularly in Y7 and Y8, show imagination and understanding.
299. Most pupils engage readily in appraising activities, using appropriate vocabulary linked to the elements of music. In Y9, listening skills are good.

Shortcomings

300. The progression of musical skills in Y9 is adversely affected by pupils receiving only one lesson per fortnight.
301. A small minority of less able musicians experience difficulty with keyboard fingerings.

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

Good features

- 302. All pupils work well in whole-class and group activities and make good progress in all aspects of GCSE work.
- 303. In Y10, pupils of different musical ability achieve very good ensemble skills on a wide range of instruments, when performing.
- 304. Y11 pupils demonstrate good vocal and instrumental standards.
- 305. Pupils make good use of the new computer facility and standards of composing are good. Able musicians create complex scores using a good variety of instruments and musical forms.
- 306. Appraising skills are generally well developed across the key stage.

Shortcomings

- 307. The standards achieved by less able musicians are adversely affected by their limited musical experience in KS3.

Sixth form - Grade 2 : Good features and no important short comings

Good features

- 308. Standards of performing are good; there is musicality and expression.
- 309. The full score produced is sophisticated and indicates good knowledge of musical style and form. Computer skills and knowledge of Sibelius software are good.
- 310. Standards of aural and appraising work are generally good.

Shortcomings

- 311. There are no important shortcomings.

Subject 6 - Physical Education

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

Good features

- 312. Pupils are aware of basic warm-up activities and use technical terminology to describe their preparation for exercise. The majority of pupils understand the reasons for warming up.

- 313. Pupils respect equipment and, in gymnastics particularly, they have well-established routines for handling equipment safely.
- 314. Girls perform basic gymnastics actions with increasing control. Most Y9 pupils are able to refine and adapt their movements from floor to apparatus.
- 315. In swimming, pupils perform the basic strokes efficiently with accuracy and control. Pupils know the basic principles of water rescue.
- 316. Pupils are able to improve their performance by practising their skills with techniques becoming increasingly effective. Pupils recognise and follow rules.
- 317. In games, pupils with SEN have refined skills and make good decisions in game situations. All achieve standards comparable with their ability.
- 318. A small minority of KS3 pupils identify strengths and weaknesses in performance and use this information to target improvement.

Shortcomings

- 319. A minority of pupils find it difficult to use observation skills to improve the quality of their performance.
- 320. A small minority of pupils lack control and accuracy in transferring skills learned in practice into more complex situations.

Key stage 4 - Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features

- 321. As in KS3, pupils are aware of basic warm-up activities and use technical terminology to describe their preparation for exercise. The majority of pupils understand the reasons for warming up.
- 322. Girls are able to produce technically complex aerobic sequences and demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the activity.
- 323. In netball, girls are able to perform skills with refinement and clarity and make good progress from KS3 to KS4.
- 324. Most pupils are able to make simple judgements about their own and others' performances. As in KS3, most pupils improve their skills through practice.
- 325. In football, a few boys send and receive the ball accurately and adapt skills to work and support others.
- 326. At GCSE, pupils are able to apply their theoretical knowledge and understanding in practical situations. The most able have well-refined skills

that allow them to throw over long distances and place the ball accurately when batting.

327. In GCSE classes, pupils confidently evaluate each other's performances and as a result, improvement is evident.

Shortcomings

328. A minority of pupils have difficulty with control, accuracy and extension and this affects their ability to apply their skills and make decisions in more complex situations.
329. The majority of performances lack quality.
330. In the GCSE class, most pupils had difficulty in grasping the implications of safety when designing footwear.
331. Pupils' GCSE work is heavily reliant on worksheets and teacher input and there is little evidence of independent work.

Sixth form - Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features

332. Students demonstrate at least a basic knowledge and understanding of the theoretical issues being discussed, such as the cardio-vascular system and the characteristics of elite performance. The most able are able to reflect and apply this understanding.
333. Students work well together and contribute usefully to group discussions.

Shortcomings

334. The majority of students have difficulty in making links between previous and present learning. A few students are unable to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations.
335. There is limited evidence of independent research.

School's response to the inspection

We have always felt that our learners are cared for, guided and supported extremely well and it was reassuring to have this confirmed. To have 'the culture of learning and achievement in which everyone is expected to do his or her best' classified as an outstanding feature was most gratifying and is central to all the work we undertake. To have a significant number of additional outstanding features identified gave even greater satisfaction.

The quantitative data confirms the high standards present in the school. Against national targets of 50% it was exciting to achieve 77% within Key Stages 3 and 4 and 73% in the sixth form. Combined with the quality of teaching, 84% in Key Stages 3 and 4 and 82% at post 16; there is sufficient evidence to confirm our belief that our students are having extremely high quality experiences. The comment that 'there is a vibrant quality in much of the teaching' was a source of particular delight.

A successful school is dependent on a whole range of personnel and we are particularly fortunate in the calibre of individuals working within and with our school. This is illustrated by such comments as 'good behaviour is the accepted norm' and 'there are high expectations of all pupils'. Our post 16 provision also attracted favourable comments, particularly the range of challenging opportunities available to our students and their development as independent learners. The conclusion that our students are mature, confident and friendly young adults, who support one another, is a tribute to all involved.

We acknowledge that an improvement in standards and examination results is an ongoing challenge and one that will constantly need to be addressed. We will add to the already wide range of strategies we currently use to provide even further opportunities and support for our students. Parentally condoned absence has been a major issue over many years for the school. We will continue our efforts to address this and hope that the various initiatives will result in an improvement. We are pleased that there are examples of high quality marking within the school and we appreciate the need to ensure this becomes consistent practice. Individual targets are included on reports but the need to make these more specific was noted.

Funding is always an issue in education and as detailed in the School Development Plan and our self-evaluation, we are aware of shortcomings in our facilities. We will seek to remedy these as soon as possible. We are committed to providing an act of daily worship. The report recognises the good progress since the last inspection and we will endeavour to maintain this improvement whilst developing further the recommendations made.

The school wishes to acknowledge the fair, professional and comprehensive approach of the inspection team, under the positive and constructive leadership of the Registered Inspector. We acknowledge the thoroughness of the inspection process and accept its findings.

Appendix A

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Ferndale Community School
School type	Community
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Ferndale Rhondda
Post-code	CF43 4AR
Telephone number	01443 – 755337

Headteacher	Mr Peter Jenkins
Date of appointment	January 1 st 2001
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Mrs Denise Gibbins
Reporting inspector	Miss Glynis Owen
Dates of inspection	22 – 26 November 2004

Appendix B

School data and indicators

Year group	Y 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y 10	Y 11	Y 12	Y13	Y 14	Total
Number of pupils	132	107	133	142	145	68	45	0	772

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	46	3	48

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16.0
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	
Average teaching group size	20.9
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	77%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole School
Term 1	88. 5	86. 2	83. 7	77. 9	78. 4			82.1
Term 2	91. 6	90. 6	88. 2	82. 8	80. 8			85.5
Term 3	92. 0	89. 8	87. 2	86. 3	82. 6			86.5

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	37%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	54 temp. 0 perm.

Appendix C

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2004															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 139															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	4	0	0	0	0	19	22	25	27	3	-	-
		National	0	1	3	0	0	2	8	21	33	23	9	-	-
	Test	School	0	8	1	-	-	-	12	18	31	25	5	-	-
		National	1	4	1	-	-	-	8	21	33	23	10	-	-
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	5	0	0	0	1	9	19	29	26	11	-	-
		National	0	1	3	0	0	1	7	19	25	31	13	-	-
	Test	School	0	9	2	-	-	-	4	21	24	25	14	-	-
		National	0	5	1	-	-	-	5	17	20	36	15	-	-
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	4	0	0	0	0	12	45	17	18	4	-	-
		National	0	1	3	0	0	0	6	20	32	27	11	-	-
	Test	School	0	7	0	-	-	-	6	26	32	21	8	-	-
		National	0	4	0	-	-	-	5	17	33	28	13	-	-

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

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school	35%	In the school	50%
In Wales	57%	In Wales	57%

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 2003__			145
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil			30
The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2003__:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	74	84	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	41	46	51
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	70	81	85
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	32	32	38
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	95	96	97
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	63	70	74
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	91	90	93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	9	10	7
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	3	4	3
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	0		
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	0		
For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs			
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2003			30
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2003__			16
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2003			14
	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	69	61	68
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	100	93	94
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	19	18	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	11		
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	0		

Appendix D

Evidence base of the inspection

- 14 inspectors spent the equivalent of 43 days at the school.
- Lessons were observed in the six subjects inspected, and every other teacher was observed teaching at least once.
- Inspectors attended assemblies, registration periods and some extra-curricular activities.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, members of the senior management team, heads of department, heads of year, staff with whole-school responsibilities and members of the administrative and support staff.
- Inspectors in the core team met representatives from other schools, institutions and outside agencies linked to the school.
- Work across the curriculum, from representative pupils and students in Y7-Y13 was examined, together with work in each subject inspected, at all key stages.
- There was formal discussion with groups of pupils from each year, with those pupils whose work was scrutinised and with pupils representing various activities, as well as informal discussion with many other pupils.
- The Registered Inspector met the staff and governing body prior to the inspection.
- Sixteen parents attended the parents' meeting and 108 replies to the questionnaire were received.
- Documentation provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection.
- Feedback was given to departments and to the headteacher and senior management team during the week of the inspection. Feedback was also given to the headteacher, the senior management team and governors after the inspection.

Appendix E

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Glynis Owen (Rgl)	KQ1, KQ5
Peter Carter (Core)	KQ6, 6 th Form , (supporting art)
Clive Rowlands (Core)	KQ3
Dave Williams (Core)	KQ7
Julia Longville (Core)	KQ2, (supporting PE)
Jeff Hanney (Core)	KQ4
Sarah Lewis (Team)	Art
Heulwen Jones (Team)	Welsh 2 nd language
Charlie Harris (Team)	English
Huw Llewelyn (Team)	Geography
John Jenkins (Team)	Music
Jan Gadd (Team)	P.E.
Ann Norbury (Team)	S.E.N.
Mrs Singh (Team)	Lay Inspector

Acknowledgement

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

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