

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

**Ysgol Friars
Lon y Bryn
Bangor
LL57 2LN**

School Number: 6614036

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by

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Ysgol Friars 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 Friars took place between 05/12/05 and 09/12/05. An independent team of inspectors, led by Gareth Hawtin Buckland undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

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

“There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a **Standard** inspection.”

Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

LIST OF ACRONYMS IN COMMON USE

AS	Advanced Subsidiary
CAT	Cognitive Abilities Test
CSI	Core Subject Indicator
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
IT	Information Technology
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
KS	Key Stage
LEA	Local Education Authority
LEDC	Lesser Economically Developed Countries
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
MEDC	More Economically Developed Countries
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages
NC	National Curriculum
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
PI	Performance Indicator
PSE	Personal and Social Education
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
SATs	Standard Assessment Tests
SDP	School Development Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SMT	Senior Management Team
UA	Unitary Authority
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
Y	Year

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Ysgol Friars is an 11-18 co-educational bilingual comprehensive school. There has been a Friars school in Bangor since 1557 but the school has existed in its present form since 1999, following the amalgamation of the upper and lower schools which were on split sites. The school provides a wide range of specialist facilities in purpose built teaching blocks and benefits from a recently completed all-weather outdoor training pitch.
2. The school serves the City of Bangor and the outlying areas of Abergwyngregyn, Talybont, Llandygai and Felinheli. However, the school also receives large numbers of applications for admission from as far afield as Criccieth and Holyhead and is currently oversubscribed in several year groups, its roll having increased from 837 to 1312 in the last decade. Some eight per cent of children speak Welsh at home. Fourteen percent of pupils are registered as entitled to free school meals. Nineteen percent of the pupils are on the special needs register, of whom one fifth have a statement of SEN. The majority of pupils on the SEN register have specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, although there is a small number with physical disabilities. In recent years pupils' reading ages as assessed on entry to the school indicate that between 25% and 36% have a reading age at least a year below their chronological age. The school admits pupils from a wide range of backgrounds, including Communities First wards. Almost 40% of sixth formers are eligible for Education Maintenance Allowances. Bangor is a university town and has a large regional hospital, both of which attract overseas staff and students, many of whom send their children to Friars. While only four per cent of the registered pupils are from a non-white ethnic background, this is a significant proportion of such children in the county.
3. The school's aims are:
 - To seek first and foremost to nurture a civilised society which stresses human and moral values and to develop self-respect, tolerance and concern for others.
 - To equip each individual to lead a full life in the bilingual community in which he/she lives.
 - To enable each individual to develop intellectual, creative, social, practical and physical skills.
 - To teach about achievements and aspirations in the arts, the sciences, religion and the search for a better society.
 - To enable each individual to acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills relevant to adult life, in a rapidly changing world, continuing education and the creative use of leisure.
 - To help each pupil to understand the world in which he/she lives and the interdependence of individuals, groups and nations.

- To develop the necessary skills and understanding in the following areas of experience:
Linguistic
Mathematical
Scientific
Technological
Religious/Moral
Aesthetic/Creative
Personal/Human/Social.

4. The last school inspection was carried out in the Autumn Term of 1999.

The school's priorities and targets

5. The school has a one-year development plan containing ten priority areas. These are:

- raising standards of achievement in English;
- consolidating and expanding upon developments in teaching Welsh as a first language;
- reviewing the provision of vocational courses in KS4 to take cognisance of the Learning Pathways 14-19 document;
- creating and implementing a new cross-curricular map for ICT in KS3 to take into consideration the developments in hardware in the school;
- addressing the current concerns around the collection of coursework for GCSE in KS4;
- extending the revised Teaching and Learning policy, with particular emphasis being placed on meta-cognition, and incorporating elements of either literacy or numeracy into schemes of work;
- establishing a *Learning to Learn* project in Y7, highlighting meta-cognition and incorporating the use of the broader key skills;
- promoting the development of basic skills across the curriculum with a view towards being awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark;
- reducing the number of temporary and permanent exclusions; and
- addressing the repair and maintenance tasks noted in the development plan.

6. Many of the priority areas have qualitative targets and these are either included in the school development plan or in targets which are accepted by the governors as an appendix to the plan.

Summary

7. Ysgol Friars is a good school in which pupils enjoy their learning experiences. It is a school that has developed a good ethos for the education of all its pupils. Since the last inspection, the school has worked hard in introducing a number of measures designed to raise standards and improve the quality of the learning experience of the pupils. It has also worked hard at creating a suitable climate and environment for successful teaching and learning. As yet, apart from the *Learning to Learn* Project, a number of initiatives are not fully implemented and the full impact of the measures taken is not being felt across the school. Nevertheless, there are distinct signs of significant improvement in a number of key areas.

Table of grades awarded

8. The table below summarises the judgements made by the inspection team. They agreed with the grades awarded by the school within its school's self-evaluation report apart from Key Questions 3 and 4, where the school awarded itself a Grade 1.

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

Standards

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

9. The standards of achievement vary across the subjects inspected as well as within each subject. The following table summarises the inspection findings:

Standards in subjects inspected			
Subject	KS3	KS4	Sixth Form
Science	2	2	1
English	2	2	3
Information Technology	3	2	2
MFL	2	2	1
History	2	2	2
Geography	2	2	1

10. As indicated above, standards are at least good across both key stages and in the sixth form in science, MFL, history and geography. In the other two subjects, good standards are achieved in KS3 and KS4 in English and KS4 and the sixth form in IT; elsewhere, good features outweigh shortcomings.

11. In summary, the following percentages within each grade across the school were allocated:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
17	65	17	1	0

12. These figures are significantly above the national target of 50% of lessons to be graded 1 or 2. Furthermore, they represent a big improvement on the findings in the previous inspection, when 51% were graded as either 1 or 2. In lessons inspected, the highest percentage of high grades were awarded in KS4, followed by the sixth form and KS3. However, overall, the differences are not significant and improvement has been demonstrated in all key stages.

Key Stages 3 and 4

13. Whereas standards of achievement and attainment have improved since the last inspection, in general the improvement in achievement is not yet fully reflected in attainment at the end of KS3 in NC test results and in GCSE examinations.
14. Achievement is generally good across the school, with good progress being made by pupils of all abilities.
15. In general, the school targets for the end of each key stage are met or exceeded in mathematics and science, while in KS3, the English targets are not met.
16. Standards in key skills are generally good or very good across the school. The *Learning to Learn* project has further helped to focus the school on the development and implementation of the broader key skills, placing these skills explicitly at the heart of the curriculum. This has also given a context for improvement in communication skills, which are often very good.
17. Written work is variable in quality across the school, although there are some very good examples of sustained writing in many curricular areas. While most writing is sound, standards are not as good as those in speaking, listening and reading. Presentation of work in exercise books is not consistently good and extended writing is not always evident. There is little evidence of common standards and expectations across departments.
18. Although numeracy has been the focus of recent whole-school initiatives, there is not yet strong evidence of a focus on it across the curriculum. Nevertheless, there are good examples of numeracy work in geography, technology and science, where pupils display good standards.
19. Information and communications technology is not used extensively across the school. The good ICT skills of many pupils in KS3 are not developed and improved in a coherent way across the curriculum and thus progress in standards is patchy. No examples of the use of the interactive whiteboards were observed. However, many pupils use the computers in the library at lunch times and are keen to undertake research using the Internet.
20. The bilingual skills of pupils are good. They are successfully developed both within Welsh lessons and outside the classroom. All signs are bilingual and are produced to a high standard.
21. Broader key skills are developed in a planned way across the school and standards are good or very good. The *Learning to Learn* initiative has resulted in pupils becoming familiar with the process of reflecting on their own learning.

22. Pupils are very good at working collaboratively with a range of partners. Problem solving is an aspect of many lessons across the curriculum.
23. In the sixth form, the school organises a formal Key Skills programme and this has high levels of participation.
24. The results in NC tests at the end of KS3 have shown significant improvements since the last inspection. However, the progress over the past four years has not been consistent; results in mathematics and science have shown a more consistent pattern of improvement than those in English.
25. In 2005, the CSI for the school was very similar to the figure for 2004 and slightly below the 2003 figure. However, in all core subjects, performance in 2005 was better than both the local and national norms, while the CSI was close to the LEA figure and above the Wales average.
26. When comparing the school with schools of similar intake, in 2004 the school was in the third quartile for CSI, the second quartile for science, the third quartile for mathematics and the fourth quartile for English. The school dropped into a lower FSM band in 2004 after consistently being placed in the first quartile in earlier years.
27. In KS4, examination results have fluctuated with the cohort over the past four years. The results in 2005 produced a drop in the figure for the five A*-C grades from 62% in 2004 to 60%; the equivalent figures for five A*-G grades dropped from 96% to 92%. However, the 2005 figures in these categories were above the all-Wales and LEA averages.
28. Compared with similar schools, the GCSE results placed the school in the first quartile for most indicators in the years from 2002 to 2004. The figure for five A*-C grades placed the school in the second quartile in 2004, with the school dropping into a lower FSM band.
29. There was a significant reduction in the proportion of pupils obtaining a Grade A*-C in the three core subjects in 2005. The figure of 41% remains above the national figure but lower than that of the LEA.
30. Results in science, mathematics, French, history, drama and second language Welsh compared well with school and LEA averages. However, the performances of pupils in English, art, CDT, music, physical education and information technology remain significantly below average.
31. Across both KS3 and KS4, progress varies across subjects and between classes. On analysing the residual graphs for the school, the best progress, compared to other subjects within the school, and LEA figures, occurs in science and second language Welsh. Pupils make least progress in English, English literature, music, physical education, first language Welsh and information technology.
32. The most-able pupils are generally challenged to produce work of a high quality both in their oral and written responses. Pupils with SEN succeed well in their designated classes and the good use of IEPs by all teachers and LSAs ensures good levels of participation and achievement by these pupils in mainstream classes.

33. The vast majority of pupils behave responsibly and demonstrate outstanding behaviour in and around the school with the emphasis being placed firmly on the classroom as a place in which learning best takes place in an orderly atmosphere.
34. Attendance and punctuality remain on-going areas for improvement. Although an improvement in attendance rates is evident and the attendance for the three full terms prior to inspection is satisfactory at 91%, the school recognises that it needs to improve in this area.
35. The punctuality of the majority of pupils at the start of the school day and individual lessons is good. However, a minority of pupils arrive late to registration and there are some late arrivals to lessons. Procedures for managing such situations are in place although implementation of these procedures is not always consistent.

Sixth Form

36. Overall, standards in the sixth form are good, with a significant amount of outstanding work in all subjects observed. On the whole, compared with similar schools, students make good progress in mathematics and the science subjects and lesser progress in art and design.
37. The good standards observed in lessons are reflected, for the most part, in attainment. In 2005, A-level pass rates were slightly above the LEA averages and significantly above the national figures.
38. Sixth formers play an active role in the general life of the school. Standards of reading in Y7 are significantly enhanced by the active role of large numbers of sixth formers in the weekly, paired reading sessions.
39. The development of key skills in the sixth form is extremely good. The school organises a formal Key Skills programme. There are high levels of participation with up to 200 portfolios being submitted for assessment in the sixth form. Timetabled tutorial sessions are provided.
40. Sixth-form students have mature attitudes towards their work, taking responsibility for their own progress. They are well-prepared for their lessons and utilise the facilities available to consolidate their learning.
41. Students gain an in-depth knowledge of the course requirements. They speak confidently, using appropriate terminology, and are prepared to argue, analyse and evaluate.
42. Students demonstrate well-developed personal, social and learning skills. In general, they are confident, articulate and mature young adults who relate very well to their teachers, their peers and visitors to the school.
43. Good behaviour, attendance and punctuality are the norm. Students are mature enough to acknowledge the contribution these attributes make to their learning.

The quality of education and training

44. There are a number of outstanding features, particularly:
 - the high quality of teaching;
 - the range and quality of the extra-curricular provision;
 - the careers' and work-related activities, and
 - the support and guidance given to pupils, including those with SEN.

45. In the six subjects inspected, the percentage of grades awarded for the quality of teaching in all lessons observed in KS3, KS4 and the sixth form were:

Key Stage	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
3	27	52	18	3	0
4	19	69	12	0	0
Sixth form	40	40	20	0	0

Key Stages 3 and 4

46. Overall grades for the quality of teaching in all lessons observed in KS3 and KS4 are:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
27%	54%	17%	2%	0

47. Since the last inspection, the school has worked hard to transform teaching and learning and these efforts have met with considerable success. This is reflected in the grades awarded for teaching throughout the inspection.
48. Current development is embedded in a project entitled *Raising Achievement in KS3*. This well-managed initiative has placed the 'broader' key skills of problem solving, working with others and self-improvement at the centre of teaching and learning.
49. The *Learning to Learn* project has made pupils aware of preferred learning styles. It has also produced genuine cross-curricular collaboration. All of this generates pace and gives both teachers and pupils a shared interest in learning.
50. Teachers use a wide range of strategies to engage pupils actively in their own learning. There are good relationships and a purposeful working atmosphere in almost all classes. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils in terms of work and behaviour; the pace of the majority of lessons is brisk.
51. Planning is good. Given the positioning of key skills at the heart of the curriculum, considerable demands are placed on subject planners. Schemes of work are comprehensive and key skills are shown to be integral to learning activities. The general quality of planning goes some way to explaining the progression in learning observed in so many lessons.
52. The learning needs of pupils of differing abilities are well met overall. However, the least-able pupils are occasionally disadvantaged, either by lack of access to learning materials or by the inappropriate pace of teaching.
53. In some classes in KS4, the pace of pupils' learning or the range of their learning experiences is impeded by excessive teacher talk.
54. Arrangements for monitoring pupil progress within school are good and are supported by extensive and effective links with partner primary schools.
55. Formative assessment in KS3 and KS4 is based on attainment and effort grades. These grades are gathered twice a year from all subject departments in Y7 and Y11 and three times a year in Y8-10. Data is then placed on the school database and these data are used, not only to track pupils' progress against CATs predictions, but also to generate an internal 'performance indicator' (PI) to detect fluctuations in individual pupils' progress.

56. Particular care is taken when tracking progress made by pupils with SEN. Progress review is undertaken by year team leaders in consultation with parents and pupils.
57. The quality of pupils' self and peer assessment is very good.
58. Particularly good planning for formative assessment occurs in science, and good practice exists in MFL, physical education, geography and history. The marking of pupils' work at GCSE level across the curriculum is both detailed and diagnostic and includes targets for improvement.
59. Pupils generally understand what attainment and effort grades mean and can explain the targets they have been set for improvement.
60. School reporting of pupil progress meets statutory requirements. Reports are informative in terms of both subject-specific progress and general effort.
61. Despite generally good practice in the planning and conduct of formative assessment across the KS3 curriculum, a lack of consistency exists in the use of assessment to improve the performance of the pupils. Most departments use the agreed grading system to record achievement on specific assessment units but there is considerable variety in the diagnostic quality of accompanying comments. This is particularly the case when providing guidance on how to improve performance. Consequently, there is a mismatch between the school's desire to promote self-assessment amongst pupils on the one hand, and variation in the extent and quality of the formative information given to them on the other.

Sixth Form

62. There are many outstanding features in particular in relation to the quality of teaching, with 36% of lessons being awarded a grade 1. The grades awarded for teaching in the 20 lessons observed in the inspected six subjects are as follows:

Grade	KQ2 %
1	40
2	40
3	20
4	0
5	0

63. The grades awarded for teaching in the 22 observations of lessons across all subject areas observed in the sixth form are:

Grade	KQ2 %
1	36
2	46
3	18
4	0
5	0

64. There are several examples of outstanding practice such as the pace, challenge and variety of teaching and learning in science lessons and the opportunities provided for students to take responsibility for their own learning.

65. Relations between teachers and students in almost all sixth form lessons observed were very strong.
66. Teaching in the sixth form is generally characterised by good preparation, extensive teacher knowledge and good levels of challenge in both classroom and homework task setting.
67. The only shortcoming observed in the sixth form was the rather limited range of teaching methods occasionally employed. Science was a notable exception to this.
68. Methods of both teacher assessment and student self-assessment are very good, with marking being detailed, helpful, and consistent.
69. Self-assessment is central to the process of raising standards in the sixth form. Joint teacher/student assessment of written essays takes place and students talk about their work with a simple, reflective confidence and a capacity for self-criticism.
70. As elsewhere, student progress is well monitored and the quality of student guidance is very good.

Leadership and management

71. The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction for the school and is effectively supported by a highly motivated SMT and a strong team of middle managers.
72. Outstanding features within this leadership include:
 - a well-established culture of monitoring and review driven through the effective link manager role from the SMT;
 - the high expectations in all aspects of school life;
 - the shared whole-school vision operating within the culture of support and co-operation, and
 - the high calibre of the staff and their continuing professional development.
73. The school has a distinct ethos in which hard work and good behaviour are the norm and a sense of community prevails. Equality for all is actively promoted and open access to the curriculum and opportunities for individuals to develop are encouraged. However, there are significant numbers of permanent exclusions in the school.
74. Links between senior and middle managers are effective in practice, in reviewing and improving performance. The practice of ideas arising from the classroom as well as originating from the senior managers reinforces the practice of communication from SMT to the classroom being a strength of the school.
75. The quality of middle management is very good overall and there is a strong sense of teamwork within departments; the pastoral management is particularly effective.
76. The professional development of staff is a clear strength of the school, with robust systems in place for ensuring staff needs are effectively and efficiently identified. The development of staff as individuals, and collectively, has had a direct impact on standards.

77. Inconsistencies within the timetable structure, particularly in relation to the length of teaching time in morning and afternoon sessions, are having an impact on the ability to deliver full course requirements in some subject areas.
78. The governing body is provided with information relating to areas such as the performance of the pupils, the finances of the school and projects being undertaken to raise standards. However, a lack of active participation in the strategic planning of the school limits the impact the governing body can make on the direction the school is taking. Limited first-hand knowledge of the school's teaching achievement and curriculum delivery restricts the governing body's capacity to undertake effectively its collective role as a critical friend to the school, capable of challenging decisions from a strong evidential basis. An example of this is in their lack of active involvement in the construction of the pre-inspection self-evaluation report.
79. Despite the accuracy of the judgements reached for grades for each key question in the self-evaluation report, there was a lack of evidence, analysis and associated areas for improvement, particularly within key questions 5, 6 and 7, which were addressed in a limited manner. The overall quality of the report was unsatisfactory. Despite this, the processes allied to monitoring and reviewing attached to the development planning in the school demonstrate the clear involvement of all staff.
80. The school has a one-year development plan, established by consensus with all staff. However, deficiencies in relation to success criteria, outcomes and financial implications, limit the capacity of the school to prioritise accurately or establish their ability to deliver the identified improvements. Furthermore, the lack of vision for the school beyond the limitations of a one-year plan restricts the capacity of the school to establish a strategic long-term perspective for the development of the school. These aspects, within the current, tight, deficit budget situation, circumscribe the ability of the school to achieve the SDP targets.
81. The funds received by the school are managed effectively and efficiently on a day-to-day basis. Heads of department manage the resources within their areas of responsibility well.
82. Members of staff are well qualified and well informed about developments in their areas of expertise as well as issues relating to learning. Their deployment is generally appropriate.
83. Accommodation is generally in good condition and well maintained. Departmental areas are identifiable by appropriate displays and the general aura around the school is one of order, cleanliness and free from graffiti; the high level of litter is a concern. Public access to the school grounds poses a potential security problem and is exacerbated by evidence of dog fouling on and alongside the footpath.
84. The budget is managed effectively and efficiently on a day-to-day basis with budget holders receiving regular statements relating to their respective financial situations. The headteacher, in discussion with the administrator, ensures this effective management of the budget. Capitation to departments, as a proportion of the school's delegated budget, is low.

85. The school is currently in a deficit budget situation and difficult decisions have to be addressed but, to date, a number of these decisions have not been finalised. Systems to analyse the impact of financial decisions on the raising of standards are not sufficiently developed at present.
86. The school and the governing body, through the finance committee, review the school's budget and all partners are aware of the budgetary pressure the school is under. However, this committee has met on only one occasion during the current financial year and the financial issues and the impact of the current financial situation have not been sufficiently explored by the governing body.
87. In consideration of the improvements made, the current financial situation in the school and the strides the school is making to continue to improve, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Progress since last inspection

88. Following the last inspection, the school has addressed many of the key issues and is starting to implement a number of aspects in all of them.
89. The development of Welsh has continued at a pace. The needs and aspirations of learners within the designated Welsh-medium groups are generally well met and the use of incidental Welsh in lessons and around the school is a good feature in the school.
90. With regards to the key issue relating to more active involvement by pupils in their learning, less teacher dominance exists within the teaching in the school and pupils are generally given much more responsibility for their own learning. However, aspects of formative assessment, in particular, written advice on what pupils need to do to improve their work, remain a shortcoming.
91. In the previous inspection a key issue was to enhance the provision and teaching of ICT across the curriculum. Although significant progress has been made in the provision of equipment and resources, many of the shortcomings highlighted in the previous inspection are still to be found in the school. Opportunities are still missed to extend pupils' ICT competence in a planned, systematic and sustained way across the curriculum.
92. A further key issue was to continue to raise standards of achievement by enabling pupils to become more actively involved in their own learning and improving the provision within mainstream classes of specialist support for pupils with SEN.
93. There has been considerable progress in both of these areas. The *Learning to Learn* initiative has resulted in pupils developing good understanding of the skills of meta-cognition. Self-assessment and reflectiveness are prominent aspects of teaching and learning in the school. Pupils work flexibly in a range of groupings and with a range of partners. Oral work is well developed and pupils are fully involved in their own learning.
94. There have been significant and successful improvements in the school's provision for pupils with SEN. Within mainstream classes the active use of IEPs has ensured that teachers are aware of the needs of their pupils, and in most cases plan accordingly. In addition, LSAs are used effectively to support children with specific needs.

95. In respect of standards in subject areas, the main criticism of English in the previous inspection report concerned attainment and progress in KS3. In general, attainment in NC tests in English has improved, not only in absolute terms (54% in 1999 to 68% in 2005) but also in relation to the figure for Wales. In 1999 the school result was seven per cent lower than the figure for Wales; however, in 2005 it was two per cent above this figure.
96. There were also references to “inconsistent opportunities for collaborative talk” in KS3. In the current inspection, collaborative talk is a strength of KS3 and thus progress has been significant. Writing was described as satisfactory and, despite explicit efforts to improve this area of English, writing is still the weakest area of English in KS3. Also, the use of computers remains inconsistent. There has been no improvement in this area.
97. The history department has explicitly addressed the improvement issue, keeping a record of, and constantly monitoring, what has been achieved. The result can only be described as outstanding. Teaching in history has been transformed by innovative strategies and commitment to whole-school initiatives in the areas of meta-cognition, problem solving and self-assessment.
98. In history also, the most dramatic improvement has been in the standards achieved in external examinations. GCSE results were well below the national average and are now above it.
99. Recruitment for both GCSE and A-level History, very weak in 1999, is now at record levels.
100. No less impressive is the improvement in standards in KS3 from ‘unsatisfactory’ in 1999 to Grade 2 in 2005. Other weaknesses identified in 1999 – levels of pupils’ conceptual understanding, of involvement in their own learning, of differentiation – are now impressive strengths of pupils’ work in KS3.

Recommendations

In order to continue the trend of improvement in the school, focusing on the following areas should be central to the school’s future plans:

- R1 further to improve standards and examination results by building on its strategies to raise standards of achievement and attainment within English and IT in KS3;
- R2 continue to develop and deliver the key skill of ICT in a coherent and planned way across the curriculum;
- R3 further improve methods of formative assessment by:
 - reviewing existing assessment tasks for consistency with valid assessment criteria, and
 - using these criteria as a basis for assessing and annotating pupils’ work, pointing out strengths and weaknesses and suggesting strategies for improvement;
- R4 address the inconsistencies within the timetable structure and eliminate the different teaching times allocated to lessons within the morning and afternoon sessions;
- R5 further develop strategies to reduce the number of permanent exclusions;

- R6 ensure the governing body develops further:
- active participation in strategic planning and the monitoring of standards and quality, and
 - its effectiveness in its role as a critical friend to the school;
- R7 establish more rigorous procedures within the SDP process to ensure:
- a strategic, longer term picture of school development can be envisioned;
 - the school and all departments have clear financial implications identified for developments, and
 - clear success criteria are established for all priorities to ensure the impact of developments on improvement and the raising of standards can be established.

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 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

101. This agrees with the school's own assessment in its self-evaluation document.

Pupils' success in attaining agreed learning goals

102. Good standards are found in all the six subjects inspected. There are outstanding features in science while no important shortcomings are found in any of the subjects in either KS4 or in the sixth form.

103. In the 80 lessons observed in those six subjects, the grades awarded across both key stages are as follows:

Grade	Standards in Subjects (%)	Standards in Subjects (%)	Standards in subjects (%)
	KS3	KS4	Sixth form
1	12	5	35
2	65	84	50
3	21	11	15
4	2		
5			
TOTAL	100	100	100

104. A summary reveals the following percentages within each grade across the school:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
17	65	17	1	0

105. These figures are significantly above the current national figure of 50% of lessons to be graded 1 or 2. In addition, they represent a big improvement since the previous inspection, when 51% were graded as either 1 or 2. In the lessons inspected, the highest proportion of high grades was awarded to KS4 but in the

sixth form, over one third of all lessons were awarded a Grade 1. Overall, the differences are not significant and improvement has occurred in all key stages.

Key Stages 3 and 4

106. Whereas both standards of achievement and examination results have improved since the last inspection, in general the improvement in standards is not yet fully reflected in attainment in SATs at the end of KS3 and in GCSE examination results.
107. Achievement is generally good across the school, with pupils of all abilities, including the most able and those with SEN, making good progress.
108. The school sets numerical targets for the end of each key stage. In KS3, these targets are met or exceeded in mathematics and science, while in English they are not met. In KS4, performance is very close to the targets that the school has set. A range of data, including CATs results, is used in order to produce these targets, which have been generally useful in focusing the school on areas for improvement. Targets are discussed in meetings between heads of department and relevant members of the SMT. Heads of department understand the basis upon which the targets have been formulated and produce departmental improvement plans which reflect these targets.
109. Standards in key skills are generally good or very good across the school. A planned approach has been taken to the development of key skills, with various initiatives being co-ordinated by a designated member of staff. This has led to significant improvements in a number of areas.
110. The *Learning to Learn* project has further helped to focus the school on the development of the broader key skills, in particular, working together and improving own performance. The placing of these skills explicitly at the heart of the curriculum has also given a context for improvement in communication skills, which are often very good. Key skills are good across all key stages and are generally apparent in the work of pupils of all abilities, including those with SEN.
111. Standards of speaking and listening are very good on the whole. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. They speak clearly and confidently in a range of contexts across the curriculum. They not only respond to questions but also raise their own questions and are capable of sustained discussion. All departments place a high value on oral skills; paired and group activity is a familiar feature of most classrooms. Pupils are not only keen to work with others but are able to evaluate their own skills and to suggest improvements. Most pupils with SEN are able to sustain discussion, and LSAs are used to support those with specific difficulties in this area.
112. Reading skills are very good. Pupils are generally able to access the curriculum and are rarely hindered by their inability to read materials that are used in lessons. They carry out independent research in many subjects and show a good sense of how material may be presented in a range of formats.
113. Reading for pleasure is evident in KS3 but is less prominent in KS4. The school library is a pleasant open-plan area that is used by large number of pupils during the lunch break. The English department organises and runs a paired-reading system. Pupils from the sixth form listen to Y7 pupils reading, and discuss their reading with them. Attendance at these sessions is very high, with

approximately 200 pupils being involved on a weekly basis. This initiative contributes positively to the good standards. Pupils with SEN receive very good support, and most teachers take note of IEP when planning their lessons.

114. Written work is more variable across the school, although there are some very good examples of sustained writing in many curricular areas. While most writing is sound, standards are not as good as those in speaking, listening and reading. Presentation is not consistently good and extended writing is not always evident in pupils' books. There is little evidence of common standards and expectations across the curriculum.
115. Although numeracy has been the focus of recent whole-school initiatives, there is not yet strong evidence of a focus on it across the curriculum. However, in addition to mathematics, there are exceptions, such as geography, technology and science, where activities such as the drawing of graphs and data capture are used extensively and where pupils display good standards. However, although there are limited opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their ability with number across the curriculum, when they do so, they are confident in applying their skills.
116. Information and communications technology is not used extensively by pupils across the school, to enhance learning experiences. Although many pupils have good ICT skills in KS3 they are not developed and improved in a coherent way across the curriculum and thus progress in standards is patchy. The school provides a range of facilities such as mobile laptop suites and banks of computers and interactive whiteboards. The banks of computers and interactive whiteboards are located in classrooms that need to be booked by teachers wishing to use them. Such usage is inconsistent across departments and thus many pupils are denied the opportunity to develop their skills outside their IT lessons. No examples of interactive whiteboards being used to support teaching were observed. However, many pupils use the computers in the library at lunch times and are keen to undertake research using the Internet.
117. The bilingual skills of pupils are good. They are developed both within Welsh lessons and outside the classroom. A wide range of extra-curricular activities involving Welsh language and culture is organized by the Welsh department to improve and extend pupils' bilingual skills at all key stages. All signs are bilingual and are produced to a high standard.
118. Broader key skills are developed in a planned way across the school and standards are good or very good. The *Learning to Learn* initiative has resulted in pupils becoming familiar with the process of reflecting on their own learning and in applying the skills of meta-cognition. They are often involved in the process of assessing their own progress and in planning for improvement. The work that goes on in subject lessons is reinforced in the school's PSE programme.
119. Pupils are very good at working collaboratively with a range of partners, while problem solving is an aspect of many lessons across the curriculum.
120. Despite the fact that there have been improvements in results in the NC tests at the end of KS3 since the last inspection, progress over the past four years has not been consistent.

121. In 2005, the KS3 CSI for the school was, at 58.7%, very similar to the figure for 2004 and slightly below the 2003 figure. Results in mathematics and science have shown a more consistent pattern of improvement than those in English. However, in all core subjects, performance in 2005 was better than both the local and national averages, while the CSI was close to the LEA figure and above the Wales average.
122. When comparing the school with schools of similar intake in 2004, which is the last year for which figures are available, the school is in the third quartile for CSI, the second quartile for science, the third quartile for mathematics and the fourth quartile for English. However, the school had dropped into a lower FSM band in 2004 after consistently being placed in the first quartile in earlier years.
123. In KS4, results have fluctuated with the cohort over the past four years. The results in 2005 identified the figure for the five A*-C grades dropping from 62% in 2004 to 60% and the equivalent figures for five A*-G grades dropping from 96% to 92%. However, both the 2005 figures were above the all-Wales and LEA averages.
124. When compared with similar schools, the GCSE results placed the school in the first quartile for most indicators in the years from 2002 to 2004, although the figure for five A*-C grades placed the school in the second quartile in 2004, as the school dropped into a lower FSM band. There was a significant reduction in the proportion of pupils gaining a grade A*-C in the three core subjects in 2005, although the figure, at 41%, remains above the national figure but lower than that of the LEA. Whereas science, mathematics, French, drama, history and second language Welsh results are comparing well with school and LEA averages, the performances of pupils in English, art, CDT, music, physical education and information technology were significantly below average.
125. The progress between KS3 and KS4 varies across subjects and between classes. From residual information provided, the best progress, compared to other subjects within the school, and LEA figures, occurs in science and second language Welsh. Pupils make least progress in English, English literature, music, physical education, first language Welsh and information technology.
126. The most-able pupils are generally challenged to produce work of a high quality both in their oral and written responses, although GCSE results at grades A*/A declined overall in several subjects in 2005. Pupils of average ability generally perform well. Pupils with SEN achieve well in the designated classes and the good use of IEPs ensures good levels of participation and achievement in mainstream classes.

Progress in learning

127. The rate of progress varies across subjects and between classes. However, in general, pupils are engaged by the work they undertake. Tasks are appropriate, containing learning experiences appropriate to ability, and pupils work at a suitable pace. In the subjects observed, there is a direct correlation between the quality of the teaching and the rate of progress made by the pupils across both key stages.
128. Pupils spend time reflecting on their own learning, often setting their own targets for improvement, both in subject lessons and in PSE sessions. Oral work and

group-work are well developed across the school and many pupils display an ability to learn independently.

The development of personal, social and learning skills

129. The large majority of pupils behave responsibly and demonstrate very good behaviour in and around the school. The focus placed on *Learning to Learn* contributes positively to the ethos of the school. Emphasis is placed on the broader key skills such as working with others and improving own performance and from their entry into the school in Y7 pupils are specifically taught these skills in a coherent and planned way. The emphasis is placed firmly on the classroom as a place in which learning takes place.
130. Attendance and punctuality are on-going areas for improvement. Although attendance for the three full terms prior to inspection is satisfactory at 91%, which represents an improvement since the last inspection, the school recognises that it wishes to improve in this area.
131. The punctuality of the majority of pupils at the start of the school day and individual lessons is good. However, there is a minority of pupils who arrive late to registration as well as some late arrivals to lessons. There are procedures in place if pupils arrive more than five minutes late for registration, although implementation of these procedures is not consistent.
132. A very comprehensive and successful work-experience programme is well established within the school. Responses from recipient employers indicate the high quality of the contribution made by the pupils during their placements.
133. The school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents although informative, do not fully comply with WAG guidelines.

Sixth Form – Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Pupils' success in attaining agreed learning goals

134. Standards in the sixth form are generally good, with a significant amount of outstanding work in all subjects observed. On the whole, students make good progress, especially in mathematics and the science subjects.
135. The good standards observed in lessons are reflected, for the most part, in attainment. In 2005, 73% of students in the sixth form achieved two or more A/AS levels at grades A – C, while 99% achieved two passes at A – E. Both these figures are slightly above the LEA averages, and significantly above the national figures.
136. Sixth formers play an active role in the life of the school. In particular, standards of reading in Y7 are significantly enhanced by the active role of large numbers of sixth formers in the weekly, paired reading sessions.
137. The development of key skills in the sixth form is extremely good. The school organises a formal Key Skills programme. There are high levels of participation with up to 200 portfolios being submitted for assessment in the sixth form. Timetabled tutorial sessions are provided and there are further plans in place to extend the process of accreditation from the sixth form into KS4 and even KS3.

Progress in learning

138. Sixth-form students have mature attitudes towards their work, taking responsibility for their own progress. They are well-prepared for their lessons and utilise the facilities available to consolidate their learning.
139. Students gain an in-depth knowledge of the course requirements. They speak confidently, using appropriate terminology, and are prepared to argue, analyse and evaluate.

The development of personal, social and learning skills

140. Students demonstrate well-developed personal, social and learning skills. In general, they are confident, articulate and mature young adults who relate very well to their teachers, their peers and visitors to the school.
141. Good behaviour, attendance and punctuality are the norm. Students are mature enough to acknowledge the contribution these attributes make to their learning.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good with no significant shortcomings

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

KS3 and KS4

143. The following table shows the quality of teaching in the KS3 and KS4 lessons observed during the inspection.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	27%	52%	18%	3%	0%
KS4	19%	69%	12%	0%	0%

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

144. The WAG, in published targets for teaching in Wales in 2002, required that 95% of lessons should be graded 3 or better, and that 50% should be graded 2 or better. As the table indicates, the school has comfortably exceeded these targets. It achieved 98% at grade 3 or better, with 81% at grade 2 or better. These figures already exceed WAG targets for 2007.
145. The school has worked hard to transform teaching and learning since the last inspection and these efforts have met with considerable success.
146. All current development is rooted in a project entitled, *Raising Achievement in KS3*. This well managed initiative has placed the 'broader' key skills of problem solving, working with others and self-improvement at the centre of teaching and learning. *Raising Achievement* has been reinforced by a further initiative, called, *Learning to Learn* – so far limited to history, geography and ICT, which recognises the vital role played by meta-cognition and self-assessment in enhancing pupil understanding and motivation, and so raising standards.

147. An indication of the school's commitment to active learning can be found in the formation of a group of teachers, in which ideas for activities involving problem-solving or meta-cognition are brought along, discussed and turned into teachable units. In practice, this means that key skills' development – in particular, that of the 'broader' key skills – drives the KS3 curriculum.
148. In several subject areas, pupils are asked to compare assessment of their own work with that of the teacher, obliging them to engage with mark schemes and the assumptions underpinning them.
149. These two initiatives have made a major contribution to raising the quality, and variety, of teaching and learning in KS3. Teachers exhibit a genuine interest in learning and what exactly they are trying to achieve through their teaching. Pupils' evaluation of their own learning experiences in KS3 indicates almost unanimous approval. More experienced teachers speak of a revival of interest in what they are doing and of critical reflection on their own performance.
150. Relations between teachers and pupils are very good, ensuring teachers can focus on the quality of their questioning and that learning can proceed at a pace, so that very little time is lost. Similarly, good relations and a willingness to work collaboratively were observed amongst the pupils themselves.
151. Teaching is characterised for the most part by very good subject knowledge and familiarity with recent developments.
152. Planning is good. Given the central position of key skills in the curriculum, considerable demands are placed on subject planners. Schemes of work are comprehensive and key skills are shown to be integral to learning activities. The general quality of planning is reflected in the progression in learning observed in so many lessons.
153. The *Raising of Achievement* project promotes different learning styles; the project has led directly to a range of learning activities that have had a positive impact on teaching and learning.
154. The *Learning to Learn* project has made pupils aware of preferred learning styles. It has also produced genuine cross-curricular collaboration. All of this generates pace and gives both teachers and pupils a shared interest in learning.
155. No lesson observations were possible in Y11 but those in Y10 revealed many of the strengths of KS3 work. Teaching and learning in Y10 are very well organised. They are characterised by clear teaching objectives, challenging task-setting and frequent willingness on the part of teachers to take risks with complex organisational models. This kind of approach was observed in history, science and geography where teachers displayed considerable skills in delivering learning that is both intensive and productive.
156. Teaching is well organised to promote equality of opportunity. Pupils readily sit in mixed-gender or mixed-ability groups and, once groups are formed, pupils help each other willingly.
157. No group of pupils in KS3 or KS4 benefits more from this focus on learning than those with limited ability or with SEN. Whilst impressively differentiated materials can be found in many subject departments, the main factor contributing to success is the active working interest teachers show in IEPs and refusal to 'water down' learning activities except as a means of access.

158. Good use is made of LSAs and signers are available in several classes to help pupils whose hearing is impaired.
159. The language needs of learners are generally well met. Some classes are designated 'Welsh medium' and are taught through the medium of Welsh. In other classes, usually taught by bilingual teachers, the initiative tends to rest with the pupil. If they ask a question in Welsh it will be answered in Welsh, an informal arrangement that seems to work very well.
160. Though the learning needs of pupils of differing abilities are well met overall, the least-able pupils are occasionally disadvantaged, either by lack of access to learning materials or by the pace of teaching.
161. In some classes in KS4, the pace of pupils' learning or the range of their learning experiences is impeded by excessive teacher talk.

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

162. Arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress are good. There are extensive and effective links with feeder schools. Formative assessment in KS3 and KS4 is based on attainment and effort grades, which are gathered twice a year in Y7 and Y11 and three times a year in Y8-10 from all subject departments; the information is then placed on the school database. These data are used, not only to track pupils' progress against CAT predictions, but also to generate a PI that is flexible enough to detect fluctuations in individual pupils' progress. Particular care is taken when tracking progress made by pupils with SEN. Progress review is undertaken by year team leaders in consultation with parents and pupils.
163. The quality of pupils' self and peer assessment is very good. It is particularly strong in science, MFL, physical education, English, history and geography, but visible in all subject areas; this includes facilities for interactive, on-line progress checking. This has been given added impetus by *Learning to Learn*, with its emphasis on meta-cognition.
164. Particularly good planning for formative assessment occurs in science, and good practice exists in MFL, physical education, geography and history. Both history and geography have portfolios of pupils' work assessed to facilitate the levelling of pupils' work in Y9. The marking of pupils' work at both GCSE and A-levels across the curriculum is both detailed and diagnostic, including targets for improvement.
165. Pupils generally understand what attainment and effort grades mean and can explain the targets they have been set for improvement.
166. School reporting of pupil progress meets statutory requirements. Reports are informative in terms of both subject-specific progress and general effort.
167. An innovative system has been devised that enables teachers to word-process their views and judgements, drawing flexibly from a range of comments, if required.
168. Despite generally good practice in the planning and conduct of formative assessment across the KS3 curriculum, there is a lack of consistency in the use of assessment to improve the performance of the pupils. Most departments use attainment and effort grades to record achievement on specific assessment

units but there is considerable variety in the diagnostic quality of accompanying comments, in particular, guidance on how to improve performance.

169. Consequently, and in a broader sense, there is a mismatch between the school's desire to promote self-assessment and meta-cognition amongst pupils on the one hand, and variation in the extent and quality of the formative information given to them on the other. When interviewed, pupils commented on the confusing effect of variation in the ways in which their work was marked; this was particularly the case in KS3.

Sixth Form

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

170. The quality of teaching was adjudged to be best overall in the sixth form, with 36% of lessons awarded a grade 1.
171. There are several examples of outstanding practice in subject areas such as the pace, challenge and variety of teaching and learning in science lessons, including opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning. The extensive use made of the target language in MFL to find out how much support they need for particular facets of language development was a strong feature in this department.
172. Relations between teachers and students in almost all sixth form lessons observed were very strong. The good features described in KS3 and KS4 are also present in sixth form lessons.
173. Two whole-school initiatives in particular are having a 'knock-on' effect on teaching and learning in the sixth form. The pervasive emphasis on meta-cognition results in sixth formers being able to discuss their work with confidence and to demonstrate higher order skills analysis and evaluation. Earlier development of literacy in KS3 and KS4 produces well-structured written work in the sixth form;
174. Teaching in the sixth form is generally characterised by good preparation, extensive teacher knowledge and good levels of challenge in both classroom discourse and homework tasks.
175. The only shortcoming observed in the sixth form was the rather limited range of teaching methods employed. Science was a notable exception to this.

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

176. Methods of both teacher assessment and student self-assessment are very good. Marking is detailed, helpful, and consistent.
177. Self-assessment continues to be central to the process of raising standards. Joint teacher/student assessment of written essays takes place in history, using a common mark scheme. Students talk about their work with a simple, reflective confidence and a capacity for self-criticism.
178. As elsewhere, student progress is well monitored and the quality of student guidance is very good.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings.

179. This grade does not correspond to the school's own self evaluation of grade 1. The inspection team judged that there are some shortcomings.
180. The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides continuity and progression between the key stages and the sixth form. It satisfies the whole range of pupils' needs and its organisation provides opportunities for pupils to reach their potential and make good progress.
181. The total teaching time is 24 hours a week. This is less than the 25 hours minimum recommended by the WAG. Apart from Monday morning, when two short lessons occur, lesson times vary from 55 minutes to one hour resulting in an occasional tendency to rush through the work during the shorter lessons.
182. The KS3 curriculum meets the requirements of the NC and for religious education. There are, however, no discrete lessons of IT after Y7; in Y8 and in Y9 IT is taught as part of PSE and also planned for in subjects across the curriculum. These limitations in the delivery of IT are hampering progress in IT development across the school. French is the only MFL offered in this key stage.
183. In KS4, pupils continue to study the statutory core subjects and select from a good range of other subjects within four option blocks. However, as a consequence of the variable lesson lengths, the time allocation within and across the four options is inequitable. Short courses are offered in a good number of subjects. Following a recent review of the curriculum, new vocational and pre-vocational courses were introduced. These extend the learning pathways available to all pupils.
184. Entry to the sixth form is open to all students where they are able to choose from a number of AS and A2 courses supplemented by a limited number of vocational courses. The programme is extended by a distance learning course and a supported self-study course. The teaching time provided for subjects in the sixth form discriminates against some subjects. Students taking subjects with reduced lesson time are allocated an additional self study lesson. Consequently, this places heavy additional demands on teachers in some subject areas such as art.
185. Schemes of work identify opportunities to develop pupils' basic skills. The school has stated its intention to apply for the Basic Skills Quality Mark. Substantial progress has been made in the development of key skills, particularly in the sixth form, where a large number of students successfully achieve accreditation at level 3 in communication, application of number and IT. Some pupils have achieved key skills accreditation at KS3 and KS4.
186. Pupils in KS3 and KS4 are issued with a homework diary; most pupils use these diaries effectively. However, the homework timetable is not always adhered to resulting in pupils, on occasions, being overburdened or not being set any work.
187. Pupils' and students' learning experiences are enriched through the wide range of extra-curricular activities available during the lunch-hour and after school and

by the many trips and visits which promote their personal and social development.

188. Pupils' spiritual development has good features. Relevant opportunities are provided across the curriculum to gain an understanding and a feeling of wonder or curiosity in creative work. However, it is not planned across the curriculum and there is some inconsistency in the quality of experience for "Thought for the Day" across tutor groups.
189. There are a number of good and outstanding features in pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Pupils respect one another, teachers and visitors to the school. They have a clear sense of what is right and wrong, are caring and willing to support others.
190. Pupils mix very well socially and work together naturally across age and ability range. They are friendly, polite and ready to help each other and visitors to the school. In the school council and many other activities they show maturity when participating in decision making or when supporting other pupils.
191. Cultural development is well reflected in aspects of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Pupils consider the implications of their own culture and compare these with other cultures and draw a balanced conclusion. They benefit from cultural visits to theatres, their own productions and visits to countries outside Wales.
192. Regular newsletters are produced for parents and two continuous assessments and one full report on pupil progress are issued annually. There is an active and supportive PTA. Parents indicate a very high level of satisfaction with the school and the home school agreement is signed by the majority of parents. The school prospectus, although informative, does not fully comply with WAG guidelines.
193. The school has close links with the community and pupils support many local and national charities. Local businesses provide good support for work experience and work related education. Good links with primary feeder schools ensures a smooth transition from KS2 into KS3. Recent agreement with the local Further Education College provides a good opportunity for some KS4 pupils to follow more practical vocational courses. These courses were identified by the school as being most likely to improve pupils' employment prospects within the community.
194. Longstanding formal ITT partnerships exist between the school and University of Wales, Bangor and Aberystwyth as well as the Open University. Prospective teachers are offered the opportunity to undertake taster sessions at the school. Teachers from the school are involved in delivering aspects of the ITT course at Bangor University. These links help to improve the quality and standards within the school.
195. All pupils throughout the school follow a well-planned and structured PSE programme. An established programme of careers education and guidance is provided in partnership with Careers Wales. A dedicated careers officer is based at the school. Careers education and guidance is part of the PSE programme. Pupils are shown how to use Careers Wales Online. All pupils in Y10 have the opportunity to participate in a week's work experience with a further week on the *Dynamo* project. Y12 students have two weeks work

experience at the end of the academic year. The school has not, as yet, applied for the Careers Wales Quality Standard.

196. An audit has been undertaken to identify how aspects of *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* are addressed within subjects across the curriculum. Opportunities are not always identified within schemes of work. Overall, pupils have a positive attitude towards the Welsh language. The Welsh department make very good contributions to bilingualism. Relevant contributions are also made by the six subjects in Y7 and Y8 where modules are taught through the medium of Welsh or bilingually. Since the last inspection the number of pupils studying Welsh first language has increased and is projected to increase substantially over the next two years.
197. Some subjects contribute well to improving pupils' understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship, however schemes of work do not clearly record areas of subject content and activities which can support this understanding. There is a recycling project and an eco group within the school.
198. Some areas of the curriculum provide opportunities for pupils to develop problem solving and decision making skills. Entrepreneurial skills are encouraged through young enterprise, the dynamo project and work experience. Throughout the school the pupils' learning experiences prepare them well to take responsibility for their own learning.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

199. This agrees with the school's own assessment in its self-evaluation document.

The quality of care, support and guidance for learners.

200. The school is a happy and caring community. Parents and pupils value the civilized ethos of the school.
201. Relationships between the school, parents and the community are very strong. The induction programmes for new pupils is good as is the relationship the school has with its partner primary schools with curricular links in several subject areas are well established.
202. All members of staff show care and concern for the pupils. The outstanding relationships between the staff and the pupils are very strong features of the ethos of the school.
203. A clear, defined, pastoral care system is successful in monitoring pupils' academic, personal and social development.
204. The school council is an active and effective body that gives the pupils a meaningful avenue to be heard and effect change.
205. The school has been successful in improving attendance. Registers are taken electronically and meet statutory requirements. A minority of pupils are not always punctual in the morning or to lessons.
206. There is an effective and well-documented discipline system. Correct procedures are followed in the case of pupils excluded temporarily or

permanently for unacceptable behaviour. Year team leaders and their staff work hard to support pupils that are in danger of exclusion.

207. Pupils are well aware of the standards and behaviour expected from them and the vast majority respond in a very positive manner.
208. The school makes effective use of the support services available and there are examples of year team teachers working with different agencies to support individual pupils.
209. In Y9 and Y11 pupils are well supported and offered appropriate guidance to help them choose the courses that are right for them. The work of the Careers Wales advisor is well integrated into the school curriculum and pupils and students from the sixth form value the advice they receive.
210. There is a well-planned programme of PSE, careers and key skills taught during extended registration periods, discrete lessons and through subjects of the curriculum. The national frameworks for both PSE and careers education and guidance are followed.
211. Child protection procedures are well established with clear guidelines for all staff.
212. Health and safety issues and risk assessments are undertaken conscientiously. Some issues were reported to the headteacher during the inspection.

The Quality of provision of additional learning needs

213. Good information from primary schools, together with assessment of pupils on entry to the school, successfully identifies pupils who need additional educational support.
214. The pupils identified are appropriately placed on the different stages of the school's register of special needs. The register is reviewed regularly and effectively.
215. Good use is made of the information gained to formulate appropriate IEPs. The IEPs include realistic targets for improvement and useful strategies to improve performance. In subjects there are good examples of the IEPs being used to plan lessons to meet the needs of the pupils and help them achieve their targets.
216. Annual reviews of statements and transitional reviews are carried out in accordance with statutory requirements.
217. A good and effective range of provision and support is provided for pupils with additional educational needs. The SENCO ensures that all mainstream teachers are well informed and have suitable strategies available to meet the needs of these pupils. All Y11 pupils on the register of SEN gained external accreditation last year.
218. Learning support assistants offer outstanding support for individual and small groups of pupils. They work closely with subject teachers, SENCO and relevant outside agencies to ensure that pupils make good progress.
219. Hearing impaired and partly sighted pupils are very well supported and are integrated naturally to school life. Across the subjects of the curriculum they are making good progress.

220. A large group of pupils with specific learning difficulties receive appropriate additional support from a specialist teaching resource.
221. "Successmaker" is very well organised by a LSA. The vast majority of the 120 pupils following the programme are making very good progress in gaining reading and spelling skills.
222. Over 100 pupils in Y7 benefit from the Buddy reading scheme with Sixth form students. Pupils enjoy reading their books and make good gains in their fluency and understanding of the stories.
223. The SENCO offers outstanding leadership and the department has made very good progress since the last inspection.

The quality of provision for equal opportunities

224. The school is successful in creating a climate where pupils are free from harassment and discrimination. Pupils and parents are confident that the school would respond promptly and efficiently to such instances.
225. Pupils and students from ethnic minority groups are integrated naturally into the daily life of the school. A number of subjects successfully provide specific opportunities for pupils to learn about racism and human rights.
226. The school monitors and compares the examination results of boys and girls. All subject options at KS4 are available to boys and girls and the school challenges stereotyping when advising pupils on their options at the end of KS3 and KS4.
227. The school's policy and procedure for dealing with oppressive behaviour are effectively implemented. A number of students from Y12 have been trained in counselling and they play an important role in dealing with incidents when they occur.
228. There are good working relationships with a wide range of external agencies. The two pupils in the care of the UA have relevant education and social plans.
229. The school has paid due regard to the requirement of the Disability Act and have identified with the UA one of the school buildings requiring modifications to allow access to pupils and students with physical handicap.
230. The school achieves good levels of success in supporting pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Year team leaders work closely with staff, parents and relevant outside agencies. Sanctions and expectations are made clear to all pupils and contribute to the outstanding behaviour in and around the school.
231. The number of permanent exclusions is substantially higher than those within the UA and Wales. Within the school's process that potentially culminates in permanent exclusion, pupils who have been referred to the exclusion unit for three days receive good support and guidance from the LSA in charge of the unit. Records show that the vast majority of the pupils are successfully re-integrated into mainstream classes. However, there is no alternative additional support or alternative strategies in place to fully meet the needs of the minority of pupils who continue to exhibit challenging behaviour to avoid further permanent exclusions.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

233. The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction based on continuous improvement of pupil learning, a safe, secure learning environment and a strong discipline policy including sanctions and rewards. He is supported by a motivated and efficient SMT.

234. The SMT link with middle managers is of the highest quality with a well-developed positive role for the link SMT member. The SMT has strong staff support and allows ideas and issues to rise from the classroom as well as providing direction from the top. The line of communication from SMT to the classroom teacher is a strength of the school.

235. There is a strong middle management team which embraces, supports and drives initiatives to improve the learning of pupils. The *Learning to Learn* project recently disseminated throughout the school from the pilot stage is having a positive impact on standards.

236. Expectations are high in all aspects of the school. Regular monitoring, both formally and informally, ensures expectations are achievable and achieved. The school is successful in promoting the academic potential of the pupils, their interests and aptitudes, through a wide-ranging extra-curricular programme; their personal development is well supported through an effective pastoral organization.

237. Equality of provision for all is actively promoted. Access to the curriculum and opportunities for all to develop as individuals is encouraged by the practices and procedures operating within the school. A positive, secure and safe learning environment is at the heart of the ethos of the school.

238. Practices in school demonstrate a whole-school, shared vision operating within a culture of support, cooperation and teamwork. However, a shared vision through the articulation of a long-term strategic plan for the school is lacking.

239. The school takes appropriate cognisance of national priorities through programmes such as the Key Skills Scheme, the *Learning to Learn* project, sustainable development and global citizenship and bilingualism. Partnerships have been forged with institutions of further education, especially Coleg Menai, in the provision of courses in KS4.

240. Following its rigorous process of reviewing and planning, the school sets annual targets for improvement involving all staff members; targets set are realistic and challenging.

241. The school places considerable emphasis on its programme for the professional development of staff. The systems in place are robust, ensuring the identification of needs by regular monitoring and the provision of appropriate training programmes. The *Raising Standards* project, introduced in 2001, has allowed the school to establish an extensive, in-house team with considerable

expertise. The organisation for the development of staff as individuals and groups is a strength of the school. This has had a positive impact on standards.

242. Staff appraisal and performance management are in place and are functioning effectively.
243. The support programme for NQTs is comprehensive, covering all aspects for the professional development of NQTs. The fully-planned programme featuring the 'Aspects for Independent Learning' project, a mentoring scheme and action plan, is delivered by the professional tutor and other experienced personnel as appropriate.

How well governors or other supervisory bodies meet their responsibilities

244. The governors are provided with extensive information relating to the performance of the school particularly with reference to pupil performance and financial matters. However, they were not actively involved in the recent self-review process.
245. First hand knowledge of the school's teaching, achievement and curriculum delivery is limited. The system of link governors is not linked to individual departments but rather cross-curricular themes. Hence there are link governors for SEN, equality, disability and child protection.
246. The existence of committees is restricted, reducing the governors' contribution to the overall development of the school. The governing body is not sufficiently proactive so as to be a valid critical friend to the school.
247. At present, the governing body provides limited support as a critical friend and in the role of monitoring of standards and quality.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

How effectively the school's performance is monitored and evaluated.

249. The cycle of planning adopted by the school meant that the inspection team was not able to receive a full self-evaluation report for the current academic year. However, the team was provided with an interim report and, although this self-evaluation report provided an accurate picture of the school's own performance in four of the key questions, it was lacking in evidence, analysis and areas for improvement, particularly within key questions 5, 6 and 7, which were addressed in a limited manner. The overall quality of the self-evaluation report provided by the school was unsatisfactory.
250. Generally, senior and middle managers have a sound understanding of the performance within the areas for which they are responsible. This understanding is gained at a senior level through the effective link manager role that each member of the senior team undertakes. The departmental self-evaluation process effectively links into the school development cycle, providing the school with a series of clear priorities for the forthcoming academic year.
251. Much of the evidence garnered is first-hand in nature, obtained through team meetings, the scrutiny of work or direct classroom observation. This evidence is

then enhanced by a rigorous scrutiny and evaluation of the annual performance data achieved by the pupils.

252. At a departmental level, all staff are involved in the self-evaluation process, reviewing their work and the outcomes arising from its delivery. Well-informed judgements are made on the basis of this range of data and information, assisting them in understanding the trends of performance over a period of time.
253. Leaders attach importance to the views of parents/carers and pupils and their views are sought on many issues relating to the school, as well as the wider community served by the school.
254. The processes of monitoring and review attached to the development planning process in the school clearly demonstrate the involvement of all staff and in some subject areas such as science, geography and history, this process is an outstanding feature of each department's working practice.

The effectiveness of planning for improvement

255. Leaders and managers make good use of the information gleaned from the departmental self-evaluation process. The system resulting in the identification of school priorities is a strength of the school; the SDP informs the departmental plans while, simultaneously, the departmental plans influence the school plan and its priorities. At whole-school and departmental levels, good use is made of information to produce plans for future development. Variation is evident in the quality of the departmental plans and schemes of work. However, a lack of success criteria, outcomes and funding limits the capacity of the departments to prioritise accurately or establish their ability to deliver the improvements they have identified.
256. The school's capacity to provide appropriate resources and funds for delivering identified priorities is hampered by the current tight budget situation. Funds and resources are allocated to departments through a formula-based capitation allowance as well as through a bidding system for additional funds. These resource streams provide the school and departments with the ability potentially to deliver the identified priorities.
257. The development of basic skills has seen a significant impact on standards and teaching, particularly where the broader key skills are embedded in classroom practice involving the *Learning to Learn* project.
258. A number of shortcomings identified in the last inspection report, as well as through the internal procedures adopted by departments and the school, have been successfully addressed by actions taken by the school. Standards in many areas have improved and the quality of middle management has been enhanced.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

259. This grade agrees with the school's self-evaluation grade.

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

260. Staff are of a high calibre and are well-informed of current developments within their specialist areas as well as in aspects of the learning debate. However,

given the financial circumstances within the school and the PTR and contact ratio, the proportion of the school's budget allocated to staffing is generous.

261. Deployment of the teaching staff is appropriate and is reviewed annually as an aspect of the curriculum review. The teaching allocations for members of the SMT vary substantially.
262. There is a clear staffing structure with associated job descriptions for all teaching staff. The school continues to be successful in its recruitment and retention of sufficient suitably qualified and experienced staff to offer a broad range of subjects at KS4 and post-16. General staff turnover is low. In the sixth form, teaching staff are highly qualified and experienced and deliver the curriculum extremely effectively.
263. The school employs a team of support staff comprising LSAs and technicians who work effectively covering a range of duties across the school. The impact of their contribution to the raising of standards is evinced within the classrooms around the school. However, technician time in science is insufficient.
264. The funds received by the school are managed effectively and efficiently on a day-to-day basis. Departments receive regular budget statements relating to the financial situation within each department. However, the amount of capitation distributed to departments, determined by an agreed formula applied to a pre-determined percentage of the budget, is low. Nevertheless, heads of departments manage the resources within their areas of responsibility well, ensuring that all staff and pupils receive suitable resources for teaching and learning. Additional funds can be sought for curriculum developments within departments.
265. Adequate provision for ICT in central administration and departments is a key priority for the school. The need to improve access to ICT resources has resulted in additional investment in computer hardware leading towards the completion of the ICT map established by the SMT.
266. The accommodation is generally in good condition and well maintained. It is either purpose built or fit for purpose. Specialist rooms are available where necessary; departments comprise suites of rooms dedicated to specific subject delivery. This arrangement also assists in the effective year group organisation employed across the school. However, in some teaching areas, rooms are scruffy in appearance, detracting from an effective teaching and learning environment. There is no evidence of graffiti in the school but litter poses a problem.
267. A number of shortcomings in external facilities exist including one playing field with drainage problems as well as a continual problem with mud being brought into the school during inclement weather. One footpath, that provides public access to the school and its grounds throughout the day, poses a potential security problem for the school. This concern is exacerbated by evidence of dog fouling on and alongside the footpath.

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

268. Under the guidance of the headteacher, in open discussion with the SMT and the school's administrator, the school manages its budget effectively. However,

the school is currently encountering financial difficulties that have resulted in the school having a significant in-year deficit. Difficult decisions are being addressed with a manageable and accepted plan in place for reducing the deficit.

269. The general budget management and system are good and the administrator undertakes the day-to-day management of the budget well. She provides the headteacher and other budget holders with accurate assessments and summaries of their respective budgets. However, systems to analyse and review the impact of spend on the raising of standards are not sufficiently developed. This is particularly so when ensuring the appropriateness of funding allocations to departments and the resulting benefit to the pupils and impact on the school's improvement agenda.
270. The school and the governing body, through the finance committee, review the school's budget and all partners, including the LEA, are aware of the budgetary pressure the school is under. However, this committee has met on only one occasion during the current financial year and the financial issues and the impact of the current financial situation have not been sufficiently explored by the governing body. This has resulted in concerns surrounding such issues as the funding clawback by the LEA for permanently excluded pupils and the on-going dialogue regarding catering remaining areas not being planned for effectively.
271. The procedures for staff development in the school are very good. They provide all staff with opportunities for professional updating and induction and for supporting new staff. A clear and thorough process of identifying staff needs is understood and respected by all staff. Departmental training needs and those of each teacher, arising from the professional development interviews, are identified and met. The Better Schools Fund (BSF) provides a resource for this training, albeit the level of funding restricts the potential training available to staff. Generally, staff have taken good advantage of funding from the General Teaching Council for Wales in order to support their continued professional development.
272. Despite some variation in the overall quality of school and departmental plans, targets for improvement are generally challenging and focused on improving standards and quality. The quality of some of the departmental plans is outstanding.
273. Nevertheless, there are several weaknesses in the SDP that require attention if the true improvements arising directly from the implementation of the plan can be determined and evaluated. There is a lack of accurate financial implications for each priority and this, allied to a shortage of success criteria, limits the school's ability to determine the efficacy of the selection and order of the priorities established. Consequently, the school is unable accurately to determine whether or not it is capable of delivering the priorities established. Furthermore, without these features in the SDP, leaders and managers are unable to determine whether they can provide sufficient resources to ensure their objectives are met.
274. At present, the SDP is a one-year operational plan that has no direct link to an established, strategic, longer-term plan. The implementation of a plan on a one-year cycle is not conducive to the school establishing a coherent improvement plan for longer term developments or for establishing success criteria for

projects, such as the *Learning to Learn* project currently embedded in KS3, over an extended period of time.

275. Overall, taking into account the improvements in standards that have taken place, the school's current funding situation and the strides the school is making to resolve the financial situation, the school provides good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English

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

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

Post-16: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key Stages 3 and 4

Good features

276. Oracy is good in both key stages. Pupils contribute positively to discussion in a wide range of contexts. They also listen attentively to the teacher and to each other.

277. Pupils are rarely passive. They answer questions with enthusiasm and also ask questions in order both to clarify points and to extend their thinking.

278. Pupils work collaboratively with a range of partners and are skilled in managing their own groups independently. They are able to talk about their oral work and frequently make suggestions of areas that might be improved.

279. Pupils sustain discussion, probing and developing key ideas. Lower ability pupils and those with SEN maintain their focus on tasks set by the teacher.

280. The great majority of pupils speak clearly and accurately and are confident when making presentations to the class.

281. Reading is good in both key stages. On the whole pupils read accurately, fluently and with appropriate expression.

282. Reading for pleasure is a very good feature in KS3. Pupils display enthusiasm and knowledge of a wide range of challenging fiction and non-fiction texts.

283. Large numbers of Y7 pupils attend a weekly, paired reading session, where they read to and with older pupils. They show confidence in reading aloud and talk about their book choices with intelligence and fluency.

284. In both key stages, pupils show good understanding of what they read. They show an increasing ability to explore texts for implicit as well as explicit meanings and respond to their reading in a range of ways, both oral and written. Many of these responses are detailed and perceptive.

285. Towards the end of KS3, and through KS4, pupils show increasing skill in examining texts in detail, using a range of strategies such as annotation. Many pupils show persistence in pursuing complex meanings.

286. Many pupils in KS3 write with enthusiasm and commitment, in a range of formats, styles and registers.

287. In KS3, pupils use writing to respond to a range of stimuli and develop a good understanding of the characteristics of various text-types. In the best examples pupils draw explicitly on skills that they have learned in earlier lessons.
288. In both key stages, there are some outstanding examples of imaginative writing, where ideas are developed with subtlety and sensitivity.
289. In KS4, coursework files are conscientious. There are many examples of sustained and purposeful writing among pupils of all abilities. Pupils revise and re-draft their writing and present it appropriately.
290. Across both key stages pupils develop an awareness of aspects of their work which need improvement. In the best cases, pupils are using strategies they have learned in order to develop technical features of their writing, such as spelling.

Shortcomings

291. In KS3 writing is not as impressive as speaking, listening and reading. In some classes relatively little sustained writing is evident. Spelling, punctuation and sentence construction require additional attention.
292. In both key stages, the challenging ideas that emerge from high quality discussion do not always translate into the writing that is finally produced by pupils.
293. In KS4, pupils' writing in timed situations is significantly weaker than the work that is produced as a result of the drafting process. This inevitably places a limit on attainment.
294. In both key stages, attainment as measured by GCSE and KS3 tests, lags significantly behind what pupils are achieving in the classroom.

Post 16 - Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features

295. Most students are willing and able to contribute to classroom discussion and to probe issues emerging from literary texts. They listen attentively to each other and to the teacher.
296. On the whole, students show sound knowledge of the set texts. In Y13, the knowledge of many students is outstanding.
297. Some students use a range of relevant and incisive literary terminology in appropriate ways, when discussing texts.
298. The most-able students show persistence in exploring complex ideas, supporting their arguments with well-chosen examples and evidence. They show confidence in challenging assumptions and show sensitivity to subtleties of tone.
299. Some students write lengthy and sophisticated responses to complex questions.

Shortcomings

300. The reading aloud of some students is hesitant and lacks appropriate expression.

301. Some students struggle to articulate complex ideas orally and in writing. In particular, they find it difficult to distil the essence of their discussion into written responses.
302. In Y12, students are too heavily dependent on the guidance and scaffolding provided by the teacher. They lack the broader context of knowledge within which to discuss texts effectively.
303. Students have a limited sense of the language of drama. Discussion of drama texts focuses too heavily on word by word analysis at the expense of a wider sense of the play.

Science

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

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

Post 16 Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Key Stage 3 and 4

Good features

304. The vast majority of pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of topics covering all the aspects of science.
305. Many pupils across the ability range, including those with SEN, make good progress because they have the confidence to answer questions and to raise interesting ones of their own.
306. Able and average pupils have good recall of previous work which enables them to move on to the next stage of learning.
307. Pupils' practical skills are well developed and they work purposefully and safely. Most display an understanding of variables and the essentials of a fair test.
308. Pupils make good progress in their investigative work. They develop a thorough understanding of their strengths and weaknesses during preparation for science coursework.

Shortcomings

309. In class discussions, some pupils do not provide extended responses to questions.

Post-16 - Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Outstanding Features

310. Students have a very good understanding of examination requirements and assessment criteria. Examination results are consistently high, representing outstanding progress in relation to students' ability.
311. Most students apply themselves enthusiastically, showing a positive attitude towards their studies. They demonstrate outstanding interest in their work.
312. Students work well together, share ideas and contribute thoughtfully to discussions. This enables them to develop further their independent learning skills.

313. Students complete practical tasks systematically and methodically. They record their observations appropriately and use ICT competently to plot graphs and lines of best fit.

Good features

314. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of biological principles as a result of completing practical investigations.

Information technology

Key Stage 3: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

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

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

Key Stage 3

Good features

315. In KS3, pupils manage a computer well and understand many of its functions. They use the mouse with confidence and demonstrate competence in handling menus and icons, and in the loading, saving, printing and retrieving of their work.

316. Pupils communicate information well and are effective in their use of word processing and desktop publishing applications. They are able to make use of information obtained from a variety of sources including the Internet.

317. They produce good work when combining text and images. They plan their work carefully and take time to draft and re-draft their final outcomes. They use IT to process, present, share and exchange information, to promote creative work and enhance its presentation.

318. Pupils are aware of some of the social, economic, ethical and moral issues raised by the use of IT and the impact it has on people's lives.

319. Less-able pupils make good progress within structured, modified tasks.

Shortcomings

320. Some work is done on modelling and the creation, maintenance and interrogation of databases. However, there is little evidence of this knowledge being applied in a worthwhile context and in challenging situations.

321. The most-able pupils do not achieve sufficiently at the higher levels of the NC, for instance, applying their skills in a variety of worthwhile contexts and to increasingly challenging situations and problems.

Key Stage 4

Good features

322. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of computer systems and the component parts and peripherals including the range of input devices for human interaction and data capture.

323. Pupils are able to explain the range of IT applications and the effects these have on society.

324. They plan and generate some interesting and challenging project work that requires research, problem solving and perseverance.
325. They can identify realistic problems, collect a wide range of data, test their validity and evaluate their solutions to an appropriate standard.
326. They have a good understanding of the theoretical aspects of their tasks and are able to explain and discuss their work using an appropriate technical vocabulary.
327. As in KS3, the less-able pupils make good progress within structured, modified tasks.

Shortcomings

328. There are no important shortcomings at KS4.

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

Good Features

329. Students successfully develop a comprehensive range of ICT skills through their project work.
330. They use a range of applications to access information and apply data and can handle information effectively through the use of appropriate software packages.
331. They can identify realistic problems, collect a wide range of data, test their validity and evaluate their solutions to an appropriate standard.
332. Students have a sound understanding and knowledge of the theory relating to computer systems and are prepared to explain and discuss a variety of topics.
333. They can construct and use complex systems that emulate real applications in the outside world, for example, stock control systems.

Shortcomings

334. There are no important shortcomings at post-16.

Modern foreign languages

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

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

Post-16 - Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Key Stage 3

Good features

335. In KS3, pupils of all abilities demonstrate good recall of prior knowledge. They transfer language learned in another context successfully.
336. Pupils respond positively and enthusiastically to a variety of oral activities. They speak confidently and in full sentences. Pronunciation and accuracy are generally good. In lower ability groups, pupils adjust their oral responses with support. This leads to a considerable improvement in their performance.
337. Across the key stage, pupils develop good listening skills. They listen to a range of stimuli for gist and detail. They listen respectfully to one another, and in the

best examples add to one another's contributions. More able pupils in Y8 and Y9 are developing the ability to infer meaning.

338. By Y9, pupils can manipulate simple language structures with confidence. They make useful comparisons with English. Some pupils successfully anticipate the language they require for a given task or within a topic area.

339. Across the key stage, pupils make good progress in written work. They express their ideas coherently, and offer opinions and simple reasons. More able pupils can describe present, past and future events accurately.

Shortcomings

340. A minority of pupils do not take the initiative in oral work, although they respond well when prompted.

341. A few pupils in Y9 do not produce a consistently good standard of work when working collaboratively.

Key Stage 4

Good features

342. Pupils, in relation to their age and ability, continue to build on the good language skills developed in KS3. Pupils speak fluently on familiar topics. They are confident when they encounter new language.

343. More able pupils move swiftly from simple to complex language forms, replicating newly encountered structures accurately.

344. In KS4, pupils demonstrate good progression in the development of writing skills. Work is well-structured and pupils express themselves clearly. Less able pupils can adapt language from models with support. More able pupils reinforce their learning by drafting extended discursive writing on computers.

345. Throughout the key stage, pupils demonstrate increasing awareness of how language is structured. They can make simple grammatical explanations.

346. Pupils of all abilities successfully use two or more language skills in combination. They are fully engaged in the range of tasks set.

Shortcomings

347. Although they respond effectively in teacher-led oral work, very few pupils use French spontaneously.

Post 16 - Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Outstanding features

348. Standards of students' oral and aural work are outstandingly good. Students are articulate and speak at length on a range of topics. They express their views confidently and provide justification. They pay due attention to pronunciation and accuracy, and are proactive in seeking guidance.

349. Students demonstrate an increasing sophistication in their use of French and German. When working collaboratively, students display a mature attitude towards language learning. They manipulate new language with confidence and discuss the suitability of vocabulary and grammatical structures.

350. Students reflect on their own work and that of their peers effectively. They are not afraid of making mistakes and are aware of their own weaknesses. They can identify how to improve.

Good features

351. Students understand and respond appropriately to a range of authentic listening and reading texts. They rephrase, paraphrase and summarise key issues effectively. They analyse factual content in depth.

352. Throughout the key stage students write extended paragraphs from memory and from prompts. They adapt structures for their own use and express their ideas clearly. Where students request additional language, they are quick to incorporate this into their own work.

353. Students make sustained progress in the four skills. They prepare thoroughly and make effective contributions in lessons. They make notes in lessons without prompting and use these to support and develop their language skills.

Shortcomings

354. A small minority of students make careless mistakes in their written work and fail to review their work thoroughly or make effective use of dictionaries for support.

History

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

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

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

Key Stage 3

Good features

355. Pupils in Y7 show good subject knowledge which they deploy effectively as context for an investigation.

356. Pupils of differing abilities in Y7 can use their literacy skills to present well structured, extended arguments with justified, balanced conclusions. This is a strength of pupils' work.

357. Pupils understand that more than one interpretation of an historical event is possible and that both may be acceptable if supported by evidence.

358. Pupils in Y7 can think critically, not only about historical problems but also about their own thought processes.

359. Pupils in Y8 test interpretations of Henry VIII using a wide range of source materials. In doing this, they understand the difference between the amount and the value of supporting evidence.

360. Pupils in Y9 studying the working conditions of children in coalmines in nineteenth-century Wales can infer and cross-reference evidence from a set of sources. They can evaluate extracts from the Royal Commission Report of 1842 for both reliability and utility.

361. In an investigation of the motives behind the Rebecca Riots of the 1840s, pupils in Y9 use their numeracy skills satisfactorily to calculate the cost of a toll-road journey from Bangor to Holyhead.
362. Lower attaining pupils make particularly good progress. The SEN group demonstrates remarkable empathy when using visual sources to consider the predicament of unemployed factory workers in the 19th century

Shortcomings

363. In some classes, lower attaining pupils and those with SEN make insufficient progress because an inability to use learning materials to best effect.
364. In some Y9 classes, a minority of pupils make insufficient reference to provenance when evaluating source material.

Key Stage 4

Good features

365. Standards in GCSE examinations show a rising trend in A*-C grades, considerably exceeding CATs predictions for 2004 and 2005.
366. Pupils in Y10 construct 'spidergrams' to sort, analyse and re-organise information for an enquiry into the importance of coal to industrial Wales. In doing so, they are able to test the proposition that the period 1902-14 was a 'golden age' for heavy industry in Wales, so demonstrating understanding of the status of historical interpretations.
367. Pupils in Y11 take this a step further by constructing competing interpretations of the burning of the Reichstag based on critical use of a collection of source material. In the best of this work, pupils make cross-references to strengthen a case and offer perceptive, in-context evaluation of the sources used.
368. Pupils of all abilities achieve well because they are able to write at length, composing well-structured arguments.

Shortcomings

369. Despite offering well-structured written work, a minority of pupils lack confidence in source evaluation. They find it difficult to combine evidence from more than one source and struggle to make a convincing argument based on the evidence used.

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

Good features

370. The proportion of students achieving Grade C or better has risen by 19% over the past two years; the proportion gaining A-B has more than doubled in the same period.
371. Students in Y13, studying the career of Ramsay MacDonald and focusing in particular on the 'great betrayal' of 1931, show very good subject knowledge and considerable insight, for example, into the importance of oratory in the politics of the 1920s and 1930s.
372. Students in both Y12 and Y13 understand – and speak with confidence about – the relative importance of several causal factors, and of the need to interpret sources in context when using them to construct an argument – for example that

MacDonald's actions in 1931 can only be explained by reference to his cultural origins and previous behaviour.

373. Students' achievement, as elsewhere, is underpinned by their ability to write well and at length, and to explain their thinking about how to resolve historical problems.

Shortcomings

374. Students can assess the significance of historical events, but do not adequately set this kind of analysis more explicitly within a longer context.

375. Students do not always have a strategy for demonstrating, as opposed to asserting, the relative importance of causal factors to an explanation.

Geography

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

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

Post 16 - Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Key Stage 3

Good features

376. The study of the microclimate within the school boundaries and of rainfall types demonstrates the pupils' sound grasp of geographical terminology.

377. Most pupils use technical geographical terms and phrases with fluency and understanding.

378. Pupils' range of geographical skills and techniques is good. They are confident in using and interpreting maps, photographs, printed material and ITC software.

379. Most pupils have a sound knowledge of the local area. They apply the urban land use model to Bangor with confidence. Most pupils are able to match areas of Bangor to the urban zones using photographs with a high degree of accuracy.

380. The majority of pupils are competent in compiling a PowerPoint presentation on the location and characteristics of the tropical rainforests and the savanna areas. Their knowledge and understanding of the contrasts between the areas are good.

381. Most pupils understand the economic factors operating in influencing the location of shopping facilities within an urban area. They have a good understanding of how large shopping complexes can lead to the possible demise of small businesses located on the fringes of central business districts.

Shortcomings

382. A minority of pupils are insecure in the application of geographical terminology.

Key Stage 4

383. Most pupils have a secure grasp of geographical terminology with the ability to use the appropriate vocabulary with confidence and precision in the completion of assignments.

384. The impact of economic, social and political factors on the lives of people in selected parts of the world is well understood by the majority of pupils. They understand the conflicts generated by international trade in More Economically

Developed Countries (MEDC's) and Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDC's).

385. Pupils demonstrate a sound grasp of why aid is required to sustain many LEDC's. They provide examples of areas and projects where aid is directed. They have a good understanding that the provision of aid to LEDC's can also lead to considerable disadvantages.
386. Their knowledge of the location of place is good in terms of the distribution of MEDC's AND LEDC's. They plot accurately the Brandt line, explain its significance, and provide examples of countries north and south of the line.
387. Pupils' skills of analysis and interpretation of complex geographical data are good. They express their findings clearly using a variety of formats such as written, graphical, map and ICT formats.

Shortcomings

388. A minority of pupils found difficulty in understanding the concept of 'development' as applied to MEDC's and LEDC's.

Post 16 - Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Outstanding features

389. Students demonstrate an outstanding depth of knowledge and understanding of a range of geographical themes and concepts. They use maps, statistical data, graphical information and printed material with confidence to arrive at solutions to the set tasks.
390. The case study of Manchester city centre and the Trafford Centre enables the students to achieve an outstanding appreciation of the advantages and disadvantages of decentralizing retail shopping facilities. They articulate in detail how the growth of out-of-town shopping areas impacts upon city centre provision.
391. Students' grasp of the spatial patterns of urban deprivation in Liverpool is outstanding. They show a thorough understanding of the indicators of deprivation and are confident in their application to construct a choropleth map.
392. Most students have a mature approach to the subject. A number have an outstanding grasp of the issues relating to the subject. Their application of a broad range of geographical skills is very good.

Good features

393. They use complex geographical terminology and concepts with confidence. Their research and enquiry skills are good resulting in some assignments and essay work of the highest quality.
394. Most students' files are neatly and orderly presented containing notes and diagrams appropriate to their course of study.

Shortcomings

395. There are no significant shortcomings.

School's response to the inspection

The school did not provide an appropriate response in time for inclusion in the report.

Appendix A

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Ysgol Friars
School type	Secondary
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Lon y Bryn Bangor Gwynedd
Postcode	LL57 2LN
Telephone number	01248-364905

Headteacher	Mr Neil Foden
Date of appointment	1 April 1997
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Cllr John R Jones Gwynedd
Reporting inspector	Mr Gareth H Buckland
Dates of inspection	5-9 December 2005

Appendix B

School data and indicators

Year group	Y 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y 10	Y 11	Y 12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	230	213	236	213	219	100	101	1312

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	69	21	80.5

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16.3:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	N/A
Average teaching group size	21.95
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	73.6

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole School
Term 1	92.9	93.4	90.7	90.8	90.7	91.7	92.2	91.8
Term 2	92.7	92.7	91.8	89.6	89.3	95.9	89.2	91.6
Term 3	90.1	90.3	86.5	89.9	91.5	92.3	94.8	90.2

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	12%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	Temporary: 66 Permanent: 9

Appendix C

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of Key Stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2005																
Total number of pupils in Y9: 213																
Percentage of pupils at each level																
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	E P	
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	2	13	21	48	8	10	0		
		National	0	1	1	0	0	2	8	21	34	24	9	0	-	
	Test	School	0	4	0	-	-	-	10	21	26	21	17	-	-	
		National	0	4	2	-	-	-	8	20	33	23	10	-	-	
Welsh	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	8	3	0	-	
		National	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	20	34	29	10	0	-	
	Test	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	
		National	0	2	0	-	-	-	5	19	35	28	10	-	-	
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	12	21	40	23	0	-	
		National	0	1	1	0	0	1	7	19	26	32	14	0	-	
	Test	School	0	3	1	-	-	-	2	15	20	38	21	-	-	
		National	0	5	1	-	-	-	5	17	20	36	15	-	-	
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	14	33	23	26	0	-	
		National	0	1	1	0	0	0	6	20	33	27	12	0	-	
	Test	School	0	2	1	-	-	-	1	15	26	31	23	-	-	
		National	0	4	0	-	-	-	5	17	33	28	13	-	-	

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

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school	58	In the school	56
In Wales	58	In Wales	57

Public Examination Results:

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ	
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2005	185
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	44

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2005:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	93	91	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	60	58.6	52.2
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	92	90.3	85.2
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	41	45.0	38.4
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	100	100.0	97.2
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	86	83	76
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	99	97.0	92.8
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	1	3.0	7.2
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	0	2	3
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	D/B	D/B	D/B
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	D/B	D/B	D/B

For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs	
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2005	105
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2005	90
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2005	15

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	73.3	72	67.6
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	98.8	98.2	94.4
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	22.9	21.9	20.5
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	D/B	D/B	D/B
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	D/B	D/B	D/B

Appendix D

Evidence base of the inspection

Ten inspectors spent a total of 43 inspector days in the school and met as a team before the inspection. A nominee from the school joined them for the meeting and for the week itself. There was also a peer inspector, from another school during the week of the inspection.

Inspectors visited:

- 80 lessons in the six subjects and 28 in other subjects;
- Every teacher in the designated subjects at least once;
- Every department in the school at least once;
- Registrations and assemblies; and
- A sample of extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team had meetings with:

- Staff, governors and parents before the inspection began;
- Senior managers, middle managers, teachers, support and administrative staff;
- Groups of pupils representing each year group within the school; and
- The Education Welfare Officer and representatives of Careers Wales and the Friends of the school.

The team also considered:

- The school's self-evaluation report;
- Replies to the parents' questionnaire;
- Comprehensive documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection; and
- A range of pupils' work.

Inspectors held meetings with departments, senior managers and the governors during and after the inspection.

Appendix E

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Gareth Buckland (Registered Inspector)	Key questions 6 and 7
Gwynoro Jones (Lay Inspector)	Key question 4 Contributions to Key questions 1 and 3
Philip Jackson (Core team member)	Key question 1 English
Alan Kelly (Core team member)	Key question 2 history
Huw Llewellyn (Core team member)	Key question 5 geography
W D Keith Davies (Core team member)	Key question 3 science
Hefina Thomas (Team member)	science
J Thomas Evans (Team member)	Information technology and information and communications technology
Heddwyn Evans (Team member)	Special educational needs Bilingualism
Dawn Sadler (Team member)	Modern foreign languages (French and German)

Acknowledgement

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

Contractor:

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