

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

**Treorchy Comprehensive School  
Pengelli  
Treorchy  
CF42 6UL**

**School Number: 6744081**

**Date of Inspection: 6 March 2006**

**by**

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17193**

**Date of Publication: 2 May 2006**

**Under Estyn contract number: 1202805**

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

The inspection of Treorchy Comprehensive School took place between 06/03/06 and 09/03/06. An independent team of inspectors, led by Terence Andrew O'Marah undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

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

"There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a **standard** inspection."

## Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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## Context

### The nature of the provider

1. Treorchy Comprehensive School is an 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive school situated near the centre of the town. There are 1511 pupils on roll compared to 1407 at the time of the previous inspection in February 2000. Of these 268 are in the sixth form, an increase of 62% since 2000. Most pupils come from Treorchy and the nearby villages of Blaencwm, Blaenrhondda, Treherbert, Cwmparc, Pentre, Ton Pentre and Gelli. The great majority of pupils come from English speaking homes and approximately 1% of pupils speak Welsh as a first language. The area the school serves suffers a degree of economic and social disadvantage. Some 21% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above the national average.
2. The school occupies 13 separate buildings on a long, narrow site which does not include playing fields. A full range of ability is represented among the pupils. 12% of pupils are identified on the school's register of pupils with special educational needs. 0.4% of pupils have statements of special educational needs which is below the national average.
3. The formal timetable provides all pupils with a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. In addition the school offers pupils a rich and wide range of additional learning and sporting experiences.

### The school's priorities and targets

4. The school's aims and objectives are prominently displayed in the entrance hall. They are clearly focused on promoting a sense of self-respect and enquiry, developing individual potential and preparing pupils for adult life.
5. The priorities of the school as set out in its development plan are:
  - to support pupils in achieving their full potential;
  - to improve the quality of teaching and learning;
  - to develop pupils key skills through a broad and balanced curriculum, and
  - to develop further links with the community, parents and governors.
6. The development plan identifies whole school targets to improve pupil achievement and attendance.

## Summary

7. Treorchy Comprehensive School is a good school that has many outstanding features. The leadership of the school set a clear focus on high expectations in achievement and personal development. Teachers and support staff translate these expectations into high quality educational provision for their pupils and students, who respond by behaving and working to a very high level.

## Table of grades awarded

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

## Standards

### Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Inspection Area	Key stage 3	Key stage 4	Post 16
Welsh	1	1	2
Mathematics	2	3	2
Science	2	2	2
History	2	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2
Religious education	2	2	2

8. In the six selected subjects, all, with the exception of mathematics at key stage 4, have either maintained high standards or improved since the previous inspection. The improvement in religious education, which was unsatisfactory (grade 4), has been outstanding.
9. The following table shows the grades awarded for the standards that students achieved, at different stages, in all the subjects inspected:

97 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Key stage 3	18%	58%	20%	4%	0%
Key stage 4	15%	56%	29%	0%	0%
<b>Combined key stages 3 and 4</b>	16%	57%	24%	3%	0%
Post 16	11%	83%	6%	0%	0%
<b>Whole school</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>0%</b>

(For an explanation of the grades, please refer to the beginning of the report)

10. The national targets for 2007, for the standards students achieve in lessons, are that 98% of lessons should be graded 3 or better, and 65% graded 2 or better. The school currently achieves 98% and 77% respectively.
11. There are a number of strong features in pupil performance and progress:
  - the examination and test performance of the school puts it comfortably into the top quarter of similar schools;
  - in key stage 3, all three core subjects match or exceed national and local averages and all three subjects show a consistent trend for improvement;
  - the school has consistently matched or exceeded the local and national averages for the proportion of pupils gaining both five or more GCSE grades A\* to C and five or more grades A\* to G;
  - analysis shows consistent added value as pupils move through the school, and
  - at advanced level, the overall pass rate at grades A to E exceeds both local and national averages.
12. There are some shortcomings that need further attention:
  - although still good, many GCSE results dipped in 2005;
  - in 2005, at both key stage 3 and GCSE, girls did significantly better than boys in English, and
  - the A to C pass rate at advanced level fell in 2005 having previously been above local and close to national averages.
13. The school's targets for examination attainment accurately predicted the dip in results in 2005.
14. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. All pupils at the school, regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background make excellent progress in their learning.
15. Pupils' skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening are good with no important shortcomings:
16. The numerical skills of pupils and students have good features and no important shortcomings. Across the school there is evidence of some good standards.
17. Pupils' and students' skills in using computers are good in almost all subjects with some outstanding skills in pupils' use of computer aided design software.
18. The development of pupils' and students' bilingual skills is outstanding.
19. In a significant proportion of lessons, the standards achieved by pupils were good with outstanding features. Examples of the good and outstanding features were:
  - clear and detailed recall of previous lessons and the ability to explain and justify their own views;
  - the accuracy and completeness of pupils' answers, both to their teacher and to each other;

- the progress they make during lessons and the quality of their practical work, and
  - confident and accurate use of correct terminology and vocabulary.
20. There were shortcomings in some lessons:
- occasionally small groups of pupils were inattentive;
  - some pupils had incomplete work in their books, and
  - there was a lack of depth in the quality of some written and spoken answers, some of which were too brief.
21. Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is an outstanding feature.
22. Most pupils show good attendance and are punctual to school. Whilst the school works hard and successfully to improve overall levels of attendance, and compares well to similar schools, it fails to meet the national target set by the Welsh Assembly Government.
23. Other outstanding aspects of the work of the school are:
- the pupils' understanding and appreciation of equal opportunities issues and their respect for diversity in society;
  - the progress they make in their personal, social and moral development, and
  - their willingness to participate in the wider social and cultural activities of the school.
24. Pupils are very well prepared for their future lives in further education, or in the work-place.

### The quality of education and training

25. The following table shows the grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment in all the lessons observed during the inspection. All teachers at the school were observed.

146 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Key stage 3	25%	48%	24%	3%	0%
Key stage 4	21%	60%	19%	0%	0%
<b>Combined key stages 3 and 4</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>0%</b>
Post 16	39%	61%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Whole School</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>

(For an explanation of the grades, please refer to the beginning of the report)

26. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection report. Then the quality of teaching was described as "a major strength of the school"; this statement is still true.

27. In four out of five lessons, teaching is good with no important shortcomings. Where this is found:
- the lessons are well planned and accurately match the ability of pupils;
  - pupils' work is marked well and learners are well supported;
  - teachers explain the aims of the lesson clearly and at the end of the lesson reinforce the main learning points effectively, and
  - the pace of these lessons is good and pupils are challenged to achieve well.
28. In addition, a quarter of teaching has outstanding features. Examples of these are where:
- teachers deliver lessons where the pace and the level of challenge to all pupils is high and is maintained throughout the lesson;
  - teachers use questioning techniques that involve all pupils in the class, and which challenge pupils' understanding and ability to give reasoned answers;
  - the use of information technology, such as interactive whiteboards, enhances learning very effectively, and
  - pupils are encouraged, both individually and in groups, to explore their own views and challenge and accept the views of others.
29. In a few lessons there are shortcomings. These include lessons where some pupils are not engaged in their tasks throughout the lesson, or where the pace of the lesson was too slow to maintain an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils. Occasionally marking and advice to pupils was not sufficiently detailed, and sometimes teachers failed to end their lesson with an effective reinforcement of what had been learned.
30. Assessment is part of the whole teaching and learning process. Practice is good with outstanding features. Some examples of this are:
- the development of very effective systems for monitoring pupils' progress;
  - the establishment of an outstanding data base for recording achievement and monitoring underachievement;
  - some outstanding examples of both peer and pupil self assessment;
  - good information shared with parents;
  - many good and some outstanding examples of detailed marking with accurate and specific feedback to pupils, and
  - the rigorous analysis of examination results and other data.
31. Not all subjects deliver the high standards of assessment and self assessment found in the best areas.
32. The curriculum is broad and balanced in each key stage and at post 16. There are a number of outstanding features:
- there are 'fast track' courses for some pupils in key stage 3;
  - there is an extensive vocational programme in key stage 4 and the sixth form, and
  - the majority of pupils study religious education and Welsh as full GCSE courses in key stage 4.

33. The school offers all its pupils an outstandingly rich and wide range of additional learning experiences. These include sporting, musical, cultural, social and academic opportunities.
34. Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is very effectively embedded into schemes of work in all subjects at each key stage.
35. There are outstanding features in the development of pupils' personal skills. Examples are:
  - the respect pupils have for one another, the staff and their environment;
  - pupils' clear sense of right and wrong;
  - pupils' care and thought for others demonstrated through charity and voluntary work, and
  - their friendliness, politeness and preparedness to work together and help friends and class-mates.
36. Pupils' spiritual development is good with no important shortcomings. Their daily experiences in the form of collective worship are of variable quality.
37. Sixth form students play an outstanding role in the daily life of the school; they support younger pupils and organise a variety of activities and undertake a range of duties.
38. Partnerships with parents, the local community and other educational partners enrich considerably the learning experiences of pupils. Many of these partnerships are outstanding.
39. The provision the school makes for education related to the world of work is good with outstanding features. These include the extent of the programme in key stage 3, the value of the work experience programme in key stage 4, and the guidance given to sixth form students. The school has outstanding provision to promote the development of entrepreneurial skills.
40. The school promotes sustainable development and global citizenship very effectively.
41. The care and support given to all pupils at the school is good with outstanding features. Teachers and support staff know their pupils well, monitor their progress thoroughly and provide detailed and rigorous support where this is necessary. Extensive use is made of external agencies when this is agreed to be necessary.
42. The school has a very effective system in place for the identification and support of pupils who have a variety of learning needs. Some of this provision is outstanding. There is a variety of support procedures in place both in the classroom and in the Pupil Support Area. Both pupils with learning difficulties and the more able receive the help, challenge and guidance they need to help them achieve their potential.

43. The school's promotion of all the issues related to equal opportunities, race, social diversity and disability is good with outstanding features.

### **Leadership and management**

44. The leadership provided by the head, well assisted by senior colleagues, is outstanding. Notable features include a clear identification of priorities, consistent focus on high expectations and standards of achievement, the management of a complex site, and an attention to detail in the development of the work of the school.
45. The high quality of leadership and management is replicated in most subject departments and other areas with management responsibilities.
46. The continuing professional development of all the staff at the school is very well organised and administered.
47. There is some outstanding work in the school in respect of national and local priorities. Examples are seen in the collaboration with local primary schools, the development of bilingualism and the promotion of independent learning skills.
48. The governing body is fully involved in planning and monitoring school performance. It provides a strong sense of identity and direction for the school and these are clearly set out in the prospectus and the annual report to parents.
49. The school's self-evaluation report is an extremely detailed analysis of its performance. It is an accurate reflection of the school's strengths and shortcomings.
50. There is a school improvement group which valuably focuses on new areas for development, and which promotes the sharing of existing good practice.
51. Planning for improvement is very good.
52. The current development plan identifies a range of appropriate priorities which include the further development of key skills, assessment for learning and the learning environment.
53. The school sets accurate and challenging targets for examination performance in agreement with the Unitary Authority. These targets are set after detailed analysis of a wide range of data and predictions.
54. Good progress has been made in addressing the Key Issues identified in the previous inspection.
55. The staffing of the school overall is an outstanding feature. The school has achieved the 'Investors in People' award for several years. All teaching staff are well qualified. There is good provision of well managed and effective learning support assistants. Classroom staff are well supported by administrative and caretaking colleagues.

56. The deployment, management and development of staff are an outstanding feature of the school because of the following:
  - deployment of nearly all staff makes very good and effective use of their time, expertise and experience, and
  - the training and professional development of staff is very well co-ordinated and is in line with the school development plan, Performance Management, and the needs of departments and individuals.
57. The quality and quantity of learning resources for key stage 3 and key stage 4 in the six subjects inspected are outstanding.
58. The school site is complex and has 13 separate buildings which make school organisation difficult; the way the school manages these difficulties is outstanding.
59. The accommodation has good features and no important shortcomings. It is sufficient for the numbers of pupils currently on roll. It meets the pastoral and academic needs of the curriculum. The accommodation is clean and well maintained.
60. Accommodation for the sixth form is an outstanding feature of the school. Students have very good facilities for research and independent study.
61. The school has implemented its strategy for the work-load agreement, and is making progress in the restructuring required for the new teaching and learning responsibilities.
62. The financial management of the school is exemplary.
63. Overall, the school uses its finances and resources very effectively and achieves very good value for money.

## **Recommendations**

### **In order to continue to raise standards the school should:**

- R1: improve standards in mathematics so as to match those achieved by the best departments;
- R2: continue to work to improve attendance, and
- R3: develop the quality of marking, target setting and guidance for improvement, so that all subjects reach the standard of the best practice in the school.

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

## Standards

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

#### Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

64. The grade awarded by the inspection team agrees with the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.

#### Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

65. The following table shows the standards achieved in the six subjects of the curriculum inspected:

Subject	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4
Welsh	1	1
Mathematics	2	3
Science	2	2
History	2	2
Physical education	2	2
Religious education	2	2

(For an explanation of the grades, please see the beginning of the report)

66. When compared to the previous inspection, all subjects, with the exception of mathematics at key stage 4, have shown improvement. The improvement in religious education over this period has been outstanding.
67. The standards that pupils achieved, at the different stages, in the six subjects inspected were:

Key Stage	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Key stage 3	18%	58%	20%	4%	0%
Key stage 4	15%	56%	29%	0%	0%
Combined	16%	57%	24%	3%	0%

(For an explanation of the grades, please see the beginning of the report)

68. These figures are an improvement on those achieved in the previous inspection, when only 1% of lessons were judged to have outstanding features. The school has exceeded the target set by the Welsh Assembly Government for 2007, for standards achieved by pupils in lessons.

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

69. On entry to the school, the overall ability of the Y7 intake, as measured by standardised tests, is below the national average.
70. There are a number of strong features in pupil performance and progress:
- when compared to other similar schools, almost all the main indicators at key stage 3 and key stage 4 are comfortably in the top quarter;

- in key stage 3, all three core subjects match or exceed national and local averages;
  - all three core subjects show an overall trend for improvement;
  - in the last six years, the school has matched or exceeded the local and national averages for the proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE grades A\* to C;
  - the school has consistently exceeded the local and national pass rate for five or more GCSE grades A\* to G, and
  - analysis shows consistent added value as pupils move through the school.
71. There are some shortcomings that need further development:
- although still good, many results dipped in 2005;
  - in 2005, at both key stage 3 and GCSE, girls did significantly better than boys in English.
72. Targets for attainment, agreed between the school and the Unitary Authority at key stages 3 and 4, have, overall, been accurate and challenging. The targets for 2005 accurately predicted the dip in results, although the decline in results in the core subject indicator at GCSE was greater than anticipated. For 2005, a group of pupils (mostly boys) who were at risk of underachieving, had been accurately identified and given additional support, often involving contact with their parents. This was only partially successful. Targets for 2006 indicate a return to the previous level of attainment.
73. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. Of the pupils on the special educational needs register in 2005, 80% gained some form of accreditation, with 70% gaining at least five GCSE A\* to G grades. Only three pupils left school with no accreditation. All pupils at the school, regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background make excellent progress in their learning.
74. Communication skills are good with no important shortcomings because in speaking and listening:
- pupils usually listen attentively to the teacher and to one another;
  - they contribute enthusiastically in class discussions;
  - the more able pupils are generally confident and give extended responses;
  - pupils collaborate well in pairs and small groups, and
  - they use subject specific vocabulary confidently.
75. Reading skills are good because pupils:
- show a clear understanding of a wide range of texts;
  - read aloud with accuracy and fluency;
  - develop skills of inference in line with abilities;
  - display good skills of research such as skimming and scanning books and screens to retrieve information, and
  - with reading difficulties make good progress in the paired reading scheme, in Corrective Reading lessons and with good support from learning support assistants and sixth form students.

76. Writing skills are also good because pupils:
- write in a range of forms for a variety of purposes and audiences;
  - often use effectively models and plans to develop understanding of appropriate structure;
  - can extend their writing when required;
  - usually present work well;
  - often draft and proof read to improve final copies, and
  - show competence relative to abilities in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
77. The numerical skills of pupils overall in key stage 3 and key stage 4 have good features and no important shortcomings. In both key stages there is evidence of some good standards.
78. A small minority of pupils lack confidence in their numerical abilities when having to apply and use number in everyday situations. This is particularly evident in key stage 4. The school's policy for numeracy in subjects across the curriculum is being reviewed. An audit of subjects is being analysed and the implementation and re-development of the policy is a school priority.
79. Pupils' skills in using computers are good in almost all subjects with some outstanding skills in pupils' use of computer aided design software. Pupils use computers confidently to present their work and to research projects using the Internet. Many use computer presentation software and the interactive whiteboards to present their projects to their peers but this is not yet universally embedded in all subjects.
80. The development of pupils' bilingual skills is outstanding. Welsh is taught by a subject specialist from the school to all Y5 and Y6 pupils in the feeder primary schools. The good standards achieved on entry are improved in key stage 3 and key stage 4.

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

81. In almost three-quarters of the lessons observed, the standards achieved by pupils were good with no important shortcomings. Examples of the good features are:
- the amount of progress made through the lesson;
  - the accurate use of vocabulary and terminology;
  - good recall of previous work;
  - good group work where pupils were prepared to discuss and challenge each others' points of view;
  - pupils' understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses;
  - pupils' ability to give clear reasoned answers to questions;
  - good written answers, many containing extended writing;
  - effective use of source material;
  - good quality practical work, and
  - confident use of the target language in language lessons.

82. There were shortcomings in some lessons:
- occasionally small groups of pupils would be inattentive;
  - some pupils had incomplete work in their books, and
  - there was a lack of depth in the quality of some written and spoken answers, some of which were too brief.
83. Where standards were judged to have outstanding features pupils;
- had clear and detailed recall of previous lessons;
  - made very good progress in their learning;
  - could explain and justify their own views;
  - produced well reasoned and well structured written work which frequently made very good use of source material;
  - took part willingly and effectively in group and class discussions;
  - solved problems and accurately researched information independently, and
  - demonstrated excellent accents in the language they were studying.
84. In around a quarter of lessons, the good features outweighed shortcomings. Whilst these lessons had some of the good features listed above, they also had some or all of the following features:
- a small number of pupils being 'off task';
  - pupils' inability to present an argument clearly;
  - insufficient detail in written and spoken answers;
  - limited attempts at extended writing;
  - poor recall of previous work, and
  - incomplete work in some pupils' books.

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

85. Most pupils have a very positive attitude towards the school and towards their school work. The majority are able to sustain their concentration throughout the school day. When representative groups of pupils from each year were interviewed, they expressed the view that they were expected to work hard and that their teachers told them how well they were progressing. They particularly remarked on the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available to them. All were happy to be at the school.
86. Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is an outstanding feature. Except for the rare occasions when a tiny minority of pupils lose focus in lessons, all pupils abide by the exemplary and well understood code of conduct. Courtesy and consideration are the norm in school.
87. Most pupils across Y7 to Y11 show good attendance and are punctual to school. The overall attendance consistently exceeds both national and local authority averages.
88. Absence is mostly for medical reasons, but holidays taken in term-time and some instances of unnecessary absence condoned by parents make a noticeable contribution.

89. Pupils, with very few exceptions, make good progress in their wider key skills. For example:
- problem solving skills are good and occasionally outstanding. Pupils respond well to challenging tasks and demonstrate good analytical and evaluative skills;
  - pupils' ideas and outcomes are often innovative and creative and particularly so in art, dance, design technology, music, physical education, and Welsh;
  - their ability to work with others is frequently outstanding. In pair and group activities pupils are productive, co-operative and supportive of each other, and
  - pupils are generally good at reviewing their own progress and a number actively seek to improve their own learning.
90. Outstanding features of the progress pupils make in their personal, social and moral development include:
- pupils' understanding and appreciation of equal opportunities issues and their respect for diversity in society;
  - their willingness to participate in wider social and cultural activities of the school, and
  - their preparation for their future lives in further or higher education, or at work.

### Sixth form

Subject	Sixth Form
Welsh	2
Mathematics	2
Science	2
History	2
Physical education	2
Religious education	2

(For an explanation of the grades, please see the beginning of the report)

91. When compared to the previous inspection, four of the subjects have maintained their good standards. Physical education has improved from having good features which outweigh shortcomings to being good with no important shortcomings. Religious education has shown outstanding improvement; it was unsatisfactory and now has good features and no important shortcomings

### Students' success in attaining agreed learning goals

92. The good features of attainment at post 16 are:
- at advanced level, the overall pass rate at grades A to E exceeds both local and national averages, and
  - the average points score per candidate is below the Wales average and above the Unitary Authority figure.

93. The shortcomings in attainment are:
- the A to C pass rate at advanced level, which had shown a trend for improvement, fell in 2005, and was below both the Unitary Authority and Wales averages, and
  - value added analysis for 2005, on progress between GCSE and A level, showed added values that were lower than in previous years.

94. 2005 advanced level results reversed the previous trend for improvement because of underachievement by some students, particularly in some vocational subjects which had experienced some staffing problems.

95. The standards that students achieved, in the six subjects inspected were:

18 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Sixth Form	11%	83%	6%	0%	0%

(For an explanation of the grades, please see the beginning of the report)

96. There has been a significant improvement in the standards achieved since the previous inspection. At that time a very small percentage had outstanding features and 61% was grade 2 or better.
97. Communication skills are good. Students listen respectfully to the teacher and each other. There are good standards of discussion in pairs and small groups. In class discussions students put forward points of view, pose questions and show a developing confidence.
98. Reading standards are good. There is clear understanding of a range of challenging texts. They understand that which is inferred and identify techniques used by writers. They display good research skills.
99. Writing standards are also good. By the end of most courses, students produce well-structured work in a range of forms. There is good use of terminology and appropriate references when required.
100. Students have good numerical skills which they are able to apply successfully in their various subject areas.
101. Students' skills in using computers are good in all subjects. They readily use computers to research projects using the Internet and to present their work. Many use computer presentation software and the interactive whiteboards effectively to present their projects to their teachers and peers.
102. Students collaborate very effectively with each other. They engage in meaningful debate and display confident, mature attitudes and reflective thinking skills.

### **Students' progress in learning**

103. Standards of achievement in nine out of ten lessons were at least good with no important shortcomings. In these lessons students:
- made good and often very good progress;
  - used terminology and vocabulary accurately and confidently;
  - had a good re-call of previous work;
  - used source material well;
  - participated fully in group work and were prepared to discuss and challenge each others' points of view;
  - could give reasoned answers to questions, and
  - had a good understanding of problems set for them, and knew how to approach finding solutions.
104. Where achievement was judged to have outstanding features students:
- gave clear answers to questions and justified their own views confidently;
  - produced practical work of a high level;
  - had excellent accents in the language they were studying;
  - produced well reasoned and well structured written work, which frequently made very good use of source material, and
  - understood the work being studied and made excellent progress in understanding through the lesson.
105. There were some shortcomings in some lessons:
- in a few instances, the progress being made was limited by low attendance ;
  - some written work lacked appropriate structure and clarity, and
  - there was insufficient depth in some spoken and written answers.

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

106. Students behave well and have a very positive attitude to the school and their work. They make a very positive contribution to the school through their involvement in a whole range of school activities and functions, including helping younger pupils with their reading and with any bullying or social problems.
107. Overall attendance is good, although in a few cases, absences hold back achievement.
108. Students have an outstanding understanding and appreciation of equal opportunities issues and show respect for diversity in society. They make excellent progress in their personal, social and moral development, and their willingness to participate in the wider social and cultural activities of the school is also outstanding.
109. Students are outstandingly well prepared for their future lives either in further or higher education, or in the work-place.

## The quality of education and training

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

#### Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

110. The grade awarded by the inspection team agrees with the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.

#### Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

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

111. The following table shows the quality of teaching and assessment in the 94 lessons observed during the inspection:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Key stage 3	25%	48%	24%	3%	0%
Key stage 4	21%	60%	19%	0%	0%
<b>Combined</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>0%</b>

(for an explanation of the grades, please refer to the beginning of the report)

112. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection report. Then the quality of teaching was described as "a major strength of the school"; this statement is still true.

113. Three-quarters of teaching is at least good with no important shortcomings. Frequently seen features of this good teaching are:

- teachers have good subject knowledge;
- lessons have a good pace and challenge allowing all the pupils in the class to achieve;
- the use of bilingual skills where these are appropriate and helpful;
- there are good, positive relationships between teachers and pupils;
- the objectives of the lesson are explained clearly and effectively;
- there is an effective plenary session at the end of the lesson that reinforces the learning that has taken place;
- teachers use appropriate and effective questioning techniques that help pupils recall previous work and understand new work;
- lessons have a good balance and range of learning activities;
- new work is explained clearly and effectively;
- teachers monitor the progress of individual pupils well, and can therefore give them good support;
- where classroom support is available it is well focused on the needs of individual pupils and is effective in promoting progress;
- the lessons are well planned, and
- teachers have high expectations of their pupils' behaviour and achievement.

114. A quarter of teaching has outstanding features. These lessons share the good features listed above and in addition teachers:
- plan lessons that are expertly matched to the abilities of all the pupils in the class;
  - deliver lessons where the pace and the level of challenge to all pupils is high and is maintained throughout the lesson;
  - use questioning techniques that involve all pupils in the class, and which challenge pupils' understanding and their ability to give reasoned answers;
  - mark pupils' work in detail and provide them with specific advice on how to improve;
  - use technology, such as interactive whiteboards, to enhance learning very effectively, and
  - encourage pupils, both individually and in groups, to explore their own views and challenge and accept the views of others.
115. There were shortcomings in the lessons seen. More of these were seen in the quarter of lessons where good features outweighed shortcomings. Examples of these are:
- teachers miss opportunities to capitalise on unplanned developments in lessons;
  - a lack of extension work available for those pupils who need it;
  - too many pupils not engaged continuously in their tasks;
  - the pace of the lesson being slow so that many pupils are not challenged to achieve as well as they could;
  - marking and subsequent feedback to pupils that was insufficiently detailed, and
  - ineffective plenary sessions that did not reinforce the learning objectives.
116. An outstanding feature of teaching is the degree to which teachers, by both example and through their teaching, promote positive attitudes towards equal opportunities. This includes issues of race, gender and disability.

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

117. Assessment is part of the whole teaching and learning process. Practice is good with outstanding features because departments and teachers:
- produce policies and marking schemes to implement the school's procedures;
  - in many subjects are making progress in the use of a variety of assessment methods;
  - devise assessment tasks for pupils and use the results to update the school's database each term;
  - in four of the six subjects inspected, write outstandingly good comments on pupils' work which identify strengths, weaknesses and include targets for improvement;
  - in a minority of subjects give good quality verbal feedback to pupils which is related to the criteria for success;
  - often link assessments to learning objectives;

- in four of the subjects inspected have developed outstanding examples of both peer and self assessment;
  - in most departments ensure that pupils know what to do to improve;
  - collate portfolios of pupils' work in key stage 4 for purposes of moderation and to exemplify standards. In a minority of departments they are in use in key stage 3;
  - ensure that thorough moderation and standardisation takes place;
  - analyse assessments rigorously to enable movement between sets and bands;
  - use assessment records to inform planning of work, particularly in key stage 4;
  - analyse in detail external examination results in an annual review with the head-teacher, following which new departmental targets are negotiated;
  - complete very informative annual reports for all years and progress reports for Y7;
  - include assessment of key skills in annual reports as well as 'working' National Curriculum levels in key stage 3 and GCSE grades in key stage 4;
  - are working towards providing greater detail in key stage 3 which will be linked to National Curriculum descriptors, and will therefore improve practice;
  - inform parents of progress during annual parents' evenings, by letter and by the use of the merit system, and
  - ensure that the requirements for the assessment of the National Curriculum, examination boards and targets in individual education plans are fully met, and
118. In addition, heads of learning and skills and tutors:
- liaise effectively with teachers and heads of department to discuss progress of individuals;
  - analyse the termly data to form an accurate overview of progress;
  - identify under achievement, inform parents, take action and monitor progress.
  - act as mentors to individuals and groups;
  - recognise progress, good work and effort through the merit system;
  - collate information from subject teachers in annual reports, write a summary comment and discuss progress with pupils;
  - inform parents of progress in Parents' Evenings, in interviews and by letter; and
  - review progress of pupils through Progress File processes, scrutiny of work and pupils 'trails'.
119. The senior management team play a prominent and very effective role in raising standards of assessment, recording and reporting. In particular the team:
- develop challenging aims, policies and procedures to guide departments aiming at a consistent approach;
  - uses the line management structure to monitor, support and advise;
  - establishes an outstandingly good database for each year group which includes an aggregation of a range of national test results which enables them to predict end of key stage levels and grades in each subject for each pupil;

- analyses rigorously data, including results of external examinations with heads of department and sets whole school, departmental and individual targets;
  - uses the data well to allocate pupils to bands and to identify pupils with special educational needs;
  - identifies good practice and areas for development through a rigorous biennial programme of departmental reviews which include a scrutiny of marked work.
  - Promotes the sharing of good practice through the work of the School Improvement Group;
  - designs and produces annual reports which give a range of good quality information for parents as well as progress reports for Y7;
  - plans, conducts and evaluates rigorously pilot schemes to improve practice, and
  - organises effective external mentoring of pupils in Y11 and acts as mentors to a further identified group in Y11.
120. Despite good progress in assessment, recording and reporting there are a few shortcomings:
- all pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to evaluate their own work and that of others against known criteria;
  - pupils are not fully aware of what they need to do to improve in all subjects;
  - comments on work are not always diagnostic, and
  - in a small number of subjects in key stage 3, termly levels are insufficiently related to National Curriculum descriptors.

## The sixth form

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

121. The following table shows the quality of teaching and assessment in the lessons observed during the inspection:

28 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Sixth Form	39%	61%	0%	0%	0%

(for an explanation of the grades, please refer to the beginning of the report)

122. In the previous inspection, when teaching was described as being a strength of the school, 10% of teaching had outstanding features and 88% was grade 2 or better. Teaching quality has improved significantly and continues to be a strength of the school.
123. The teaching that was good with no important shortcomings shared the good features listed for key stages 3 and 4. In the two-fifths of lessons where teaching in the sixth form had outstanding features:
- students were expected to draw their own conclusions on questions of values or ethics;

- well structured group work encouraged students to explore their understanding;
  - teachers consistently challenged individuals to improve;
  - teachers had very good subject knowledge;
  - the lessons had consistently high pace;
  - the quality of marking and feedback to students was high;
  - teachers had a detailed understanding of their students' strengths and weaknesses, and
  - the teaching was enthusiastic and occasionally inspirational.
124. There were some shortcomings in the teaching. Examples of these were:
- a lack of sufficient depth in some explanations of new material;
  - in some lessons, not all students were drawn into class discussions, and
  - some questioning did not probe students' understanding, or did not encourage extended answers.
125. An outstanding feature of teaching was the degree to which teachers, by both example and through their teaching, promote positive attitudes towards equal opportunities. This includes issues of race, gender and disability.

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

126. The assessment of students' work is good with some outstanding features because teachers and the head of the sixth form:
- write extensive and constructive comments on work which shows students how they can improve;
  - give very good verbal feedback to students;
  - assess students' work and at least once a term update the school's database;
  - use the data helpfully to track progress against predicted grades;
  - offer outstanding support and mentor those who are not attaining predicted grades;
  - use data effectively to plan appropriate tasks to meet the needs of individual students;
  - ensure all students are involved in the accurate assessment of their own work against known criteria;
  - make students aware of the requirements of examination boards;
  - inform all interested groups, including parents, of the progress and achievements of students. Information is outstanding;
  - write subject specific annual reports that set appropriate targets for improvement, and
  - issue informative progress reports each year to parents of students in both Y12 and Y13.

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

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
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127. The grade awarded by the inspection team agrees with the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.

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

128. The curriculum overall is successful in:

- meeting pupils' learning needs and satisfies the aims set out for pupils of statutory school age in the Education Act 1996;
- enabling pupils and students of all abilities and backgrounds equality of access, and
- encouraging learners to achieve success and high standards in each key stage, and to participate fully in the life of the school.

129. Pupils have opportunities to gain accreditation at GCSE level in a small number of subjects by the end of key stage 3. In key stage 4, pupils can gain a wide range of qualifications at GCSE level and in vocational courses. All pupils in key stage 4 have access to GCSE examinations. This is an outstanding feature.

130. Access to the sixth form is open to all pupils. They have opportunities to gain qualifications in a large number of AS and A2 courses, and a wide range of vocational courses. The provision is outstanding in meeting the needs of the students returning to continue their studies.

131. The curriculum is broad and balanced in each key stage. There are a number of outstanding features:

- some pupils in key stage 3 can follow 'fast track' courses in French, Spanish and Welsh and sit GCSE examinations at the end of Y9;
- the vast majority of pupils in key stage 4 study religious education and Welsh as full GCSE courses, and
- there is an extensive vocational programme in key stage 4 and the sixth form, with opportunities for progression in many subjects.

132. There are a number of good features:

- all pupils in key stage 3 study drama and information technology as discrete subjects;
- pupils in key stage 3 can study geography, history and religious education through the medium of Welsh, and
- there is an appropriate alternative curriculum in key stage 4.

133. There are some good features in the development of basic and key skills:

- the school has been successful in gaining the Basic Skills Quality award;
- key skills have been identified in all schemes of work, and
- lessons to develop Critical Skills Challenges have been introduced in key stage 4.

134. The range of extra-curricular activities available for all years is an outstanding feature of the school. A large number of pupils and students benefit from the wide range of activities available, which broaden their experiences and promote their personal and social development.
135. Pupils and students have many opportunities to:
- represent the school in many sporting activities, gaining county and national honours;
  - take part in musical activities, join choirs and orchestras and take part in school productions;
  - join a wide range of clubs across the curriculum;
  - visit theatres, galleries and many field studies, and
  - experience a range of visits abroad for curricular and social activities.
136. There are a number of good and outstanding features in pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Spiritual development has good features and no important shortcomings. The outstanding features are that pupils:
- respect one another, the staff and the environment;
  - have a clear sense of right and wrong;
  - show care and thoughtfulness towards others by fund raising for charities;
  - mix very well socially and work together naturally across the age range, and
  - are friendly, polite and ready to help each other and visitors to the school.
137. The good features are that pupils:
- are given opportunities to develop an understanding of beliefs and values in their assemblies and in religious education;
  - are aware of sensitive matters such as prejudice, racism, and the rights of the individual;
  - are aware of other cultures and respect diversity and other peoples' views, and
  - are aware of the culture of Wales.
138. There is one shortcoming:
- pupils are given variable experiences in the act of collective worship held in the tutor period.
139. Students in the sixth form are mature and play an outstanding role in the school's every day life. They provide very good support for younger pupils in reading classes and around the school. They organise activities and undertake a variety of duties.
140. The learning experiences of pupils are considerably enriched by the school's partnership with parents, community and other educational providers. The conventional information exchanges with parents, primary schools, community and colleges that ensure that pupils' pastoral and learning needs are met are good, well managed and effective. Within these and other additional initiatives, the following are outstanding features:

- the willingness to canvas the view of pupils and parents on school processes and provision by questionnaire. These surveys influence planning and management;
- the extent of school involvement in community development. Both staff and sixth form students contribute to the Local Area Regeneration Partnership and the School Council is developing the links with the local Theatre and Library complex;
- the success with which the school markets itself, through wide distribution of newsletters in the community and active, productive links with the local press;
- the extent of participation by local community enterprises and businesses in provision of learning support in school for careers and work-related education, vocational subjects and pupil mentoring;
- the breadth and management of transition arrangements from key stage 2 to key stage 3. In addition to excellent pastoral support there is a particularly broad range of curriculum bridging links, and
- the consortium links with other schools and colleges to provide breadth to the vocational and sixth form curriculum.

141. The curriculum meets legal requirements. The programmes for personal, health and social education, work related education and careers education and guidance meet national guidelines and are well planned in the teaching programme.

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

142. Provision for work-related education is good with outstanding features. The outstanding features are:

- the extent of the programme in key stage 3 and key stage 4 of supporting visits, visitors and activities that greatly help illustrate the nature, needs and opportunities of the workplace. The good relationship with the Education Business Partnership is instrumental in securing this programme;
- the value of the compulsory work-experience in Y12, for which students are interviewed and strongly urged to find placements related to their career aspirations, and
- the supporting curriculum of guidance for post 16 students which develops an understanding of life skills for citizenship, employment and higher education.

143. The good features are:

- a well-organised and beneficial work-experience for Y10, which allows proper time for de-briefing and use of the experience for classroom discussion, and
- explanation of the workplace from Y7 onwards.

144. The development of bilingualism is an outstanding feature of the school. Teachers from Treorchy Comprehensive teach Welsh to all Y5 and Y6 classes in the feeder primary schools, giving these pupils a sound base from which to develop their bilingual skills further. High achievers can, if they wish, enter fast track classes at key stage 3 where humanities are taught bilingually to extend

their use of the language. An increasing number choose this option. In 2005 these pupils sat the full Welsh GCSE course in Y10 with outstanding results. 80% of key stage 4 pupils follow the full GCSE course. Low ability pupils, including those with special educational needs, follow an NVQ Welsh Language Units course as it is more suited to their needs. There is extensive use of Welsh around the school. An outstanding range of activities involving Welsh language and culture is on offer to all pupils at each key stage.

145. Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is very effectively embedded into schemes of work in all subjects at each key stage. An audit has been carried out to identify how all aspects of Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig are addressed across the curriculum.
146. There are good features in promoting the awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship. These include:
  - a detailed policy for sustainable development and global citizenship;
  - an audit which identified coverage in business studies, design technology, geography, personal and social education, religious education, science and sociology;
  - pupils' involvement in developing a conservation garden and a recycling project;
  - the formation of an eco-committee, and
  - success in gaining a Healthy School award.
147. At present, the school has not been awarded any local or national eco-awards.
148. The structured and close links with the workplace and community ensures that the school is well aware of, and takes account of the needs of employers. Compact goals underpin success in the school, and a wide variety of team-building activities are offered across key stage 3 and key stage 4. Independent learning is strongly encouraged in the sixth form.
149. The school provides an outstanding package for the development of entrepreneurial skills. The outstanding features are:
  - many lessons offer good problem solving exercises. Problem solving is planned into the schemes of work in almost all departments;
  - the quality and extent of vocational courses and supporting vocational opportunities for the less academic;
  - the range and number of design skills and business challenge competitions for pupils across key stage 3 and key stage 4. The school achieves well in regional and national competition;
  - the Dynamo project, enabling pupils to meet and listen to a particularly wide range of entrepreneurs;
  - the opportunity to participate in Young Enterprise business competitions; the school is regularly successful in regional competition, and
  - the community links that enable pupils/students to participate in community development schemes.

150. The school is very successful in ensuring that pupils and students acquire the appropriate knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes to make good, and for some, outstanding progress. Through a range of activities and experiences they are developing as independent learners.
151. The breadth and quality of the curriculum, extra-curricular opportunities and work-related education ensures that learning experiences successfully reflect national priorities and lay the foundation for lifelong learning.

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

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
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152. The grade awarded by the inspection team agrees with the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.

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

153. The school provides all pupils with an outstanding environment in which to work to reach their potential.

154. The outstanding features in the quality of care, support and guidance include:

- heads of learning and skills for each year rigorously monitor the progress of all pupils in each year group. Where underachievement is identified, pupils and their parents are then consulted and together an action plan is agreed and followed up regularly;
- guidance and learning support officers (who do not have teaching responsibilities) enable issues such as attendance, uniform and behaviour to be followed up swiftly, and parents contacted if necessary;
- year group activities and trips, which are open to all pupils, are well planned to encourage the development of both technical and social skills;
- close co-operation between the heads of learning and skills, special needs co-ordinator, an assistant head and other agencies means that pupils with learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties are referred speedily to outside agencies where this is appropriate;
- weekly visits from an educational psychologist, Learning Support Service, Behavioural Support Service and the Restorative Justice Team allow problems to be diagnosed promptly. Recommendations are then acted on by members of the teaching staff, using individual education plans;
- there is a comprehensive careers education programme, starting in Y7, with many work-related experiences provided for pupils;
- the very well developed co-operation between the school and its cluster primary schools, and
- the personal and social education syllabus closely follows the national guidelines, and is taught by a team of teachers who are committed to its delivery. Pupils respond very well to these lessons, which allow difficult issues to be addressed in a caring atmosphere.

155. Good features include:

- the full time provision of a school nurse;
- the encouragement of pupils to eat healthily both in the school canteens and through the vending machines;
- child protection procedures that ensures swift reporting of any such issues to the appropriate senior member of staff, and
- the caring team of learning support assistants who are well managed by their team leader.

156. A small number of health and safety issues were reported to the school during the inspection.

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

157. The school has a very effective system in place for identifying pupils who have a variety of learning needs.
158. Outstanding features include:
- the quality of the use of the Code of Practice to identify pupils with learning difficulties and provide for their needs. There are six pupils with statements of special educational need, 163 pupils who are on School Action or School Action Plus. Annual Reviews are thorough;
  - a wide range of appropriate standardised tests are used to identify needs;
  - some pupils are given individual support from a learning support assistant who follows a programme tailored to the pupil's needs; others are placed on a corrective reading programme and some are given paired reading support from students in the sixth form;
  - pupils are tested each term to monitor progress, and the results show gains of up to two years in reading age over two terms;
  - the very effective use of learning support assistants in subject lessons;
  - a register of more able and talented pupils is kept, and information passed on to staff to ensure that pupils are given work that challenges them to reach their potential;
  - there is a fast track class in key stage 3 which allows pupils to take some GCSE examinations early;
  - the very effective Pupil Support Area is well resourced, with networked computers and curriculum work from all subjects, so that pupils working there are supported in their learning. Careful records are kept of the pupils who are working there. The Reflection Room provides a comfortable place for behaviour management work and the Nurture Room is used for individual support as well as to work with a group of Y7 pupils who lack confidence;
  - pupils with disabilities are well provided for. Good care is taken to plan for pupils with disabilities who are likely to enter the school in the future and to ensure that parents are satisfied with the plans;
  - Any low level disruption is dealt with promptly. Pupils are well aware of the consequences of poor behaviour. More serious behaviour problems are dealt with efficiently and promptly by senior staff. The wide variety of vocational choices at Y10 gives pupils who may otherwise be disaffected, the chance to find where their strengths lie;
  - in art, at key stage 3 and in the GCSE course, pupils work alongside, and help, pupils from a local special school. This gives them valuable personal and social development.
159. Pupils who are taught in the support groups are integrated into mainstream for registration, design and technology and physical education. They have full access to the curriculum and are taught by specialist teachers. Teachers differentiate resources to the learning needs of the pupils well. The full range of options is available to pupils with special educational needs at the end of key stage 3. Of the 26 Y11 pupils on the special educational needs register in 2005, 70% achieved at least five GCSE passes at grades A\* to G, showing very good progress from Y7.

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

160. Provision for equal opportunities is good with outstanding features. These outstanding features include:
- the awareness of the school of its social context, and the caring encouragement given to pupils to reach their potential;
  - the whole school emphasis placed on ensuring that pupils with dyslexia are understood and catered for through the Dyslexia Friendly school award and departmental training that has been carried out;
  - the extensive work done through open option choices and careers advice for all pupils;
  - the positive work being done to encourage pupils to choose subjects more traditionally done by pupils of the opposite gender. In religious education, for example, it is department policy to use 'boy friendly' materials and approaches, and as a consequence boys' achievement is rising, and
  - the reasonable adjustments made for disabled learners to ensure that they are not placed at a disadvantage, through special arrangements for internal and external examinations.
161. Good features include:
- work being done through personal and social education and in other areas to promote good race relations and multi-cultural awareness and an awareness of the diverse nature of our society, and
  - the effective measures in place to eliminate any form of harassment or bullying through referral to the Restorative Justice Team.
162. There is a shortcoming in that the school site makes it very difficult for a pupil in a wheelchair to gain access to all areas.

## Leadership and management

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

#### Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

163. The grade awarded by the inspection team agrees with the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.

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

164. The aims and expectations of the school are made clear to all governors, staff, pupils and visitors. They are published in all the main school documents, are displayed around the school, and are frequently referred to in a whole range of meetings. The expectations set by managers and leaders are consistently high.

165. The leadership provided by the head, well assisted by senior colleagues, is outstanding. Notable features include:

- clear strategic planning, based on a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school;
- a rigorous and constant focus on improving standards of achievement;
- an open policy for discussing policies and sharing information;
- a strong commitment to high expectations;
- well managed curriculum development;
- clear learning and pastoral support strategies;
- regular meetings with middle managers, focused on standards;
- the promotion by senior and middle managers of high standards of learning and behaviour;
- clear and explicit promotion of equal opportunities through the curriculum, through teaching strategies and by example;
- good support for departments by senior managers, and
- the constant and active presence of senior managers around the site.

166. The high quality of leadership and management is replicated in the majority of subject departments and other areas with management responsibilities. The aims and values of the school are fully supported and are promoted effectively. Planning and the supporting documentation is almost always clear and appropriate, and is sometimes meticulous in its attention to detail. There is a small number of departments where management and leadership fall below the overall standard.

167. The continuing professional development of all the staff at the school is very well organised and administered. Some of the good or outstanding features are:

- a very effective Performance Management policy;
- challenging targets set for senior managers in negotiation with the head-teacher;
- rigorous targets set for heads of department by their line managers;

- a comprehensive support and training programme for teaching and associate staff;
  - clear identification of training needs by individuals, by departments in their development plan, by the school as a consequence of self-evaluation, and by the consortium arrangement with local primary schools, and
  - a comprehensive and well administered induction programme for newly qualified teachers.
168. There is some outstanding work in the school in respect of national and local priorities. Examples are:
- the consortium links with other schools and colleges to provide breadth to the vocational and sixth form curriculum;
  - the quality of work done with local primary schools to improve the transition of pupils from Y6 to Y7;
  - the development of bilingual skills;
  - the development of entrepreneurial skills, and
  - the development of new approaches to teaching pupils to become independent learners.
169. The school has a rigorous process for setting targets for identifying areas for improvement. Examination and National Curriculum test results are analysed in detail and are matched to and compared with a wealth of data from a range of standardised tests, and with teachers' own assessments. Teachers are expected to discuss individual pupils' work in relation to targets set by departments. The targets in individual action plans are set annually for both academic and personal skills. Departments monitor rigorously progress towards these targets.

### **How well governors meet their responsibilities**

170. The governing body is fully involved in planning, monitoring and evaluating school performance. They provide a strong sense of identity and direction for the school and these are clearly set out in the prospectus and the annual report to parents.
171. Governors are well aware of trends in education and have extensive experience of local and wider community issues. They have a thorough understanding of their school and their roles in its management. Consequently the valuable input they make to strategic management is well informed and particularly well focused.
172. Governors assess performance in respect of the agreed school improvement plan and progress towards its targets. They hold themselves accountable for the effectiveness, appropriateness for purpose and value for money of all school policies, procedures and practices.
173. The Governing Body meet all its regulatory and legal requirements.

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

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

174. In its self evaluation, the school awarded itself a grade 2 for this question. The inspection team awarded a grade 1 because they judged that progress since the last inspection was better than the school had realised.

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

175. The school self-evaluation report is an extremely detailed analysis of the school's performance measured against the seven key questions used in this report. Examples of outstanding features of self-evaluation at the school are:

- the very detailed and accurate whole school self-evaluation report;
- the detailed and rigorous annual self-evaluation reports produced by most heads of department and other middle managers;
- self-evaluation reports which are produced for all aspects of the school's work, such as key skills;
- the detailed and rigorous analysis of examination and test data carried out by heads of department, which are then discussed with senior management;
- the detailed and rigorous biennial departmental reviews involving senior managers and advisers from the Unitary Authority;
- the well structured observation of colleagues' teaching by heads of department and line managers;
- the cross-curricular monitoring of standards by the heads of learning and skills;
- the regular meetings involving a variety of teachers representing all levels of management, to review progress;
- valuable surveys of pupils' and parents' views;
- regular reviews of the effectiveness of support and guidance and of the learning environment, and
- the effective monitoring of pupil underachievement.

176. In a small number of subjects self-evaluation and development planning are not sufficiently accurate and detailed.

177. The monitoring and self-evaluation process involves all members of staff, who all understand their roles, responsibility and accountability.

178. A survey of parents' views, carried out for this inspection, indicated strong approval of the organisation and work of the school.

179. A senior manager maintains an outstanding central data base which is available on-line to all colleagues and which is used to identify underachievement.

180. There is a school improvement group which valuably focuses on new areas for development. It is currently working on 'Learning to Learn'. One of the group's

main and helpful functions is to identify good practice and promote it across the school. In all aspects of the work of the school, managers at all levels constantly seek to improve standards of achievement. Where it is seen as appropriate the school will actively support innovation with the resources and training needed to ensure success.

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

181. Planning for improvement is good. The current development plan covers 2005 to 2008 and includes departmental plans for the current year. The main areas for development properly arise out of an audit of the previous year's development plan, departmental reviews and their priorities. The majority of areas for improvement focus on very appropriate aspects of teaching or learning. All the plans helpfully identify;
- the targets;
  - the success criteria;
  - the action needed;
  - a time-scale;
  - the staff responsible for the development;
  - a review of progress, and
  - identification of any further action needed.
182. Development plans are prepared following self-evaluation. Subject development plans address the priorities identified by the school, as well as any subject specific needs. The delivery of these plans is carefully and regularly monitored throughout the year by the line manager for each department. When subjects bid for finance for consumables or for innovation and development, their bids are evaluated against priorities identified in their development plans. The current development plan identifies a range of appropriate priorities which include the further development of key skills, assessment for learning and the learning environment.
183. The school sets accurate and challenging targets for examination performance in agreement with the Unitary Authority. These targets are set after detailed analysis of a wide range of data and predictions.
184. Overall good progress has been made in addressing the Key Issues identified in the previous inspection:
- the progress made in religious education and religious studies has been outstanding and standards are now good across the school;
  - standards in those subjects that were satisfactory in 2000 have all shown good improvement;
  - considerable investment has been made in information technology and good progress has been made in developing its use across the curriculum, where standards are now good in most subjects;
  - a number of numeracy projects and the provision of appropriate training for staff have led to good progress in pupils' skills;
  - the health and safety issues identified in the report have all been fully resolved.

- pupils' progress in subjects and in key skills is now noted in the annual full report, and teachers' comments now indicate progress being made, and areas for further development, and
- good progress has been made in ensuring that pupils understand their own strengths and weaknesses, and know what they need to do to improve.

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

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
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185. The grade awarded by the inspection team agrees with the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.

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

186. The staffing of the school overall is an outstanding feature. The school has achieved the 'Investors in People' award for several years.

187. Overall the number of staff is sufficient for the school to run effectively and efficiently. Over half of the staff have ten years teaching experience or less, including four newly qualified teachers. The good and outstanding features can be summarised as:

- all teaching staff are well qualified to teach all aspects and subjects to meet the needs of the curriculum ;
- administrative staff ensure that the office, reception and reprographics areas run efficiently;
- the business and facilities manager, the site manager, and two caretakers contribute effectively and efficiently to the maintenance and daily routines of the school;
- technician support in science, information technology and in the workshops is very good;
- five guidance and learning support assistants make a very good contribution to the monitoring of pupils who are underachieving; they also cover lessons for absent staff in the short term;
- nine learning support assistants provide highly effective help and encouragement to those students with learning and behavioural problems, and
- the librarian who efficiently runs and supervises the use of the library.

188. One shortcoming within staffing is the absence of technician support in home economics. Consequently teachers' time has to be used for preparation of materials and equipment for lessons and room cleanliness.

189. The quality and quantity of learning resources for key stage 3 and key stage 4 in the six subjects inspected are outstanding. The good and outstanding features include:

- a wide range of text books and equipment;
- the good range of subject materials produced in-house;
- the overall provision of ICT equipment throughout the school; this caters effectively for the teaching of discrete ICT lessons and is well used by many subject areas of the curriculum;
- the high number of interactive white boards used to enhance classroom teaching;

- the design and technology area, where control and computer aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) are well used;
  - outstanding use of resources out of school to enrich the curriculum; these include visits abroad and to museums, art galleries, theatres, and field trips, and
  - a wide range of valuable visiting speakers who enhance pupils' learning experiences.
190. The library for pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 is well used by subjects across the curriculum; it is used for research and encourages pupils' independent learning outside of lessons, during lunchtime and after school.
191. In the sixth form there is:
- a very good range and supply of text books and equipment;
  - an appropriately stocked library, and
  - two computer rooms used for research and independent study.
192. The one shortcoming in the use of resources is that on occasions the electronic white boards are not used appropriately and effectively.
193. The school site is complex and has 13 separate buildings which make school organisation difficult; the way the school manages these difficulties is outstanding.
194. The accommodation has good features and no important shortcomings. It is sufficient for the numbers of pupils currently on roll. It meets the pastoral and academic needs of the curriculum and has the following good features in key stage 3 and key stage 4:
- the school has a fresh, clean appearance;
  - most rooms cater well for all class sizes;
  - all subject rooms are suited;
  - in corridors and most classrooms, displays of pupils' work, subject features and club activity information are bright and colourful and provide a stimulating learning environment;
  - planning and development of the site overall, and
  - the school grounds and buildings are kept clean, well maintained and litter free.
195. Accommodation for the sixth form is an outstanding feature of the school. It meets the pastoral and academic needs of the curriculum. The sixth form centre has a large common room, a combined library and study room, and two computer rooms. Students have very good facilities for research and independent study.
196. The minor shortcoming in accommodation is that a very small number of classes are taught in non-specialist rooms.

197. Overall, the deployment, management and development of staff are an outstanding feature of the school on account of the following:
- deployment of nearly all staff makes very good and effective use of their time, expertise and experience;
  - the training and professional development of staff is very well co-ordinated and is in line with the school development plan, performance management, and the needs of departments and individuals;
  - courses attended are comprehensively evaluated and used to the benefit of the school;
  - programmes and support for newly qualified teachers and for initial teacher training students are exemplary; they are detailed and thorough, and
  - the professional development of support staff.
198. The school has implemented its strategy for the workload agreement. It has made provision in the time-table for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment (PPA).
199. The head-teacher, leadership team and governors are making progress in the restructuring required for the new teaching and learning responsibilities.
200. The financial management of the school is exemplary. The head-teacher, the business and facilities manager, the head-teacher's secretary and the governing body's committee for finance manage the available budget effectively.
201. The following good features are evident:
- the finance committee meets each half-term and it receives detailed up to date reports from the head-teacher ;
  - astute financial decisions are well focused on the curriculum needs and the educational priorities identified in the school development plan;
  - the school pursues effectively all grants and sponsorship that are available;
  - the distribution of capitation to subject areas is very effective and is linked to subject improvement plans and other initiatives;
  - the finance clerks competently operate the day to day running of the finances;
  - the head-teacher's secretary provides her and heads of department with immediate budget analysis and current balances; spending is effectively monitored, and
  - the recommendations of the last auditors' report have been addressed.
202. Overall, the school uses its finances and resources very effectively and achieves very good value for money.

## Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

### Welsh second language

**Key Stage 3: Grade 1:** Good with outstanding features  
**Key Stage 4: Grade 1:** Good with outstanding features  
**Post 16: Grade 2:** Good features and no important shortcomings

#### Good and outstanding features

##### Key Stage 3

203. Pupils are taught by a subject specialist from the school in the top two years of their primary school. Due to their understanding of the language on entry, pupils are totally comfortable with the high expectations set as only Welsh is spoken by the teachers in the majority of lessons. They respond confidently to all the activities presented to link language skills.
204. As part of the revision process, all pupils recall an extended sentence at the beginning and end of each lesson. The highest achievers create a round robin story of an outstanding standard.
205. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, can conduct a simple, impromptu conversation on familiar subjects.
206. Pupils work outstandingly well in pairs and small groups to share ideas, solve problems and create dialogues. The highest achievers can be heard planning their work through the medium of Welsh.
207. By the end of the key stage fast track pupils show outstanding standards in all language skills allowing them to sit the GCSE examination at the end of Y9.
208. Without exception, pupils listen carefully to their teacher and to each other. They ask questions in Welsh to clarify understanding. Class discussions in all lessons are lively. The extended responses demonstrate a thorough understanding of the work.
209. Pupils read aloud with good intonation. They read their own compositions expressively. Pronunciation of most pupils is outstanding. A reading scheme has been developed; pupils are required to comment on texts read.
210. From Y7, pupils write extended documents for a range of purposes. The standard is good with examples of outstanding work.
211. Pupils use ICT effectively to redraft work, for class displays and to present findings using bar and pie charts following a class survey.

### **Key Stage 4**

- 212. Pupils on the fast track course achieve outstanding standards. When studying healthy eating in Y10 they express opinions effectively and confidently conduct dialogues in front of their peers. They vary their sentence structures and tenses to good effect.
- 213. Current Y11 pupils on the fast track course sat their full GCSE course in Y10. 100% achieved A\* to B grades with 61% achieving an A\* grade. They now follow the AS course which demonstrates their outstanding linguistic skills. They role-play the lead characters in the film "Hedd Wyn" without prior preparation to face peer questions on their characters. They discuss conflict, irony and symbolism in the film. They speak Welsh naturally with their teacher, peers and visitors.
- 214. Pupils in all classes, including those with special educational needs, collaborate well in pairs to produce interesting dialogue on a range of familiar subjects.
- 215. Standards in reading are good. Pupils on the NVQ Welsh Language Units course read aloud confidently and extract information accurately to use in their written work.
- 216. Standards in writing are commensurate with ability. Pupils write in a range of forms. They express opinion clearly.

### **Post 16**

#### **Good features**

- 217. AS and A level examination results are good.
- 218. The majority of students make good progress. They discuss set texts confidently. They understand characterisation, plot and the relevance of different events. They can compare similar themes in different literary work.
- 219. They work effectively in groups to prepare a presentation on a poem studied.
- 220. The standard of written work of the highest achievers is good. They write extended documents in several forms using a wide range of language patterns and specialist vocabulary.

#### **Shortcomings**

#### **Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4**

- 221. There are instances of elementary errors of grammar in written work.

#### **Post 16**

- 222. Absence hinders the progress of a few students. Due to infrequent use of the language they are unable to recall language learnt previously to help them tackle unfamiliar structures and vocabulary. They do not have the linguistic skills to discuss the very complex literary works studied. Their ability to move a discussion forward is limited.

<b>Mathematics</b>
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**Key Stage 3: Grade 2:** Good features and no important shortcomings

**Key Stage 4: Grade 3:** Good features outweigh shortcomings

**Post 16: Grade 2:** Good features and no important shortcomings

### **Good features**

#### **Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4**

- 223. Most pupils across the age and ability ranges answer questions orally with clarity, understanding and accuracy.
- 224. Pupils have spatial awareness and understand the concepts of the areas of plane figures and the volumes of regular solids using appropriate units in each case.
- 225. They are developing a sound knowledge of number, vulgar fractions, decimal fractions and percentages and the relationship between them.
- 226. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- 227. Most pupils use calculators appropriately.

#### **Key Stage 3**

- 228. In the National Curriculum tests, the proportion of pupils gaining at least a level 5 has been consistent and close to national averages over the last four years.
- 229. Pupils in Y7 are developing a sound understanding of the three dimensional figures including cubes, cuboids, prisms and pyramids.
- 230. They can represent numbers in terms of their prime factors in index form.
- 231. Y8 pupils understand the concept of sequences of numbers and can extend them as required.
- 232. The less able Y8 pupils can apply their knowledge of positive and negative numbers to everyday situations including temperature scales.
- 233. The more able pupils in Y9 understand the equation of a straight line and can draw lines on axes. They have extended this knowledge to solve pairs of simultaneous equations.
- 234. Less able pupils in Y9 have an understanding of the basic rules and concepts of probability.

### **Key Stage 4**

- 235. The more able pupils in Y11 can draw the graphs of quadratic equations and have investigated their transformational properties.
- 236. Lower ability pupils in Y11 can collect data in a survey and represent the data in scatter diagrams. They understand the concept of correlation and can apply this knowledge to situations in everyday life.
- 237. In Y10, the more able pupils can apply their knowledge of probability to solve problems using tree diagrams.
- 238. Less able pupils in Y10 have a basic knowledge of angle properties on a straight line, about a point and in triangles. They can apply the knowledge to problems and can construct triangles.

### **Post 16**

- 239. Y13 students have a good understanding of a range of concepts in pure mathematics and statistics. They can adapt this knowledge to solve associated questions.
- 240. Y12 students are making good progress in understanding the basic concepts of pure mathematics and mechanics.
- 241. Students' learning is enhanced by readily available extra support.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4**

- 242. A minority of lower ability pupils do not always complete and present their work in a neat, logical way. They do not always correct work that is wrong.
- 243. A small minority of pupils lack confidence in their mathematical abilities and are too dependent on teacher support.

#### **Key Stage 4**

- 244. Some middle ability pupils, especially boys, underachieve.
- 245. A small number of lower ability pupils have difficulty in retaining mathematical concepts so that they can apply them effectively.

#### **Post 16**

- 246. On entry to the sixth form, a very small number of Y12 students have difficulty in applying some complex algebraic procedures.

<b>Science</b>
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**Key Stage 3: Grade 2:** Good features and no important shortcomings

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

**Post 16: Grade 2:** Good features and no important shortcomings

### **Good features**

#### **Key Stage 3**

247. Many pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of a wide range of topics covering all aspects of the National Curriculum, at levels appropriate to their stage of development.
248. Many pupils recall key concepts well, and apply them to a range of problems and applications of science in familiar and unfamiliar situations.
249. A majority of pupils have a good understanding of the link between scientific principles and applications associated with the environment and healthy living.
250. Many pupils use scientific terms accurately in many problem solving activities and responses to questions.
251. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress relative to their ability.
252. Pupils develop good practical skills. Most pupils work safely and collaborate well.

#### **Key Stage 4**

253. A majority of pupils have a good understanding of the more complex principles developed in the key stage in life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical properties.
254. They have a good recall of previous work and can apply their knowledge to a range of tasks and applications across many topics in the National Curriculum.
255. Many pupils develop a good awareness and understanding of the contribution that science makes to society and of its impact upon industry, the environment and the economy.
256. More able pupils complete investigations to a good standard.
257. Where standards are good, pupils develop their scientific knowledge and understanding to inform their plan, and record the outcomes of preliminary work. Actual measurements are systematically recorded.
258. They are able to analyse their results using graphs or numerical methods, assess the validity of their findings and indicate ways to improve their procedures.

259. Pupils following the GNVQ and Applied science courses generally make good progress.

### **Post 16**

260. Most students in biology, chemistry and physics make at least good progress in the respective programmes of study.

261. Many students in physics have made outstanding progress in many of the modules studied.

262. Many students have a good recall and understanding of key concepts and principles.

263. In practical work observed, students achieve good standards overall.

264. Many students are able to apply their theoretical understanding to a number of problems involving the analysis of data and practical applications in familiar and unfamiliar situations.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4**

265. The progress of a few pupils is hindered by a lack of commitment to complete some homework tasks and some elements of coursework.

#### **Key Stage 3**

266. A minority of average and lower ability pupils have a less secure recall and understanding of current and previous work.

267. These pupils have difficulty in applying scientific principles to a range of tasks and applications in both familiar and unfamiliar situations and to offer explanations of behaviour they observe.

#### **Key Stage 4**

268. A minority of average and lower ability pupils make limited progress in the three attainment targets. Their recall of current and previous work is not secure, resulting in difficulties when applying a number of scientific principles to a range of tasks and scientific problems.

269. Where the standard of investigations has shortcomings, some pupils do not address the skill areas of planning, analysing and evaluating in sufficient depth to access the higher marks.

### **Post 16**

270. A few students have a less secure knowledge and understanding of some of the topics covered.

271. They have some difficulty applying some of the more complex principles to tasks and practical applications.

## History

<b>Key Stage 3:</b>	<b>Grade 2:</b>	Good features and no important shortcomings
<b>Key Stage 4:</b>	<b>Grade 2:</b>	Good features and no important shortcomings
<b>Post 16</b>	<b>Grade 2:</b>	Good features and no important shortcomings

### Good features

#### Key stage 3

272. Pupils have good levels of background knowledge and a secure understanding of chronology. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
273. They recall their previous learning successfully and they apply this information effectively when considering challenging historical problems.
274. Pupils adopt good investigative approaches in examining historical problems. They use a variety of sources of evidence effectively to compare and contrast differing interpretations of historical events and developments; as a result they provide convincing explanations of the causes of changes occurring over time.
275. In Y7 and Y8, pupils have good levels of knowledge and understanding. Y8 pupils make good progress in extracting relevant information from sources of evidence.
276. By Y9, pupils become increasingly confident in testing their sources of evidence for bias, usefulness and reliability. They evaluate the sources effectively and use them to develop well balanced oral and written arguments in which they show awareness of how interpretations of history emerge and also change.
277. By the end of the key stage, pupils have secure skills in distinguishing between long-term and short-term causes of change. Most pupils achieve good standards in selecting, organising and communicating information through a wide range of writing tasks, such as essays and source evaluations. They use a good range of historical vocabulary and make good progress in developing their thinking skills through the construction of concept maps.

#### Key Stage 4

278. Pupils build successfully on the historical knowledge and skills acquired in key stage 3. They demonstrate a growing maturity in the depth of their response to tasks and challenges.
279. Pupils are increasingly well focused upon providing reasonable and convincing explanations for the motivation and attitudes of people in the past by asking more complex questions of the sources.
280. Average and above average ability pupils achieve good standards in identifying and explaining cause and effect.

281. By Y11, a significant number of pupils produce good quality coursework which shows high standards of research, selection and organisation of relevant information.
282. Extended writing skills develop well.
283. Below average ability students, such as those following the Entry Level course, achieve good standards in examining pictorial sources relating to the Civil Rights movement in the USA.
284. Most pupils produce well organised and well presented written work. They use ICT tools effectively to enhance their written work and further develop their research skills.
285. Pupils make very effective use of the local and national environment to extend their knowledge and understanding of the particular historical and cultural development of Wales.
286. They make good progress in applying their knowledge and understanding from other curricular areas, such as literacy, to raise their standards in written work and to extend their problem-solving and independent learning skills.

### **Post 16**

287. Students have good levels of knowledge and understanding of the historical debates surrounding the impact of the Depression on Britain and Europe in the inter-war years.
288. In Y13, students make good progress in dealing with the complex primary and secondary sources relating to the German economy between 1880 and 1914. They make good efforts to meet the rigorous demands of the synoptic paper which forms part of advanced level history, particularly in mastering the historiography of the period.
289. Students identify interesting and relevant questions to ask of the sources and are very clear in their recognition of the operation of bias and propaganda. They are increasingly confident in identifying the differences in interpretation found in the works of experts on these areas and use their analytical skills effectively to evaluate and explain the differences found in the arguments of the professional historians.
290. Students show a good ability to construct balanced and opposing arguments in their oral and written work. Their written work shows good skills in selecting and organising the material which they use to respond to the challenging problems they are required to consider.
291. There is good evidence that they can weigh and measure the range of factors which have to be considered in order to achieve a balanced and well-considered judgement.

## Shortcomings

### Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

292. A small minority of pupils do not complete their written assignments regularly. They show variable standards in the depth with which they tackle problems and some of their work lacks adequate detail to provide a satisfying response to the question they are considering. A minority of pupils also find source evaluation problematic.

### Post 16

293. The work of a small minority of students lacks the adequate depth and detail required to produce a satisfying and fully-developed argument. Some of these students do not evaluate the relevant sources with sufficient insight and depth.

<b>Physical education</b>
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**Key Stage 3: Grade 2:** Good features and no important shortcomings

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

**Post 16: Grade 2:** Good features and no important shortcomings

## Good features

### Key Stage 3

294. In all lessons pupils work enthusiastically and maintain their interest throughout the lesson. Pupils work to the task set. In gymnastics in Y7, the work is outstanding when pupils use their creative skills to develop some challenging sequences. They practise and refine their skills, and the evaluation of others' sequences is impressive with the use of technical vocabulary and suggestions for improvements.

295. In football both boys and girls consolidate their skill and techniques through continued practise.

296. In the majority of lessons, pupils demonstrate an understanding of the short-term benefits of exercise on the body.

297. In health related exercise lessons, when interpreting the effects of working with different degrees of intensity, some pupils are able to think for themselves and interpret their results accurately. Pupils' work rate is very good and pupils are capable of sustaining continued exercise for a period of time. They work independently and in pairs and the ideas which they use to increase the intensity of what they are doing are very good. Pupils physically challenge themselves.

298. Working with others is a strong feature of the work across the activity areas, with pupils offering advice and discussing the work in order to develop their ideas.

299. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

300. A positive attitude towards physical education is demonstrated with pupils taking a pride in the appearance and good participation levels in lessons. When pupils are unable to participate in physical activities because of illness they continue to learn by being productively involved in the lesson.

#### **Key Stage 4**

301. In theory sessions pupils are attentive and contribute to class discussions. Pupils are able to recall previous knowledge to answer questions.
302. In GCSE physical education, pupils are able to apply their understanding of the components of fitness to a range of sporting activities. The use of subject specific technology here is outstanding.
303. In dance, pupils practise and refine their performance skills; sequences are creative and show a good understanding of choreographic skills and composition devices. This work is outstanding, as is the fluency in the way they link actions together.
304. Inclement weather during the inspection made it necessary for groups to share the indoor facilities. Though space was limited, pupils demonstrated safe practice and were competent when demonstrating basic handling and control skills in football and rugby. In a modified game situation, the better players dominated the situation but showed good decision making skills in attacking play. The majority of pupils were enthusiastic about taking part.

#### **Post 16**

305. Only Year 12 examination classes were observed.
306. Students work well in small group situations and are very responsive. They share ideas when discussing issues and justifying their viewpoint. They recall information from previous lessons and use this information to inform their thinking.
307. Students are prepared to give their own opinion and evaluate its relevance.
308. Written work is generally well presented, often using ICT. It is detailed and shows a good understanding of the work involved. Students are reflective and there is evidence of personal research. There is good application of the theoretical knowledge to the practical situation.

#### **Shortcomings**

##### **Key Stage 3**

309. In a variety of lessons, although pupils are knowledgeable about the required techniques involved, they are not always able to apply this knowledge when observing the performance of others.
310. In swimming, some pupils are content to repeat their actions without refining the work and do not make the required progress.

311. When using apparatus in gymnastics, though repeating actions, pupils do not improve their body awareness and clarity of shape whilst in the air. Sometimes landings from the apparatus lack resilience.

#### **Key Stage 4**

312. Not all pupils in the non-examination groups understand the benefits of the activities to developing all round fitness, nor do they fully understand the need for exercise to perpetuate a healthy life style.
313. In the game situation, some pupils do not get fully involved and make re-active actions rather than planned moves.
314. Some pupils in theory sessions give superficial responses to questions with answers not fully developed. There is some unnecessary chatter 'off task' and these pupils are not fully involved in the work.

#### **Post 16**

315. Answers to questions are not fully developed and the students rely on the teacher to expand on their comments.
316. Not all students get fully involved in responding to questions and rely on others to make the contribution.

### **Religious education (including religious studies)**

<b>Key Stage 3</b>	<b>Grade 2:</b>	Good features and no important shortcomings
<b>Key Stage 4</b>	<b>Grade 2:</b>	Good features and no important shortcomings
<b>Post 16:</b>	<b>Grade 2:</b>	Good features and no important shortcomings

#### **Good features**

##### **Key Stage 3**

317. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of key beliefs and practices of the religions studied, reflecting the requirements of the local agreed syllabus.
318. They respectfully compare and sometimes contrast some of these beliefs.
319. They understand how religious ideas can be expressed through symbols, and generally use terminology appropriately.
320. Many pupils give a good account of their personal viewpoint on a range of issues.
321. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress.

### **Key Stage 4**

- 322. Most pupils use a good range of religious vocabulary appropriately.
- 323. They have good knowledge and understanding of the relevant units of study, demonstrating this in class discussions and in written work.
- 324. They reflect well on issues; many pupils analyse ideas well and give reasons for their viewpoints.
- 325. The ablest pupils perceive some of the less obvious implications of values and beliefs. They challenge stereotypes well.
- 326. In the full-course GCSE, pupils draw well on their own experiences and their studies in a range of other subjects, particularly history and geography, to make clear connections between personal standpoints and actions taken by individuals and groups.

### **Post 16**

- 327. Students research widely in an open and unprejudiced way.
- 328. In statutory religious education, students talk knowledgeably about a range of moral and ethical issues.
- 329. In examination classes more especially, students weigh evidence well, offering pertinent and reasoned judgements on matters of belief and behaviour, especially as they affect society in this country today.
- 330. They also demonstrate a good grasp of many of the beliefs and practices of a variety of religions, philosophies and groups, identifying differences within and between faiths well.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **Key Stage 3**

- 331. Pupils do not often identify what influences their own values, or review these in the light of others' experiences and insights.

#### **Key Stage 4**

- 332. In the short course GCSE, otherwise good arguments are not always fully developed or well-supported by relevant examples.
- 333. In the full course GCSE a minority of pupils do not draw sufficiently on their prior learning to present as convincing a case as they could. They do not always conclude their arguments to best effect.

### **Post 16**

- 334. In statutory religious education, students are less confident in evaluating the more spiritual rather than moral and ethical aspects of belief, and their place in society and culture.

335. In examination classes, students do not always construct their essays well enough to make the fullest use of evidence for and against certain stances so as to present the clearest conclusions.

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

The head-teacher, staff and governors of Treorchy Comprehensive School are delighted that the inspection report concludes that Treorchy is a good school that has many outstanding features.

The award of the highest grade 1 in all seven key questions is a positive endorsement of the school's self-evaluation and recognises the many outstanding features of the school.

The School Improvement Plan is clearly focussed on raising standards through learning and teaching. We are pleased, therefore, that the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and remains 'a major strength of the school', with 81% of lessons judged 1 or 2 overall. The deployment, management and development of the staff are outstanding features.

We are also very proud of our young pupils and students and we are pleased that the report notes that their behaviour in class and around the school is an outstanding feature – the respect they have for one another, the staff and their environment. Courtesy and consideration are the norm in the school.

We are very pleased that the development of pupils' and students' bilingual skills is an outstanding feature of the school with an outstanding range of activities involving the Welsh language and culture on offer to all pupils at each key stage.

The report also recognises that all pupils at the school, regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background, make excellent progress in their learning. The school has already achieved the national targets for 2007 for the standards students achieve in lessons.

To complement the quality of the classroom experience, the rich and wide range of extra curricular activities available for all years is also an outstanding feature of the school's provision for promoting pupils' personal skills and social development.

The report recognises that the accommodation for the sixth form is outstanding with very good facilities for research and independent study. The students are outstandingly well prepared for their future lives in further or higher education or in the work place.

We are appreciative of the recommendations and the need for continuing to improve standards, to provide guidance for improvement, marking and target setting in all subject areas to reflect the best practice in the school. Our action plan will aim for this consistency and identify additional strategies for working with pupils, parents and other partners to further improve attendance.

## Appendix 1

### Basic information about the school

Name of school	Treorchy Comprehensive School
School type	Community
Age-range of pupils	11 to 18
Address of school	Pengelli, Treorchy Rhondda Cynon Taff
Postcode	CF42 6UL
Telephone number	01443 773128

Head-teacher	Mrs Bethan Guilfoyle
Date of appointment	April 1996
Chair of governors/ Appropriate Authority	Mr Gareth Morgan-Jones
Reporting inspector	Mr T. O'Marah
Dates of inspection	06/03/06 to 09/03/06

## Appendix 2

### School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	245	243	228	281	250	150	136	1533

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	81	6	84.16

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	18 :1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	18.4 : 1
Average teaching group size	21
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	75%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole School
Term 1	93.96	91.36	90.67	91.3	91.95	92.8	86.29	91.58
Term 2	90.31	89.82	88.49	88.58	87.4	93.37	85.53	89.17
Term 3	90.24	88.58	88.32	87.37	95.37	85.29	91.4	89.55

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	20.5%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	83

## Appendix 3

### National Curriculum Assessment Results

#### End of Key Stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2005															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 277															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.6	6.1	19.1	33.2	26.7	10.8	0.0	0.0
		National	0.4	0.8	0.5	0.2	0.4	1.7	8.1	21.3	33.6	23.5	9.4	0.2	0.0
	Test	School	0.0	1.8	0.7	n/a	n/a	n/a	13.8	23.9	31.2	19.9	8.7	n/a	n/a
		National	0.5	3.5	2.7	n/a	n/a	n/a	7.5	20.4	32.6	22.7	10.1	n/a	n/a
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.3	18.1	26.7	32.9	13.4	0.0	0.0
		National	0.3	0.6	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.9	6.8	18.9	25.7	31.6	13.7	0.3	0.0
	Test	School	0.0	4.3	0.0	n/a	n/a	n/a	6.9	18.8	20.2	38.6	11.2	n/a	n/a
		National	0.3	5.1	1.4	n/a	n/a	n/a	5.1	17.2	19.9	36.0	15.0	n/a	n/a
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.3	29.2	41.9	19.5	0.4	0.0	0.0
		National	0.3	0.7	0.6	0.2	0.1	0.4	6.0	20.1	32.8	27.1	11.6	0.1	0.0
	Test	School	0.0	1.8	0.0	n/a	n/a	n/a	4.0	21.7	33.6	28.2	10.8	n/a	n/a
		National	0.3	0.4	0.8	n/a	n/a	n/a	4.7	16.6	32.5	28.2	13.0	n/a	n/a

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

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school	54.9%	In the school	53.8%
In Wales	58%	In Wales	57%%

**Public Examination Results:**

<b>For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ</b>	
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2005	246
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	43

<b>The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2005:</b>	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	91%	84%	87%
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	52%	44%	52%
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	90%	82%	87%
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	32%	30%	38%
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	100%	97%	97%
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	77%	70%	76%
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	97%	92%	93%
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	3%	5%	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	1%	-	-
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	13%	-	-

<b>For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs</b>	
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2005	258
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2005	81
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2005	37

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	49%	57%	68%
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	96%	92%	94%
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	18	17	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	-	-	-
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	-	-	-

UA Unitary Authority

## Appendix 4

### **Evidence base of the inspection**

Prior to the inspection, full discussions were held between the registered inspector and the head based on the school's self-evaluation report and the report of the previous inspection in 2000. In addition, meetings were held with the staff of the school, with parents and with the governors. 337 questionnaires were returned by parents and analysed by the inspection team. Whole school and appropriate subject documents were collected and reviewed by inspectors. All of this information was used to inform the organisation of the inspection and the deployment of inspectors

During the inspection, six subjects of the curriculum were inspected in detail and a total of 146 lessons were observed. All teachers at the school were seen teaching at least once. Formal and informal interviews were held with pupils and the full daily life of the school was observed. The inspection team reviewed pupils' work in exercise books and folders and looked at pupils' work diaries and the school reports sent to their parents.

During the week the inspection team saw 27 registration periods and two assemblies, and visits were made to a wide range of clubs and activities. Interviews were held with appropriate heads of department, and with those teachers and managers holding positions with whole school responsibilities.

The performance of the school in public examinations and tests was analysed in detail so that trends in performance over time, and comparisons to local and national data could be identified and accounted for.

## Appendix 5

### Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team Member	Responsibilities
Terry A O'Marah Registered Inspector	<b>Key Questions 1,2, 5, 6</b>
Dr. Michael H L Snow Lay Inspector	Contributions to Key Questions 1, 3, 4, 5, 7
S Glyn Davies	<b>Key Question 3</b> ; <i>Science</i> ; Sixth form co-ordinator;
Alan V Edwards	<b>Key Question 7</b> ; Numeracy; <i>Mathematics</i> .
Rachel Carr	<b>Key Question 4</b> ; Special Educational Needs; Personal & Social Education
D Lynn Bithell	Assessment; Literacy; Support for KQ7
E Mary Crandon	Bilingual Provision and Competence: <i>Welsh</i>
Anne Newman	<i>History</i> ;
Sheila R Steer	<i>Physical education</i>
Martyn S Williams	<i>Religious education</i>
David M Jones	<i>Science</i>
Dr. W D Keith Davies	<i>Science</i>
Keith Hopkins	General Observations; ICT:
Margaret E Herbert	General Observations; Wider Key Skills
Susan L Williams	General Observations
Wynne Rogers Peer Assessor	
Gwyneira Davies School Nominee	

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### Acknowledgement

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