

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

**Ysgol Aberconwy  
Morfa Drive  
Conwy  
LL32 8ED**

**School Number: 6624023**

**Date of Inspection: 22 May 2006**

**by**

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- \* 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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Ysgol Aberconwy 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 Ysgol Aberconwy took place between 22/05/06 and 25/05/06. 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

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Standards</b>	<b>8</b>
Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?	8
<b>The quality of education and training</b>	<b>15</b>
Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	15
Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	19
Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	23
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>26</b>
Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?	26
Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	28
Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	30
<b>Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning</b>	<b>34</b>
English	34
Welsh second language	36
Mathematics	37
Modern foreign languages	39
Geography	41
Religious education (including religious studies)	42
<b>School's response to the inspection</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>45</b>
1 Basic information about the school	45
2 School data and indicators	46
3 National Curriculum assessments results	47
4 Evidence base of the inspection	50
5 Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team	51

## Context

### The nature of the provider

1. Ysgol Aberconwy is a community, English medium 11-18 mixed comprehensive school. It has approximately 1140 pupils on roll and it is envisaged that numbers will remain fairly constant over the next few years. The previous inspection was in May 2000.
2. The school is located in the town of Conwy and serves a number of communities along a ten mile section of the North Wales coast and so the vast majority of its pupils travel to and from school by bus.
3. The school has recently taken full possession of refurbished accommodation and new buildings under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract. The current head-teacher took up post in September 2004.
4. The vast majority of pupils come from communities that are neither prosperous nor socially or economically disadvantaged. There is little manufacturing or heavy industry in the area and most families are employed in the service or tourist industries. Some 7% of pupils are registered as being entitled to free school meals and 98% belong to the white ethnic group. No pupils receive extra support to learn English as an additional language and eight pupils are in the care of the local authority. The school houses the Unitary Authority's specialist unit for pupils with Dyslexia.
5. 46 pupils have a statement of special educational needs, and 129 pupils are on the "school action" or "school action plus" register. 99% of pupils come from homes where English is the main language.
6. The school has recently received the Basic Skills Quality mark.

### The school's priorities and targets

7. The school's main priorities for 2005 to 2008 are the following:
  - a. Improve learning for all pupils by better teaching.
  - b. Improve learning for all pupils by clarifying individual, team and whole school roles and responsibilities.
  - c. Improve learning for all pupils by developing a sense of belonging and an effective support network for pupils.

## Summary

8. There have been some major changes affecting the school and its work in the last three years. There has been a major building and refurbishment programme, the appointment of a new head-teacher, a new leadership team and significant changes to the curriculum and time-table. A number of new initiatives and policies have also been introduced in the last 12 months, which have yet to make a measurable impact on standards.

### Table of grades awarded

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

### Standards

#### Grades for standards in the six subjects inspected

9. It was not possible, because of their examination commitments, to observe Y11 or Y12 pupils and students in lessons. Judgements in relation to key stage 4 and the sixth form are therefore based on observation of Y10 and Y13, and scrutiny of the work of pupils and students of all year groups.

Subject	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Post 16
English	3	3	2
Welsh second language	3	2	2
Mathematics	3	3	2
Modern foreign languages	3	2	3
Geography	2	2	2
Religious education	2	2	n/a

10. When compared with the previous report, standards have improved by one grade in geography in key stage 3, religious education in key stage 4 and English at post 16. There has been a decline of one grade in standards in English and Welsh in key stage 3, and modern foreign languages in key stage 4. All other subject standards have been maintained at their previous level.

11. The following table shows the grades awarded for the standards that students achieved in the six subjects inspected in detail:

74 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Key stage 3	7%	50%	34%	9%	0%
Key stage 4	0%	50%	32%	18%	0%
<b>Key Stages 3 and 4</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>0%</b>
Post 16	0%	83%	17%	0%	0%
<b>Whole school</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>0%</b>

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

12. The Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) current targets for standards in Wales, to be achieved by 2007, require that 98% of lessons should be graded 3 or better, and that 65% should be graded 2 or better. As the table indicates, for the six selected subjects, the school has not yet met either of these targets
13. Results in National Curriculum tests in key stage 3 are consistently at or above national and local levels. This was also true of the overall GCSE and advanced level results until 2004 and 2005 when these results dipped below the Wales and Unitary Authority (UA) averages. Girls achieve better results than boys, sometimes significantly so.
14. The school does not compare well to similar schools (based on pupils' entitlement to free school meals) for examination or test results at key stage 3 and key stage 4.
15. In lessons where standards were good with no important shortcomings (grade 2) pupils:
- had good writing skills and demonstrated good use of appropriate vocabulary and terminology;
  - understood both the problems set for them and the solutions;
  - understood the work being studied and could often give clear explanations of answers they gave;
  - had good recall of previous work; and
  - participated confidently in class discussions.
16. In a small number of lessons some of these abilities were outstanding (grade 1).
17. Where lessons had good features which outweigh shortcomings (grade 3), pupils shared many of the good abilities listed above. There were, however:
- lessons where low level disruption - usually talking – slowed the pace of progress;
  - some instances of unacceptable behaviour and poor attitude;
  - some pupils whose spelling and writing skills were poor; and
  - a number of pupils who relied too heavily on the teacher and could not make progress unaided.
18. In a minority of lessons, these shortcomings were such that they became important (grade 4).

19. Students in the sixth form have good linguistic skills, understand their work and can explain and justify answers they give.
20. The school's targets for attainment, agreed with the UA, were not achieved in 2005. However, improved use of data should mean that revised targets for 2006 and 2007 are both challenging and attainable.
21. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils succeed regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background.
22. Most pupils and students listen attentively in lessons and contribute to discussions. Reading skills are generally good and most pupils write in a range of appropriate styles. Some middle and lower ability pupils are making slower progress in the development of their communication skills.
23. The majority of pupils and students have good numerical skills although a minority with more limited skills lack confidence in applying them in every day situations.
24. Pupils' and students' ICT skills are generally good and the most able use computers skilfully.
25. Whilst pupils use their Welsh well in formal lessons, they do not use it incidentally around the school.
26. Many pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Most respect each other and are generally courteous. A minority, however, persist in the low level disruption of lessons by talking or not listening to the teacher. This disruption affects the pace of lessons and therefore the standards of achievement of all pupils in the class.
27. When there are instances of bullying, pupils say that these are dealt with quickly and effectively.
28. Attendance is below local and national averages and affects the standards achieved by some pupils. Whilst most pupils are punctual to school or lessons, a minority are not. The school now has effective policies in place to improve attendance.
29. Pupils' and students' problem solving skills are mainly good and many demonstrate creative ability and imagination. Most pupils work together well in groups or pairs but a minority do not always act responsibly.

### **The quality of education and training**

30. 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 teaching.

125 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Key stage 3	14%	42%	38%	6%	0%
Key stage 4	6%	48%	35%	11%	0%
<b>Key stages 3 and 4</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>0%</b>
Post 16	15%	77%	8%	0%	0%
<b>Whole school</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>0%</b>

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

31. Over half of teaching in the school had no important shortcomings (grade 2). Where this was found teachers:
  - had good subject knowledge and taught lessons which challenged pupils to achieve;
  - planned lessons well and had high expectations of pupils and students;
  - used questions well to probe pupils' understanding;
  - had positive working relationships with pupils; and
  - applied the school's classroom management guidelines effectively.
32. In just over one lesson in ten, teaching had outstanding features (grade 1).
33. Where there were shortcomings in lessons (grade 3):
  - the school's classroom management guidelines were not implemented rigorously;
  - they were not planned appropriately; and
  - some teaching was over-prescriptive, giving pupils few opportunities to develop independence.
34. In some lessons in key stages 3 and 4, these became important shortcomings (grade 4).
35. Procedures for marking and assessing pupils' and students' work were reviewed by the school less than a year ago. Overall, marking and assessment are fair, regular and accurate, and good use is made of the school's data base to record and monitor pupils' progress.
36. There are some shortcomings. Not all teachers explain objectives for learning and assessment criteria clearly to their pupils, nor do they all write constructive comments on pupils' class-work. Not all subjects involve pupils in self-assessment.
37. The school is increasingly using data from standardised tests and teachers' assessments to monitor pupils' and students' progress. This allows the setting of more reliable targets for individuals and subject departments.
38. The school curriculum meets pupils' learning needs and is broad and balanced. All pupils have access to the full curriculum. At post 16 there are good links with the Conwy Learning Federation which provides a wider choice of courses of study.

39. The school provides a good range of sporting and musical extra-curricular activities, and visits to the school's cottage and abroad add to pupils' learning experiences.
40. There are some good features in the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is good multi-cultural awareness, a good understanding of equal opportunities issues, and most pupils work well together in groups or pairs. Pupils and students show concern for others by the support they give to charities and other good causes.
41. The school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide all pupils with the opportunity to participate in a daily act of collective worship, and the promotion of Welsh language across the curriculum is under-developed.
42. There are good links with the school's feeder primary schools, with local secondary schools and the local college. There are constructive links with the local community.
43. Pupils and students understand the needs of the workplace and receive good careers guidance from the school and Careers Wales.
44. Most pupils respond positively to the care shown to them, and are very ready to turn to their teachers for advice and support. There is a newly established and successful pastoral system which is supported by a personal and social education programme that meets national guidelines.
45. The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils' needs are accurately identified and appropriate provision is made to meet their needs. There are good strategies to improve the ability of pupils who have literacy difficulties. All Y11 pupils on the special needs register gained at least one GCSE pass in 2005, and most gained three or more.
46. Pupils who are in the care of the social services have good individual care plans and the school works well with other relevant agencies.
47. Pupils from ethnic minority groups integrate well with their peers, and all pupils are taught to recognise and respect diversity.

### **Leadership and management**

48. The recently expanded leadership team consulted widely before making the major changes to the curriculum that came into effect in September 2005. The head-teacher, who is in his second year at the school, supported by the leadership team, has a clear view of the future direction of the school.
49. The school's self-evaluation procedures give an accurate identification of the main strengths and areas for improvement. In preparing their published self-evaluation report, the governors and school were optimistic in the grades they awarded themselves.

50. Self-evaluation and leadership of subject areas are mostly good. Not all school policies and procedures are applied rigorously or consistently in all areas of the school.
51. The school development plan, which is effectively informed by the self-evaluation process, is a comprehensive document that identifies appropriate priorities, and how these will be managed. The school addresses national priorities successfully. Most of the Key Issues identified in the previous report in 2000 have been resolved, although some require further development.
52. The governors carry out their duties effectively although they do not fully meet their statutory responsibilities.
53. The school is housed in good quality and well maintained buildings that meet fully the needs of the curriculum. Overall staffing is good and resources are sufficient in most areas of the school to meet curriculum needs.
54. The finances of the school are well managed. The school gives value for money, although this would be enhanced by improved achievement by pupils and students.

## **Recommendations**

In order to continue to raise standards the school should:

- R1: improve examination results;
- R2: improve the effectiveness of guidelines and strategies for dealing with those pupils who disrupt lessons;
- R3: ensure that school policies and procedures are applied rigorously and consistently across all areas of the school;
- R4: continue to develop key skills across the curriculum;
- R5: continue the work to improve attendance; and
- R6: meet statutory requirements for the content of the School Prospectus and the Annual Report to Parents.

One Key Issue from the September 2000 inspection report has not been fully resolved. It therefore remains a Key Issue to be addressed by the school:

“comply with the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship”.

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

## Standards

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

#### Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

55. In its self-evaluation report the school awarded itself a grade 2 for this question. The inspection team judged the school to be a grade 3 because the school underachieves in comparison to similar schools (based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals).

#### Key stage 3 and key stage 4

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

Subject	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4
English	3	3
Welsh second language	3	2
Mathematics	3	3
Modern foreign languages	3	2
Geography	2	2
Religious education	2	2

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

57. When compared with the previous report, standards have improved by one grade in geography in key stage 3, religious education in key stage 4 and English at post 16. There has been a decline of one grade in standards in English and Welsh in key stage 3, and modern foreign languages in key stage 4. All other subject standards have been maintained at their previous level.
58. The standards that pupils achieved, at the different stages, in the six subjects inspected were:

74 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Key stage 3	8%	48%	33%	11%	0%
Key stage 4	0%	50%	33%	17%	0%
Key stages 3 and 4	4%	50%	34%	12%	0%

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

59. The Welsh Assembly Government's current targets for standards in Wales, to be achieved by 2007, require that 98% of lessons should be graded 3 or better, and that 65% should be graded 2 or better. As the table indicates, for the six selected subjects, the school has not yet met either of these targets.

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

60. On entry to the school, the overall ability of the Y7 intake is similar to both local and national averages, but with a smaller proportion of pupils at each end of the ability range.
61. There are a number of good features in pupils' attainment in national tests and public examinations:
  - results in National Curriculum tests in key stage 3 in English, mathematics and science over the past five years have been at or above national averages. Science consistently exceeds the Wales average;
  - achievement of the core subject indicator (CSI) in key stage 3 also matches national averages;
  - until 2004, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A\* to C matched both local and national averages; and
  - the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE A\* to G grades is consistently above both local and national averages.
62. There are some shortcomings in attainment:
  - in English in key stage 3, girls' results are significantly better than those of the boys; this means that girls also do better than boys in achieving the CSI;
  - at GCSE, the CSI results are significantly below the Wales and UA averages;
  - in the majority of GCSE courses, girls achieve better results than boys, and gain a higher proportion of the two top grades; and
  - overall GCSE results declined in both 2004 and 2005.
63. Compared to similar schools in Wales (based on the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals)
  - for 2005, in key stage 3, English, mathematics and the CSI were in the lowest quarter, and science is below the half-way point; and
  - for 2005, all key stage 4 indicators were in the lowest quarter, except the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A\* to G, which is below the half-way point.
64. The school sets targets for attainment annually in agreement with the UA. In 2005, targets set for key stage 3 were met but those for key stage 4 were not. Revised targets for 2006 and 2007 have been set following detailed analysis of predictive data, and are likely to be more accurate and appropriately challenging.
65. Value added analysis indicates that good progress in key stage 3 is not maintained through to key stage 4 or from key stage 4 to post 16.
66. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils succeed regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background.
67. Pupils' skills in communicating have good features which outweigh shortcomings. In many lessons, pupils listen attentively and respond to questions. Able pupils give extended responses; they explain their work, take part in presentations and use Standard English appropriately. There is good use and understanding of subject vocabulary. Pupils collaborate well in groups and

pairs in a number of subjects. However, in both key stages, a significant number of pupils of middle and lower abilities make slow progress in the development of communication skills. These pupils often do not listen with respect to teachers and to one another.

68. Reading skills are generally good. Most read aloud with accuracy and fluency and some with expression. Most pupils have a clear understanding of what is read. They can skim and scan to extract information and engage in research. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress in reading.
69. Pupils write in a range of forms. They adapt tone and language to audience and purpose. Most pupils extend their writing and structure is often good. Able pupils achieve good standards but a significant number of pupils of middle to lower abilities leave work unfinished. They do not draft their work effectively so that presentation is poor and spelling, punctuation and grammar errors are left unchecked.
70. Overall, pupils' numerical skills have good features outweighing shortcomings. In both key stage 3 and key stage 4 there is evidence of some good and very good standards. However, a minority of pupils have limited numerical skills and lack the confidence and motivation to apply their skills to everyday situations.
71. The basic skills co-ordinator is responsible for the co-ordination of numeracy in subjects across the curriculum. Following an audit, an initial effective booklet, 'Raising Standards in Numeracy', was produced. The implementation and development of such initiatives is in its early stages.
72. Pupils' information and communications technology (ICT) skills are generally good. Almost all pupils can competently access the network and load and use a broad range of computer software. The most able can use the computers skilfully to research, prepare and present information and to communicate their ideas. They display these skills regularly and effectively in geography and Welsh lessons. In design and technology, most pupils used computer aided design software with high levels of competence to design their projects. However, there is a lack of rigour in the co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum. As a result pupils are not always given sufficient opportunities to develop their skills.
73. All pupils follow Welsh courses through both key stages, with the advanced learners taking their GCSE examinations early. Examination results are consistently above the national average. However, pupils do not use their bilingual skills in other areas of the curriculum.

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

74. Where standards in the six selected subjects were judged to be good with no important shortcomings most pupils:
  - demonstrated good use of appropriate vocabulary and terminology;
  - understood the problems presented to them and the solutions to those problems;

- understood the work being studied and could often give clear explanations of answers they gave;
  - had good recall of previous work;
  - listened attentively;
  - had good writing skills; and
  - participated confidently in class discussions.
75. In a small number of lessons, there were some outstanding features. In these lessons pupils had detailed and accurate understanding of the work being studied, and could explain and justify their own views with clarity. Their writing was accurate, often extended, and used appropriate terminology and vocabulary well.
76. There were shortcomings in lessons. Examples of these were:
- lessons where low level disruption - usually talking – slowed the pace of progress and therefore affected the work of all pupils in the class;
  - a few instances of unacceptable behaviour;
  - some pupils with a poor attitude towards their work;
  - some pupils having poor spelling and writing skills; and
  - a number of pupils who relied too heavily on the teacher and could not make progress unaided.
77. In a small number of lessons these shortcomings were such that they became important shortcomings (grade 4). A number of lessons, at all grades, were down-graded because of the low level disruption noted above.

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

78. Many pupils behave well both in class and around the school. They understand and comply with the school's accepted code of conduct. There were no incidents of bullying seen during the inspection and pupils reported that when bullying occurs then it is dealt with effectively. Most respect each other and are courteous to teachers. In lessons, the majority take part willingly in tasks and activities and they listen to teachers and one another.
79. Most have respect for the diversity of lifestyles, beliefs and other cultures as a result of discussions in lessons such as religious education and personal and social education. They show compassion for others in their efforts to raise funds for charitable causes in the locality and in other countries. Some pupils show the capacity to accept responsibility by representing their peers on the School Council.
80. There are shortcomings which impede the development of personal, social and learning skills. A minority of pupils in both key stages, demonstrate unacceptable or disruptive behaviour in lessons. This behaviour is poorer in key stage 3 than in key stage 4. These pupils make little progress in their moral development. As a result their written work is not always completed and deadlines are not always met for completion of coursework. These pupils do not make effective use of their time and their negative attitudes impede the progress of all.

81. The schools' efforts to reduce the frequency of incidents of inappropriate behaviour are partly reflected in the relatively high number of fixed term and permanent exclusions.
82. The average level of attendance of compulsory school age pupils (Y7 to Y11), over three terms, is just 90%. This is below the UA and national averages, significantly below the average for similar schools (based on free school meals entitlement) and substantially below the WAG target (94%).
83. Some pupils' low levels of attendance adversely affect their progress, particularly at key stage 4. Unauthorised absence is above local and national averages.
84. A minority of pupils is late for school and some move from lesson to lesson in a dilatory fashion. The use of an electronic registration system enables the school to identify pupils' truancy from lessons but the information available is not utilised to full effect. Despite the efforts of the guidance mentors and the education welfare officer, the levels of attendance have not shown a sustained trend for improvement.
85. Registration procedures are in accordance with Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) circular 3/99.
86. Pupils' problem solving skills are mainly good. In a number of subjects across the curriculum pupils experiment effectively, analyse, make decisions and record well their considered solutions to a range of open-ended tasks.
87. Creative and innovative outcomes are evident in pupils' work particularly art; design and technology and religious education. A minority of pupils however, lack confidence in using their imagination and often rely on their teacher for ideas.
88. The ability to work with others is good in geography and religious education but more variable in other subjects. Most pupils co-operate sensibly and productively in pair or group activities. There is a minority of pupils who are immature in their attitudes and do not act responsibly with each other.
89. Many pupils review their own progress independently and set future targets for improvement.

## **Post 16**

90. It was not possible, because of examination commitments, to observe Y12 students in lessons. Judgements in relation to post 16 standards are therefore based on observation of Y13 and scrutiny of both Y12 and Y13 students' work.
91. The following table shows the standards achieved in the six subjects of the curriculum inspected:

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Post 16</b>
Welsh second language	2
English	2
Mathematics	2
Modern foreign languages	3
Geography	2
Religious education	N/A

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

92. When compared to the previous inspection most subjects have maintained their standards; standards in English have improved.
93. The standards that pupils achieved, at the different stages, in the six subjects inspected were:

6 lessons	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
Sixth Form	0%	80%	20%	0%	0%

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

### **Students' success in attaining agreed learning goals**

94. Overall, examination results at post 16 show that:
- the proportion of students gaining A to C grades at advanced level has consistently matched the averages for the UA and for Wales;
  - the A to C pass rate has, however, declined since a high point in 2003; and
  - in the last two years, the average points score for students taking two or more advanced level examinations, has been one or two points below the UA and Wales average.

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

95. Most students have good linguistic skills and use appropriate terminology and vocabulary well. Most have a good understanding of their subject material and can explain and justify their answers.
96. Some written work lacks sufficient detail and depth. Some students are hesitant in contributing to discussions. A few have a weaker understanding of subject material.
97. Students' communication skills are good overall. They respond to a wide range of challenging texts and reading standards are sound. Students demonstrate good competence in interpretation, critical analysis, cross reference and research. They refer to texts to support opinion.
98. Written work is also good in relation to abilities. Students write effectively for a range of purposes. Writing is often well-structured and organised. Some able students achieve very good standards. Most respond to critical comments written by teachers so that final drafts are improved.

99. Students' numerical skills are well developed and have good features and no important shortcomings. They are able to use and apply these skills effectively and accurately in various subject areas across the curriculum.
100. Students' information and communications technology (ICT) skills are generally good. Most students have the required basic ICT skills. However, there is little evidence in their coursework files that they readily use the computer as a tool to research, prepare and present work. For example, students were not seen presenting their ideas to their peers using the more sophisticated software available to them.
101. Sixth form students collaborate effectively with each other. They demonstrate mature attitudes and a good level of independence in their learning and problem solving.
102. Behaviour of students is good.
103. The average attendance of students is, for most terms, below 90 per cent.

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

104. The development of students' personal, social and learning skills is good because students:
  - show positive attitudes to learning;
  - show appreciation of good teaching by attending revision lessons during the examination period;
  - are courteous and respectful to teachers, one another and to visitors;
  - contribute to the life of the school by engaging in charitable projects, duties and the School Council;
  - behave with a growing confidence and support younger pupils in lessons;
  - take part in presentations during lessons of personal and social education;
  - assist in events such as Awards Evenings and 'Intake Days'; and
  - show appreciation and respect for the facilities made available to them, both for study and for social activities.

## The quality of education and training

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

#### Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

105. In its self-evaluation, the school awarded itself a grade 2 for this question. The findings of the inspection team do not match this judgement because there were shortcomings in many of the lessons observed.

### Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

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

106. The following table shows the quality of teaching and assessment in the key stage 3 and key stage 4 lessons observed during the inspection:

112 lessons	% Grade 1	% Grade 2	% Grade 3	% Grade 4	% Grade 5
KS3	14%	42%	38%	6%	0%
KS4	6%	49%	34%	11%	0%
KS3 & KS4	12%	44%	36%	8%	0%

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

107. Since the previous inspection, there has been an improvement in the number of lessons judged to be good with outstanding features (grade 1), but also an increase in the number of lessons with important shortcomings (grade 4). The percentage of lessons judged to be grade 2 has decreased significantly.

108. Where the teaching was judged to have good features, and in 13 lessons outstanding features, it was because teachers:

- have detailed and secure subject knowledge and show enthusiasm for the subject;
- deliver lessons where the pace and challenge is maintained throughout the lesson;
- have high expectations of the pupils;
- structure questions which challenge and probe pupils' understanding, and skillfully use responses to extend learning;
- have positive working relationships which promote an atmosphere of mutual respect and create an orderly atmosphere for learning;
- give a clear explanation of learning objectives at the start of lessons, and review pupils' recall and understanding in plenary sessions;
- carefully plan and structure lessons using a range of activities and stimuli; and
- give encouragement to pupils to ensure equality of opportunity and to raise awareness of the diversity of life skills, cultures and beliefs.

109. In many of the lessons which were graded 3 or 4, this was because teachers did not consistently implement the school's Behaviour Policy. This resulted in a minority of pupils:
- slowing the pace and continuity of lessons;
  - distracting the teacher regularly during the lesson; and
  - preventing other pupils receiving the attention they deserved.
110. There were shortcomings in other lessons which include:
- a lack of detailed planning to cater appropriately for the learning of pupils of all abilities;
  - objectives for lessons not being clearly explained;
  - some teaching being over-prescriptive, giving pupils few opportunities to develop independence;
  - insufficient rigour in questioning and probing understanding; and
  - teaching which only occasionally provides opportunities for pupils to develop their bilingual skills.
111. Many teachers monitor and review pupils' progress systematically and employ a good range of support procedures to help pupils gain success.

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

112. Procedures for the assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' achievement were reviewed less than a year ago. The good features of practice outweigh shortcomings because heads of department and teachers:
- are familiar with the school's database which includes end of key stage predicted results in all subjects. Cognitive tests are used to predict these levels and grades;
  - summarise achievements of pupils twice a year in each subject and use the results to update the school's database with current working levels and grades;
  - set key assignments each half term in each subject. These are rigorously marked indicating strengths and targets for improvement. Levels are awarded to key stage 3 pupils and grades to those in key stage 4;
  - moderate work within departments, so that assessments are fair and accurate;
  - analyse results of external examinations with members of the leadership team;
  - discuss and set realistic yet challenging targets for improvement for year groups, class groups and individuals;
  - review pupils' progress and complete annual subject reports and interim reports for parent and carers; and
  - ensure that the requirements of examination boards, National Curriculum and the Code of Practice are met.
113. Progress and practice are good but procedures are new and there are variations in the quality of aspects of assessment and reporting. For example, not all teachers and departments:

- explain the objectives of learning and assessment criteria to pupils at the start of lessons. This is particularly evident in key stage 3;
- consistently write comments on pupils' day-to-day work which are related to objectives and which identify how far pupils have met the criteria and how they might improve;
- use the data base to identify pupils who are not making progress in relation to target levels and grades. In some departments there are lost opportunities for the early identification of underachievement;
- regularly praise and give good verbal feedback to pupils;
- ensure that assessments lead to improvements for all pupils;
- involve pupils in self-assessment so that they fully understand criteria, their own strengths and areas where they need to improve;
- write specific learning targets for improvement in annual reports which inform parents of aspects of the subject that pupils need to improve; and
- use what they learn from assessment to help them plan more effective lessons and if necessary, modify schemes of work.

114. Pupils not making sufficient progress to meet their target levels and grades are indicated on the data base. Heads of house receive this information twice a year. They interview under-achievers, take action and inform parents when necessary. Heads of house also summarise achievements in annual reports. Form tutors are to be involved in monitoring pupils' progress across the curriculum. They will negotiate targets for improvement with pupils. This practice will be implemented this term and so its effectiveness cannot be judged.

115. Members of the leadership team prepared an appropriate whole school policy and marking guidelines to inform departmental practice. They use their link role to support departments and to monitor practice. They have appointed guidance mentors to support pupils in issues of punctuality, attendance and achievement. Examination results are analysed and discussed with heads of department and challenging targets for improvement are agreed. In addition to the provision of annual and interim reports, the leadership team also calendar assessment events such as examinations and meetings with parents and subject teachers.

## Post 16

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

116. The following table shows the quality of teaching and assessment in the sixth form from lessons observed during the inspection. It was only possible to observe lessons in Y13, however inspectors scrutinised Y12 students' work.

13 lessons	% Grade 1	% Grade 2	% Grade 3	% Grade 4	% Grade 5
	15%	77%	8%	0%	0%

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

117. The quality of the teaching was better in the sixth form than in key stage 3 and 4.

118. The good and outstanding features described above for key stage 3 and key stage 4 are also present in almost all sixth form lessons. In addition in many lessons teachers:
- encourage students to begin developing independent skills for lifelong learning; and
  - explore in depth students' understanding of certain complex concepts and principles.

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

119. The assessment and recording of students' work is good because teachers:
- inform students of the criteria for examinations and the requirements of examination boards;
  - write helpful comments on work which show students how they can improve;
  - give good verbal feedback to students;
  - monitor the progress of each student in all subjects;
  - inform the head of the sixth form of students whose progress is a cause for concern;
  - write helpful comments on progress for annual reports to parents;
  - provide working grades for effort and attainment in each subject as well as target grades so that interim reports are informative; and
  - meet parents to discuss the progress of students.
120. In addition, the head of the sixth form:
- interviews students who are causing concern. Action is taken and parents are informed;
  - reviews students' achievements in examinations. Tutors are informed of individuals who are underachieving and support is offered in tutor periods;
  - provides weekly tutorial sheets which are helpful in guiding tutors in the process of monitoring and mentoring; and
  - summarises achievements in annual reports.

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

**Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

121. In its self-evaluation report, the school awarded itself a grade 2 for this question. The findings of the inspection team do not match this judgement because the school does not provide an act of worship in all tutor groups. This is deemed as an important shortcoming.

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

122. Overall the curriculum:

- meets the learning needs of all pupils and reflects the aims set out for pupils of statutory school age in the Education Act 1996; and
- enables pupils and students of all abilities and backgrounds equality of access.

123. Some pupils have opportunities to gain accreditation at GCSE level in Welsh at the end of key stage 3. In key stage 4 pupils can gain qualifications in a wide range of subjects at GCSE level and in a modest programme of vocational courses.

124. Access to the sixth form is open to all pupils. They can choose AS and A2 courses in a range of subjects. The provision is supplemented by additional subjects being offered through the Conwy Learning Federation.

125. The curriculum is generally broad and balanced in each key stage and has some good features:

- all pupils in key stage 3 study information technology as a discrete subject;
- all pupils in key stage 4 study Welsh as a full course to GCSE level; and
- there is an appropriate alternative provision in Y11 to meet the needs of some disaffected pupils.

126. There are some shortcomings:

- drama, which has been introduced into Y7, is not taught as a discrete subject in Y8 and Y9;
- the arrangements to offer French and German in the teaching programme in Y9, limits progression in French; and
- the provision for vocational courses in key stage 4 and the sixth form is limited.

127. 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;
- literacy and numeracy audits have been carried out;
- literacy and numeracy guides have been prepared for all teachers; and
- a small number of students in the sixth form are involved in a county pilot scheme to gain accreditation in some of the wider key skills.

128. There are some shortcomings which have limited progress:
- the school does not have a co-ordinator for ICT, and
  - no audit has been carried out to identify how ICT is planned across the curriculum.
129. The range of extra-curricular activities available for all years has good features which outweigh shortcomings. The school offers a good range of sporting and musical activities, and a number of pupils are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. Visits to the School Cottage and abroad have enriched pupils' learning experiences and their personal and social developments. However, the limited range of clubs and visits to support the curriculum is a shortcoming.
130. The school's provision to promote learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has good features that outweigh shortcomings. The good features are that:
- in the collective act of worship in the House assembly, pupils are given opportunities to participate actively and to reflect;
  - the period at the end of the House assembly is effectively used to celebrate pupils' success;
  - appropriate material is prepared to promote worship in the tutor groups;
  - pupils show concern for those less fortunate than themselves by the support given to a wide range of good causes and charities;
  - the House Council and the School Council create good opportunities for pupils to develop responsible attitudes;
  - most pupils work effectively in pairs and groups within the class and collaborate in preparation for concerts and productions; and
  - multi-cultural awareness is promoted in aspects of work within a substantial number of subjects and visits abroad.
131. However, there are a number of shortcomings, including:
- no opportunity is provided in a number of tutor groups for communal worship, and consequently the school fails to conform to statutory requirements;
  - no structured planning for the spiritual dimension or multicultural awareness across the curriculum;
  - a minority of pupils show little respect to staff or visitors to the school; and
  - the promotion of the Welsh ethos across the curriculum and other activities in the school.
132. The learning experiences of pupils are enriched by the schools' partnership with parents, the community and other education providers. Most of the expected liaisons are generally established. The information exchanges with parents, primary schools, colleges and the community ensure that pupils' pastoral and learning needs are met.
133. Some good features in the partnerships are the:
- links with feeder primary schools, including the use of continuity projects and the effective arrangements for pupils moving from key stage 2 to key stage 3;

- consortium links with other secondary schools and a college to provide for aspects of the vocational and A-level curricula; and
- links with initial teacher training establishments.

134. There are some shortcomings which include:

- the limited range and effectiveness of links with the local community;
- the relatively low level of attendance at parents evenings; and
- the comparatively small number of parents who assist with school functions.

135. The programmes for personal, health and social education, work-related education and careers education and guidance meet national guidelines.

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

136. Work-related education has good features which outweigh shortcomings. The good features are:

- the work experience placements for Y10 pupils and Y12 students;
- the opportunities for many Y12 students to access placements linked to their career aspirations: and
- the effective partnership with Careers Wales whose advisers provide relevant current information and guidance for pupils and staff.

137. The shortcomings are:

- the limited opportunities in some years of the personal and social education programme to study work-related education in depth; and
- the lack of a de-briefing session for Y10 pupils following work placements, so that benefits of collective discussion are not realised and subject departments are not able to use the experiences as classroom tasks.

138. Pupils' awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship is restricted to reference in the geography, personal and social education and science schemes of work. On a whole-school basis this curricular initiative is underdeveloped. There is no school policy, neither has an audit been carried out.

139. The strong partnership with Careers Wales, supplemented by the knowledge of governors help to maintain a current awareness of the needs of employers. There are few other links with local industry/commerce other than occasional input into some personal and social education days.

140. There are some opportunities provided for pupils and students to develop their entrepreneurial and other business skills. The good features are:

- the Dynamo project which is included in one session of the personal and social education programme for Y9 pupils; and
- problem solving activities in curriculum subjects such as design and technology, geography, history and religious education.

141. The shortcomings are:

- students have no current involvement with initiatives such as Young

Enterprise; and

- the school does not actively promote the development of pupils' entrepreneurial skills on a whole-school basis.
142. All pupils study Welsh at key stages 3 and 4. Advanced learners follow an accelerated course where they sit the GCSE examination at the end of key stage 3 and complete the AS course in key stage 4. All other pupils follow the full GCSE course at key stage 4. The Welsh department arranges visits and residential courses for pupils to further develop their bilingual competence. Signs around the school are bilingual as are publications to parents. However, the school does not have a policy for the development of bilingualism. The language and culture of Wales are not actively promoted in the life of the school. Consequently, pupils are not sufficiently aware of the benefits of becoming fully bilingual. Opportunities are not planned for advanced learners to use their bilingual skills in other areas of the curriculum. The use of incidental Welsh around the school is rare even though a high percentage of staff is Welsh speaking.
143. An audit has identified that Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is appropriately embedded in schemes of work of all subjects.
144. The school is generally successful in ensuring that most pupils and students acquire the appropriate knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes to progress. Aspects of the curriculum and work-related education ensure that learning experiences reflect some of the national priorities. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
145. There are shortcomings in the development of pupils' use of ICT across the curriculum, the modest extra-curricular programme and insufficient opportunities for pupils and students to develop and experience enterprise and entrepreneurial activities.

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

<b>Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
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146. In its self-evaluation report the school awarded itself a Grade 1 for this key question. The findings of the inspection team coincide with some of the school's judgement. However, the structures for monitoring of learners' punctuality, attendance, behaviour and performance are not yet sufficiently embedded and developed to impact fully on current standards. As a result the team awarded this key question a Grade 2.

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

147. Good features in the quality of care, support and guidance include:

- that the vast majority of pupils respond positively to the care shown them, being very ready to turn to their teachers or guidance mentors for advice when the need arises;
- an established and successful pastoral system that emphasises the personal welfare of its pupils;
- a House system that promotes the achievement of learners, with good support from the achievement mentors;
- a personal and social education programme that meets the national framework requirements and enhances and supports the pastoral programme;
- good pastoral and curricular links with its feeder primary schools and the Pupil Referral Units;
- the induction programmes for pupils from the primary schools and for learners moving to the school from other areas;
- good links with parents;
- a careers education programme with close co-operation with Careers Wales advisor;
- sound child protection procedures of which all members of staff are aware, and a known senior teacher to whom teachers can refer; and
- clear documented procedures for assuring learners' well being and health, with an appropriate number of staff having recognised First Aid qualification.

148. The shortcomings in the provision include:

- tutor time is not always used well;
- a number of good strategies to support pupils, who disrupt the learning of others, are at an early stage of development and are not yet fully effective; and
- links with local businesses and industry are limited.

149. The role of guidance mentors in containing disruptive behaviour and encouraging good behaviour in the classroom is developing but is not yet fully effective. The assistant headteacher and the two heads of key stages collate information and use it to target the behaviour of individuals or groups of pupils.

150. Over the past year the number of pupils excluded has been high. The school has therefore opened a Students Support Centre which works as an internal

exclusion room where pupils can work and receive guidance from staff. Records show that the vast majority of these pupils return to mainstream and successfully continue with their education.

### **The quality of the provision for special educational needs**

151. The quality of the provision for pupils' additional educational needs has many good features which include:
- successful identification of pupils who need additional educational assistance on entry to the school;
  - effective use of guidance mentors;
  - a variety of support to ensure that the behaviour of pupils with challenging behavioural or emotional problems does not impact upon the progress of others;
  - providing mainstream teachers with relevant information in order to aid their planning;
  - effective implementation of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice;
  - good relationships with parents, carers and outside agencies;
  - good cross-curricular and literacy support for learners with specific learning difficulties;
  - good support from Learning Support Assistants for both individuals and small groups of pupils;
  - good strategies to improve pupils' literacy skills which include 'The Daily Diary Reading Scheme';
  - ensuring that children with additional learning needs are not treated less favourably than others;
  - good social inclusion measures which have recently been introduced; and
  - all Y11 pupils on the register of special needs achieved at least one grade in the GCSE examinations last year, with most gaining three or more.
152. However, there are some shortcomings, which include:
- the best use of Learning Support Assistants' expertise and time can not be made when they are linked to an individual pupil.
  - in some large classes, e.g. in Welsh, there is no support for the high proportion of the class that are on the special educational needs register; and
  - comprehensive strategies to deal with pupils with behavioural difficulties have recently been put in place; they are not as yet fully effective.

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

153. The good features in the quality of provision for equal opportunities include:
- recognising the pupils' varied social backgrounds and providing a broad and flexible curriculum for them, including special arrangements for some pupils to spend part of their course off-site;
  - pupils do not have any serious concerns about bullying and are confident that staff will deal with any incidents quickly and effectively;
  - all key stage 4 and sixth form options are open to learners from either sex;
  - the monitoring and comparing of the examination results of boys and girls;
  - good working relationships with a wide range of external agencies;

- the pupils who are 'looked after' by social services have good individual care plans and the school works closely with the relevant agencies;
- good procedures for dealing with oppressive behaviour are in place;
- disabled learners are able to access all relevant areas of the building and follow the mainstream curriculum;
- pupils are supported sensitively and effectively if they experience difficulty in school, home or in the community;
- pupils from minority ethnic groups integrate naturally with their peers. All pupils are taught to recognise and respect diversity; and
- good opportunities are provided in a number of subjects for learners to study and discuss examples of racism, prejudice and inequality.

## Leadership and management

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

#### Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

154. In its self-evaluation report the school awarded itself a grade 2 for this question. The inspection team judged the school to be a grade 3 because there is, as yet, insufficient evidence to confirm the positive impact of recently made changes.

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

155. There have been some major changes affecting the school and its work in the last three years. There has been a major building and refurbishment programme, the appointment of a new head-teacher, a new leadership team and significant changes to the curriculum and time-table. A number of new initiatives and policies have also been introduced in the last 12 months, which have yet to have a measurable impact on standards.

156. To prepare for the recent curriculum changes, parents, pupils and teachers were consulted through questionnaires. Staff were also involved with representatives from the UA and governors in a full day planning activity that agreed three main focus areas that underpin the school's planning and decision making:

- better teaching;
- clarifying roles; and
- improving pupil support.

157. Members of the leadership team play a key role in supporting and monitoring subject areas. They:

- are linked to subject areas, and meet with them regularly ;
- conduct audits of subject areas including lesson observation;
- participate in annual reviews of faculties; and
- regularly monitor the progress of faculties.

158. There are many examples in the school that indicate the successful implementation of change and of the more recent policies and guidelines. Good practice can be found of:

- classroom management;
- good practice in teaching and learning;
- marking and assessment; and
- monitoring and self-evaluation

159. There are, however, shortcomings:

- not all subject areas implement school policies consistently or rigorously; and
- some strategies either lack sufficient clarity of purpose or are not understood by all staff. Where this occurs there is a weakness in communication between teachers so that standards are affected.

160. Overall, staff in middle management roles share the schools expectations for achievement and agree the aims and future direction of the school. Regular meetings between the heads of department and their link person with the leadership team are mostly seen to be helpful and constructive.
161. Policies and school activities actively promote equality of opportunity and all groups in the school have equal access to all courses and events. Pupils are aware of issues of equality. However, girls gain significantly better examination results in many subjects.
162. The school takes good account of national priorities. It works successfully with its local primary schools, with the other secondary schools in the area and with the local further education college. Vocational courses are available and are increasing. Whilst the school does provide work related education and does seek to promote bilingualism, both of these aspects need further development.
163. The school sets targets annually in agreement with the UA. Revised targets for the next two years, for subjects and for the school, have been set following analysis of predictive data and should therefore be more accurate and challenging than has been the case previously.
164. Performance Management arrangements are in place, as is a self-evaluation system. Overall these are effective and identify accurately both professional development needs and the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
165. There are, however, some shortcomings. Not all the monitoring and evaluation is carried out with sufficient consistency and rigour, so that the maximum benefit to the school is not achieved.

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

166. The governing body is very supportive with individual governors having a wide range of experience, expertise and knowledge. They meet regularly and are provided with reports from the head-teacher which include details about the progress of the school and aspects affecting its performance. Finance and personnel committees have recently been established. The records of the meetings are very brief and contain little detail.
167. The role of the governing body as a critical friend is developing. Only a small number of the governors are significantly involved with setting the strategic direction of the school, with the processes for long term planning, producing the school development plan and whole school self-evaluation. The governors are not fully involved with evaluating the successes and aspirations of departments and assessing the progress of whole school strategies.
168. The governing body meets most of its regulatory and legal requirements. However, the school prospectus and annual reports to parents do not meet statutory requirements and the governors do not ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to participate in a daily act of collective worship.

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

<b>Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings</b>
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169. In its self-evaluation report the school awarded itself a grade 2 for this question. The inspection team judged the school to be a grade 3 because whilst the school has correctly identified most of the shortcomings also identified by the inspection team, it was generous in its grading of the key questions.

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

170. Overall, the school's self-evaluation report accurately identifies the main strengths and shortcomings of the school.

171. Detailed monitoring, evaluation and review were introduced at the school in May 2005. Key features of this process are:

- a time-table of activities across the year, involving all staff;
- defined roles for heads of subjects and the leadership team;
- an active role for the leadership team in observing the quality of education provided by each subject area;
- a schedule of rigorous faculty reviews, led by the line manager, to identify progress and areas for improvement;
- the use of Performance Management to help in the identification of the professional development needs of teachers;
- reviews of teachers' planners and pupils' books by heads of faculties; and
- increasingly detailed analysis of a range of data.

172. This process has strengths and, for both the school and most subject areas, has accurately identified successes and the aspects requiring attention. In some subject areas there is good practice which results in good standards. There are some shortcomings:

- the role played by subject leaders is variable both in its rigour and effectiveness;
- at school level, where strengths are accurately identified, the judgement of the level of quality is occasionally optimistic;
- not all the structured links between heads of subjects and the leadership team are effective;
- some shortcomings, identified in this report, such as behaviour and some teaching standards, have not been identified with sufficient rigour and consistency; and
- the value of self-evaluation in supporting improvement is not fully accepted by a small number of teachers.

173. Detailed monitoring arrangements are in place to support newly qualified teachers, teachers on initial training and teachers in the early stages of their careers.

174. Lesson observations by the leadership team use a common format, which allows the school to prepare a useful analysis of the strengths and shortcomings of teaching and learning across the school.
175. Self-evaluation and annual faculty reviews lead directly to an agreement on subject development plans. These may be modified following the publication of examination results. This process then informs the preparation of the school development plan.
176. In the past two years the school has developed the use of a good range of standardised and predictive data. This is now used to set targets for subject areas and individual pupils, and its use allows a greater degree of challenge to be built into the target setting process. Most targets set for examination attainment in 2005 were not met. Those recently set for 2006 and 2007 should be more accurate whilst still encouraging genuine improvement.
177. Major changes were made to the curriculum and time-table for September 2005. Prior to decisions being made the school sought the views of parents, pupils, staff and governors. Such consultations are planned for future developments.

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

178. During the summer term, the senior leadership team, working from their analysis of the self-evaluation process, prepare a draft of the school development plan which includes the identification of any follow-up strategies to support priority areas. Following examination results, early in the autumn term the leadership may amend the identified priorities in the development plan. The school and governors then review the plan before it is formally adopted.
179. The school development plan is a detailed and clear document that identifies the tasks, the desired measurable outcomes, responsibilities, time-scales and costs. The priorities it identifies are appropriate to the current needs of the school.
180. In the last two years, major decisions have been taken on the organisation, curriculum and management of the school. These decisions were informed by consultation and analysis. As yet it is too soon to make a secure judgement on the impact of these decisions.
181. There has been mixed success in addressing the Key Issues identified in the previous inspection report:
  - all the subjects where standards were judged to be satisfactory have either maintained standards or improved them;
  - there are improved IT resources across the school and IT is now a time-tabled subject in key stage 3;
  - the teaching of literacy has improved although further development is needed;
  - the time in most tutor periods is now used effectively;
  - the new Learning Resource Centre and Library is a significant improvement and is a major resource in the school
  - the health and safety issues identified at the time have been resolved; and
  - the school still does not comply fully with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

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

<b>Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
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### Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

182. In its self-evaluation report, the school awarded itself a grade 1 for this question. The inspection team did not agree with a number of judgements made by the school. In particular, the shortcomings in staffing and only adequate value for money achieved overall.
183. There are sufficient staff for the school to run efficiently. There is a good balance between experienced teachers and those new to the profession. The good features can be summarised as:
- most teaching staff are appropriately qualified to teach all aspects and subjects to meet the needs of the curriculum ;
  - the finance officer and administrative staff ensure that the office, reception and reprographics areas run efficiently;
  - technician support in science is good;
  - five newly appointed guidance mentors, each appointed to a separate year group, are developing their roles effectively; their impact is yet to be fully evaluated;
  - two basic skills mentors provide good support to pupils in the basic skills intervention scheme;
  - six learning support assistants, appointed by the unitary authority, work well with individual pupils; they work effectively with teachers;
  - in the main school, there are a further three learning support assistants; two work effectively with classes and there is one in the social inclusion unit; they provide good assistance to the number of pupils with learning and behavioural problems; they work effectively with teachers;
  - a librarian co-ordinates and supervises the use of the learning resource centre well; and
  - the caretakers, through the contact with the PFI company, contribute to the efficient routines of the school.
184. The shortcomings within staffing include:
- long term absences of teachers in English, ICT, science and Welsh, and difficulties in the recruitment of staff to cover these absences; and
  - some inadequacies in the provision of technician support.
185. The quality and quantity of learning resources for key stage 3 and key stage 4 in the six subjects inspected have good features and these outweigh shortcomings.
186. The initial distribution of capitation is insufficient for some departments to run effectively. However, some departments receive additional amounts that result from bids and subject improvement plans.

187. The good features include:
- a good range of text books and equipment across the subject areas;
  - a wide range of subject booklets produced by the school itself;
  - the small number of interactive white boards and interactive projectors are used effectively to enhance classroom teaching;
  - a range of visiting speakers enhance pupils learning experiences;
  - a good provision of ICT equipment that caters for the teaching of discrete ICT lessons; when available, these rooms are used by subject areas across the curriculum;
  - a varying range of computers in some subjects across the curriculum; and
  - the very good provision of ICT equipment in design and technology for CAD/CAM.
188. The shortcomings in resources for key stages 3 and 4 include:
- the limited access to the ICT rooms for some subjects across the curriculum;
  - the small number of interactive white boards and interactive projectors to enhance teaching;
  - in art, low basic capitation restricts the range of teaching materials; and
  - laptop computers are available for classes to use, but short battery life occasionally curtails usage and slows progress.
189. In the sixth form, there is a good range and supply of text books and equipment. During lessons, when there are no classes, students use the learning resource centre for independent learning and research.
190. The learning resource centre (library) is adequate in size for the number of pupils on roll but its book stock is under the recommended levels. However, it makes good use of the schools' library service provided by the UA. It is used by subjects across the curriculum and by pupils for independent learning and research. The learning resource centre has 25 computers and these are used by pupils for presentation of work, course work and research on the internet. The centre successfully encourages pupils to read. It is open at lunch and break times.
191. The school is situated on a large site. The present building is one of three schools in the Unitary Authority that have been built through the Private Finance Initiative (PFI).
192. Overall, the school buildings provide good basic rooms and facilities. The relationships between the school and the PFI company are positive and there is a lot of good will shown by both parties.
193. The accommodation is sufficient for the numbers of pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4. It caters for both the academic and pastoral needs of the curriculum.
194. The quality of the accommodation is very good and includes:
- rooms that cater well for all class sizes;
  - displays of pupils' work and subject information in corridors and classrooms, provide an effective and sometimes stimulating learning environment;

- the sports hall and the astro-turf that are very good facilities;
  - the good toilet facilities for pupils ; and
  - the school grounds and buildings that are kept clean, and well maintained.
195. During the inspection, areas of concern arose and these could be classed as shortcomings. These included:
- lack of immediate action to address unexpected low temperatures throughout the school;
  - several weeks into the athletics season, a running track had not been marked out for use by the physical education department; and
  - the excessive litter in and around the school during the school day.
196. Accommodation for the sixth form is good and caters well for the academic and pastoral needs of the curriculum. It includes a study room for independent study and a large common room. Both rooms are appropriately furnished. In the learning resource centre, an area complete with computers, is available for independent study and research.
197. Overall, the deployment, management and development of staff are very effective. The good features include:
- the deployment of most staff making good and efficient use of their time, expertise and experience;
  - training for teachers that is linked with Performance Management, the school development plan and the needs of departments and individuals; it is well coordinated;
  - training courses attended by teachers are evaluated and used to the benefit of the school;
  - programmes and support for newly qualified teachers and for initial teacher training students are good; they are detailed and thorough; and
  - the professional development of support staff.
198. There are constraints on the timetable caused by the need to employ 12 part-time teachers.
199. The school has completed plans for the workload agreement. It has made provision in the time-table for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment (PPA).
200. The head-teacher and leadership team have consulted all interested parties and, with the governing body's approval, have finalised their structure for the new teaching and learning responsibilities.
201. The financial management of the school is good. The head-teacher and the governing body's committee for finance manage the available budget efficiently.
202. The following good features are evident:
- the finance committee meet regularly and it receives detailed up to date reports from the head-teacher;

- financial decisions are well focussed on the curriculum needs and the educational priorities identified in the school development plan;
  - the school pursues all grants and sponsorship that are available;
  - the head-teacher and heads of department have immediate breakdowns and current balances from the finance officer; spending is effectively monitored; and
  - the very minor recommendations of the recent auditors report have been addressed.
203. On the whole, the school uses its resources and finances capably. The school gives value for money, although this would be enhanced by improved achievement by pupils and students.

## Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

### English

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

#### Good features

##### Key Stage 3

204. Many pupils listen attentively to the teacher and to one another. They usually respond to instructions and demonstrate knowledge of their reading by taking part in class discussions. Able pupils in particular pose questions, justify decisions and refer to evidence to support their ideas.
205. Many collaborate well in small groups. Girls are usually more co-operative and listen more respectfully to the views of their peers. They engage in group work for a range of purposes, including the planning of presentations and to analyse texts. Able pupils usually use Standard English in presenting their ideas to the class and in explaining their work.
206. All read a range of challenging fiction, media texts, poetry and drama including texts which reflect the culture of Wales. Most read aloud with accuracy and fluency. Many read with expression. Pupils with additional learning needs are well supported in the development of reading. They use good word attack skills and good progress is made. All skim and scan for information and there is good recall of what is read. Most have a good knowledge of plot and characters in set texts. Able pupils in particular interpret what is read and understand inference as well as the use and effects of devices used by authors.
207. All understand the conventions of different genre, especially in narratives. Most know, understand and use technical vocabulary.
208. Pupils write in a range of forms and for a variety of purposes. Most adapt tone and language to audience. Portfolios of best written work demonstrate that pupils can improve writing by planning and drafting. Presentation skills are variable but usually the work of girls is better than that of boys. Able pupils structure their work well and often produce writing of good standard. The majority of pupils with additional learning needs make good progress.

##### Key Stage 4

209. Pupils usually listen to the opinion of others. Most are able to explain their work clearly and engage readily in discussions. The most able sustain concentration and collaborate well in small groups. They negotiate and reach agreement on a range of issues such as how to effectively collect and present data.

210. All read a wide range of texts. They have a clear understanding of plots, characters and themes. There is a developing confidence in understanding linguistic devices and the codes and conventions of play scripts and media texts such as advertisements and situation comedy. Able pupils often have a good understanding of technical vocabulary such as lexis and genre.
211. Pupils write for a range of purposes. They extend their writing when required and adapt the range of sentences, vocabulary and structure to purpose and target audience. For example, in writing and compiling magazines. All evaluate their own work and most do so effectively. The most able write fluently. Their structure and organisation is often good.

### **Post 16**

212. There is good knowledge and understanding of a range of challenging literary and non-literary texts. Students of literature demonstrate a clear understanding of characters, plots and themes as well as the cultural and historical backgrounds of texts. There is good progress in the use and understanding of linguistic and literary terms.
213. Students demonstrate understanding of different kinds of writing. They develop good skills of critical analysis in relation to ability and their narrative writing is often imaginative. All make good progress and they respond to the diagnostic comments written by teachers to improve their coursework. By the end of both the Language and Literature courses, writing is usually well organised. Most students put forward their opinions clearly, demonstrating good skills of cross reference to support ideas. Able students write with fluency and confidence and their 'free' writing is particularly good. The coursework of these students is well structured, detailed and includes insightful comments, appropriate references, accurate use of terminology, mature vocabulary and clear expression.

### **Shortcomings**

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

214. The achievement of girls is significantly better than that of boys.
215. A significant number of pupils of middle and lower abilities:
- lack motivation and concentration. They are not always fully engaged in lessons and do not make productive use of their time;
  - do not always listen with respect; and
  - do not always extend their writing. They often fail to develop ideas, add detail and sometimes leave writing unfinished. They do not draft effectively, so that errors of punctuation, spelling and grammar persist.

### **Post 16**

216. In a few cases, students lack confidence in written work. They have difficulty in expressing their views clearly and coursework can lack depth and detail.

<b>Welsh second language</b>
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<b>Key Stage 3</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	Good features outweigh 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**

217. Pupils' understanding of the language is good. They respond accurately to the constant use of Welsh by their teachers in all classes. When they are willing to respond to their teachers' extensive use of incidental Welsh outside formal exercises it has a significant impact on improving standards in oral work.
218. The majority of pupils listen carefully to their teacher and their peers thus improving their language skills. They extract information accurately and quickly from tape and video.
219. Standards in speaking are good. Pupils recall language well to help them use new vocabulary. They produce dialogue on a range of subjects using a variety of language patterns.
220. Standards in reading are commensurate with ability. The highest achievers read aloud meaningfully with good intonation. Pupils across the ability range extract information from a range of texts accurately and quickly to use in their written or oral work.
221. Pupils write for a range of purposes. Standards, in relation to ability, are good. Pupils who sit the GCSE examination at the end of key stage 3 show a sound grasp of grammar and a wide vocabulary.
222. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when they are in small classes where they receive the support they need.

#### **Key Stage 4**

223. All pupils follow the full GCSE course. Examination results are consistently above the national average. A high percentage gain an A\* or A grade. Pupils on the accelerated Welsh course complete the AS course at key stage 4 which illustrates the good standards achieved.
224. Standards in speaking are good. Pupils discuss a range of topics in groups and pairs. The highest achievers speak Welsh spontaneously in class discussions.
225. Standards in writing are good. Pupils express opinions on a range of social and moral issues. They write in extended forms accurately and use figures of speech effectively.
226. Pupils research a range of sources to use in their oral and written work.
227. Pupils with special educational needs achieve good results in the GCSE examination.

### **Post-16**

- 228. Students engage in natural conversation with the teacher, peers and visitors.
- 229. Students make accurate, purposeful notes on set works. Folio work shows the ability to adapt their style of writing to suit audience and purpose. They structure their extended documents well. The highest achievers write imaginatively and accurately.
- 230. Students express opinions on character and themes in set works. They justify their viewpoint with appropriate evidence.
- 231. Students use ICT effectively to present their coursework.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **Key Stage 3**

- 232. In lessons, a significant number of pupils are not sufficiently on task to improve their language skills.
- 233. When working in groups or pairs pupils rarely speak Welsh outside the structured exercises, although they have the ability to do so.
- 234. The written work of a minority of pupils is often incomplete and contains too many errors of spelling and grammar.
- 235. Some pupils are unwilling to extend their written and oral responses.

#### **Key Stage 4**

- 236. A minority of pupils do not apply rules of mutation in either oral or written work. They frequently use English words in written work.
- 237. Pupils are reluctant to use incidental Welsh. They are unwilling to use their considerable language skills outside formal exercises.

### **Post-16**

- 238. Students are often too dependent on their teachers to correct basic errors of grammar in their written work.

<b>Mathematics</b>
--------------------

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

### **Good features**

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

- 239. A majority of pupils across the age and ability ranges answer questions orally with clarity, understanding and accuracy.

- 240. They have spatial awareness and understand the concepts of area and volume using appropriate units.
- 241. They are developing an effective knowledge of number, vulgar fractions, decimal fractions and percentages and the relationship between them. These pupils can apply this to situations in every day life.
- 242. Most pupils use calculators appropriately.
- 243. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- 244. Pupils' progress in learning is enhanced by readily available extra support which pupils use well.

### **Key Stage 3**

- 245. The more able pupils in Y7 have a good basic knowledge of probability and can apply this knowledge to game situations.
- 246. Pupils in year 8 can collect data using tally charts, illustrate the data using various graphs and calculate the data averages. The more able pupils can extend this work to investigations.
- 247. Most Y9 pupils can calculate energy bills including standing charges and value added tax. The more able pupils can apply their knowledge of finance to make price comparisons in everyday situations.

### **Key Stage 4**

- 248. Good standards of coursework have contributed to the levels of GCSE passes.
- 249. The more able pupils in year 10 have a good basic understanding of vectors and can apply this knowledge to solve problems.
- 250. Average ability pupils have a basic knowledge of axes in co-ordinate geometry and are able to draw and identify enlargement of figures.
- 251. Less able pupils understand and can apply appropriately their knowledge of different averages in everyday situations.

### **Post 16**

- 252. Year 13 students have a good understanding of a range of concepts in pure mathematics, mechanics or statistics. They can adapt this knowledge to solve associated questions.
- 253. Year 12 students are making good progress in understanding the basic concepts of pure mathematics, mechanics or statistics.
- 254. Students' learning is enhanced by readily available extra support.

## Shortcomings

### Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

- 255. 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 and learn from their errors.
- 256. In some classes across the ability ranges, the more able pupils are not always challenged in lessons and do not achieve their potential.
- 257. In a small number of classes disruptive pupils slow down the rate of progress and achievement within the classes.
- 258. A small number of lower ability pupils have limited numerical skills.
- 259. In a minority of classes pupils lack confidence in their mathematical abilities and are too dependent on teacher support.
- 260. A small number of pupils lack motivation are content with minimal achievement.

### Post 16

- 261. There are no significant shortcomings.

## Modern foreign languages

### (French, German and Spanish)

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

### Good features

#### Key Stage 3

- 262. Pupils make good progress in French in Y7. They identify quickly the main points in authentic recordings. Most pupils are keen to speak and many are developing good accents.
- 263. By Y8 a majority talk competently about simple things they have done in the past as well as things they do now. They develop a good vocabulary. Their written messages are clear and unambiguous.
- 264. Pupils in Y9 listen and read competently in French. They speak briefly with confidence and write short pieces.
- 265. Pupils with special educational needs usually do as well as their classmates: some for example are amongst the highest attainers in Y8.
- 266. Pupils beginning German or Spanish in Y9 make good progress in the time available, regularly adapting and re-using what they have learned so they can say and write as much as possible.

#### **Key Stage 4**

267. Pupils taking French and German in Y10 listen carefully and speak with confidence. Boys especially are keen to contribute to discussions in German. Both boys and girls are developing a good understanding of relevant grammar to help them use more complex structures and improve their accuracy.
268. Audio recordings of Y11 show that pupils usually communicate effectively.
269. Most pupils write coherently. The ablest pupils write both formal and informal letters well, using appropriate vocabulary, verb tenses and style. Such work is particularly evident in French where some of the highest attaining pupils introduce colloquial expressions to give their work a more authentic flavour.
270. Recent GCSE examination results have been lower than in Wales as a whole. The entries encompassed the whole range of ability, including pupils with special educational needs. Nearly all pupils took a language and this represents a much higher proportion of the cohort than is typical. The results therefore represent good achievement.

#### **Post-16**

271. Most students, in both languages, read and listen well to authentic materials. They generally respond to questions clearly and unambiguously
272. The majority of students in both Y12 and Y13 write effectively in French or German, using a range of appropriate language to convey their meaning.
273. The ablest students research and use evidence well to support their arguments. They make use of authentic expressions to give a natural feel to their essays and articles.

#### **Shortcomings**

#### **Key Stage 3**

274. Some lower attaining pupils in Y7 and particularly in Y8 offer very short responses only. They do not listen well enough to say more or to acquire better accents.
275. In French, by Y9, pupils do not confidently speak or write much about past activities or future plans. They do not often use different tenses together. A minority of pupils speak at length or write longer pieces.

#### **Key Stage 4**

276. Lower attaining pupils in both languages lack confidence in speaking and writing. They use a narrow range of words and structures, and their command of grammar, especially of verbs, is not secure.

#### **Post-16**

277. Recordings of Y12 students indicate that in French they have limited confidence and competence when dealing with unfamiliar and unpredictable situations.

278. Many students in both languages in Y13 hesitate much more than is normal when speaking.
279. The grammar and word order of lower attaining students is greatly influenced by English. When writing at length they show a limited sense of shape and do not use evidence well to support their arguments. They tend not to concentrate well enough to improve their own learning.

## Geography

<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 Stages 3 and Key Stage 4

280. The majority of pupils demonstrate a sound grasp of geographical terminology. They apply geographical vocabulary with accuracy in a variety of contexts.
281. Pupils' geographical skills are good. They use atlases, written texts, graphical data and maps with confidence to complete set tasks.
282. Y7 pupils have a thorough understanding of the hydrological cycle and its processes. They can explain how water moves through the ground in natural catchment areas and the contrasting systems of water movement in urban areas. Most pupils apply the relevant terminology with accuracy.
283. Pupils display a good understanding of the changes that have occurred in Welsh upland farming during the course of the last fifty years. They fully appreciate the causes, and the impact these changes have had on the social and economic structure of individual farmers and local communities.
284. Knowledge of place is well developed, especially through the pupils' extensive study of aspects of the physical, economic and social geography of Wales.
285. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They demonstrate a good grasp of quite difficult geographical terminology and apply a range of geographical skills to complete set tasks.
286. Skills of enquiry and observation are developed and strengthened by fieldwork activities undertaken mostly in the local area. The detailed individual assignments completed on accessibility, land use and the impact of the tourist industry on Conwy are particularly good.
287. The majority of pupils are confident in the analysis and interpretation of raw data. They present their findings accurately in written, diagrammatic, map and graphical forms using ICT wherever appropriate.

288. Pupils demonstrate a sound understanding of urban land use patterns as applied to Conwy. They acquire an appreciation of the changes that occur in land use patterns over time and can offer reasons for these changes.

### **Post 16**

289. Students demonstrate good research skills and use geographical vocabulary accurately to complete assignments of good quality.

290. Understanding of map skills and statistical techniques is good. Students present their work in a variety of formats in response to specific requirements. Individual assignments reflect the students' confidence in the use of a comprehensive range of ICT applications.

291. Students display an understanding of complex geographical concepts. They have a good grasp of the tri-cellular model. They understand the effects of the changing location of high and low pressure systems and their associated climatic hazards.

292. Individual assignments demonstrate considerable depth of knowledge, understanding and skill in the subject. Good map and graphical work is a strong feature of their studies.

### **Shortcomings**

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

293. A minority of pupils in key stage 3 has an insecure grasp of some geographical terminology.

294. A small number of exercise books, particularly those of low ability pupils, have missing and incomplete work.

### **Post 16**

295. There are no significant shortcomings

<b>Religious education (including religious studies)</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

### **Good features**

#### **Key Stage 3**

296. Pupils across the ability range have good knowledge and understanding of the units of work they study, which reflect the requirement of the local agreed syllabus.

297. They know how and why believers from different religions worship, meditate and celebrate their faith.

298. They can recount, describe and explain the features of creeds, religious practices and human experiences, orally and in writing.
299. The less able can give a clear account of the beliefs and activities of different religious traditions. By Y9 they can explain what it means to be committed to a particular religion and its values.
300. The more able can explain why people respond in different ways to challenging issues in their personal life and in their community.
301. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well relative to their ability.

#### **Key Stage 4**

302. Pupils possess good knowledge and understanding of the syllabus of the short course that they study.
303. They consider issues such as prejudice in society confidently and honestly, referring to religious practices as well as their own experiences and views.
304. Less able pupils have an appropriate vocabulary of key terms. They contribute regularly in the lessons, showing a good understanding of the issues discussed.
305. The higher achieving pupils respond thoughtfully to moral and social issues within their community and understand that religions can influence the way believers respond.

#### **Shortcomings**

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

306. The writing of middle achieving pupils is often perceptive but they seldom write at length or draw on their own experiences.
307. A minority of pupils have incomplete work which hinders their progress.

##### **Key Stage 4**

308. Pupils do not sufficiently relate their own experiences to lesson concepts and ideas.
309. In the middle achieving group, pupils' conceptual development is clearly in evidence, but tends to be less pronounced than the acquisition of knowledge.

##### **Post 16**

310. No lessons were taught during the time of the inspection.

## School's response to the inspection

The school welcomes the inspection team's identification of many good features found in the school. Particular examples are:

- when compared with the previous report, most of the inspected subjects have maintained or improved standards;
- students in the sixth form have good linguistic skills, understand their work and can explain and justify answers they give;
- across the school, pupils with special educational needs make good progress;
- most pupils and students listen attentively in lessons and contribute to discussions;
- pupils' and students' ICT skills are generally good, and the most able use computers skilfully;
- there are good links with the school's feeder primary schools, with local secondary schools and the local college. There are constructive links with the local community;
- the head-teacher, who is in his second year at the school, supported by the leadership team, has a clear view of the future direction of the school; and
- the school's self-evaluation procedures give an accurate identification of the main strengths and areas for improvement.

The school is reassured to find that the inspection team has identified broadly the same issues for improvement as had been established from the school's own self-evaluation process. The school is confident that its stated priorities for the coming year, namely:

1. improve learning for all pupils by better teaching;
2. improve learning for all pupils by clarifying individual, team and whole school roles and responsibilities; and
3. improve learning for all pupils by developing a sense of belonging and an effective support network for pupils,

will allow it to address all the recommendations in this report. As the inspection team's report has described, many changes and initiatives have already been put in place this year by the school, but it is too early for their impact to be measured.

These changes include:

- a new school day and timetable;
- a newly formed senior leadership team;
- an expanded pastoral support system;
- a new house system to support achievement;
- systems to monitor standards of teaching and learning;
- target setting based on prior attainment; and
- assessment and reporting.

The school is grateful to have received this useful external audit to augment its own internal self-evaluation as it moves forward to fully achieve its stated aims.

## Appendix 1

### Basic information about the school

Name of school	Ysgol Aberconwy
School type	Secondary
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Morfa Drive Conwy
Postcode	LL32 8ED
Telephone number	01492 593243

Headteacher	Mr. David Wylde
Date of appointment	September 2002
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Mr. David Ross
Reporting inspector	Mr T. O'Marah
Dates of inspection	22 May to 25 May 2006

## Appendix 2

### School data and indicators

Year group	Y 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y 10	Y 11	Y 12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	205	191	219	218	189	80	63	1165

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	57	12	64.36

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	18.1 : 1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	-
Average teaching group size	23.28
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	77.75%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole School
Term 1	92.95	93.63	92.41	90.59	87.29	86.82	83.0	90.89
Term 2	92.46	93.03	91.01	92.40	69.5	74.03	82.91	87.08
Term 3	94.89	93.62	92.57	91.84	88.67	94.09	92.93	92.49

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	8%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	97

## Appendix 3

### National Curriculum Assessment Results End of Key Stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2005															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 228															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	1	0	0	0	0	7	32	45	13	2	6	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
	Test	School	0	2.6	0.4	0.4	0	0	5.3	23.7	38.2	21.9	7.9	0	2.2
		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	1	0	0	0	0	3	22	19	43	12	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
	Test	School	0	3.6	0	0	0	0	3.5	18	20.2	39	15.8	0	3.5
		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	0	0	0	3	13	32	42	10	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
	Test	School	0	2.1	0	0	0	0	2.2	14.5	36	31.6	12.7	0	3.1
		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	62.8%	In the school	58.0%
In Wales	58.0%	In Wales	57.0%

## 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	191
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	38

<b>The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2005:</b>	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	91%	87%	87%
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	47%	52%	52%
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	88%	84%	87%
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	31%	36%	38%
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	99%	98%	97%
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	76%	76%	76%
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	97%	93%	93%
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	3%	7%	7%
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	1%	3%	3%
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	-	-	-
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	-	-	-

<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	131
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2005	53
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2005	12

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	66%	68%	68%
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	98%	96%	94%
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	18	20	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 May 2000. In addition, meetings were held with the staff of the school, with parents and with the governors. 36 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 125 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.

It was not possible to observe lessons for Y11 and Y12 pupils because of their examination commitments.

During the week the inspection team saw 12 form registration periods and one assembly, 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
Terence A O'Marah	<b>KQ1: KQ5: KQ6.</b>
J Kerry G Jones	Behaviour: Attendance: Work Related Education: Partnerships with Industry.
Alan V Edwards	<b>KQ7: Numeracy: <i>Mathematics.</i></b>
D Lynn Bithell	Assessment: Literacy: Personal and social education: <i>English.</i>
S Glyn Davies	<b>KQ2: KQ3: General observations.</b>
Heddwyn Evans	<b>KQ4: Religious education.</b>
E Mary Crandon	Bilingualism: <i>Welsh</i>
C Huw Llewelyn	Sustainable development: <i>Geography.</i>
Martyn S Williams	<i>Modern Foreign Languages.</i>
Anne Newman	General observations.
Eric Forster	General observations
Keith Hopkins	Information technology: General observations.
W D Keith Davies	General observations
Margaret E Herbert	Personal skills: General observations
Dewi Rowlands	School Nominee

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### Acknowledgement

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