

**Inspection under Section 28 of the
Education Act 2005**

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Ysgol Gyfun Cymer Rhondda
Heol Graigwen
Cymer
Rhondda Cynon Taff
CF39 9HA**

School Number: 6744097

Date of Inspection: 4 February 2008

by

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Ysgol Gyfun Cymer Rhondda 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 Gyfun Cymer Rhondda took place between 04/02/08 and 08/02/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by William Gwyn Thomas 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 nursery schools, 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

Contents	Page
Context	1
Summary	2
Recommendations	8
Standards	8
Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?	8
The quality of education and training	13
Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	13
Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	17
Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	20
Leadership and management	24
Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?	24
Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	26
Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	28
Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning	30
English	30
Mathematics	32
Design technology	34
Information technology	36
Geography	37
Music	39
School's response to the inspection	41
Appendices	42
1 Basic information about the school	42
2 School data and indicators	42
3 National Curriculum assessments results	43
4 Evidence base of the inspection	45
5 Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team	46

Context

The nature of the provider

1. Ysgol Gyfun Cymer, Rhondda is an 11-18 mixed, designated Welsh comprehensive school, maintained by Rhondda Cynon Taf Unitary Authority (UA). It services a wide catchment area which is mainly socially deprived and economically disadvantaged. There are 879 pupils currently on roll, including 155 in the sixth form. At the time of the last inspection in March 2002, there were 907 pupils on roll, including 134 in the sixth form.
2. There is a distinct lack of employment opportunities in the area. Eleven of Rhondda's wards are amongst the 50 most deprived in Wales. A relatively high proportion of pupils (19.4%) are entitled to free school meals; between 2005-2008, on average over 20% of pupils were receiving free school meals.
3. Pupils also represent the full range of ability. One pupil has a statement of special educational need (SEN) and a further 119 have been identified as needing some support. One pupil has been disapplied from the national curriculum (NC).
4. One point eight two per cent of the pupils come from homes where the predominant language spoken is Welsh. Ninety eight point one eight per cent come from homes where the predominant language spoken is English. One hundred per cent of the pupils speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard. No pupils receive support teaching in English as an additional language. There are three pupils who are looked after by the local authority.
5. The headteacher was appointed to the post in September 2000. The senior leadership team (SLT) is made up of the headteacher, deputy headteacher, and four assistant headteachers.
6. Vocationally based courses at key stage (KS) 4 and the sixth form have been and are being developed internally and in conjunction with other providers in the area.

The school's priorities and targets

7. The school has prepared a four-year development plan for 2004-2008. A detailed development plan for 2007/8 identifies areas for development, which encompass standards, teaching and assessment, bilingualism, the curriculum, pastoral care and guidance, management, self-evaluation and the learning environment.
8. The school also sets numerical targets for success at the end of KS3 and KS4, that in 2008:
 - 45% of pupils should reach at least level 5, in teachers' assessments in all core subjects combined, at the end of KS3 (English 60%, Welsh 66%, maths 61%, science 54%); and
 - 54 % of pupils gain at least five grades A*-C, 94 % gain at least five grades A*-G, and 44% achieve the core subject indicator (CSI). The unauthorised absence target is 1.3%.

Summary

9. Ysgol y Cymer is a good school with several very good features. They relate specifically to:
 - the use and range of teaching methods to secure the engagement of pupils;
 - the provision of a wealth of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities involving the community; and
 - the effective use of resources.
10. The school provides outstanding pastoral care and support that enables pupils to take advantage of its extra-curricular activities. The school has received national recognition for its successes in this area.
11. The school has a number of shortcomings that need attention. These include:
 - greater consistency in monitoring and improving performance;
 - raising standards in subjects which are satisfactory; and
 - ensuring greater consistency in the quality of leadership of middle managers.

Table of grades awarded

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

12. These grades match those of the school's self-evaluation report in key questions 2,3, and 7. They are lower than that which the school awarded itself, in its self-evaluation report, in key questions 1, 5, and 6 but higher in key question 4 by one grade.

Standards

13. Key stage 3 results in each of the core subjects have fluctuated between 2005 and 2007. During this period, the CSI has varied annually. In 2007, the results in English, Welsh, mathematics, science and the CSI were below the national average.
14. An encouraging aspect of the school's General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results is that during 2006 and 2007, 94% of pupils were entered and achieved at least one A*-G grade. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher grades A*/A is below national figures.
15. During the last two years, there has been a reduction in the number of pupils leaving school without a recognised qualification. The percentage of pupils gaining five A*-C/G has been above local and national averages.
16. In 2006 and 2007, girls outperformed boys in most key indicators at KS4.

17. Results at A level reflect appropriately the wide range of ability in the sixth form.
18. In the six subjects inspected, the following grades were awarded:

	KS3	KS4	Sixth Form
Mathematics	3	3	2
English	3	2	2
Geography	2	3	3
Music	2	2	3
Information Technology	2	1	1
Design Technology	2	1	2

19. In the 59 lessons observed in these subjects, the following grades were awarded for standards of achievement:

Key Stage	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	4%	67%	30%	0%	0%
KS4	32%	26%	42%	0%	0%
Sixth form	15%	62%	23%	0%	0%
Total	15%	53%	32%	0%	0%

20. The sample of lessons observed in the sixth form was very small and therefore comparisons between key stages are not reliable.
21. Overall, the percentage of lessons graded 1, 2 and 3 exceeded the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) (Vision into Action 2010 target) of standards in 98% of classes being graded 3 and above.
22. The percentage of lessons graded 1 and 2 are above the WAG's target for standards in 65% of lessons to be awarded these grades. Only design technology and information technology contributed to the percentage of lessons awarded the highest grade. Information technology has standards that are good with outstanding features in both KS4 and the sixth form.
23. There has been an improvement in standards at KS3 in design technology, information technology and geography. In KS4, standards have improved in design technology and English. There has been no improvement in standards in mathematics. None of the six subjects inspected had a standard that was below a Grade 3.
24. Throughout the school, the standards that pupils achieve in all their key skills are variable throughout the key stages. They are predominantly strong in the sixth form. The skill of working with others is outstanding throughout the school.
25. Pupils' bilingual skills are good and are clearly evident within the school community.
26. Pupils are not fully aware of what they have to do to improve in some areas of the curriculum. The target setting processes within the school are not fully embedded and require further development. Pupils of middle and lower ability underachieve.
27. A major strength of the school is the development of pupils' personal, social and moral skills that are outstanding. These features include:
- the behaviour of pupils within the school community and on cultural visits is exemplary;

- respect for staff, visitors and peers; and
 - the appreciation shown for the vast opportunities, including extra-curricular, provided by the school.
28. Pupils show good awareness and understanding of moral issues, beliefs and cultures. However, the quality of the tutor periods is inconsistent and this has an adverse impact on pupils' spiritual development.
29. Assemblies contribute to raising these standards.
30. The annual attendance rate has risen to 91% during the previous year. This figure is just below the WAG target of 93%. However, it is above the annual rate for Wales (90.6%) in 2007. It is also above the Wales rate when compared with similar schools in terms of the free school meals.
31. The school works very closely and effectively with Careers Wales and industrialists to facilitate the preparation for movement to post-16 education or the world of work. By the end of KS4, pupils are in a position to make informed choices about their futures.

The quality of education and training

32. Where teaching is outstanding:
- the quality of relationships between staff and pupils is high;
 - appropriate questioning techniques are effective; and
 - expectations are high in accordance to pupils' abilities.
33. The following grades were awarded for the 59 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected and the 42 lessons observed in other subjects.

Subject	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6 subjects	18.5%	63%	18.5%	0%	0%
Other subjects	24%	36%	29%	9%	2%
Total	21%	51%	23%	4%	1%

34. The size and nature of this sample differs from the last inspection. However, the percentage of lessons graded 1 and 2 in this inspection (72%) is above the all-Wales figures in the latest Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training report for 2005-06 of 69%. The figure is also well above that achieved in the last inspection but below the WAG (Vision into Action 2010) target of 80%.
35. The outstanding caring and supportive nature of the school's teaching and support staff has had a direct bearing on the quality of teaching. These factors contribute significantly to the very good relationships that exist between staff and pupils. The pastoral influence has not fully impacted on pupils' academic standards to date.
36. The quality of teaching in design technology and information technology is outstanding. These departments contributed significantly to the percentage of lessons awarded a grade one.
37. Where teaching is good, there is appropriate pace and resources are used well. Teachers have a good grasp of their subject knowledge and key skills are developed within the classroom.

38. There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in some subjects, in particularly, science where there are shortcomings in important areas. Inconsistencies exist both within and between subjects.
39. Where assessment practices are consistent, rigorous and accurate, departments are able to monitor pupils' progress and pupils are clear on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. There are inconsistencies in the use of assessment data, especially on how to raise standards.
40. The school's curriculum offers a range of subject options to its pupils in KS4 and the sixth form. Links with other Welsh medium schools, Coleg Morgannwg and other external providers are extending the 14-19 option menu at these key stages. The curriculum is accessible to all and provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to achieve accreditation.
41. The school provides outstanding extra-curricular activities, which enrich pupils' personal development. Many pupils also benefit from the wide range of cultural activities available, including musical activities and participating in the Urdd eisteddfodau. Excursions abroad have included language, geographical and recreational activities.
42. Pupils' key skills are developing through classroom activities. The recently appointed key skills co-ordinator has begun the process of accrediting these skills in KS3 and the sixth form. This is a good feature that is beginning to impact on pupils' standards.
43. Careers education is an outstanding feature with local employers making a substantial contribution. This ensures that work-related education is prominent within the school. These activities contribute significantly to the development of the learning core within the school's 14-19 Learning Pathways curriculum.
44. Pupils' active participation in the promotion of education for sustainable development has involved them in some activities.
45. Links with local businesses are strong.
46. There are outstanding features in the way pupils are cared for, guided and supported. There is a strong and highly effective pastoral system that is embedded in the school. It successfully supports the personal and social development of the pupil. Leaders at all levels, support staff and form teachers work effectively as a team to provide the best possible outcomes for pupils and students. This collaboration, leads to consistency in practice.
47. Transition arrangements between each key stage are carefully planned and managed. The quality of the pastoral liaison between the school and its primary feeder schools is outstanding. This close link enables pupils to enter the secondary school with confidence and settle in quickly.
48. Monitoring of pupils' attendance has raised attendance levels, although they continue to be slightly below the WAG target of 93%. There is close collaboration with the primary feeder schools and attendance tracking begins early. The school's attendance figure is significantly affected by parents taking holidays during term time.

49. The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs and those with emotional and behavioural difficulties is outstanding. Teachers diagnose pupils' needs carefully and implement a range of effective support strategies. This enables pupils with learning difficulties to leave school with recognised qualifications.
50. Overall, the school's provision for equal opportunities is strong, giving all pupils as many opportunities as possible. In spite of being located in a socially deprived area, the school has succeeded in creating a truly friendly community spirit. This contributes substantially to the pupils' outstanding behaviour.
51. The school council had had a positive impact on the school's policies for improving pupils' fitness and promoting healthy eating.
52. There is a comprehensive anti-bullying policy that is used to deal effectively with incidents. Child protection procedures are well embedded in the school.

Leadership and management

53. The headteacher has a vision for the development of the school. He has appointed new staff to his leadership team to strengthen the monitoring of pupils' academic development. The full benefits of these appointments have yet to be realised.
54. There are links from the SLT to all departments but the effectiveness of these links is variable. Departments are monitored and lesson observations are undertaken. However, quality assurance requires more rigour and remedial action applied sooner.
55. In several instances, middle managers give clear directions and are consistent in raising standards; they lead their teams or departments well. Where there is inconsistency, they do not monitor performance rigorously and pupils do not reach their full potential. There have been instances recently of continuing long-term absences among middle managers. This has impacted upon standards, especially the core subjects.
56. The newly appointed assistant-headteachers and heads of section will enhance the efficiency of the current team. Clearer lines of responsibilities and increased accountability will prevail in relation to target setting and raising standards.
57. Staff are valued and continuous staff development has a priority within the school. All are given support and training of quality. The newly appointed managers will require further training to enable them to fulfil in their leadership roles.
58. Governors understand their roles and are involved in the strategic management of the school. They are linked to departments in a supportive role. Currently, they do not undertake classroom observations. They are extensively involved in the development of the school as a community facility.
59. The school's self-evaluation processes are well embedded in the work of all staff. These procedures were developed as part of the Investors in People Award, which the school has been awarded on several occasions. The process focused staff's attention on management issues.
60. The school's self-evaluation report and the grades given by the inspection team were the same in three of the key questions.

61. There is inconsistency in the way in which middle managers use information obtained from the self-evaluation process. Managers do not use data rigorously to identify underachievement. Neither do they apply strategies effectively to counter this underachievement. Senior managers do not challenge managers sufficiently when scrutinising departmental performance.
62. In several departments, their development plans address issues identified in their evaluation processes. However, there are inconsistencies with other departments and planning for improvement is ineffective.
63. The school is well staffed. It employs suitably qualified and experienced staff, some of whom teach outside their main specialist areas. Appropriate training is given to these individuals. All support staff make a significant contribution to the strong pastoral ethos of the school.
64. The accommodation is sufficient for the number of pupils on roll, but there are shortcomings in several areas, in particular, the older building. The school makes best use of its accommodation, using display work in the classrooms and in the corridors to enhance its appearance as a learning environment.
65. The school provides its pupils with an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities through the involvement of school staff and outside providers.
66. Pupils' standards in information and communications technology (ICT) have been substantially enhanced by the considerable investment in computers since the last inspection. Many classrooms have interactive white-boards that support teaching and learning.
67. The school manages its budget allocation effectively, through the headteacher and finance officer. The governing body monitors spending appropriately.
68. Overall, the school achieves good value for money.
69. With regard to the key issues from the previous inspection, the school has made good progress in:
 - combating poor attendance;
 - reviewing personal and social education (PSE) and improving the pastoral period;
 - complying with the statutory requirements for the act of daily collective worship for every pupil; and
 - providing improved facilities for physical education and the sixth form.
70. However, insufficient progress has been made in relation to:
 - sharing the good self-evaluation practices that exist in some departments;
 - improving pupils' standards of achievement in subjects and areas of learning where they were satisfactory; and
 - developing a culture of self-evaluation to promote higher standards.

Recommendations

In order to achieve its objectives, the school should focus on the following priorities:

- *R1. Raise standards in subjects that have satisfactory standards.
- *R2. Promote the good and outstanding features to all departments by sharing best practice.
- *R3. Raise pupils' expectations by developing a more consistent process of target-setting procedures to ensure that:
 - pupils have an input to their own targets; and
 - that pupils are fully aware of what is required to improve their performance.
- *R4. Develop and standardise the use of data to strengthen the target setting processes across the school.
- R5. Strengthen the monitoring and accountability roles of managers within the school.
- *R6. Improve the rigour with which the school evaluates its progress and uses the findings to plan for improvement.
- R7. Work with the UA to improve accommodation.

* *The school development plan (SDP) addresses several of these recommendations.*

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

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

71. The school awarded itself a Grade 2 in its self-evaluation report. The grade awarded by the inspection team is one grade lower because good features outweigh shortcomings. The shortcomings relate to inconsistencies in:
- standards achieved in lessons observed;
 - trends in performance in the core subjects, and
 - departments not setting nor achieving realistic targets.

KS3 and KS4

Pupils' success in attaining agreed learning goals

72. The following grades were awarded for standards of achievement at KS3 and KS4 in the 46 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	4%	67%	30%	0%	0%
KS4	32%	26%	42%	0%	0%
KS3+KS4	15%	50%	35%	0%	0%

73. In 65% of the lessons, pupils achieve standards that have good features and no important shortcomings. In 100% of lessons, good features outweigh shortcomings.
74. Standards match the 2007 WAG target for Grades 1 and 2. The school grades are equal to the target that 65% of lessons are to be grade one or two and above the national Vision into Action 2010 target of 98% for standards to be graded one, two or three.
75. Standards associated with Grade 1 in both key stages are due to the outstanding work identified in information technology and design technology.
76. In KS4, in the six subjects inspected, standards in information technology and design technology are outstanding; standards in music and English have good features and no important shortcomings; standards in geography and mathematics have good features outweighing shortcomings.
77. In KS3, standards in geography, music, information technology and design technology have good features and no important shortcomings. In English and mathematics, good features outweigh shortcomings. Overall standards are better in KS3 than they are in KS4.
78. Results in teacher assessments at the end of KS3 have varied over the last three years (2005-2007). Overall, attainment in 2007 varied between the top 25% to below the average for schools with similar free school meals entitlement. Teacher assessments in English, Welsh first language, mathematics and science and the three core subjects combined were below national averages. Between 2005 and 2007, overall, results had fluctuated with 2006 being the best year when English, mathematics, science and the CSI were in the top 25% for schools with similar free school meal figures.
79. At KS4, in 2007, the percentage of pupils achieving five A*-C grades and five A*-G grades are close to the national but above local authority averages. When compared with similar school in Wales, the percentage of pupils in the above three categories is in the top 25% of schools with similar free school meal entitlement. In 2005 and 2007, the school's CSI results were well below local and national averages.
80. Between 2005 and 2007 the percentage of pupils achieving a grade C or above in the core subjects varied with the greatest consistency being in English. Science results over the three-year period were significantly below local and national averages.
81. Compared with their performance in KS3, pupils under performed significantly in their GCSE core subjects of mathematics and science in 2007. This contributed substantially to the low CSI at KS4.
82. In 2007, girls outperformed boys in all the core subjects and the CSI.
83. In KS4, pupils of all abilities underachieve. It is more apparent that middle and lower ability boys underachieve.
84. The school's target setting processes have improved but they lack consistency and rigour. In 2007, over 15 subject areas set realistic targets, which were not achieved by the pupils in their GCSE examinations.

85. Pupils' speaking skills in Welsh and English have improved and now have good features and no important shortcomings. Pupils' reading skills in Welsh are good in both key stages. They are better in reading through the medium of English in KS4 than in KS3. Their bilingual skills are strong as is evidenced by their use of both languages confidently in all activities.
86. Pupils' listening skills in Welsh and English have good features and no important shortcomings. However, with their writing and numeracy skills in both languages, good features outweigh shortcomings. This also applies to the skills of improving one's own learning.
87. Pupils work very effectively with one another in class. This has enabled them to raise their standards in creative and problem solving activities.
88. Standards in ICT skills throughout both key stages have good features and no important shortcomings. Access to ICT rooms is difficult and this restricts the cross curricular development of the skill. However, there is very good practice in some subjects, but it is inconsistent. The greatest progress is made in design technology.
89. The school is in the process of piloting the accreditation of the good work undertaken in key skills in KS3.

Their progress in learning

90. The overall ability of the pupils entering the school varies from year to year. Expectations and outcomes are influenced by the percentage of boys within the year group. When there is an imbalance of boys, the year group does not perform as well. Pupils do not reach their potential as they have low expectations and some have poor attitudes to learning.
91. Based on prior attainment and ability on entry to the school, the pupils in KS3 in 2007 performed in line with what was expected in the CSI. However, boys' performance was significantly lower than girls' performance in English, Welsh and science.
92. Compared with their performance in KS3, pupils did not achieve as well as was expected at the end of KS4 in 2007 in slightly fewer than 50% of their GCSE subjects. Underachievement was also evident in the other GCSE subjects. Forty-eight per cent of the cohort underachieved significantly in two or more subjects, one-third being girls. Insufficient attention is given to tackle boys' underachievement in both key stages.
93. Twelve per cent of the Y11 cohort was not entered for five A*-G subjects at GCSE examination level. Only 33% of the cohort succeeded in achieving threshold Level 2 qualifications (five A*-C) including mathematics and English.
94. One hundred per cent of the cohort was entered for one or more entry level, GCSE short course, GCSE or equivalent in 2007. Two per cent of the cohort left the school without a recognised qualification.
95. The extent to which pupils make progress varies between subjects and between different key stages. Pupil progress is better in KS3 than in KS4.
96. Pupils acquire new knowledge and skills, but the process of assessing how well they have achieved is inconsistent and underdeveloped. Pupils are not fully aware of what they have to do to improve. There is inconsistency across the

curriculum in procedures of how pupils need to improve. Written and oral feedback is variable in quality.

97. Pupils' abilities to improve their own performance are limited. Targets for improvement are given but where there is inconsistency, they are not specifically subject focused. Self-assessment is irregular.
98. The majority of pupils' key skills are developing. However, their literacy skills require further development.
99. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) achieve very good standards that are matched to their ability or better. They receive outstanding support that contributes significantly to their success.
100. Pupils receive very good induction for moving between each key stage. The careers service provides comprehensive advice about higher education and employment opportunities.

The development of their personal, social and learning skills

101. An outstanding strength of the school is the progress that pupils' make in their social, moral and personal skills. Further outstanding skills are evident in pupils' social and cultural developments. Pupils' spiritual skills are less well developed.
102. Pupils work well in lessons as individuals and very well collaboratively. They show interest and enthusiasm in their work.
103. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in most instances, both within the classroom and around the school. They show respect and behave responsibly towards one another, to members of staff and to visitors. Pupils have a high regard for their teachers because of their caring nature. The atmosphere within the school community is very calm and orderly. The school's outstanding pastoral support system facilitates very good behaviour in the school community. This contributes positively to pupils' attentiveness in class.
104. The attendance level for 2006-2007 was 91%. However, this is below the WAG target of 93%. The majority of pupils are punctual to lessons. During the inspection, pupils' attendance was good.
105. During the last academic year, no pupil was permanently excluded.
106. Assemblies and form tutor periods, where pupils have opportunities to reflect on moral, spiritual and religious topics, contribute to pupils' development. Not all tutor periods contribute effectively to the spiritual dimension.
107. Pupils demonstrate a sound awareness of equal opportunities issues and show great respect for diversity, both within school and in society. There are strong links with the community and local businesses. Through these, and values promoted by the school, pupils are prepared well for participation in the workplace and community.

Sixth form

Students' success in attaining agreed learning goals

108. In the six subjects inspected, standards in information technology are good with outstanding features; good features and no important shortcomings prevail in design technology, mathematics and English. Standards in music and geography have good features that outweigh shortcomings.

109. Standards associated with Grade 1 in the sixth form are due to the outstanding work identified in information technology.
110. The following grades were awarded for standards of achievement in the sixth form in the 13 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
15%	62%	23%	0%	0%

111. Although the sample is small, these figures indicate that students achieve standards that have good features and no important shortcomings in 77% of the lessons.
112. Results in external examinations between 2005-2007, were well below those achieved by students in the last inspection for two or more A level grades at A-C. The A-C pass rate in 2006 and 2007 was below that of the local authority and national average.
113. In 2007, students did better at A level than expected from their GCSE results in only six out of 19 subjects studied. Sixty per cent of those entered underachieved in one or more of their examination subjects.
114. In 2007, the percentage of pupils gaining two or more A levels or equivalent at grades A-E continued to be below the previous inspection's results. The average A level points score per student for 2006 and 2007 was the same as in the previous inspection and continued to be below local and national averages.
115. Girls and boys average points' scores were similar in 2007. Boys marginally outperformed girls during this period at grades A-C at A level examinations. In 2006, the gap between the average points' score of boys and girls was reduced to one percentage point.
116. The school has successfully developed vocational courses, including the CACHE course, which caters well for students of all abilities.
117. Students achieve good standards in all their key skills except that of improving one's own learning. Here, their skills are underdeveloped as students require and receive substantial support. The standards of ICT skills in the six subjects inspected are variable, but have at least good features outweighing shortcomings.
118. Good levels of communication in both languages are evident in class discussion. Most students are prepared to give extended answers to teacher questioning and the quality of discussion is good. A significant minority of students is reserved in this respect.
119. Some students use complex subject-specific terminology in discussions with one another and with the teachers. Group work is well developed in most subject areas and is an outstanding aspect in the sixth-form. These qualities assist students to enhance their good problem-solving skills.

Their progress in learning

120. Students study from within a range of AS, A2 and vocational courses. In 2007, 89% of students achieved at least A-E passes in two or more subjects. Completion rates are below local authority and national average figures.

121. Retention rates to the sixth form are very encouraging. Most students enjoy the challenges of the sixth form and appreciate that they are able to study the subjects of their choice, locally.
122. Many of those who return proceed to higher education on completion of their courses. Their mature attitude to work prepares them well for progression to university or the world of work.
123. Students receive both written and verbal guidance from their subject teachers. They also receive strong pastoral support from the head of sixth-form. However, targets for improvement are set but not scrutinised rigorously enough.

The development of their personal, social and learning skills

124. Students have well-developed personal and social skills. They gain in maturity during their period of study in the sixth form and have a valuable experience. Their leadership skills are very good and this has enabled them to strengthen the relationships between senior and junior pupils. They have very good relationships with staff and develop further, good learning skills.
125. Members of the sixth form undertake their duties around the school effectively and are an added means of support for younger and new pupils to the school. They prove to be very good role models to the remainder of the school.
126. Students are well supported by staff and they show appreciation of the opportunities made available to them.
127. Attendance is closely monitored and students acquire good working habits.
128. Students gain much from their sixth-form experiences, in their academic, personal, social, moral and wider development.

The quality of education and training

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

Gradd 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

How well the teaching and training satisfies the needs of learners and the curriculum and course requirements

130. In the 59 lessons observed in the six subjects, the following grades were awarded to the teaching:

Quality of teaching	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Subjects inspected	18.5%	63%	18.5%	0%	0%

131. Good and outstanding examples were seen in the quality of teaching in four of the six subjects inspected. There are good and outstanding features in the quality of teaching in the vast majority of information technology lessons. In music, geography, English and design and technology, the quality of teaching shows good features and no important shortcomings. In mathematics, the quality of teaching shows good features outweighing shortcomings.

132. Overall, there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The grades awarded for the quality of teaching in the 101 lessons observed were:

Quality of teaching	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
All lessons	21%	51%	23%	4%	1%

133. The table for each lesson shows that there are good features and no important shortcomings in teaching in 72% of the lessons. This is higher than the figure for inspections in Wales in 2005-06 when 69% of lessons were judged to be Grade 1 or 2.

134. In 23% of lessons, good features outweigh shortcomings and in another 5%, namely a small number of science lessons observed, there are good features but shortcomings in important areas. The school therefore does not reach the secondary target in 'Vision into Action - 2010', namely that the quality of teaching should be Grade 2 or better in 80% of classes.

KS3 and KS4

135. The following table shows the quality of teaching in the 46 lessons observed in the six subjects and the 35 lessons observed in other subjects in KS3 and KS4:

Quality of teaching	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Subjects inspected	19%	59%	22%	0%	0%
All KS3/KS4 lessons	23%	48%	23%	5%	1%

136. Good and outstanding features were seen in the quality of teaching in a good range of subjects across the school.

137. The outstanding features of the teaching include:

- very careful planning and presentation to inspire and motivate pupils to think and develop their understanding;
- high expectations of what pupils can achieve in line with the age, ability and understanding of individuals;
- purposeful, penetrating questioning which promotes pupils' ability to think independently; and
- the use of a range of teaching and learning techniques that encourage pupils to be fully involved and to make progress.

138. There is very good working relationship between pupils and teachers. Teachers know the pupils well as individuals and offer guidance, sensitive support and praise that promote pupils' motivation and ensure a good standard of behaviour in lessons. Teachers create a caring atmosphere and offer learning experiences in which each pupil is respected as an individual whatever his/her gender, race or disability.

139. Across all lessons, there are many good features to the teaching including:

- lessons planned by five steps and carefully arranged and structured;
- sharing lesson objectives at the beginning, using them with pupils and reinforcing them at the end;

- a variety of activities with definite timescales that give good pace to the lessons so that pupils can make appropriate use of their time;
 - varied and purposive classroom arrangement including pair and group work;
 - good questioning techniques to reinforce previous knowledge and to support the learning;
 - opportunities to develop pupils' bilingual skills; and
 - effective use of the interactive whiteboard.
140. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and a good number of them give generously of their time to offer additional support in work sessions that reinforce pupils' learning.
141. In a few lessons, the shortcomings seen include:
- lack of careful planning with over-long presentations by teachers and a lack of pace in the work;
 - restricted questioning, and as a result pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their work in depth;
 - lack of variety and sufficient challenge in the activities; and
 - limited range of teaching techniques to ensure pupils' active participation.
142. Pupils with ALN are taught well and are fully integrated into classroom activities.

Sixth form

143. The quality of teaching is good and there are no important shortcomings in the sixth form.
144. In the six subjects inspected, the teaching was at least good with no important shortcomings in 92% of the 13 lessons observed.

Quality of teaching	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Six Subjects	15%	77%	8%	0%	0%

145. The table below shows the grades awarded to the quality of teaching in the lessons observed in each of the 20 lessons in the sixth form:

Quality of teaching	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
All lessons	15%	65%	20%	0%	0%

146. Outstanding features of the teaching are the very good working relationship between teachers and students and the way they are carefully prepared for their external examinations. In these lessons, expectations are very high, where students are encouraged to develop as independent learners. The good features of the learning almost always include lessons with emphasis on activities that enable students to develop new concepts and quite intentionally promote their key skills, together with a range of activities and tasks arranged at an appropriate pace.
147. The school ensures good opportunities for developing students' bilingual skills, through specific activities, formal lessons and through preparing students for the bilingual world of work and further and higher education.

148. The shortcomings identified in KS3 and KS4 are present in some lessons in the sixth form and include questioning that is too restricted and missed opportunities that allow students to extend their comments and placing too much emphasis on gathering information at the expense of developing new skills and an understanding of subject concepts.

How thorough is the assessment and how is it used to plan and improve learning

149. All requirements with regard to assessment and reporting on the subjects of the NC are met and arrangements fulfil the regulations of the examination boards.
150. Departmental procedures for standardising the quality of pupils' work is developing effectively and is a means of promoting better understanding in respect of standards and ensuring consistency and accuracy with regard to assessment.
151. The school has a clear assessment policy that offers guidance to implement the assessment system. Through the 'assessment for learning' policy, good practices are identified and promoted. However, every department has not yet succeeded in responding fully to the requirements of this policy for raising standards and as a result there are inconsistent standards and assessment practices in some departments, including science and mathematics.
152. Since the previous inspection, the school has established a computerised assessment system and there is effective use of the system at school and departmental level to facilitate the collating of a very wide range of information and to implement monitoring processes and reporting on progress. Some departments succeed in using data well and effectively to set subject targets and to consistently monitor pupils' and students' progress thus influencing positively on the teaching, marking and assessment. In these departments underachievement is effectively identified and a range of strategies is used to ensure improvement.
153. However, currently, there is inconsistency in the efficiency of the use made of the assessment system across the subjects in analysing various data in order to predict pupils' and students' attainment by the end of the key stage. Expectations are varied with regard to the targets set by departments in order to raise standards together with the strategies for monitoring progress in order to identify and respond to underachievement across the key stages. Although there are good practices beginning to develop with regard to targeting groups of pupils who are underachieving, this procedure has not yet embedded and fully developed throughout the school and the school does not check the targets of individual departments with sufficient rigour.
154. The good features include departmental procedures that respond to subject assessment objectives. There is very good practice in some departments where the assessment practice is consistent and thorough. In these subjects, expectations are clear and assessment criteria shared with the pupils. Good use is made of self-assessment practices and peer assessment in order to improve pupils' and students' understanding of their standard and the methods of improvement. The quality of feedback offered to pupils and students is also detailed and guides the individual to make good progress.

155. However, where there are inconsistencies within and between departments, the shortcomings include:
- lack of detailed use of assessment information to influence planning for the future;
 - lack of sufficient feedback to pupils and students to enable them to understand what they need to do in order to improve their work and ensure progress; and
 - inconsistency in the use of assessment for learning as a tool to promote and raise pupils' and students' standards.
156. Annual and interim reports to parents prior to parents' evening are based on a computerised system that tracks the pupils' and students' curricular and pastoral progress. Good use is made of the whole-school guidelines to create full, personal and readable reports. The subject comments are judgemental and of good quality with subject targets on how to improve. Parents can contribute to the report by responding in writing and year group parents' evenings are held. The training offered to parents to enable them to support pupils with their study skills is an example of good practice.
157. Pupils and students contribute to their final reports through offering comments on their progress and are given good opportunities to discuss their progress in regular interviews with their class tutor and recording personal and subject targets in the Progress File and the Personal Organiser. The quality and sharpness of these targets is varied.

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

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

The extent to which learning experiences meet learners' needs and interest

159. The school delivers a wide range of well-structured programmes designed to allow pupils to achieve their academic and social potential within the framework of the Education Acts of 1996 and 2005. It meets all legal requirements. Religious education is now provided in the sixth-form but textiles is still not included as part of the curriculum in design and technology at KS3. This is due to factors outside the control of the school. All pupils have the opportunity to gain a qualification at the end of KS4.
160. The curriculum is broad, balanced and sufficiently flexible to meet individual needs and develops the understanding of pupils as they progress through the school. This is a strength of the school. The few pupils that have been disapplied from the NC are given every opportunity to develop their potential. This reflects the positive influence of the curriculum. The time allocated to each subject is appropriate within all key stages and the sixth-form. Liaison with the feeder primary schools is strong and curricular links are well developed. Employers and trainers are used to good effect to enrich the opportunities and experiences of pupils.
161. At KS3, pupils follow a curriculum that complies with NC requirements. The modern foreign language studied, French or German, depends on the year the

- pupil enters the school. This language option is further enhanced by the extra-curricular clubs provided to enable pupils to experience other modern languages. Personal and social education is an integral part of the curriculum and offers pupils many opportunities to develop and refine their understanding and skills.
162. At KS4, the curriculum offered is particularly strong with vocational courses to meet all abilities as well as courses that are applicable to lower ability pupils. The numerous courses offered are a strength within the school. All pupils at this key stage study a core curriculum comprising Welsh, English, mathematics, science, religious education, PSE and games. In addition, there are four option choices available. Some of the option courses are delivered by agencies outside the school. This aspect widens curricular choice.
163. In the sixth form, the choices are extensive and include NVQ courses. The Sports Leadership course is delivered by a former Welsh XI international football captain. The CACHE course involves work experience opportunities in local children's nurseries. A wide range of A2 courses are also available. Law is studied using video conferencing facilities linking with a company based in North Wales. The school has done a great deal to develop the 14–19 Learning Pathways agenda in collaboration with the local consortium. This involves working with other Welsh medium schools, the local community and college.
164. The curriculum includes basic and key skills and a co-ordinator has recently been appointed to develop these further. A whole-school audit has been conducted to establish the contribution made to this element by all the subjects. This aspect is developing well and allows pupils the opportunity to gain accreditation in the sixth form. This is a strong feature in the school.
165. The school provides numerous extra curricular activities that include physical education, games and music. A skiing trip to Canada is imminent. Other opportunities have included visits to Christmas markets on the continent organised by the modern language department and a geography visit to New York. Visits to local museums and a visit to be arranged to Belgium to study poetry appertaining to war organised by the English department. The school has an annual eisteddfod and parties of pupils compete at the Urdd eisteddfod. Many pupils are involved in school concerts. These activities broaden their key skills of working with others.
166. The school successfully promotes pupils' personal development by placing a strong emphasis on their moral, social and cultural development. In school assemblies and tutorials, opportunities are given to pupils to participate. There is time for reflection, including a religious element. However, tutorial time is not always used to good effect.
167. Pupils show respect for one another, their teachers and visitors to the school and they work very well together in groups or pairs. Sixth-form students support Y7 pupils through the "Cymer Ofal" scheme. Many opportunities exist in the curriculum to study other cultures, including the *Cwricwlwm Cymreig*.
168. Learning experiences are enriched by effective partnerships. Parental and community links are good and there are numerous links with other schools and colleges. The school is involved with initial teacher training (ITT) institutions.

Links with the feeder primary schools are particularly strong and the Y10 drama group has visited these schools to perform. Transitional links are strong.

169. The school meets its' legal and course requirements, including the provision for a daily act of worship. The requirements of the examination boards are met. There is a well-planned PSE programme that deals with health education, sex education, substance misuse, careers education and guidance. The careers education programme is extensive.

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

170. This section contains one outstanding feature, namely that the courses offered by the school meet the bilingual skills required for employment in some local businesses and industry.
171. There is a good link with Education Business Partnerships (EBP) on different tasks that are planned and there are considerable opportunities for work related education. This is all delivered through the PSE programme which is based on the Framework for lifelong-learning. The pupils get many opportunities involving different tasks which begins in Year 7. Employers work with groups of pupils in Y7 to raise their awareness of how they operate. In Y8, pupils visit different companies. The Dynamo project is presented to pupils in Y9 and at KS4, workshops are run focussing on business and enterprise.
172. The curriculum provision includes experiences in both Welsh and English and in subjects such as design and technology, information technology and geography; the technical terms for the subjects are available bilingually. The bilingual competency of the pupils develops as they progress through the school. Many subjects contribute towards a strong 'Cwricwlwm Cymreig'. An audit has been conducted on this element. In modern foreign languages, the opportunity is taken to compare the industrial and cultural differences of Wales, France, Germany and Spain. In art, the work of Welsh artists such as Ernest Zobole and Peter Piech is studied. In the SEN department, consideration is given to the story of Gelert and St. David amongst others.
173. Pupils across the school get the opportunity to gain the COMPACT certificate, be involved in mock interviews, the Young Porth scheme, ASDAN and Wise for Life. There is a good link with Careers Wales and a number of representatives from local business visit the school to give presentations, lead groups and discuss what are the requirements of local businesses with the pupils in each year. There are also examples of visits by pupils to local businesses which are related to the subjects they study.
174. The school plans for a number of useful workshops and challenges which develop pupils' enterprise abilities including The Young Enterprise Challenge, the Sony business challenge, the information technology challenge of the Rotary organisation for the wider area. The Dynamo project is presented in Years 9,10 and 11 to promote enterprise as well as sessions that focus on this and industry, as part of the learning experiences. All these experiences contribute to the development of key skills for the pupils and their understanding of enterprise needs and the business world. Vocational courses are available in the sixth-form in partnership with other providers to meet the need for bilingual

skills in certain fields, where a shortage has been noted by the WAG. This is an outstanding feature.

175. The school council has arranged to recycle paper and plastic. The school makes a substantial effort to develop understanding of citizenship and world cultures within the schemes of work of PSE, other subjects and by numerous visits abroad.
176. Overall the curriculum and opportunities available in the school reflect the national priorities well, especially in the fields of bilingualism, key skills, citizenship and enterprise. These ensure the pupils gain the necessary skills for lifelong learning.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

177. The school awarded itself a Grade 2 in its self-evaluation report. The grade awarded by the inspection team is one grade higher because the inspection grade reflects the many outstanding features the school has in relation to the way learners are cared for, guided and supported.
178. The outstanding features include the:
- well managed and very effective care arrangements;
 - school's supportive pastoral system;
 - very positive partnerships with parents, carers and employers;
 - partnership arrangements with other agencies;
 - transition arrangements for Y6 pupils;
 - quality management and provision for pupils with ALN;
 - school's process towards the early identification of pupils with ALN;
 - well targeted and co-ordinated support for pupils with SEN in mainstream classes;
 - effective procedures used to monitor learners' behaviour; and
 - arrangements for pupil inclusion, regardless of their level of disability.

The quality of care, support and guidance to learners

179. The planning, management and co-ordination of care and support are outstanding. All members of staff fully understand pupils' needs and provide effective support for them. The school has a very positive ethos and every pupil is valued and included. Pupils of all ages appreciate the quality of support and guidance they receive at school.
180. There are outstanding relationships between teachers and learners. They show respect for one another. The effective use of teaching assistants and other professional workers is a very strong feature of the school. Pupils feel secure, at ease and know whom to turn to for help, reassurance and guidance.

181. The assistant headteacher leads the school pastoral team very efficiently and effectively. The very good practice established by the school in this area of its work has been acknowledged by the local authority, WAG and the NSPCC.
182. There are excellent links with parents, carers and employers. This is reflected in the very positive responses from parents about the school in both the pre-inspection meeting and pre-inspection questionnaires. The quality of written information provided for parents is very good. The prospectus is of good quality and provides valuable information. It contains the home/school agreement that is signed by parents. Homework diaries assist pupils in planning their homework. It provides parents with valuable information and is another useful form of dialogue between home and school.
183. Pupils and parents receive good information and guidance about the subject choices through an informative options booklet, parents evening and well structured careers education in Y9 and in KS4. Sixth form students receive advice of equal quality.
184. Transition arrangements for Y6 pupils from the five feeder primary schools are another strength of the schools' provision. There are excellent links with feeder schools through the work of the transition teacher. Two terms are spent in the primary schools and one term introducing Y7 pupils to their secondary school. Pastoral and support arrangements for this transition are very effective and well developed. Curriculum and transition projects are of very good quality in Welsh, drama and modern foreign languages. Sixth form students are trained to be peer counsellors for Y7 pupils through the "Cymer ofal" scheme. They accompany pupils on residential visits to the Urdd camp at Llangrannog and Lampeter. These arrangements promote pupils' and students' personal and social development very well.
185. The revised PSE programme is well planned and covers all aspects set out in the PSE Framework for Wales.
186. There is a highly effective Careers guidance programme. Careers Wales' staff provide effective support to the school. These include interviews with older pupils in establishments and settings outside school. Teachers and careers officers offer good and relevant guidance to students at points of transfer.
187. Outstanding procedures are used to monitor learners' behaviour. The assistant headteacher, the behaviour inclusion officer, SENCo, key stage managers all work very effectively with all members of the school's staff in monitoring and recording pupils' behaviour. The behaviour inclusion officer provides high quality support for pupils who behave inappropriately.
188. The school has established excellent links with its partners and other professional support teams. The pupil review panel is a multi-disciplinary approach to supporting pupils experiencing a range of difficulties.
189. Pupils and students who feel vulnerable and isolated or who are experiencing emotional problems are very well guided and supported by the school counsellor.
190. The school fully supports and promotes the requirements of a 'healthy eating' and in these aspects it does well. There are sufficient choices available in the canteens to ensure healthy eating. The school council was very positive of the

ways in which the school enabled learners to be healthy. PSE programmes stress the benefits of fitness. The learners are encouraged to participate in regular exercise.

191. There are robust child protection arrangements in place. The designated person is the assistant headteacher who has a caring and pragmatic approach to her duties. There is very efficient referral and record keeping systems in place. Staff constantly check the well-being of pupils.

The quality of provision for additional learning needs

192. The quality of provision and management of SEN is a strength of the school. The school recognises the diverse needs of pupils and promotes inclusive education effectively. The following outstanding features are evident.
193. The SENCo provides clear vision and direction, together with a sense of purpose. She has very effective links with staff in all departments to plan effective strategies and provision for pupils with SEN.
194. The school's process towards early identification of pupils with SEN is a strength. The SENCo and headteacher visit all primary schools to ensure appropriate support leading up to and during their transfer to the secondary school.
195. Pupils with SEN have full access to the curriculum. Learning support assistants (LSAs) assigned to support individual and groups of pupils, are well trained and briefed by the SENCo and have very positive working relationships with class teachers and pupils.
196. There is a comprehensive policy in place and all documentation and procedures are well understood and implemented effectively.
197. The SENCo has very positive relationships with the extremely supportive designated governor for SEN and other interested parties.
198. Parents of pupils with SEN are fully involved in reviews of their child's developments and are promptly informed of their child's identified need and progress. The school prospectus gives a comprehensive picture of SEN provision and parents and carers are well informed. Parents and governors view SEN provision as a major strength of the school.
199. Pupils with SEN make good and often very good progress. They are exceptionally well behaved and display very positive attitudes to work.
200. The school provides very effective support through its policies and practices for those pupils whose behaviour impedes their progress and those of others.
201. There are also a number of very good features which include:
- the withdrawal support for pupils with SEN in Y7-Y9 for literacy and spelling;
 - appropriate support for a small number of pupils with specific learning difficulties from a specialist teacher;
 - identification and provision for gifted and talented pupils;
 - lunchtime activities which promote the social development of pupils with SEN; and
 - a range of courses leading to accreditation at KS4.

The quality of provision for equal opportunities

202. This section includes an outstanding feature, namely:

- the school's special, comprehensive and effective measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour, which include close and constant collaboration between the staff and outside agencies.

203. There is great emphasis within the school, through the pastoral arrangements, personal programmes, special support and care that exist, the industriousness and commitment of the staff and the very strong links that exist with a number of outside agencies, on identifying and responding to the needs of the individual, whether personal, social, linguistic or educational. The contribution of a number of staff and organisations outside the school are notable in this respect.

204. The school's equal opportunities policy is in place and promoted through the PSE programme, the 'minute to reflect' period, assemblies, opportunities for performing and sports and academic and curricular aspects. Also, the school promotes good interrelationships between races and staff are expected to realize this in their activities and their response to incidents. There is a designated person for racial incidents and there are good arrangements with other co-ordinators to ensure that matters of diversity, race and culture are dealt within in a way that promotes pupils' understanding.

205. Through the PSE programme and subject contributions traditional stereotyping is challenged.

206. The school succeeds in ensuring a friendly and community atmosphere. Everyone is constantly reminded of how essential it is to respond pleasantly and respectfully to each pupil and adult. The racial equality policy has very clear arrangements for the urgent steps that should be taken to eliminate all types of racialism.

207. Particular features of the work of the school are the very effective arrangements and processes the school has to eliminate all types of oppressive behaviour. The Personal Pastoral Support Programmes are comprehensive and through the notable guidance of the assistant headteacher and the SENCO, staff achieve a number of support, pastoral, discipline and academic arrangements very well in order to ensure that there is no continuation of any oppressive behaviour within and outside the school. An external counsellor is employed for pupils who have complex problems this is a good feature. Also, very successful arrangements exist with a number of external agencies that make particular contributions to the schools' aims, objectives and intentions and are of benefit to the pupils. The Pupils' Review Panel achieves very good work.

208. The school has an Accessibility and Inclusion policy and also an Accessibility Plan and adaptations have already been made to the new block, the sports hall and some of the old buildings. However, building adaptations are currently inadequate to cater for pupils in wheelchairs or those that are severely disabled.

209. The school's arrangements and policies ensure that pupils have understanding, recognition and respect towards personal social and international diversity. Over and above the statements on equal opportunities and racial equality, aspects of the curriculum are used very well to learn about elements of multiculturalism and the various religions in the world. A number of the pupils have taken

advantage of opportunities offered by the school to visit a number of other countries. Also, through discussions, it is obvious that pupils are knowledgeable of the differences that exist in our world and are ready to celebrate them in the school.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

210. The school awarded itself a Grade 2 in its self-evaluation report. The grade awarded by the inspection team is one grade lower because good features outweigh shortcomings. The shortcomings relate to inconsistencies in:

- good management initiatives are not yet consistently embedded in practice;
- monitoring and improving performance require further development; and
- the target setting processes require further refinement.

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

211. The school has developed shared values through extensive consultation which also involved consulting the school council. The headteacher has a vision for the future strategic direction of the school. Part of this vision has included the development of an extended senior leadership team (SLT) and middle management structure. The aim is to assist the future development of the school and strengthen procedures. However, these developments have not had sufficient time to be embedded. Neither have the roles of the new members been clarified fully. They are evolving.

212. The headteacher is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and other members of this SLT, all of whom are assistant headteachers. Most are linked to a cluster of departments. The effectiveness of some members to undertake SLT responsibilities is restricted by the fact that they currently continue to undertake their other managerial responsibilities. Appointments will be made in readiness for the new academic year in 2008, to relieve these staff of their other responsibilities.

213. The links between the senior leaders and the departments and teams which they line manage vary in their effectiveness. Those that continue to monitor their own departments are very effective. Monitoring is undertaken by others, but the extent of the degree of rigour with which the SLT assures quality and reviews the work of individual subject departments and teams is variable.

214. Senior managers do not always deal with difficulties effectively enough or take prompt action to improve the situation.

215. The role of middle managers and their accountability is developing. Managers are aware of their responsibilities but some do not undertake their roles with sufficient rigour.

216. The quality of leadership of middle managers is variable, with outstanding practice in Welsh, design technology and information technology and poor in

science. In departments where there are outstanding features, or mainly good features, there is clear direction and consistency. In a number of departments, there is a lack of leadership and there are shortcomings to be eliminated. Some heads of department do not monitor with sufficient rigour nor plan effectively for improvement.

217. Very able pastoral heads of sections, with responsibilities for several year groups, were appointed within the school in September 2007. Their effectiveness as pastoral managers is outstanding. However, their enhanced role as learning managers in monitoring academic performance is not yet fully effective. This aspect of their role is developing.
218. The school actively promotes equality of opportunity for all, regardless of linguistic, cultural or social background. Pupils and students have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Option choices are open to all pupils. All teaching and support staff are given the opportunity to undergo professional development.
219. The school has a firmly established system of performance management. Targets are set for each individual teacher's professional development and one target for whole-school development. However, in a significant minority of cases, performance management is not sufficiently rigorous. The quality of provision has not improved. Whilst continuous professional development is available to all, it has had insufficient impact on the school as a whole in terms of consistency and accountability.
220. The school has incorporated several national priorities into its agenda for improvement. There are very good features in the development of work-related education, healthy eating and lifestyles, social inclusion, and good features in sustainable development.
221. The school is working closely and effectively with the authority's 14-19 Learning Pathways' co-ordinator, four other Welsh schools and Coleg Morgannwg. The school uses its video conferencing facility to broaden its vocational pathways to students. Links with primary schools are very good and ensure continuity of learning.
222. The school has an abundance of information available for setting pupil targets and systems for tracking performance. However, in spite of staff training, there continues to be uncertainty of what information and how information should be used. Assessment and target setting processes are in place but responsibilities in this area are fragmented and uncoordinated. Insufficient use is made of the data that is currently available to set realistic targets that are close to pupils' outcomes.

How well governors or other supervisory bodies meet their responsibilities

223. The composition of the governing body includes a variety of expertise ranging from established members to those recently appointed. Their individual expertise is used well. Governors understand their roles and contribute effectively through the school's committee structure. They scrutinise relevant documentation and participate in all strategic decision-making.
224. Governors recognise that self-evaluation is becoming more structured and is closely associated with the strategic development of the school. Governors were

involved in the compilation of the self-evaluation report for the inspection and had a clear understanding of its content.

225. Governors are regularly provided with appropriate information by the SLT and ask pertinent questions about performance and plans for improvement. However, the degree of challenge by some governors is insufficient. The role of the governing body as a critical friend is not sufficiently challenging.
226. A member of the governing body links directly with the SEN department. The newly appointed designated governor is very supportive of the outstanding work of the learning support team.
227. Many of the governors are linked to departments in a supportive role. Currently, they do not monitor departments nor do they attend departmental meetings.
228. All regulatory requirements are met.

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

229. The school awarded itself a Grade 2 in its self-evaluation report. The grade awarded by the inspection team is one grade lower because good features outweigh shortcomings. The shortcomings relate to insufficient:

- rigour in self-evaluation practices; and
- progress in sharing the good self-evaluation practice identified at the last inspection.

How effectively the school's performance is monitored and evaluated

230. The school's self-evaluation report is a comprehensive document that identifies strengths and areas for improvement. It also lists the evidence used. It does not make clear links between the evidence and the evaluation that it supports and this is a shortcoming. The inspection team also disagrees with the grades awarded by the school for four of the seven key questions. For key questions 1, 5 and 6 the team awarded one grade lower than the school, whilst for question 4 it awarded one grade higher.
231. Self-evaluation is well established at the school. Each year the cycle begins with a review of the summer's examination results by the headteacher and heads of department. The head of department then drafts a report that is discussed by the staff. All members of the teaching staff have the opportunity to contribute to the self-evaluation report.
232. Most leaders and managers have a good understanding of how well the areas for which they are responsible are performing. However, there is no consistency in the way in which they use this information to plan for improvement.
233. Leaders and managers use a range of first hand evidence to arrive at their decisions. This includes examination results, lesson observations and the examination of pupils' work. Pupils' views are taken into consideration through

the school council. However, the school does not make sufficient efforts to collect the views of parents, carers and representatives of the local community.

234. There is too much variation in the rigour with which managers at all levels evaluate and use the data they collect. They do not analyse examination results in sufficient detail. Neither do they make adequate comparisons with similar schools nor do they identify areas of underperformance. Too few managers make critical judgements about their department's performance and they do not identify trends.
235. Senior managers are insufficiently robust in the ways that they challenge departments' analyses of their performance. Consequently, not all managers have an in-depth understanding of what needs to be done to improve.

The effectiveness of planning for improvement

236. The SDP identifies clear areas for development and include national and local authority priorities. School priorities are included, but the process of how they were identified, is not clear.
237. The same framework is used for writing the school and departmental development plans. They identify clear aims, methods and success criteria. The SDP, and to a lesser extent, departmental development plans (DDPs) allocate sufficient resources to meet the activities planned. Furthermore, appropriate time scales for completion are also identified.
238. Departmental development plans address whole-school issues and make worthwhile contributions to the school's development. In Welsh, art, technology and geography, the development plans carefully address issues raised by the subject or department's self-evaluation. Some of the actions taken have resulted in measurable improvements in standards.
239. In a number of departments, including science, music and mathematics the development plans do not address issues raised in their own self-evaluations. Shortcomings are not addressed and planning for improvement is ineffective. These are important shortcomings that significantly undermine the purposes of self-evaluation.
240. The school sets targets for improvement for all pupils, but in most instances, they are insufficiently challenging.
241. There were seven key issues for action in the last inspection report. The school has fully addressed four of these issues. These were to:
- continue with concerted efforts to combat poor attendance;
 - work with the UA to improve provision for physical education, games and sixth form students;
 - review the arrangement for PSE and improve the use of the pastoral period; and
 - conform to the statutory requirements regarding the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
242. There has been progress with the other three issues. However, further work is required to:
- improve the standards of achievement in areas where they were satisfactory;

- ensure the consistent implementation of the aims and objectives in the SDP to raise standards; and
- build upon, and implement the developing self-evaluation procedures.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

244. The curriculum is effectively delivered by a team of 60.4 suitably qualified and experienced staff. This provides a favourable pupil/teacher ratio of 14.4:1 with an average teaching group size of 22.6. The teaching staff are ably supported by a small team of well trained learning support assistants.
245. Staff are deployed to provide the best possible match to their specialist qualifications. Some teachers have retrained to enable them to acquire expertise in a second subject or area of learning. However, where staff are deployed outside their specialist subject, adequate training and support is provided.
246. The appropriate and effective use of technical and clerical staff contributes significantly to the delivery of a high quality support programme throughout the school. There is no technical support to assist with the delivery of food technology.
247. There has been considerable investment in ICT since the last inspection with the establishment of new ICT suites, departmentally based computers and the installation of interactive whiteboards in a number of classrooms. This provision has had a very positive impact on the standard of pupil ICT skills. However, departments continue to experience difficulties in accessing ICT facilities to enhance their learning programmes.
248. The quantity and quality of paper resources and equipment is good in most departments. However, both the English and music departments lack the resources to deliver fully their teaching and learning programmes effectively.
249. Currently, the library only plays a minor role in supporting curriculum delivery. It is utilized lunchtimes to accommodate both the English and Welsh reading clubs but children do not have the opportunity to borrow books. There are plans to convert the facility into a resource centre housing a suite of computers. Most departments have their own library.
250. The school is to be commended for its decision to pay for the services of eight peripatetic music teachers from its own resources. The staff provide pupils with the opportunity to experience and develop their instrumental musical interests and talents.
251. The accommodation is a combination of older and relatively new facilities. Improvements to the accommodation since the last inspection include:
- a new teaching block housing an ICT suite and a sixth form facility;

- a new community sports hall;
- better outdoor physical education facilities;
- an impressive fitness suite; and
- upgraded toilet areas in two sections of the school.

252. The displays of pupils' work in most classrooms and corridors are good and provide a positive and stimulating environment for learning.

253. However, a number of areas on the school site do not contribute positively to teaching and learning. They include the:

- general 'drab and shabby' nature of the school grounds and the older buildings;
- missing and worn floor tiles in the older building and the areas of water ingress;
- unacceptable standards of cleaning in a number of areas;
- restricted availability of quality recreational areas for children; and
- poor maintenance of school grounds.

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

254. The management of the school's resources demonstrates a number of good features. These include the:

- day to day management of the budget by the finance officer and the head teacher;
- establishment of effective and efficient systems to plan, implement and monitor budgetary spending;
- rigorous control and review of all income and expenditure by the governing body staffing and finance sub-committee;
- distribution and regular review of departmental capitation allowances by formula; and
- annual budget dialogue with the UA senior finance officer.

255. Currently, the school does not carry a contingency fund in line with recommended practice to allow for unforeseen future expenditure.

256. The school's good practice in terms of financial management and control has been recently confirmed by external auditors. Areas identified for attention are being addressed by the school.

257. In response to the UA desire to form partnerships and to rationalize post-16 teaching groups across the authority, the governing body has prudently taken steps to assess the economic efficiency of class numbers.

258. The school operates a detailed professional development programme for all teaching and support staff. Training needs are identified in line with school priorities and individual development requirements through the comprehensive performance management programme. Appropriate funding is earmarked to secure national and local courses of the highest possible quality for the professional development of teaching and support staff.

259. The school achieved the Investors in People Award for the third time in 2007. This award underlies the school's determination to invest in its staff and is a real strength of the school.
260. However, the evaluation and monitoring of the quality and impact of training courses is not undertaken with sufficient rigour.
261. A comprehensive training and support programme exists for initial teacher training (ITT) in conjunction with UWIC, University College Aberystwyth and Trinity College, Carmarthen, for newly qualified staff (NQT's) and other staff appointed to new posts within the school.
262. The school has fully consulted with staff with reference to the workforce restructuring plans with a planned review before full implementation at the end of 2008. The provision of appropriate planning, preparation and assessment schedules is good.
263. All teaching, support and volunteer staff working in school have been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).
264. The school provides a balanced and broadly based curriculum. The additional vocational courses in the sixth form have enabled more students to remain in school and make the sixth form a viable entity. These factors, including the extensive range of extra-curricular activities, effective deployment and development of staff and the efficient management and control of the budget ensures that the school provides good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English

Key Stage 3: Grade 3 - Good features outweigh shortcomings

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

Sixth Form: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

265. Examination results at GCSE in the last three years have been broadly in line with national averages for passes at A*-C and A*/A. These are in line with pupils' ability.
266. Examination results at A level in the last three years have been broadly in line with national averages for passes at A/B. These results are in line with pupils' ability.
267. Standards in KS4 have improved by one grade since the previous inspection.
268. Pupils with SEN integrate well in the English classes and make definite improvement in speaking, listening, reading and writing.

KS3

Good features

269. Pupils, generally, have good speaking skills. They answer questions accurately and clearly with confidence. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls.

- 270. They listen well in most classes and many carry out instructions accurately. Many pupils use information gained in previous lessons to develop their ideas well.
- 271. Most pupils can read and understand the material they encounter in lessons. Some cope well with more challenging texts.
- 272. Their good progress in reading for pleasure is well supported by the regular reading periods at the beginning of English lessons.
- 273. Pupils are aware of their audience when they write. They write to purpose, for example diaries, reports, newspaper articles, letters.

Shortcomings

- 274. In both speaking and writing, pupils use a limited vocabulary. Many need to develop a wider range of relevant expressions.
- 275. Although many pupils are improving their reading skills some are not making sufficient progress in word recognition.
- 276. Pupils do not make sufficient progress in improving their spelling and punctuation by the end of KS3. The technical inaccuracies of many pupils can mar the fluency of their written work.

KS4

Good features

- 277. Although some pupils are reluctant to justify their views at length, most make discernible improvement in Years 10 and 11 in their control of vocabulary. They communicate well in small groups.
- 278. Many pupils listen attentively and positively. They have good recall of previous information which they use to enhance their knowledge and opinions.
- 279. Pupils answer questions promptly and many formulate relevant and searching questions.
- 280. Key stage 4 pupils make good progress in reading by the end of Y11. They are engaged with the broad reading matter they study and develop sound textual analysis skills and personal responses.
- 281. Many pupils in this stage are capable of producing detailed, extended writing. When standards are good the writing is well structured and controlled. All pupils make good attempts at imaginative writing.
- 282. A number of pupils draft their work thoroughly to improve their spelling and the presentation of their work. They draw clear links between language, theme and effect.

Shortcomings

- 283. Some pupils do not pay enough attention to the use of correct punctuation and grammar in their writing. This affects the flow and, sometimes, the sense of their work.

Sixth form

Good features

- 284. Many Y12 students approach their work with thoroughness and a clear understanding of a writer's technique and motive.

285. They listen intelligently and confidently share their views in class and small discussion groups.
286. Most are making good progress in using good quality language and their verbal and written responses are concise and well considered.
287. By the end of Y13, students demonstrate solid achievement in their English studies in relation to their ability and many progress to study the subject further in university.
288. They have a good understanding of the historical and social contexts of their set texts and support their judgements confidently, with well chosen textual references.
289. In both years students make clear progress in exploring ideas and subtexts. Some students are beginning to organise their material well but they sometimes lack detail and penetration and are not selective enough when using quotations.

Shortcomings

290. The minority of students who lack penetration in their textual analyses does not enhance their understanding enough by wider, more challenging, reading.

Mathematics

Key Stage 3: Grade 3 – Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 3 – Good features outweigh shortcomings

Sixth Form: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

291. Examination results at GCSE in the last three years have been in line with national averages for passes at A*-C and below for A*/A. These results represent achievement in line with pupils' ability.
292. Examination results at A level in the last three years have been in line with national averages for passes at A/B and considering the numbers involved these are broadly in line with pupils' ability.

KS3 and KS4

Good features

293. At KS3, pupils develop their understanding of the subject as they move through the key stage according to their ability. Pupils with SEN are also very successful.
294. The work completed by the pupils is generally accurate and their number work correct and they are able to determine if the answer is sensible. They deal effectively with percentages and decimals and advisedly write their answers to one decimal place. Work on fractions is completed to a good standard and they can find the values of some square roots without recourse to calculators. Pupils are able to deal effectively with number patterns and determine the missing number in a series. Pupils have a working understanding of the BODMAS rule and use this to answer numerical and algebraic questions.
295. The pupils can name different shapes and calculate their areas and volumes including the units in their answers. The practical Ma1 work they cover, such as in the work on the Pythagoras Theorem, gives them the opportunity to enhance their understanding of the subject. They are able to name the various parts of a circle.
296. They understand the topics covered in algebra and geometry fully according to their ability and they are able to solve equations of various complexities as they develop their understanding.

297. They deal effectively with data and understand the principles of probability and can apply these acceptably.
298. At KS4, the more able pupils do a considerable amount of work which benefits their understanding of the subject in readiness for the external examinations. The more able pupils can solve complex problems. They fully understand the topic being considered and can apply their knowledge to solve given problems.
299. These pupils deal effectively with statistics and can draw graphs from given data and read the graph to determine values. The graphs drawn are accurate and enable the pupils to determine an answer.
300. Pupils are able to expand brackets and simplify the expression accordingly.
301. Pupils deal effectively with equations, including simultaneous and quadratics at a level appropriate to their understanding. For the latter, they can apply the standard formula correctly. They can change the subject of a formula accurately even if the given subject is more complex such as the inclusion of surds or powers. Pupils deal appropriately with inequalities as required.
302. In trigonometry, pupils can apply the ratios of sine, cosine and tangent to find the values of a given side or angle in a right-angled triangle. They are fully aware of which ratio to use to answer a given question. The more able and many middle ability pupils can generally deal with quite complex problems involving this element.
303. In graph work, pupils are able to determine the gradient of a graph and understand how the intercept is determined for a straight line graph using the usual equation. The more able pupils can work out the gradient between two given co-ordinates.
304. The lower and middle ability pupils spend a considerable amount of time on numerical work of various types which helps to further their understanding of this basic feature.

Shortcomings

305. There are clear errors in the work that some pupils complete in their exercise books and many have not completed their work or have not copied up work missed through absences.
306. The middle ability pupils do not complete sufficient work in a lesson and opportunities to fully understand the subject are lost by some.
307. Pupils are slow to recall work done previously and time is lost re-establishing their understanding of the topic before a new theme can be studied.
308. In many instances, the work completed is untidy and diagrams are not drawn using a ruler. Pupils' inability to be accurate, such as in using a protractor, affects the exactitude of their work. Axes on graphs are not always labelled.

Sixth form

Good features

309. Students are given the opportunity to study pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics with one student studying further mathematics.

310. Students are able to work out the equation of a circle using the relevant formula given the co-ordinate for the centre of the circle. They can equally apply the formula to determine other answers.
311. Students are able to differentiate and integrate correctly and apply these techniques to solve problems finding other values such as the minimum or maximum value of a curve.
312. In statistics, they can apply the rules of probability and use the correct tables based on the normal curve to determine answers.
313. In mechanics, the correct use is made of Hooke's Law to solve problems.

Shortcomings

314. Students' work could be neater in their books or files. This would enable them to understand their work more clearly when revising.

Design technology

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

Key Stage 4: Grade 1 - Good with outstanding features

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

315. The percentages of pupils who have gained GCSE grades A*-C in each of the last three years have been well above those for the LEA and Wales. In 2006, and 2007 the results were significantly higher. The A*/A grades were also much higher than those for Wales. These results represent good progress and achievement. A significant feature is that the results are often above their predicted target grades. GCSE results in the subject are outstanding. They are significantly higher than national averages most years.
316. In 2006, the percentage of students who gained an A-C grade at A level was broadly similar to the average for Wales. In 2007 the percentages were significantly higher than those in the LEA and Wales. The A/B grades in 2007 were also significantly higher than those for Wales. They were in line in 2006. The results reflect good progress and achievement for these students. However the number of students in the cohort fluctuates and in 2007 was too few to make any meaningful comparisons.

KS3

Good features

317. All pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of design principles and can apply the design cycle well throughout this key stage.
318. Almost all pupils take responsibility for their own work and show good ability to work independently and constructively in groups. As a result they almost all produce good product outcomes.
319. Pupils can use Welsh technical terms that are relevant to the subject very well.
320. Pupils with SEN produce good design work and good product outcomes above expectation.

Shortcomings

321. Too many pupils make insufficient use of information technology in their work.

KS4

Outstanding features

- 322. In resistant materials, at least a quarter of pupils produce outstanding work with very high levels of unique creative flair and imagination evident in their product outcomes.
- 323. In graphics, well over a third of pupils convey their design ideas using outstanding graphical communication skills. Standards are thus, exceptionally high.
- 324. In graphics, all pupils make outstanding use of a laser cutter to produce outcomes of professional standards.

KS4

Good features

- 325. In their GCSE folios, there is detailed evidence of working through design and make processes with a clear understanding of what needs to be accomplished. Most pupils use a variety of sources well to gather information relevant to their task. They are good at developing interesting design solutions.
- 326. Almost all pupils make appropriate use of ICT skills, including computer assisted design and computer assisted manufacturing (CAD/CAM) in their projects. This enhances the quality of their projects.
- 327. Most pupils' graphical communication skills are high. They produce drawing and annotating work, including accurate technical drawing, which is of a good standard.
- 328. Product outcomes are well crafted and finished. They show that pupils use tools, equipment and machines well.

Sixth form

Good features

- 329. Students have a good understanding of the principles of design. They can all produce original, creative and appropriate design solutions to their specific design brief.
- 330. All students carry out thorough research work using a range of sources. Existing products are analysed in great detail.
- 331. They deal with contemporary concepts well and show a good awareness of this area of study within the world of work.
- 332. All students make good use of ICT, including CAD/CAM and PRODESKTOP to produce, present and develop design outcomes of a good standard.

Shortcomings

- 333. The planning and structure of project work is the weakest element in students' work.

Information technology

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

Key Stage 4: Grade 1 - Good with outstanding features

Sixth Form: Grade 1 - Good with outstanding features

334. Examination results at GCSE in the last three years have been significantly higher than those for the local and national averages for passes at A*-C and A*/A. These results reflect very good progress and very good achievement for these students.
335. In 2006, the percentages of students who gained A level grades A to C were much higher than those in the LEA and Wales. In 2007, they were broadly the same as those for Wales. A/B grades are consistently in line with national averages. This factor is significant because the number of students studying A level computing in the school is much higher than in most other schools. AS and A level results reflect good progress and good achievement for these students.

KS3

Good features

336. Most pupils make good progress in information technology and can use computers competently and confidently.
337. Almost all pupils communicate information well using word-processing and desktop publishing applications. They can quickly find and use information from a variety of sources, including the Internet, without the need of much help from their teachers.
338. Almost all pupils have a good understanding of spreadsheets and databases and use mathematical formulae well to manipulate data.
339. The highest attaining pupils have a very good understanding of the theoretical aspects of their tasks and can explain and discuss their work well, using a good level of Welsh technical vocabulary.
340. Pupils with SEN show a good understanding of work using computers and achieve well in the subject.

Shortcomings

341. A very small number of pupils need a lot of support when tackling new work.

KS4

Outstanding features

342. Most pupils make very good progress and achieve outstanding GCSE results in the subject.
343. Pupils' knowledge, understanding and use of higher order computing techniques are outstanding.
344. All pupils use an outstanding level of Welsh technical vocabulary to discuss or explain their work.
345. A notable number of SEN pupils achieve high standards.

Good features

346. In GCSE, most pupils have a very positive attitude towards learning and attain good and often very good standards in computing work. They plan their work thoroughly and are skilled in solving problems set by their teachers.
347. In their project work, pupils readily establish a range of business applications required to run a business or club of their choice. They create appropriate databases and set up effective and efficient queries to search their data and model information.
348. Almost all pupils use spreadsheets well and often use sophisticated mathematical formulae to manipulate data.
349. Pupils with SEN use computers with a good measure of understanding and confidence, and produce work of a good standard.

Sixth form

Outstanding features

350. Students have an outstanding knowledge and understanding of computing and achieve excellent results at A Level.
351. The highest attaining students write and use an outstanding level of unique computer code when programming, using visual basic.
352. Independent learning skills are quite outstanding with students showing very high levels of problem solving skills when developing their projects.

Good features

353. All students have very good practical computing skills. Students readily select and use the software package that is best suited to a particular task. They are able to select, justify and use appropriate techniques to develop their projects very effectively.
354. Every student has a good and often very good knowledge and understanding of computer systems, including a range of input and output devices that allow computers to capture and transmit data.
355. In their AS level projects, and even more so in their A level projects, students display the ability to apply their computing skills to problem solving in the real world. The standard of some individual students' projects is very high.

Sixth form

356. There are no important shortcomings.

Geography

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

Key Stage 4: Grade 3 - Good features outweigh shortcomings.

Sixth Form: Grade 3 - Good features outweigh shortcomings.

357. Overall the examination results in this subject at GCSE in the last three years have been significantly below national averages for passes at A*-C.
358. Examination results in this subject at AS and A2 levels in the last three years have been significantly below national averages for passes at grades A-C.

KS3

Good features

359. The majority of pupils demonstrate considerable confidence in their use of maps, photographs, information booklets, task sheets and ICT.
360. Most pupils have a good understanding of the elements of the weather. They accurately match the elements to the appropriate weather instruments and units of measurement. Their knowledge of how the weather influences the work of the various economic groups, such as farmers, is good.
361. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the problems faced by people migrating from Mexico to the United States of America. They understand the reasons why the poorer people are determined to leave their homeland for the USA. They gather a good level of understanding of the type of work available to the immigrants and the necessity to obtain work permits for the higher paid employment.
362. The majority of pupils with additional learning needs complete work of a good standard in most aspects of the subject.
363. Many pupils understand the purpose of contour lines on OS maps. They understand that the spacing of contour lines indicate the relative steepness of the land. The models constructed by the pupils are of a high standard.

Shortcomings

364. A minority of the exercise books contains incomplete and untidily presented work.
365. The application of geographical terminology by a minority of pupils, especially the lower ability, displays a lack of understanding.

KS4

Good features

366. Pupils have a sound knowledge of patterns and processes in physical geography. Their coursework, based on fieldwork in Cardiff, demonstrates good research, analysis and recording skills.
367. The majority of pupils possess a good knowledge of the causes and effects of flooding. They can name specific settlements that are liable to flooding in such areas as the Severn Valley. Their understanding of the precautions that could be taken on national and local levels, to alleviate the flooding, is good.
368. The level of geographical skills of the majority of pupils is good. Most use maps, photographs, graphs and ICT accurately to complete class-work, assessment units and course-work assignments of a good standard.
369. Pupils with additional learning needs complete work of a good standard. They show good understanding of the reasons that led to the opening of coalmines in the Rhondda Valley. Their understanding of the reasons for the closure of the mines and the introduction of light industrial enterprises, such as Sony, is very good.
370. The majority of pupils display a sound understanding of the characteristics of hurricanes. They are fully aware of the catastrophic consequences hurricanes can inflict on people and property.

Shortcomings

371. The oral and written responses of a minority of pupils show a lack of detail in terms of knowledge and understanding which restricts the standard of their work.
372. The exercise books of a minority of pupils too often contain tasks that have not been completed or missing completely. This has a negative impact on their standard of work.
373. A significant number of particularly lower ability pupils is insecure in their understanding of geographical vocabulary.

Sixth form

Good features

374. Students are confident in their interpretation of patterns and processes in physical and human geography. Their research and enquiry skills have developed to a good standard through their involvement in fieldwork activities.
375. Most students demonstrate a good knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of developments such as commercial farming and cattle ranching in the tropical rainforests. They understand the dilemmas faced by governments, such as in Brazil, in the decision making process on the distribution of land among the various developments.
376. The majority of students applies geographical terminology appropriately in the completion of specific units of work.
377. Students use a wide range of statistical techniques, map skills, graphical representation, diagrams and ICT in analysing and recording data on all aspects of their course with good effect.
378. The factors influencing various aspects of population studies are well understood by the majority of students. Their analysis of population growth over time in different parts of the world shows a high level of understanding and ability to interpret graphical information accurately. With the use of an atlas they locate and name correctly the countries with high population densities.

Shortcomings

379. The work of a significant number of students demonstrates a lack of the depth and detail expected at AS and A2 levels.
380. The standards achieved by a minority of students are handicapped by poor presentational and organisational skills. There is some missing and incomplete work in student files. This restricts standards.
381. A minority of students is reluctant to contribute to class discussion.

Music

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

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

Sixth Form: Grade 3 - Good features outweigh shortcomings

382. Examination results at GCSE in 2006 and 2007 were above local and national averages for A*-C and A*-G passes. This represents very good achievement. In 2006, the number of passes at A* was below national averages but above

national averages for A grade passes. In 2007, A*/ A passes were below national averages.

383. Examination results at A level in the last two years have been well below local authority and national averages for A/B grade passes.

KS3

Good features

384. Pupils sing in unison with confidence, pleasing tone and secure pitch. They perform melodies individually with confidence and accuracy and when performing with others, show good awareness of other parts in an ensemble.
385. In pairs and groups, pupils can improvise short melodic phrases over a chordal accompaniment. They have good awareness of chords in Year 9 demonstrated in performing and composing work.
386. When listening to music, pupils show a sound knowledge of the musical elements and technical vocabulary. In Y7, pupils can differentiate between 3 and 4 beats in a bar and by Y9 they recognise and comment on musical structure and different scales.

Shortcomings

387. Some pupils are less confident when performing to the class and cannot keep a steady pulse when performing as a class or in paired work.
388. A severe shortage of computers limits the range of the pupils' responses to composition work. This influences the standards of pupils' compositional work.

KS4

Good features

389. Pupils perform confidently, the majority with style and expression, both individually and within an ensemble. Many solo and ensemble performances are of a high standard.
390. The majority of pupils' compositions shows a good awareness of form and structure. There is imaginative treatment of musical ideas which reflect the wide range of pupils' interests.
391. When listening to music, pupils can demonstrate knowledge of the musical elements and correct musical terminology.

Shortcomings

392. The pupils' compositional work is restricted in range by a shortage of computers and especially in the response of the less able. The standard of their work is restricted.

Sixth form

Good features

393. Generally, standards of performing are often very good and students, drawn from a wide ability range, make good progress.
394. Students demonstrate a wide musical interest in genre and style when composing. Many compositions show varied and interesting treatment of compositional ideas and are enhanced by imaginative use of music technology.

395. When listening and appraising music, students can comment on the musical features, instrumentation and compositional techniques they identify. They use a broad range of musical vocabulary.

Shortcomings

396. A few students have limited knowledge of musical vocabulary and demonstrate a limited response to written coursework on the American Musical.

397. A minority of students has difficulty commenting on structure, instrumentation and important features of Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra.

School's response to the inspection

The school was invited to respond to the inspection report, however, on this occasion, it declined to do so.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Ysgol Gyfun Cymer Rhondda
School type	Secondary, Designated Welsh
Age range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Heol Graigwen Cymer Rhondda Cynon Taf
Postcode	CF39 9HA
Telephone number	01443-680800

Headteacher	Mr R Noel Pritchard
Date of appointment	January 2000
Chair of governors	Mr John Bryant
Reporting inspector	Mr William Gwyn Thomas
Dates of inspection	4-8 February 2008

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	135	134	165	135	151	93	61	874

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	56	7	60.4

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	14.4:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	
Average teaching group size	22.6
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	70

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	93	91	91	91	88	76	70	88
Term 2	91	87	88	89	96	61	83	87
Term 3	92	92	88	91	89	77	76	87

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	19.4
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	24

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2007			Number of pupils in Y9	137
Percentage of pupils reaching or exceeding level 5				
English	Teacher assessment	School	62.8	
		National	68.6	
Welsh	Teacher assessment	School	66.4	
		National	72.6	
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	67.9	
		National	69.9	
Science	Teacher assessment	School	62.8	
		National	70.5	

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2007																
Total number of pupils in Y9: 137																
Percentage of pupils at each level																
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP	
English	Teacher assessment	School							13	24	29	23	10			
		National	1		1	1	2	7	22	36	24	8	1			
Welsh	Teacher assessment	School						2	12	20	43	18	6			
		National	1		1	1	1	1	5	20	37	27	9	1		
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School							12	20	13	42	12			
		National	1	0	1	1	1	1	7	18	25	30	16	1		
Science	Teacher assessment	School						1	7	29	33	22	8	0		
		National	1	0	1	1	1	1	6	19	34	28	12	1		

- 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

In the school	54%	In Wales	58%
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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 2007	163
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	42

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2007:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	88	83	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	55	48	54
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	88	81	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	27	34	40
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	100	97	98
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	80	71	77
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	94	91	93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	6	9	7
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	2	4	3
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	0		
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	4		

For pupils aged 17, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs	
Number of pupils aged 17 in January 2007	57
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2007	39
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2007	18

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	46	60	67
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	89	91	94
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	15	18	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	0		
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	0		

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Inspectors spent a total of 43 days in the school and were joined by the school's headteacher as nominee. They held a meeting before the inspection.

During the inspection, inspectors visited:

- 101 lessons, 59 lessons in the six subjects inspected and 42 lessons in all other subjects;
- registrations and assemblies; and
- some extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team met with:

- staff, parents and governors before the inspection;
- senior managers, middle managers, teachers, support assistants and administrative staff;
- groups of pupils representing each year group;
- representatives of the school council: and
- business and other school partners.

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;
- samples of pupils' reports; and,
- a range of pupils' work.

After the inspection, inspectors held meetings with departments, senior managers and governors.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
W Gwyn Thomas Registered Inspector	Context, Summary, Recommendations. Appendix Key Questions 1 and 5
Gwynoro Jones Lay Inspector	Contributions to Key Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4
Manon Wyn Sion	Key Question 2
Peredur W Francis	Key Question 3, mathematics
David B Morgan	Key Question 4
Meiriol Meredith-Jones	Key Question 4 support and English
David Hughes	Key Question 6
Huw Llewelyn	Key Question 7, geography
Keith Hopkins	design technology and information technology
Dylan Gwyer-Roberts	music
Noel Prichard	Nominee

Acknowledgement

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

Contractor

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