

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

**King Henry VIII Comprehensive School  
Old Hereford Road  
Abergavenny  
Monmouthshire  
NP7 6EP**

**School Number: 679/4064**

**Date of Inspection:  
18<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> April 2005**

**by**

**Trevor Guy  
Inspector No. W140/15865**

**Date: June 2005**

**Under Estyn contract number: T/31/04**

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King Henry VIII Comprehensive 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 King Henry VIII Comprehensive School took place between 18<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2005. An independent team of inspectors, led by Mr. Trevor Guy, 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:

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

## 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. King Henry VIII Comprehensive School is an 11-19 mixed community school serving the small town of Abergavenny and its surrounding rural area in the unitary authority of Monmouthshire.
2. There are currently 1214 pupils on roll including 201 students in the Sixth Form. Pupils are from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds with 13% receiving free school meals which is below the national average.
3. Pupils entering the school from its 14 associate primary schools represent the full range of ability. The area is mainly English speaking with very few speaking Welsh as their first language. There are few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. 42 pupils have statements of special educational need (SEN) and a further 87 pupils are on the school's SEN register.
4. The current headteacher was appointed since the last inspection and the senior management team is a mix of recently appointed and well established staff.

### **The school's priorities and targets**

5. The school seeks to value all students and believes that each individual has an equal entitlement to an appropriate, high grade education which enables them to achieve success.
6. The schools aims to:
  - promote lifelong learning as an active challenging experience;
  - provide effective teaching;
  - provide a safe, caring, disciplined, attractive and stimulating environment;
  - develop partnerships between the home and the school, and between the school and the community and
  - set realistic yet challenging targets for success in national tests and external examinations.

## Summary

7. King Henry VIII School is making good progress towards its goal of enabling all learners to find success and fulfil their potential. Under the clear and decisive leadership of the headteacher there is a concerted drive to build on the school's many strengths and to address shortcomings where they occur. There is a good culture developing in which openness and trust are enabling worthwhile initiatives, such as those in learning and teaching promoted by the School Improvement Group, to take root.
8. Progress has been made on most of the issues identified in the last inspection, with 3 exceptions. Pupils' standards have risen in many areas, the quality of learning and teaching and attendance have improved and self-evaluation is more effective. Limited progress has been made with improving assessment practices, key skills and the achievements of some lower ability pupils.
9. The inspection team agreed with 5 of the 7 judgements made in the school's own self-evaluation report, giving a higher grade for one key question and a lower grade for another.

### Table of grades awarded

Key question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	3
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	3
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	3
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	2
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

### Standards

10. The following table shows pupils' standards of achievement in the subjects that Estyn selected for inspection at King Henry School.

Subject	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Sixth Form
Art	2	4	1
English	2	1	2
Information technology	3	2	1
Music	3	2	1
Music technology	-	-	3
Science	3	3	2

Welsh	3	3	2
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**Standards in key stages 3 and 4**

11. The school has made significant progress at key stage 3. In national curriculum tests, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level or higher in all 3 core subjects is well above the national averages and the results compare well with those in similar schools across Wales.
12. In key stage 4, GCSE results for pupils gaining 5 or more passes at grades A\*-C are above the national average and largely in line with expectation given the ability of the pupils. Pass rates at grades C and above in the 3 core subjects are good. In comparison, the number of pupils achieving 5 or more passes at grades A\*-G is low compared to similar schools.
13. In the six subjects inspected at key stages 3 and 4 the percentages of grades awarded met or exceeded the national targets set by the Welsh Assembly Government and were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
8%	45%	42%	3%	2%

14. More able pupils mostly do very well while some in the middle to lower ability range lose motivation and do not always perform to expectations. Pupils in the designated SEN classes make good progress and achieve good standards.
15. As in Wales as a whole, girls usually perform better than boys in national curriculum tests and GCSE.
16. The good features seen in pupils' key skills of communication, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT), and in other learning skills, outweigh the shortcomings, although pupils generally do not make as much progress as they might. Where less able pupils are withdrawn for additional support in literacy and numeracy, they make rapid progress.
17. When working with others, pupils usually co-operate well and make good progress. With guidance, most pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work.
18. A good majority of pupils work hard in lessons, readily join in the range of activities provided and show enthusiasm for their work. However, a small minority of pupils, mainly in years 10 and 11, display challenging behaviour.
19. The average attendance for the three terms before the inspection was 90%. However, a significant minority of pupils do not attend regularly, especially in years 10 and 11, although the school works hard to encourage good attendance.

## Standards in the Sixth Form

20. Students generally achieve high standards in the Sixth Form; 1 in 4 lessons has features which are outstanding. In the subjects inspected in the Sixth Form the percentages of grades awarded were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
25%	60%	15%	0%	0%

21. The A-E pass rate at A level is high with large numbers gaining passes at the highest grades. The trend in performance is strongly upwards and results are well above national averages. Most Sixth Form students make very good progress from year 11 and a good proportion gain places in higher education.
22. Students are very attentive listeners and many are very confident in expressing their own ideas. They are able to summarise and present information effectively. While many benefit greatly from the sharing of ideas, there is a reluctance by some to work together with too great a readiness simply to receive information from the teacher. Written work is often fluent and well constructed. Note taking skills are not fully developed in all subjects. Most make solid progress in using ICT to support their learning.
23. Students increasingly show initiative and work successfully with less direct supervision. They often show well-developed skills in improving their own learning. Behaviour is very good and students are keen learners. Attendance levels in the Sixth Form are good.

## The quality of education and training

24. In 2 lessons in every 3 the teaching is good with no important shortcomings; this greatly exceeds the national target of 50%. Grades for the quality of teaching in all lessons observed in key stages 3 and 4 and the Sixth Form were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
17%	48%	29%	7%	0%

25. In key stages 3 and 4, classroom organisation and relationships are often good and some of the teaching is outstanding. While some teachers provide opportunities for some of the key skills to be practised, in the best teaching, pupils are actively coached to improve these skills. Pupils are not always challenged to think for themselves. Homework does help pupils to make progress but the irregularity with which it is set does not help pupils to develop good study habits.
26. In the Sixth Form there are outstanding features in the teaching in 1 in 5 lessons and no important shortcomings in the great majority of lessons. Very

good relationships and the way lessons are structured encourage students to think issues through for themselves and express their own ideas. Much of the teaching is very well pitched to stretch students, though some makes insufficient demands upon the students when too much learning is directed by the teacher.

27. The school meets statutory requirements for assessment and follows the regulations of examination boards. Assessment practice has improved since the last inspection although marking and grading are not consistent across the school. Some teachers are good at helping pupils to see what they need to do to improve; others offer praise but only limited advice on how to make progress. Systems for tracking the progress of all pupils in key stages 3 and 4 on a regular basis are not well developed. Reports are generally helpful to parents. In the Sixth Form, assessment and the recording of progress are good.
28. The school meets requirements for the curriculum in key stages 3 and 4. The school has attempted to broaden the range of vocational courses on offer, but with limited uptake by pupils. The quality of provision is good for pupils in the designated SEN classes. Provision in a range of subjects contributes to pupils' understanding of Wales.
29. A very broad range of AS and A level courses is on offer plus a small number of vocational courses. Religious education is not provided in the Sixth Form and in this respect the school does not meet statutory requirements.
30. The school actively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a variety of ways. Pupils have a good understanding of moral issues which are addressed particularly well in personal and social education (PSE) and religious education. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is more limited but is promoted in assemblies and in some lessons. The arrangements for collective worship meet statutory requirements.
31. Many pupils' learning experiences are enriched through the broad range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school. High standards are achieved in many of these activities, particularly music and sport.
32. The school's provision generally encourages and assists pupils, as they move through the key stages, to acquire the skills they require to be lifelong learners.
33. The school has a well-structured pastoral system which provides very good care and support for all pupils. Transition of pupils from primary school is an outstanding aspect of the school's provision.
34. The school has introduced a number of good measures to strengthen links with parents. The vast majority of parents are supportive of the school and feel they can approach staff with problems. The statutory requirement for a home-school agreement is not yet being met.

35. The school, together with the careers service, provides good careers education and guidance.
36. The work of the form, year and full school councils is outstanding.
37. Support for pupils with a range of special needs is very good with some aspects of provision being outstanding. The new behaviour management system has improved behaviour but is not implemented consistently by all staff.
38. The vast majority of pupils, both boys and girls, have equal access to the curriculum and other school activities. Equal opportunities are promoted effectively.

### **Leadership and management**

39. The school has a clear set of values which place great emphasis on individuals achieving their learning goals. These values are promoted by senior managers and increasingly shared by middle managers. Review and planning processes are evolving to translate these values into practical outcomes.
40. The headteacher has been instrumental in driving forward coherent policies to raise standards and in bringing greater consistency to the implementation of policy. His commitment, pragmatism and attention to detail have been significant in moving the school forward.
41. Senior managers have a good understanding of strengths and shortcomings across the school and when necessary, a robust approach is taken to tackling issues. Senior managers have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. There is insufficient involvement of senior managers, beyond the analysis of examination data, in evaluating the standards being achieved in departments.
42. The effectiveness of middle managers does vary. A number of subject leaders are developing a very good knowledge of their departments and building a definite team ethos to improve learning and teaching. In other instances, departments do not readily acknowledge shortcomings and there is no clear steer on how improvement is to be brought about.
43. There is a general willingness by staff to engage in open debate about improvement issues and in departments where new approaches are tried, the quality of learning and teaching is often enhanced; this is especially evident in English.
44. The governing body is very well informed and they exercise their responsibilities with care. They place a strong emphasis on raising standards and are active in seeking the resources to achieve this aim but are not sufficiently involved in setting priorities for the school development plan (SDP).

45. The SDP is a useful working document although it is essentially a one year plan and does not set out a longer term view of priorities for the school. Whole school targets are mostly challenging and appropriate, signalling the school's intent to drive on raising standards.
46. The allocation of resources is very well matched to achieving the school's main aims. In most areas of the curriculum, pupils have access to a good range of appropriate learning resources.
47. The school has enough, well qualified staff but when the use of non-specialists and temporary teachers has been unavoidable it has affected pupil progress. Support staff are deployed appropriately and contribute to the efficient running of the school.
48. The school is clean and well maintained and has been upgraded through a staged programme of refurbishments and health and safety improvements. The school has recently secured a grant of £1 million from the Local Education Authority (LEA) to continue the programme.
49. The financial management of the school is an outstanding feature. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and the finance committee manage the budget effectively and efficiently despite pupil numbers reducing.
50. The work of the School Improvement Group has contributed significantly to the professional development of many teachers and to improving the quality of teaching and learning. There are some good examples of the school evaluating how far training is put into practice but this is not followed through to judge the effect on standards.

## Recommendations

In order to build on the clear progress made since the previous inspection the school should:

- R1: continue to promote and extend the good work of the School Improvement Group;
- R2: raise standards in subjects where there is underachievement, especially in art at key stage 4;
- R3: improve learners' key skills further and make the use of key skills more effective across the curriculum;
- R4: bring greater consistency and rigour to assessment processes;
- R5: develop further the roles and skills of middle managers;
- R6: meet statutory requirements by providing religious education for students in the Sixth Form and establishing home-school agreements.

The school already has plans in hand to address most of these recommendations. The governing body is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the recommendations within 45 working days of receiving this report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. This plan, or a summary of it, will be circulated to all parents at the school.

## Standards

### Key question 1: How well do learners achieve?

#### Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings

51. This grade by the inspection team confirms the school's own evaluation. Standards in over 60% of lessons of the six subjects inspected were judged to be grade 1 or 2. This is a much higher figure than in the previous inspection. Standards in the Sixth Form contain a number of outstanding features. The main factors preventing the overall grade being higher are a degree of underperformance by lower and middle ability pupils in key stage 4, shortcomings in several of the key skills and important shortcomings in art in key stage 4.

#### Key stages 3 and 4

52. In key stage 3, there are good features and no important shortcomings in art and English. In information technology, music, science and Welsh, good features outweigh shortcomings.

53. In key stage 4, standards are good with outstanding features in English. In information technology and music there are good features with no important shortcomings. The good features outweigh the shortcomings in science and Welsh. While there are good features in art there are also important shortcomings.

54. In the six subjects inspected at key stages 3 and 4 the percentages of grades awarded met or exceeded the national targets set by the Welsh Assembly Government and were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
8%	45%	42%	3%	2%

55. In national curriculum assessments at key stage 3 there has been significant progress in the last two years. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected level or higher in all 3 core subjects is well above the national averages and the results compare well with those in similar schools across Wales.

56. In key stage 4, GCSE results for pupils gaining 5 or more passes at grades A\*-C are just above the national average and mostly in line with expectation given the ability of the pupils. Pass rates at grades C and above in the 3 core subjects are good. In comparison, the number of pupils achieving 5 or more passes at grades A\*-G is lower than national pass rates and the school is in the lowest quarter of similar schools in Wales on this indicator.

57. More able pupils mostly do very well while some in the middle to lower ability range do not always perform to expectations. As in Wales as a whole, girls usually perform better than boys in national curriculum tests and GCSE. In

2004, more able girls performed much better than more able boys; in previous years the difference in performance has been less and closer to the national average. The underperformance in key stage 4 amongst the middle to lower ability pupils affects both boys and girls equally.

58. Pupils in the designated SEN classes make good progress and achieve good standards in both key stages 3 and 4.
59. Pupils make good progress in key stage 3. In 2004, the key stage 3 results comfortably exceeded the school's targets. Progress is less consistent in key stage 4 and varies more from subject to subject and amongst different ability groups. A minority of pupils, mainly of middle to lower ability, lose motivation and this inhibits their progress. A good number of pupils continue their education with more than half staying on at school after 16.
60. Speaking and listening skills are good. Pupils are confident speakers, most listen attentively and respond appropriately. Pupils can tailor their language to different audiences and make good use of subject specific language.
61. Pupils of all ages have well developed reading skills and most read aloud with confidence, fluency and expression and their understanding is good. Pupils do not apply their reading skills consistently well in all subjects. While some do read for pleasure, usage of the library by key stage 3 and 4 pupils is not extensive.
62. Pupils can write in a range of forms using appropriate vocabulary. Spelling and punctuation are mostly accurate. There is evidence of some extended writing but standards are not consistently good across the curriculum.
63. Many pupils have good knowledge of number, shape and space, measurement and data handling and while this knowledge is applied well in some subjects it is not consistently applied in all subjects, other than mathematics, science and technology. Some middle and lower ability pupils make too little progress in measurement and data handling.
64. Where less able pupils are withdrawn for additional support in literacy and numeracy, they make rapid progress.
65. Pupils are developing their ICT skills to support learning when given opportunities to do so. Pupils are able to word process, construct and interpret spreadsheets, use desktop publishing software, make presentations and create web pages. Pupils use the internet for research with growing confidence and purpose. The levels of ICT skill applied in different lessons are not consistent so pupils do not make as much progress as they might.
66. Pupils apply problem-solving skills successfully in a range of contexts, for example when undertaking project work in technology. When working with others, pupils usually co-operate well and make good progress. In some pair work, for example in performing work in music, more able pupils give effective

support to less able partners. In some lessons, inability to organise and communicate well when working together, hinders progress.

67. With guidance, pupils understand what they need to improve and how to do it; the better motivated willingly do this to good effect.
68. Pupils demonstrate good creative skills in some subjects but there are few examples of this across subjects, particularly at key stage 3. In some cases, the nature of a task set constrains creativity. A good majority of pupils work hard in lessons, readily join in the range of activities provided and show enthusiasm for their work. They move around the school in an orderly manner, have a good understanding of right and wrong, are courteous to adults and relate well to each other. However, a small minority of pupils display challenging behaviour which is more apparent in years 10 and 11 and often arises when pupils do not see the relevance of a lesson or are not motivated by the teaching.
69. The average attendance for the three terms before the inspection was 90%. However, a significant minority of pupils do not attend regularly, especially in years 10 and 11, although the school works hard to encourage good attendance. Most pupils are punctual to school and to lessons; a small number arrive late on a regular basis, especially on mornings that start with an assembly.

### Sixth Form

70. Students generally achieve high standards in the Sixth Form. In 3 of the 6 subjects inspected, art, information technology and music, standards are good with outstanding features. In English, science and Welsh there are good features and no important shortcomings and in music technology the good features outweigh the shortcomings.
71. In the subjects inspected in the Sixth Form the percentages of grades awarded were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
25%	60%	15%	0%	0%

72. The A-E pass rate at A level is high with large numbers gaining passes at the highest grades. The trend in performance is strongly upwards and results are well above national averages. Most Sixth Form students make very good progress from year 11 and a good proportion gain places in higher education.
73. Students are very attentive listeners who respect the opinions of their peers and many are very confident in expressing their own ideas. They are able to synthesise and represent information effectively.
74. While many benefit greatly from the sharing of ideas, there is a reluctance by some to work together with too great a readiness to be passive recipients of information. Most students' reading skills are good. They are confident readers

who can interpret the meaning of texts and retrieve information from a range of sources. Written work is often fluent and well constructed. Note taking skills are not fully developed in all subjects.

75. Students use and apply their number skills effectively in a range of subjects and generally make good progress. Some pupils do not use their number skills effectively when applying them to new situations or make full use of these skills in many of the subjects.
76. Students use ICT with increasing independence and confidence, though its capacity to support their learning varies with the opportunities provided. Most make solid progress and they develop more skills in certain subject-specific contexts, for example in art, music and music technology.
77. Problem-solving skills are well developed in a range of contexts. There are examples of effective collaborative working in both curricular and extra-curricular activities. Students increasingly show initiative and work successfully with less direct supervision. They often show well-developed skills in improving their own learning. Students display good creative skills in a number of subjects, some work in art and music being particularly imaginative and original.
78. Behaviour is very good and students are keen learners. Through activities with their peers and in leading activities for younger pupils, students are good role models and ambassadors for their school.
79. Attendance levels in the Sixth Form are good, as is their punctuality to lessons.

## The quality of education and training

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

#### Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings

80. In its self-evaluation report, the school judged this key question to be a grade 2. The findings of the inspection team judged the quality of teaching and assessment to be a grade 3 because, although teaching is mostly good, there are a number of shortcomings in assessment.
81. In 2 lessons in every 3 the teaching is good with no important shortcomings; this greatly exceeds the national target of 50%. The school is close to meeting the target set by the Welsh Assembly Government for the proportion of lessons being grade 3 or above.
82. Grades for the quality of teaching in all lessons observed in key stages 3 and 4 were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
15%	50%	27%	8%	0%

83. Classroom organisation is often good and lessons are mostly well structured with purposeful starts and useful review sessions to finish.
84. Relationships are mostly good. In the most effective practice this is an outstanding feature when teachers are very supportive of pupils, have high expectations and use praise and humour to motivate the pupils. This is most evident in English.
85. There is a good variety of stimulating activities, delivered at pace, in most subjects, but not all staff have fully embraced this approach which requires pupils to do more for themselves. Use of a range of well chosen resources aids learning in many lessons.
86. Explanations are clear and draw upon teachers' good subject knowledge. Some teachers can pose questions which probe and deepen understanding but pupils are not always challenged to think for themselves. While some teachers provide opportunities for some of the key skills to be practised, in the best teaching, pupils are actively coached to improve these skills.
87. Teaching of pupils in the designated SEN classes is informed by a close knowledge of the pupils' needs. In other classes, there is often not enough account taken of pupils' different abilities, whether they are taught in sets or mixed ability groups.
88. Homework does help pupils to make progress but the irregularity with which it is set does not help pupils to develop good study habits.

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

89. An assessment policy revised since the last inspection has brought about some improvements in assessment practice but it is not specific enough to ensure that common approaches are followed across the school. This results in pupils receiving written feedback on their work in ways which can vary considerably between subjects and this mixture of marks, grades, national curriculum levels and comments is confusing to pupils.
90. Marking is mostly accurate. It is most helpful when it sets out the steps by which pupils might improve their work. There are also examples of marking which praises pupils' efforts but says little about how to make progress.
91. Teachers often provide good oral feedback in class with the most skilled teachers pursuing a line of questioning to extend pupils' understanding.
92. Findings from day-to-day assessment within departments are used with varying degrees of effectiveness. In English, assessment information is used very well to identify the need for individual support for pupils and to adapt teaching, but this is not the norm. Pupils do assess their own and others' work e.g. in biology where pupils know the aims of the assessment and set their own targets for improvement.
93. Systems for tracking the progress of all pupils on a regular basis are not well developed. Underachievement by individual pupils is noted by departments, shared with the pastoral staff and action taken. The current reliance on tests and an end of year grade to track pupils' progress does not give a reliable overview of trends in performance by individuals or groups of pupils.
94. The school meets statutory requirements for assessment and follows the regulations of examination boards.
95. Reports are generally helpful to parents with some having a very clear summary of the pupils' achievements. Some comments and targets for improvement are too generalised and lack specific advice.

### **Sixth Form**

96. In the Sixth Form there are outstanding features in the teaching in 1 in 5 lessons and no important shortcomings in the great majority of lessons.
97. Grades for the quality of teaching in all lessons observed in the Sixth Form were:

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
22%	41%	34%	3%	0%

98. Very good relationships and the way lessons are structured encourage students to engage fully with the subject matter, think issues through for themselves and have confidence in expressing their own ideas.
99. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Much of the teaching is very well pitched to stretch students, though some makes insufficient demands upon the students when too much learning is directed by the teacher.
100. A good variety of teaching activities are used to achieve well defined objectives and meet examination requirements.
101. Assessment is good. Feedback by teachers in class is supportive and marking is accurate and detailed; pupils are set personal targets to improve their work. Recording of progress is good and reports to parents are informative.

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

<b>Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings</b>
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102. This grade by the inspection team confirms the school's own evaluation.

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

103. The school provides a curriculum which meets the needs of its pupils and reflects the aims set out for pupils of statutory school age in the Education Act 1996.
104. The curriculum is suitably broad and provides effectively for continuity between years and key stages. At key stage 4 and in the Sixth Form pupils have opportunities to obtain appropriate qualifications.
105. All statutory subjects, including PSE, are provided at key stages 3 and 4. In addition, the majority of key stage 3 pupils study a second foreign language. Staffing difficulties have caused problems with the provision of appropriate lesson allocations in Welsh and this has made the provision less effective.
106. At key stage 4, the curriculum on offer is appropriate and, apart from the small number of vocational courses available, pupils have a broad and suitable range of options from which to choose. While the school has attempted to offer and promote a range of courses more suited to pupils with different aptitudes in key stage 4, the numbers opting have been small. Appropriate provision is made for a small number of disaffected pupils.
107. The quality of provision is good for pupils in the designated SEN classes and pupils can access GCSE courses.

108. In the Sixth Form the school offers a suitably broad range of AS and A2 courses, 28 subjects in total, and also two vocational options. Religious education is not provided for all students at this level and in this respect the school does not meet statutory requirements.
109. The key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT are not planned for effectively so that these skills are not developed over time. Provision for the development of other key skills and national curriculum common requirements varies considerably from subject to subject. While there are many individual examples of good classroom practice, the overall effectiveness of key skills provision in the school is currently restricted by a lack of co-ordination and monitoring at whole-school level.
110. The school makes good, additional provision in key stage 3 for developing the literacy and numeracy skills of pupils who have low skill levels in these areas. The school has recently been awarded the Basic Skills Secondary Quality Mark.
111. Many pupils' learning experiences are enriched through the broad range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school. High standards are achieved in many of these activities, particularly music and sport. The school's extra-curricular provision also enhances links with parents and the community.
112. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a variety of ways and through different subjects, particularly PSE. Social and cultural issues are properly addressed in, for example, music and art, and discussion of moral issues in religious education and history enhances pupils' development. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is more limited but is promoted in assemblies. The introduction of the 'Thought for the Day' has helped to bring structure and a degree of consistency to the school's provision for daily collective worship. The arrangements made by the school now meet statutory requirements. There is some inconsistency in the way staff carry out the policy; in the best practice, pupils are involved and gain by being able to reflect on the spiritual issues raised.
113. The school works hard to establish a partnership with the parents and the community it serves. A small but active Parent-Teacher Association makes a valuable contribution. The statutory requirement for a home-school agreement is not yet being met.
114. Outstanding links with primary schools make transfer to the secondary school a positive experience for year 7 pupils. There are also good curricular links in physical education and mathematics. The establishment of similar links in other subject areas has been identified as an area for development.
115. Partnerships with local colleges are well established and there are also good links with initial teacher training institutions.

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

116. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place for both Careers Education and Guidance and Work Related Education. All pupils have the opportunity to participate in relevant work experience placements in years 10 and 12 through a productive partnership with Careers Wales Gwent. In some subjects, experiences gained through placements contribute effectively to learning in the classroom. A limited range of vocational courses is offered at key stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. There is little opportunity for industrial links in the area but links with business and the service sector help pupils' understanding of the world of work. There are few industrial placements which develop staff expertise.
117. Bilingual skills are developed mainly through the Welsh and English lessons provided for all pupils up to year 11. Special arrangements, involving a group of parents, are made to enable a small number of pupils to sit GCSE examinations in Welsh as a first language. Provision in a range of subjects, along with the annual eisteddfod, contribute to pupils' understanding of Wales.
118. The school's statement of values properly emphasises the equality of entitlement for each individual. The school strives to ensure that these values are reflected in its provision. Various strategies aimed at tackling social disadvantage are in place. The work of the Youth Access Team, the residential experience afforded some year 9 pupils and the flexible curriculum arrangements at key stage 4, all help to address the needs of a small number of disaffected pupils.
119. A number of departments promote sustainable development and global citizenship, either through their programmes of work or in their day-to-day practice with regard to such issues as the recycling of waste. The school implements a number of measures in support of sustainable development, for example in relation to energy conservation.
120. A number of good initiatives are in place to develop pupils' entrepreneurial skills.
121. The school's provision generally encourages and assists pupils, as they move through the key stages, to acquire the skills they require to be lifelong learners. This benefits especially those in the Sixth Form and only a lack of focus on and co-ordination of key skills lower down the school impedes progress.

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

<b>Grade 1: good with outstanding features</b>
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122. In its self-evaluation report, the school judged this key question as grade 2. The inspection team judged the quality of care, guidance and support to be grade 1 because there are some outstanding features.

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

123. The school has a well-structured pastoral system which provides very good care and support for all pupils. Heads of Year and Heads of Key Stage are very effective in co-ordinating support for pupils from a range of services, including a counselling service and the Youth Access programme.
124. Arrangements are in place for a smooth transition of pupils from primary school and this aspect of the school's provision is outstanding. Year 7 pupils develop good relationships with their year 12 PALs (Peers Active Listening Service). After-school clubs, taster days and a transition PSE project also mean that pupils settle happily and successfully into year 7.
125. The school has introduced a number of good measures to strengthen links with parents. The vast majority of parents are supportive of the school and feel they can approach staff with problems. The school has good systems in place for monitoring attendance, punctuality and behaviour. Heads of year keep up-to-date, extensive monitoring records of pupils giving cause for concern.
126. The PSE programme, delivered by a specialist team of teachers, is well structured, relevant and stimulating. Form tutors deliver a carefully planned pastoral programme.
127. The school, with support from the careers service, provides good careers education and guidance.
128. Both pupils and staff are well cared for by the school nurses. The health and safety and welfare of the pupils is actively promoted and well documented. A good range of strategies actively promote pupils' health and the school is accredited within the Monmouthshire Healthy School Scheme. Appropriate child protection procedures are firmly in place.
129. The work of the form, year and full school councils is outstanding. They are effective forums for discussing a range of issues which concern pupils and contribute to major decisions, such as the content of the SDP and the appointment of staff.

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

130. The department for educational support provides very good support for pupils with a range of special needs, both in mainstream and special classes. Teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) work very well as a team under the outstanding leadership of the head of department. Effective assessment of pupils with SEN provides good information, allowing early intervention to address pupils' needs.

131. The organisation and management of record systems is very effective, however, the targets in pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) are not sufficiently well focused. The new behaviour management system has improved behaviour overall; this has led to an increase in temporary exclusions. The system is well understood and works well, particularly with pupils in years 7 to 9, but is not always implemented consistently by all staff. There is no established rewards system across the school but one is currently being trialed.
132. The project giving residential experience in year 9 has improved the attitudes and behaviour of pupils who have participated. Appropriate and effective arrangements at a local college provide an alternative curriculum for pupils with poor behaviour and attendance.

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

133. The vast majority of pupils, both boys and girls, have equal access to the curriculum and other school activities. Understanding of different cultures is promoted through a number of subjects and whole school activities, such as assemblies.
134. A good anti-bullying policy and procedures are in place and understood by pupils. Bullying is addressed in the PSE programme where pupils are challenged to show respect to others and take responsibility for their own actions.
135. The school has produced a comprehensive accessibility plan.

## **Leadership and management**

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

#### **Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings**

136. This grade by the inspection team confirms the school's own evaluation.

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

137. The school has a clear set of values which place great emphasis on the process of learning and the success of individuals in achieving learning goals. These values are promoted by senior managers and are increasingly shared by middle managers. Most targets set by the school provide a good degree of challenge whilst also being achievable. Review and planning processes are evolving to translate these values into practical outcomes.
138. There is a strong commitment to the equality of provision and raising expectations for all. There is an appropriate policy to promote racial equality and the school meets statutory requirements in respect of disability and looked after children.
139. A number of national priorities have been well managed, including transition between the primary and secondary phases and the introduction of workforce remodelling. Management initiatives have helped to establish good links with the nearest tertiary college.
140. The headteacher has been instrumental in driving forward coherent policies to raise standards and in bringing greater consistency to the implementation of policy. His commitment, pragmatism and attention to detail have been significant in moving the school forward.
141. Senior managers have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in promoting high standards and are increasingly working with middle managers to bring about improvements. Senior managers offer an appropriate degree of both support and challenge to departments. There is insufficient involvement of senior managers, beyond the analysis of examination data, in evaluating the standards being achieved in departments.
142. The effectiveness of middle managers does vary. Some departments, English, French, history and technology in particular, have developed a definite team ethos in which issues central to improving learning and teaching are regularly raised and addressed. In other instances, science and art in particular, there is no clear steer on how improvement is to be brought about where it is needed.

143. The process of performance management has been well managed and a number of staff training needs have been identified. Opportunities and proper support have been given for individuals and teams to develop their expertise; in most instances this has led to improvements in the standards pupils achieve.

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

144. The governing body is very well informed and committed to improving provision and raising achievement. The well-defined committee structure enables governors to focus sharply on their specific responsibilities, which they exercise with care. The link role of governors to departments is helpful where it informs the governing body of successes and issues requiring attention but this does not happen consistently. Governors have a good grasp of strengths and shortcomings in the school and are prepared to question and challenge as necessary.

145. The Chair of the governing body has given an important lead in setting the tone and approach to governance in the school which is objective and forward-looking. Although governors are not sufficiently involved in formulating priorities for the SDP, they do place a strong emphasis on raising standards and are active in seeking to secure and deploy resources to achieve this aim.

146. The Governing Body fulfils its legal duties and meets all statutory requirements with the exception of providing religious education in the Sixth Form and home-school agreements.

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

<b>Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings</b>
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147. This grade by the inspection team confirms the school's own evaluation.

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

148. Senior managers have a good understanding of strengths and shortcomings across the school. The school's own self-evaluation report is a very honest document and accurate on most of the judgements made. Where the inspection team reached a different judgement, the school did not take account of all the criteria. Information taken from review processes in the school is being used by senior managers to inform a dialogue with departments on how to improve learning and teaching and raise standards and when necessary, a robust approach is taken to tackling issues.

149. At middle management level, a number of subject leaders are developing a very good knowledge of their departments by conducting their own lesson observations, reviewing pupils' work and focusing discussion with colleagues

on how to improve further. Some departments do not readily acknowledge shortcomings because not all middle managers are fully objective or rigorous in their approach.

150. There is a general willingness by staff to engage in open debate about improvement issues and in departments where new approaches are tried, the quality of learning and teaching is often enhanced; this is especially evident in English.
151. The annual analysis of data has provided a sound overview of performance though an over-reliance on one particular measure has not given a rounded view of how well individual subject departments have been adding value to pupils' performance. A wider range of data now available from the LEA is starting to address this issue and the school is using the data to identify areas for further development.
152. A programme of departmental reviews has been the major plank of the school's self-evaluation processes while an effective system of performance management has also made a positive contribution. The reviews offer a good view of learning and teaching in particular but do not concentrate sufficiently on the standards being achieved by pupils. The reviews have helped to improve provision and performance by being followed through with action plans. The headteacher, in particular, has sought to ensure that departments act upon recommendations which have emerged from the reviews.
153. At whole school level, some very effective reviews have been undertaken in response to a perceived need e.g. concerning behaviour and the achievement of boys, and these have led to changes for the better. While the school has made good progress since the last inspection, self-evaluation of whole school aspects is not entirely systematic. Pupils and parents contribute to reviews and the school has taken their views seriously and responded to concerns. The headteacher meets groups of pupils and reviews their books regularly and this is particularly good practice.

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

154. The SDP uses information from both formal and informal self-evaluation to arrive at priorities for the coming year. This is effective in ensuring that both major initiatives and more routine developmental work are planned for. The plan has the virtue of being simply set out and easy to follow as a working document.
155. The SDP is a one year plan and does not offer a longer term strategic view of priorities for the school. There is, however, a clear view about the school's direction held by senior managers, governors and the majority of staff but because this is not set out in the SDP, the Departmental Development Plans (DDPs) do not always reflect these major priorities in their forward planning.

156. Whole school targets are mostly challenging and appropriate, signalling the school's intent to drive on raising standards. Performance targets in some subjects do not contain the same degree of challenge and rigour. Within many plans, the criteria used to judge success are more about completion of the task than how well it is done.
157. The allocation of resources is very well matched to achieving the school's main aims, within the constraints of the budget. A good example of this is the way in which time for teachers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has been focused upon improving the quality of learning and teaching, particularly through the work of the School Improvement Group, from which obvious benefits are already apparent.

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

<b>Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings</b>
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158. This grade by the inspection team confirms the school's own evaluation.

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

159. The school has enough well qualified staff to teach most aspects and subjects of the curriculum in key stages 3 and 4 and in the Sixth Form. There are, however, some exceptions where non-specialist teaching or the frequent and unavoidable use of temporary teachers have hindered pupil progress.
160. The pupil teacher ratio of 16:1 is slightly better than the national average and there is a good balance between experienced teachers and those who have recently joined the profession. Newly qualified teachers are properly monitored and well supported.
161. Classroom assistants support pupils well and work effectively with teachers to meet the needs of pupils with SEN. Support staff are deployed appropriately and contribute to the efficient running of the school. Technical support in science and information technology is good.
162. In most areas of the curriculum, pupils use a good range of appropriate learning resources. In response to school improvement initiatives some teachers have made resources in-house to engage pupils with different learning styles. These are used effectively to sustain their enthusiasm and enrich learning experiences. ICT equipment is generally well used to stimulate pupils' curiosity and present information, though teacher and pupil expertise is not sufficiently developed to take full advantage of all the possibilities which the technology offers.

163. The school is clean and well maintained and has been upgraded through a staged programme of refurbishments and health and safety improvements. The school has recently secured a grant of £1 million from the LEA to continue the programme. Damp conditions in science and unpleasant toilet facilities for some pupils and staff have yet to be addressed.
164. In general, departments are located in suites of rooms that are fit for purpose. However, in some English, science and geography rooms, cramped conditions require careful organisation and music rooms are too small for the largest groups. Storage facilities in art and music are inadequate. The displays in some classrooms provide a stimulating environment.
165. The key stage 3/4 library is used well as a study area but it is not a welcoming or stimulating learning environment. The range of reference books is not sufficient to meet learners' needs. Access to ICT facilities is adequate but for information retrieval, pupils rely too heavily on the Internet.

#### **How efficiently resources are managed to achieve value for money**

166. The financial management of the school is an outstanding feature. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and the finance committee manage the budget effectively, efficiently and economically despite pupil numbers reducing.
167. The accounting system is suitably sophisticated to allow the school to review and report on spending regularly and accurately. Good relationships with the authority's link officer, liaison with feeder schools, good stewardship and competitive tendering for commercial contracts enable the school to achieve value for money.
168. Spending decisions are linked to the school's priorities for development. In general DDPs are in line with the SDP. However, not all managers give due consideration to costs or the rigorous evaluation of the outcomes of expenditure on standards.
169. The system of departments bidding for funding is effective and properly includes middle managers in the decision making process. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher monitor spending closely.
170. The development of staff is linked to the LEAs strategic priorities, performance management system and the SDP. Needs are carefully prioritised and the school has benefited from a good training programme, which includes supply staff, governors and administrative staff.
171. In a number of curriculum areas the work of the School Improvement Group has contributed to improving the quality of teaching and learning. This good work has had more of an impact on the effectiveness of individual teachers than the school as a whole.

172. Training by external providers is evaluated rigorously but evaluation of internal training events is informal. There are some good examples of the school evaluating the impact of training on classroom practice but this is not traced through to the effect on standards.

## Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

### Art

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

##### Good features

173. Pupils have a good and secure understanding of the visual aspects of the subject including tone, texture, shape, colour and pattern. They apply their knowledge effectively in their practical and written work.
174. Pupils develop appropriate and relevant knowledge of the work of others from a variety of periods and cultures.
175. In years 7 and 8, pupils make effective use of their sketchbooks to record from observation, gather information, experiment with materials and show the development of their own ideas.
176. Pupils show good progress in the development of a range of skills including, drawing, painting, printmaking, mosaic, collage and 3D construction.

##### Shortcomings

177. Pupils depend too heavily on reproductions of artists' work rather than drawing upon first-hand evidence.
178. The use of ICT for exploring ideas and manipulating images is underdeveloped.

#### Key stage 4 - Grade 4: some good features but shortcomings in important areas

##### Good features

179. The most able pupils, especially girls, achieve good or very good standards relative to their abilities. Their coursework shows good evidence of skilful recording of primary and secondary sources and the confident use of a wide range of materials, tools and techniques. They use information well to develop their own ideas into individual final pieces of work.
180. Pupils with SEN make good progress across a range of disciplines including large-scale paintings and printmaking.

##### Shortcomings

181. There is significant underachievement among middle ability pupils at GCSE.

182. Pupils struggle to work productively without direct supervision and lack the skills necessary to research and investigate a theme well. Their understanding of the work of other artists is limited and few go beyond simple and repetitive descriptions in their written work.
183. In year 10, pupils are unable to develop good practical skills because they do not concentrate on improving any one skill to any real depth. By year 11, pupils show a lack of confidence in their abilities and become disengaged.

### **Sixth Form - Grade 1: good with outstanding features**

#### **Good and outstanding features**

184. Students record their observations, ideas and feelings sensitively, skilfully and with maturity. This is an outstanding feature.
185. Work in sketchbooks is thoroughly researched and often benefits from students making personal contact with contemporary artists, craft workers and designers. Students describe and evaluate the work of others well; their written work is perceptive and thoughtful. This is an outstanding feature.
186. Students are able to plan purposefully for the development of their own work; they are able to set and achieve their own goals. They experiment confidently with a range of materials, tools and techniques and develop new and original ways of working with traditional processes.
187. Students' work is often highly innovative and personal. Their coursework is the product of a coherent, competent and creative investigation of ideas.

#### **Shortcomings**

188. There are no important shortcomings.

<b>English</b>
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### **Key stage 3 – Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

189. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and make good progress.
190. They have good speaking skills and discuss well in pairs and small groups to solve problems and find meaning in texts. They can both pose and answer questions about demanding texts. Most pupils are prepared to defend and justify a point of view. They listen attentively to each other and engage in mature debate to explore controversial issues.

191. Pupils read challenging material and are able to analyse and evaluate fiction and non-fiction, using technical language effectively.
192. Pupils' writing skills are good. They write in a wide range of forms with a clear understanding of the purpose of their writing and the audience. They can use specific criteria to analyse their own work and the work of others. Presentational skills are good and pupils readily redraft their work.

### **Shortcomings**

193. In some mainstream classes, a small number of less able pupils do not achieve as well as they might.

## **Key stage 4 – Grade 1: good with outstanding features**

### **Good and outstanding features**

194. Pupils make very good progress in English language and literature and this is reflected in results at GCSE.
195. They are confident speakers who are fully aware of the protocols for effective speaking and listening. The way in which most pupils are prepared to explore and challenge new ideas and probe the opinions of others is outstanding.
196. Reading skills are good. Pupils choose to read challenging texts and can use analytical language to frame their responses and explore complex issues.
197. The standard of writing in coursework folders is high and pupils' use of assessment criteria ensures their work is sophisticated and relevant.

### **Shortcomings**

198. Some pupils do not participate fully in speaking and listening activities.

## **Sixth Form – Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings**

### **Good features**

199. Students attain very good results in AS and A2 examinations.
200. They have good subject knowledge and are confident speakers whose contributions enrich the learning experience of other students. Students can discuss sophisticated themes and concepts, justifying their opinions through close knowledge and analysis of the texts.
201. Students are able to use language effectively to justify their opinions. They read a wide range of demanding texts and are prepared to explore the ideas of

other authors to gain a deeper understanding of their set works. Students are good at applying this wider knowledge in their own written work.

202. The range and quality of many students' written work is sophisticated. Their willingness and ability to redraft greatly improves the standard of their work.

### **Shortcomings**

203. In some classes students are provided with too much detailed support and this constricts the students' ability to interpret the texts for themselves.

## **Information technology**

### **Key stage 3 - Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

204. There has been a significant improvement in standards since the last inspection.

205. Pupils quickly gain confidence in accessing the network and relevant software. They apply themselves to learning new skills and can demonstrate an accurate understanding of appropriate information technology terms.

206. They are able to word process effectively, using different tools to format text accurately and they are developing an awareness of how to prepare and present text for a particular audience.

207. They can combine text and images, make simple presentations, model data in spreadsheets and many pupils start to collate data using data handling software. They can create and interpret data from charts. Most pupils can also create effective presentations in the form of web pages.

208. SEN pupils are well motivated, confident learners and they achieve well.

#### **Shortcomings**

209. More able pupils do not have the problem-solving skills which would allow them to create work of the highest standard.

210. Some pupils do not make adequate progress in data handling.

### **Key stage 4 - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

211. By the end of the key stage, most pupils are confident in working on their own and achieve well in all aspects of the course.

212. Pupils understand clearly the process of an investigation. They work enthusiastically to identify real and relevant problems, collect and test out the reliability of data and evaluate their solutions to the problems. Many pupils have a good understanding of the theory behind their practical investigations.
213. Most pupils can identify exactly how to make further progress; this results from good support in lessons.
214. SEN pupils following the non-GCSE course show good motivation, make good progress and demonstrate understanding in a wide range of practical information technology skills.

### **Shortcomings**

215. Whilst many pupils know where improvements are needed in order to make progress, a minority of pupils lack the motivation to apply this knowledge. As a result, their coursework does not always reach the same standard as their theoretical knowledge.

### **Sixth Form - Grade 1: good with outstanding features**

#### **Good and outstanding features**

216. Since the last inspection, standards have improved, particularly in the quality of completed coursework assignments. Pupils perform very well in examinations.
217. The standard of presentation in web-based work is very good and benefits from the very thoughtful approach taken to the design issues and to the careful consideration given to the likely audience.
218. Students choose their projects very well. They are able to apply their theoretical understanding in a variety of realistic situations to produce some practical work of outstanding quality.
219. They are well motivated and work with enthusiasm and accuracy. In seeking solutions to problems, they pose the right questions and assess carefully the relevance of information before arriving at suitable answers. Students are animated in discussing their own ideas and some students have outstanding insight into the potential of software.
220. Students written assignments are of very good quality. They are able to think about and present their work very logically.

## Music

### **Key stage 3 - Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

221. Pupils' singing is mostly in tune with clear diction.
222. Pupils quickly learn to play the notes of new melodies and accompaniments on electronic keyboards. The more able can perform more challenging parts.
223. Pupils, working on their own or in groups, devise and develop their own ideas to compose different types of music. Some pieces are particularly effective, for example in their use of melody.
224. Pupils listen attentively to recorded extracts of music and are able to identify instruments, the various sections of a song and other main features. They make sound judgements about the effectiveness of pieces of music. Some pupils are particularly perceptive and offer more detailed observations about the music.
225. Pupils in year 7, including those with SEN, demonstrate good skills and understanding and make good progress in lessons.

#### **Shortcomings**

226. Pupils' singing generally lacks enthusiasm and control of particular aspects, for example phrase endings.
227. Many keyboard performances lack a secure sense of rhythm and this sometimes impairs the effectiveness of ensemble playing.
228. When composing, pupils do not always listen carefully or critically to their work and, as a result, some pieces lack genuine musical interest. When discussing the effectiveness of pieces of music, pupils do not always identify clearly the way in which musical elements are used, for example to create particular moods.

### **Key stage 4 - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

229. Pupils sing and play a range of music and demonstrate generally good technical skills and understanding of different musical styles.
230. Their musical compositions mostly show a good understanding of features such as harmony and structure, and they use computer software well to help them to develop their ideas and to produce notated versions of their work.

231. When listening to music, pupils are able to detect and correct errors and identify musical features in a range of pieces. Some show high levels of musical perception. Most pupils have a good understanding of the range of music studied and are able to discuss this using appropriate musical vocabulary. More able pupils confidently discuss some of the finer details of particular twentieth century styles.

### **Shortcomings**

232. A minority of the pupils lack confidence when discussing the detail of the music studied and experience difficulty with some aspects of the listening work.

### **Sixth form - Grade 1: good with outstanding features**

#### **Good and outstanding features**

233. Students perform challenging pieces and have good levels of technical competence and musical understanding. The work of a number of students across the two year groups is outstanding.

234. Students' compositions are inventive and show a very good understanding of musical styles. In some cases they show a particularly high degree of originality and craftsmanship.

235. Students' listening work and essay writing are of a good standard. Students are confident in discussing the intricate details of a complex piece of music and have a sound understanding of all aspects of the course.

### **Shortcomings**

236. There are no shortcomings.

### **Music technology – Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

237. Students are generally competent in their use of music technology. They use software effectively to create their own arrangements of pieces of music, some of which are particularly imaginative.

238. Students are able to describe their work in appropriate terms. Some give detailed accounts which reflect good technical knowledge and understanding.

### **Shortcomings**

239. A number of students experience difficulty due to an underdeveloped musical knowledge and understanding, for example in relation to harmony and the

capabilities of particular instruments. They make slow progress in lessons therefore and rely heavily on teacher support.

## Science

### **Key stage 3 - Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

- 240. Most pupils know the key scientific terms, facts and ideas. They can explain things scientifically and apply their knowledge well in contexts with which they are already familiar.
- 241. Pupils work safely and carefully on practical activities. They can follow written and oral instructions and use a range of apparatus and instruments effectively.
- 242. More able pupils can apply their practical skills to investigate problems. By the end of year 9, these pupils can plan an investigation, collect the evidence they need and organise and analyse the data appropriately.
- 243. Pupils use scientific vocabulary, charts, tables, symbols and graphs to communicate their ideas effectively and most pupils use units of measurement well.
- 244. Pupils with SEN make good progress and achieve high standards in all aspects of science.

#### **Shortcomings**

- 245. Some middle and lower ability pupils, particularly boys, find it difficult to recall and apply earlier learning, use units effectively or apply their practical skills to investigate problems.
- 246. Very able pupils do not readily apply their understanding of key concepts to new work.
- 247. Most pupils do not handle or display data well when using ICT. They do not make good use of scientific knowledge they already have when faced with a new challenge. They do not understand the difference between reliable and accurate data.

### **Key stage 4 - Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

- 248. More able pupils and pupils with SEN have a broad scientific knowledge and understanding which they can apply in situations with which they are already

familiar. Middle to lower ability pupils have also developed a good knowledge and understanding of that part of the course which deals with life processes.

249. All pupils continue to build on their practical skills during key stage 4. The more able and pupils with SEN develop good investigative skills by year 11. Middle to lower ability pupils are developing their basic investigative skills.
250. Pupils make good progress generally in the way they communicate their scientific understanding.
251. Pupils with SEN following the Science Plus course, achieve very well.

### **Shortcomings**

252. Some middle to lower ability pupils find it difficult to recall previous work and apply it to new learning. In year 10 these pupils cannot investigate problems for themselves and by year 11 they still do not analyse data or evaluate their work effectively.
253. The shortcomings seen in key stage 3 with regard to handling data and not being able to apply their knowledge effectively, are also found in key stage 4.

### **Key stage 5 - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

254. Standards are good in all AS and A2 science courses. The students are knowledgeable and understand the key concepts and ideas of the subjects.
255. Students in all science classes demonstrate good practical skills.
256. In biology, students are very good at applying their understanding of key ideas in different contexts, and this is an outstanding feature of oral work in year 13.
257. In physics and chemistry classes, students make valid predictions by the proper use of their scientific knowledge. These pupils also apply their number skills effectively to solve problems.

#### **Shortcomings**

258. A small minority of physics and chemistry students struggle to make full use of their scientific knowledge.
259. In chemistry, the work of a small number of students is spoilt by careless and unnecessary mistakes. A small number of very able biology students have difficulty in applying their number skills to best effect.

## Welsh second language

### Key stage 3 - Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings

#### Good features

- 260. Pupils readily take part in discussions and are able to give their opinions in Welsh about familiar topics.
- 261. Pupils are able to follow what is being said when listening to spoken Welsh. They can use this information to give short answers to questions.
- 262. More able pupils read aloud with confidence, pronouncing words with a fair degree of accuracy. Most pupils can understand the main ideas when reading from suitable Welsh texts.
- 263. Pupils' writing is mostly accurate and they can write in a variety of forms to communicate factual information and express their own thoughts. More able pupils can write interestingly and at length.

#### Shortcomings

- 264. Pupils do not speak at length in Welsh without being prompted and some pupils lack confidence when speaking and reading aloud. Welsh is not used effectively within the classroom as the main language for learning.
- 265. Many pupils do not respond in any depth to what they read in Welsh; few read Welsh learners' books for pleasure. Written work is too brief.

### Key stage 4 - Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings

#### Good features

- 266. Standards are mostly good in the GCSE full course and in the GCSE short course (higher tier).
- 267. Pupils are able to hold short conversations and more able pupils can take part in a discussion with confidence. They provide suitable answers to questions raised when listening to the spoken word.
- 268. Pupils read and understand more extended pieces of Welsh writing, including poems.
- 269. Pupils write accurately about familiar topics and more able pupils can write at length and with imagination.

### **Shortcomings**

- 270. Progress in the GCSE short course is limited due to inadequate time provision. Some pupils do not have a positive attitude to Welsh, which also hinders their progress.
- 271. Pupils give very short answers when speaking and are not fluent when using standard phrases. Their pronunciation of common words when reading is not always accurate and too much written work is incomplete.

### **Sixth Form – Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings**

#### **Good features**

- 272. Students are able to speak with confidence; they can discuss both day-to-day matters and give their views on a wide range of topics, such as Welsh poetry and politics.
- 273. They are good readers and are able to make effective use of what they have read in discussion and in their writing.
- 274. Written work, both factual and creative, is mature and completed with a good degree of accuracy. Their coursework includes a wide vocabulary and uses a variety of Welsh sentence patterns effectively.

#### **Shortcomings**

- 275. Occasionally, lack of planning and an insecure knowledge of verb patterns affect the standard of the students' written work.

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

The governors and staff of the school welcome this report. We appreciate the insights it contains and acknowledge the contribution the process will make to our plans to improve our school.

We are pleased that inspectors have identified that, since the last inspection, there has been good progress in pupils' standards of achievement. In the six subjects inspected at key stages 3 and 4, the percentage of grades achieved met or exceeded the national targets set by the Welsh Assembly Government. In the Sixth Form inspectors found that our students achieve high standards and produce results which are well above national averages.

We accept the recommendation that developing pupils' key skills will raise standards further. The development and co-ordination of key skills already forms part of our current School Development Plan and will feature strongly in next year's plan. Also, we intend to raise standards further by introducing measures to monitor and track pupils' progress more effectively.

Teachers welcome the finding of inspectors that in 2 lessons in every 3 teaching is good with no important shortcomings. This exceeds the national target of 50%. In the Sixth Form inspectors noted that there are outstanding features in the teaching in 1 in 5 lessons.

We acknowledge that the current high standards in teaching can be further supported by the more regular setting of homework and by the adoption of whole school assessment procedures, which give pupils a clear indication of what they must do to improve. These strategies will feature in our school's post inspection action plan.

We are pleased that inspectors found that the quality of care, support and guidance provided for learners at King Henry VIII School is good with outstanding features. They noted that the good majority of our pupils work well in lessons, readily join in the range of activities provided and show enthusiasm for their work. We believe that our pupils have benefited from the adoption of the new behaviour management system and will strive to ensure that all teaching staff consistently apply this policy in the future.

We are pleased that inspectors found our self-evaluation report to be 'a very honest document' and to be accurate on most of the judgements made. We shall introduce strategies to ensure that self-evaluation at all levels within the school becomes equally objective and rigorous. This will provide the basis for raising standards in areas where shortcomings have been identified.

Inspectors have found that the financial management of the school has been outstanding, despite the financial impact of falling rolls. The school will continue to make the best use of available funding in order to provide the maximum possible resources for pupils.

The school wishes to record its appreciation of the hard work by all members of the inspection team throughout the period of the inspection.

## Appendix A

### Basic information about the school

Name of school	King Henry VIII Comprehensive School
School type	Community
Age-range of pupils	11-19
Address of school	Old Hereford Road Abergavenny Monmouthshire
Post-code	NP7 6EP
Telephone number	01873 735305

Headteacher	Mr. G. L. Barker
Date of appointment	September 2000
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Mr. A. Reynolds Monmouthshire County Council
Reporting inspector	Trevor Guy
Dates of inspection	18 <sup>th</sup> -22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2005

## 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	195	213	210	204	191	112	89	-	1214

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	70	10	76.01

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	n/a
Average teaching group size	21.5
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	74.22%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole School
Term 1	89.6	88.3	82.9	86	92.6	97.1	98.3	87.9
Term 2	94.5	93.8	92.6	89.5	90.3	93.1	97	92.16
Term 3	90.3	91.9	91.2	86.9	86.8	87.5	96.3	89.99

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	13%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	76

**Appendix C**

**National Curriculum Assessment Results  
End of key stage 3:**

<b>National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2004</b>															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 203															
<b>Percentage of pupils at each level</b>															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	2	0	0	1	1	5	18	34	25	14	0	0
		National	0.4	0.8	0.5	0.2	0.4	2	8	21	34	24	9	0.2	0
	Test	School	0	3	5	0	0	0	2	19	34	26	11	0	0
		National	0.5	4	3	0	0	0	8	20	33	23	10	0	0
Welsh	Teacher assessment	School	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		National	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Test	School	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		National	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	17	24	25	29	1	0
		National	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.2	0.2	1	7	19	26	32	14	0.3	0
	Test	School	0	4	2	0	0	0	5	10	16	40	22	0	0
		National	0.3	5	1	0	0	0	5	17	20	36	15	0	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	10	33	46	8	0	0
		National	0.3	0.7	0.6	0.2	0.1	0.4	6	20	33	27	12	0.1	0
	Test	School	0	4	1	0	0	0	2	12	31	30	21	0	0
		National	0.3	4	1	0	0	0	5	17	32	28	13	0	0

- D Pupils exempted 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	68.4	In the school	65.5
In Wales	56.9	In Wales	57.3

**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 2004	206
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	39

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2004:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	90	90	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	53	52	51
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	84	88	85
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	47	41	38
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	97	98	97
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	69	75	75
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	94	94	93
attained no graded GCSE C or the vocational qualification equivalent	6	6	7
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	0	3	3
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	0	N/A	N/A
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	0	N/A	N/A

For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs	
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2004	220
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2004	98
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2004	31

Report by Trevor Guy  
King Henry VIII Comprehensive School – April 2005

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	79	70	68
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	97	96	95
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	27	22	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	3	N/A	N/A
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	3	N/A	N/A

## Appendix D

### Evidence base of the inspection

Fourteen inspectors spent a total of 52 days at the school.

Before the inspection, inspectors considered a range of documentation provided by the school and held discussions with:

- the headteacher, senior management team, staff, governing body and parents.

During the inspection week, inspectors visited:

- lessons in the six subjects inspected;
- lessons taught by all other teachers at the school;
- tutorials, registration, assemblies and extra-curricular activities.

Discussions were also held with:

- members of the senior management team;
- a selection of middle managers;
- teaching and non-teaching staff;
- the Chairman of the Governing Body and Chairman of the finance committee;
- groups of pupils and students from each year group;
- the School Council.

The team also considered:

- work in all subjects from a representative sample of pupils and students in each year group;
- samples of work in each subject inspected;
- documentation provided by the school during the inspection week;
- responses to the questionnaire sent to parents.

## Appendix E

### Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

<b>Team member</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>	<b>Role</b>
Trevor Guy	Key Questions 1 and 5	Registered Inspector
Mererid Morgan	Key Question 2; Welsh	Core team
Kevin Adams	Key Question 3: Key skills; Music	Core team
Sue Allerston	Key Question 4	Core team
Mike Tibbott	Key Question 6: Key Skills (numeracy); Science	Core team
Lorraine Buck	Key Question 7; Art	Core team
Derek Hobbs	Aspects of key questions 1, 3, 4, 7	Lay Inspector/core team
Neil Shutt	School nominee	Core team
Sally Mills	Key skills (communication); English	Team member
Kath Durbin	English	Team member
Miriam Norton	Key skills (ICT); Information technology	Team member
Colin Green	Science	Team member
Jill Lawrence	Key Question 4	Team member
Brian George	Key Questions 1 and 2	Team member

Contractor: ESIS  
The Learning Centre  
The Broadway  
Pontypridd  
CF37 1BE

### Acknowledgement

**The inspection team would like to thank all members of staff at King Henry VIII, the pupils, their parents and the Governing Body for the warm welcome, level of co-operation and support that were given during the inspection process.**

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

**SUMMARY REPORT FOR PARENTS**

**King Henry VIII Comprehensive School  
Old Hereford Road  
Abergavenny  
Monmouthshire  
NP7 6EP**

**School Number: 679/4064**

**Date of Inspection:  
18<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> April 2005**

**by**

**Trevor Guy  
Inspector No. W140/15865**

**Date: June 2005**

**Under Estyn contract number: T/31/04**

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King Henry VIII Comprehensive 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 King Henry VIII Comprehensive School took place between 18<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2005. An independent team of inspectors, led by Mr. Trevor Guy, 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:

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

## **Context**

### **The nature of the provider**

1. King Henry VIII Comprehensive School is an 11-19 mixed community school serving the small town of Abergavenny and its surrounding rural area in the unitary authority of Monmouthshire.
2. There are currently 1214 pupils on roll including 201 students in the Sixth Form. Pupils are from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds with 13% receiving free school meals which is below the national average.
3. Pupils entering the school from its 14 associate primary schools represent the full range of ability. The area is mainly English speaking with very few speaking Welsh as their first language. There are few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. 42 pupils have statements of special educational need (SEN) and a further 87 pupils are on the school's SEN register.
4. The current headteacher was appointed since the last inspection and the senior management team is a mix of recently appointed and well established staff.

### **The school's priorities and targets**

5. The school seeks to value all students and believes that each individual has an equal entitlement to an appropriate, high grade education which enables them to achieve success.
6. The schools aims to:
  - promote lifelong learning as an active challenging experience;
  - provide effective teaching;
  - provide a safe, caring, disciplined, attractive and stimulating environment;
  - develop partnerships between the home and the school, and between the school and the community and
  - set realistic yet challenging targets for success in national tests and external examinations.

## Summary

7. King Henry VIII School is making good progress towards its goal of enabling all learners to find success and fulfil their potential. Under the clear and decisive leadership of the headteacher there is a concerted drive to build on the school's many strengths and to address shortcomings where they occur. There is a good culture developing in which openness and trust are enabling worthwhile initiatives, such as those in learning and teaching promoted by the School Improvement Group, to take root.
8. Progress has been made on most of the issues identified in the last inspection, with 3 exceptions. Pupils' standards have risen in many areas, the quality of learning and teaching and attendance have improved and self-evaluation is more effective. Limited progress has been made with improving assessment practices, key skills and the achievements of some lower ability pupils.
9. The inspection team agreed with 5 of the 7 judgements made in the school's own self-evaluation report, giving a higher grade for one key question and a lower grade for another.

### Table of grades awarded

Key question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	3
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	3
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	3
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	2
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

### Standards

10. The following table shows pupils' standards of achievement in the subjects that Estyn selected for inspection at King Henry School.

Subject	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Sixth Form
Art	2	4	1
English	2	1	2
Information technology	3	2	1
Music	3	2	1
Music technology	-	-	3
Science	3	3	2

Welsh	3	3	2
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### Standards in key stages 3 and 4

11. The school has made significant progress at key stage 3. In national curriculum tests, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level or higher in all 3 core subjects is well above the national averages and the results compare well with those in similar schools across Wales.
12. In key stage 4, GCSE results for pupils gaining 5 or more passes at grades A\*-C are above the national average and largely in line with expectation given the ability of the pupils. Pass rates at grades C and above in the 3 core subjects are good. In comparison, the number of pupils achieving 5 or more passes at grades A\*-G is low compared to similar schools.
13. In the six subjects inspected at key stages 3 and 4 the percentages of grades awarded met or exceeded the national targets set by the Welsh Assembly Government and were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
8%	45%	42%	3%	2%

14. More able pupils mostly do very well while some in the middle to lower ability range lose motivation and do not always perform to expectations. Pupils in the designated SEN classes make good progress and achieve good standards.
15. As in Wales as a whole, girls usually perform better than boys in national curriculum tests and GCSE.
16. The good features seen in pupils' key skills of communication, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT), and in other learning skills, outweigh the shortcomings, although pupils generally do not make as much progress as they might. Where less able pupils are withdrawn for additional support in literacy and numeracy, they make rapid progress.
17. When working with others, pupils usually co-operate well and make good progress. With guidance, most pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work.
18. A good majority of pupils work hard in lessons, readily join in the range of activities provided and show enthusiasm for their work. However, a small minority of pupils, mainly in years 10 and 11, display challenging behaviour.
19. The average attendance for the three terms before the inspection was 90%. However, a significant minority of pupils do not attend regularly, especially in years 10 and 11, although the school works hard to encourage good attendance.

## Standards in the Sixth Form

20. Students generally achieve high standards in the Sixth Form; 1 in 4 lessons has features which are outstanding. In the subjects inspected in the Sixth Form the percentages of grades awarded were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
25%	60%	15%	0%	0%

21. The A-E pass rate at A level is high with large numbers gaining passes at the highest grades. The trend in performance is strongly upwards and results are well above national averages. Most Sixth Form students make very good progress from year 11 and a good proportion gain places in higher education.
22. Students are very attentive listeners and many are very confident in expressing their own ideas. They are able to summarise and present information effectively. While many benefit greatly from the sharing of ideas, there is a reluctance by some to work together with too great a readiness simply to receive information from the teacher. Written work is often fluent and well constructed. Note taking skills are not fully developed in all subjects. Most make solid progress in using ICT to support their learning.
23. Students increasingly show initiative and work successfully with less direct supervision. They often show well-developed skills in improving their own learning. Behaviour is very good and students are keen learners. Attendance levels in the Sixth Form are good.

## The quality of education and training

24. In 2 lessons in every 3 the teaching is good with no important shortcomings; this greatly exceeds the national target of 50%. Grades for the quality of teaching in all lessons observed in key stages 3 and 4 and the Sixth Form were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
17%	48%	29%	7%	0%

25. In key stages 3 and 4, classroom organisation and relationships are often good and some of the teaching is outstanding. While some teachers provide opportunities for some of the key skills to be practised, in the best teaching, pupils are actively coached to improve these skills. Pupils are not always challenged to think for themselves. Homework does help pupils to make progress but the irregularity with which it is set does not help pupils to develop good study habits.
26. In the Sixth Form there are outstanding features in the teaching in 1 in 5 lessons and no important shortcomings in the great majority of lessons. Very

good relationships and the way lessons are structured encourage students to think issues through for themselves and express their own ideas. Much of the teaching is very well pitched to stretch students, though some makes insufficient demands upon the students when too much learning is directed by the teacher.

27. The school meets statutory requirements for assessment and follows the regulations of examination boards. Assessment practice has improved since the last inspection although marking and grading are not consistent across the school. Some teachers are good at helping pupils to see what they need to do to improve; others offer praise but only limited advice on how to make progress. Systems for tracking the progress of all pupils in key stages 3 and 4 on a regular basis are not well developed. Reports are generally helpful to parents. In the Sixth Form, assessment and the recording of progress are good.
28. The school meets requirements for the curriculum in key stages 3 and 4. The school has attempted to broaden the range of vocational courses on offer, but with limited uptake by pupils. The quality of provision is good for pupils in the designated SEN classes. Provision in a range of subjects contributes to pupils' understanding of Wales.
29. A very broad range of AS and A level courses is on offer plus a small number of vocational courses. Religious education is not provided in the Sixth Form and in this respect the school does not meet statutory requirements.
30. The school actively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a variety of ways. Pupils have a good understanding of moral issues which are addressed particularly well in personal and social education (PSE) and religious education. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is more limited but is promoted in assemblies and in some lessons. The arrangements for collective worship meet statutory requirements.
31. Many pupils' learning experiences are enriched through the broad range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school. High standards are achieved in many of these activities, particularly music and sport.
32. The school's provision generally encourages and assists pupils, as they move through the key stages, to acquire the skills they require to be lifelong learners.
33. The school has a well-structured pastoral system which provides very good care and support for all pupils. Transition of pupils from primary school is an outstanding aspect of the school's provision.
34. The school has introduced a number of good measures to strengthen links with parents. The vast majority of parents are supportive of the school and feel they can approach staff with problems. The statutory requirement for a home-school agreement is not yet being met.

35. The school, together with the careers service, provides good careers education and guidance.
36. The work of the form, year and full school councils is outstanding.
37. Support for pupils with a range of special needs is very good with some aspects of provision being outstanding. The new behaviour management system has improved behaviour but is not implemented consistently by all staff.
38. The vast majority of pupils, both boys and girls, have equal access to the curriculum and other school activities. Equal opportunities are promoted effectively.

### **Leadership and management**

39. The school has a clear set of values which place great emphasis on individuals achieving their learning goals. These values are promoted by senior managers and increasingly shared by middle managers. Review and planning processes are evolving to translate these values into practical outcomes.
40. The headteacher has been instrumental in driving forward coherent policies to raise standards and in bringing greater consistency to the implementation of policy. His commitment, pragmatism and attention to detail have been significant in moving the school forward.
41. Senior managers have a good understanding of strengths and shortcomings across the school and when necessary, a robust approach is taken to tackling issues. Senior managers have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. There is insufficient involvement of senior managers, beyond the analysis of examination data, in evaluating the standards being achieved in departments.
42. The effectiveness of middle managers does vary. A number of subject leaders are developing a very good knowledge of their departments and building a definite team ethos to improve learning and teaching. In other instances, departments do not readily acknowledge shortcomings and there is no clear steer on how improvement is to be brought about.
43. There is a general willingness by staff to engage in open debate about improvement issues and in departments where new approaches are tried, the quality of learning and teaching is often enhanced; this is especially evident in English.
44. The governing body is very well informed and they exercise their responsibilities with care. They place a strong emphasis on raising standards and are active in seeking the resources to achieve this aim but are not sufficiently involved in setting priorities for the school development plan (SDP).

45. The SDP is a useful working document although it is essentially a one year plan and does not set out a longer term view of priorities for the school. Whole school targets are mostly challenging and appropriate, signalling the school's intent to drive on raising standards.
46. The allocation of resources is very well matched to achieving the school's main aims. In most areas of the curriculum, pupils have access to a good range of appropriate learning resources.
47. The school has enough, well qualified staff but when the use of non-specialists and temporary teachers has been unavoidable it has affected pupil progress. Support staff are deployed appropriately and contribute to the efficient running of the school.
48. The school is clean and well maintained and has been upgraded through a staged programme of refurbishments and health and safety improvements. The school has recently secured a grant of £1 million from the Local Education Authority (LEA) to continue the programme.
49. The financial management of the school is an outstanding feature. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and the finance committee manage the budget effectively and efficiently despite pupil numbers reducing.
50. The work of the School Improvement Group has contributed significantly to the professional development of many teachers and to improving the quality of teaching and learning. There are some good examples of the school evaluating how far training is put into practice but this is not followed through to judge the effect on standards.

## Recommendations

In order to build on the clear progress made since the previous inspection the school should:

- R1: continue to promote and extend the good work of the School Improvement Group;
- R2: raise standards in subjects where there is underachievement, especially in art at key stage 4;
- R3: improve learners' key skills further and make the use of key skills more effective across the curriculum;
- R4: bring greater consistency and rigour to assessment processes;
- R5: develop further the roles and skills of middle managers;
- R6: meet statutory requirements by providing religious education for students in the Sixth Form and establishing home-school agreements.

The school already has plans in hand to address most of these recommendations. 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.