

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

A report on the quality of education in

**Argoed High School
Bryn Road
Bryn y Baal
Mold
CH7 6RY**

School number: 6644042

Date of inspection: 16/03/09

by

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17166**

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Argoed High School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents information about the performance of their child's school.

The inspection of Argoed High School took place between 16/03/09 and 20/03/09. An independent team of inspectors, led by Gareth Wyn Roberts 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.

Estyn's reports follow its guidance for the writing and editing of reports, which is available on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk). The table below explains the terms that Estyn uses to indicate quantities. The table is for guidance only.

Nearly all	with very few exceptions
Most	90% or more
Many	70% or more
A majority	over 60%
Half/around half	close to 50%
A minority	below 40%
Few	below 20%
Very few	less than 10%

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

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Argoed High School, built to an unique design in 1978, is an 11-16 mixed English medium community comprehensive school in the Flintshire Unitary Authority (UA) area. It is located at Bryn Y Baal near the county town of Mold and serves its close catchment of predominantly private housing estates in the semi-rural areas of Bryn y Baal, Mynydd Isa, New Brighton, Sychdyn and neighbouring villages. Currently there are 567 pupils on roll. Virtually all pupils come from homes where English is the dominant language. No pupils speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard. The proportion of pupils who come from ethnic minority groups is around one per cent. Two pupils have extra tuition in English as an additional language (EAL).
2. Pupils are drawn from the full range of economic and social backgrounds. Most parents are in employment and commute to surrounding areas. Most pupils are from neither prosperous nor financially disadvantaged homes. Approximately four per cent are known to be eligible for free school meals, compared with the Welsh average of 14.2 per cent. Three pupils are 'looked after' by a local authority.
3. The school takes pupils from the whole ability range, although it contains a relatively high proportion of pupils of average ability and above. Forty seven pupils (8.25 per cent) have statements of additional needs and a further fifty seven (10 per cent) are on the school's register of additional learning needs (ALN). The significantly higher than national percentage of pupils who have statements of additional needs is due to the fact that the school houses two UA funded special provisions, one for speech and language impairment and the other for Aspergers Syndrome.
4. Although Argoed High School is the only secondary school in the Flintshire UA which accepts pupils between the ages of 11 and 16, the proportion of pupils choosing to transfer to full time education beyond the age of 16, is over 85 per cent. This is a high percentage and compares very favourably with local 11-18 schools with similar intakes. The school has curricular partnerships with Deeside College, Elfed High School and the Welsh College of Horticulture. In order to meet the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) future curricular requirements for key stage 4, these links are being strengthened.
5. The school's vision, 'succeeding together for excellence in learning' and its aims are translated into action through strategic planning and the published whole school development plan (SDP).
6. The present head teacher was appointed in September 2005. The school was previously inspected in May 2003 and there have been only relatively minor changes in the number of pupils on roll, the number of pupils entitled to free school meals, percentage of pupils with additional needs, the percentage of Welsh speakers and the percentage of pupils from ethnic minorities. This time the school has had a 'standard' inspection where six subjects were inspected specifically.

The school's priorities and targets
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7. The school's priorities in its SDP for 2008-2009 are to:
- a) raise the achievement of learners by means of a more effective analysis of subject data;
 - b) improve the effectiveness of teaching and assessment by further developing assessment for learning, reviewing assessment policies and selective use of technology;
 - c) ensure that learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community by improving transition with the primary phase, by working more closely with the community and developing more fully a skills based curriculum;
 - d) further improve the care, guidance and support for learners by developing the role of the learning mentor and updating the rewards policy;
 - e) improve leadership and management, both at whole school and middle management level, by ensuring that self-evaluation is based on secure evidence and measured against more pertinent success criteria .

8. The quantitative targets set by the governing body for 2009 and 2010 are:

Key stage 3	The percentage of pupils attaining NC level 5 or higher in	2009	2010
	English	86%	86%
	mathematics	83%	86%
	science	87%	86
	The percentage of pupils attaining the 'core subject indicator' of level 5 of the NC or more in the combination of English, mathematics and science	76% (boys 73%, girls 79%)	76% (boys 75%, girls 78%)
Key stage 4	The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C in five GCSE subjects	69%	75%
	The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-G in five GCSE subjects	100%	100%
	The percentage of pupils attaining the 'core indicator' of grades A*-C at GCSE in the combination of English, mathematics and science	58% (boys 52%, girls 67%)	61% (boys 60%, girls 63%)

Summary

9. This is a good school. It has outstanding leadership which focuses on continuing improvement. Pupils achieve and attain well; the quality of teaching is good. There are outstanding features in the pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work and their personal, social and learning skills. The school offers outstanding learning experiences and quality of care, guidance and support. The leaders evaluate performance well and use resources efficiently.

Table of grades awarded

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

10. The inspection team's findings coincided with the grades the school awarded itself in its self-evaluation document in four of the seven key questions. The inspection team awarded a higher grade in two key questions and a lower grade in key question 1.

Standards

11. Overall results in teacher assessments at key stage 3 (KS3) and external examination results in KS4 demonstrate that standards of attainment are good. At both key stages results have been above those for the county and Wales in the last three years. Girls have generally outperformed boys at both key stages though boys' results have also improved.
12. When compared to schools in the same free school meal band in 2008, the results for all the core subjects and the core subject indicator (CSI) (based on pupils' attainment in a combination of either English or Welsh First Language, mathematics and science) are close to the boundary with the top 25 per cent of similar schools. Previously, KS3 results have varied. In 2007 they were in the lower 50 per cent of schools and in 2006 they were in the top 50 per cent of similar schools.

13. At KS4, results have improved significantly over the last few years, and in 2008 results in many of the key indicators were close to those of the top 25 per cent of schools with the same free school entitlement. Analyses of pupil progress indicates that the value added for pupils achieving grades A*-C and grades A*-G in five subjects and the CSI is significantly above the values predicted by two of the commonly used benchmarks. Many of the most able pupils achieve their full potential.

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

14. Overall, the standards in the six subjects inspected are good. The standards of achievement in each subject are graded as follows.

Subject	KS3	KS4
English	2	2
Welsh second language	2	1
Mathematics	2	2
Geography	2	2
Music	3	2
Religious education	1	1

15. Since the last inspection, standards have improved in religious education at KS3 and in Welsh at KS4. Otherwise, the grades correspond to those awarded in 2003.
16. In the 59 lessons observed in these six subjects at KS3 and KS4, the grades awarded in the lessons for standards of achievement corresponded to a large extent to the overall grades awarded to the subjects. Standards are higher at KS4 than at KS3. The percentage of grades awarded was as follows.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Whole school	22%	75%	3%	0%	0%

17. The overall grades awarded for standards of achievement for KS3 and KS4 combined, correspond very favourably with those reported in the Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's (HMCI) Annual Report for 2007-2008 where standards in the secondary sector are good or better (grade 1 and 2) in 70% of lessons, and standards are outstanding (grade 1) in 10% of lessons.
18. Standards in key skills and bilingualism are good with outstanding features and are noted in the table below. Standards in the key skills have improved since the last inspection.

Skill	KS3	KS4
Speaking :English	1	1
Listening: English	1	1
Reading: English	1	1
Writing: English	2	2
Mathematical skills/numeracy	2	2
Information and communication technology skills (ICT)	1	1
Bilingualism	1	1

19. Pupils of all ages and abilities achieve good standards in their knowledge, understanding and skills. All pupils are making good progress and fulfil their potential as they move to the next stage of learning both within the school and also when moving on from this school to further education, employment or training.
20. Pupils make outstanding progress in their moral, social and cultural development. They make good progress in their spiritual development. Pupils' attitudes to learning, the interest they show in their work and their ability to sustain concentration are almost consistently outstanding.
21. The whole school average attendance of 94.0% over the three terms preceding the inspection places the school's attendance in the top 25 per cent of schools in the same free school meal band.

The quality of education and training

22. The quality of the teaching in the 88 lessons inspected (59 in the six subjects specifically inspected and an additional 29 across the school) was graded as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
31%	58%	11%	0%	0%

23. These figures compare very favourably with statistics reported in HMCI's annual report for 2007 – 2008 where, on average in the secondary sector, 75% of lessons were awarded either a grade 1 or grade 2 and 17% of those were grade 1 lessons.
24. There is a high correlation between the grades awarded for the quality of teaching in the subjects inspected and subject standards. In the lessons where subject standards were not being judged, the percentage of lessons with outstanding features (grade 1) is nearer the national average for 2007-2008.

25. The curricular provision for the range of pupils at the school has many outstanding features and fully meets their requirements. Outstanding features of the school's curriculum include the provision of personal and social education (PSE), work-related education, careers education and guidance of the highest standard, the provision to develop pupils' moral, social and cultural development and the breadth of the accreditation possibilities for pupils at the end of KS4.
26. The school's partnerships with parents, other schools and institutions reinforce the pupils' learning experiences and has many outstanding features.
27. The school possesses a very clear support structure which promotes high subject standards as well as outstanding pastoral care.
28. The Asperger and the Speech and Language Resource Bases provide outstanding support for the ALN pupils in their care and promote high standards.
29. The quality of provision for equal opportunities is good with outstanding features. The school has achieved outstanding success in creating a civilised, happy and caring community where the pupils feel safe. All associated with the school co-operate to create a purposeful, friendly and supportive atmosphere where pupils are valued as individuals. The school encourages pupils to have appropriate expectations.

Leadership and management

30. The clarity of the school's vision, the overall commitment to achieving the associated aims and objectives and the manner in which the school promotes aspirations at all levels, are outstanding features.
31. The school has developed well under the purposeful and strategic leadership of the head teacher. He is highly respected by staff, governors and the wider community. He works well with members of the senior management team (SMT) and with the governing body and this cooperation has been integral in moving the school forward.
32. The quality of leadership at all levels is good with outstanding features. Members of the SMT, curriculum leaders, learning managers and senior learning mentors understand their roles clearly and carry out their responsibilities effectively.
33. The governing body's contribution to the leadership of the school is effective. Individual professional expertise and interests are used to allocate responsibilities and this has had a positive impact on their work.
34. The school's arrangements for evaluating its own progress are detailed and good. All stakeholders are involved. Nevertheless, at present, whilst the departmental review process is good, it does not focus sufficiently on the standard of pupils' work in lessons and aspects of teaching that need to be improved.

35. The school is well staffed with appropriately qualified, experienced and highly committed teachers. The school has a strong team of teaching assistants which provides excellent support to pupils and teaching staff. Resources throughout the school are good, and are appreciated by staff and pupils alike.
36. Good features outweigh shortcomings in the buildings. The school has excellent information and ICT facilities, a spacious design and technology department, a learning resource centre consisting of a video conferencing suite and a pleasant library, an attractive reception area, and excellent sports facilities. Shortcomings identified at the time of the last inspection and which are still present include the location of the music room and music rehearsal rooms. These are unsatisfactory conditions for the teaching of music.
37. Taking into consideration the good results in external examinations, the good teaching, the high quality curriculum provided, the outstanding care and support for the pupils and the outstanding leadership and management, the school offers good value for money.
38. The school has responded well to the key issues identified in the 2003 inspection report.

Recommendations

The school needs to:

- R1 raise the standards of music at KS3, maintain and further improve standards of achievement and attainment in all subjects* ;
- R2 further develop the contribution of departmental reviews to raising standards by ensuring that they focus sufficiently on the standard of pupils' work in lessons and aspects of teaching that need to be improved, *and
- R3 negotiate with the appropriate authorities for improvements to the buildings, in particular the provision of facilities for music.*

*The school has already noted this area for improvement in its own documentation

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

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: Good and no important shortcomings

39. The inspection team awarded a lower grade than the one the school awarded itself in its self-evaluation report. Although standards in many of the pupils' personal, social and learning skills are good with outstanding features, there were insufficient outstanding features in pupils' success in attaining agreed learning goals and their progress in learning to justify awarding a grade 1 for this key question.

Pupils' success in attaining agreed learning goals

40. Overall results in teacher assessments at KS3 and external examination results in KS4 demonstrate that standards of attainment are good.
41. Results in the core subjects and the CSI in teacher assessments at the end of KS3 have been above local and national figures for the last three years. During this period pupil performance in English and mathematics, in comparison with other similar schools in Wales, has improved from the bottom 50 per cent of similar schools in 2006 and 2007 to the top 50 per cent of similar schools in 2008, whilst the performance in science was in the top 25 per cent of similar schools in 2006, bottom 50 per cent of similar schools in 2007 and the top 25 per cent of similar schools in 2008. The CSI performance was in the top 50 per cent of similar schools in 2006, bottom 50 per cent of similar schools in 2007 and top 50 per cent of schools in 2008.
42. In 2008, the results for all the core subjects and the CSI are close to the boundary with the top 25 per cent of similar schools. Girls generally outperformed boys at KS3 during this period.
43. At KS4, the percentage of pupils reaching the CSI and gaining grades A*-C and A*-G in five subjects has been above the UA and Wales averages for the last three years. In 2008, in comparison with schools with similar free school meal entitlement, the percentage attaining the CSI, grades A*-C in five subjects, the 'Level 2 threshold', the 'Level 2 threshold including language and mathematics', is close to the top 25 per cent of similar schools. The percentage attaining the level 1 threshold is in the top 25 per cent of similar schools. The percentage achieving grades A*-C places the results for the three individual core subjects in the top 50 per cent of similar schools.
44. Pupil progress indicates that the value added for pupils achieving grades A*-C and grades A*-G in five subjects and the CSI is significantly above the values predicted by the WAG's type 3 model.
45. Many of the most able pupils achieve their full potential. They gain the A*/A grades in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations. In 2008, 24 per cent of grades recorded by the school were at this level. This percentage is well above local and national averages.

46. At KS4 in the GCSE examinations in 2007, girls outperformed boys in nearly all indicators. The difference between the two has remained more or less the same during the last three years. During this period, the performance of boys and girls has improved.
47. Overall, the standards in the six subjects inspected are good. The grades for the standards of achievement in each subject are as follows.

Subject	KS3	KS4
English	2	2
Welsh second language	2	1
Mathematics	2	2
Geography	2	2
Music	3	2
Religious education	1	1

48. Since the last inspection, standards have improved in religious education at KS3 and in Welsh at both key stage.
49. In the 59 lessons observed in these six subjects at KS3 and KS4, the grades awarded in the lessons for standards of achievement corresponded, to a large extent, to the overall grades awarded to the subjects. Standards are higher at KS4 than at KS3. The percentage of grades awarded was as follows.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	14%	81%	6%	0%	0%
KS4	35%	65%	0%	0%	0%
KS3 and KS4 combined	22%	75%	3%	0%	0%

50. The overall grades awarded for standards of achievement for KS3 and KS4 combined correspond very favourably with those reported for secondary schools in the HMCI's Annual Report for 2007-2008 where:
- standards are good or better (grade 1 and 2) in 70% of lessons; and
 - standards are outstanding (grade 1) in 10% of lessons.
51. Standards in the key skills and in bilingualism are good with outstanding features. Standards for bilingualism are judged in the context of the school. Standards achieved in the key skills and in bilingualism are noted in the table below.

Skill	KS3	KS4
Speaking :English	1	1
Listening: English	1	1
Reading: English	1	1
Writing: English	2	2
Mathematical skills/numeracy	2	2
Information technology skills	1	1
Bilingualism	1	1

52. Standards in the key skills have generally improved since the last inspection (standards in bilingualism were not evaluated then).
53. Pupils speak very well and at length, using the correct register, appropriate vocabulary and a wide range of constructions. They listen very well to each other and to their teacher and respond very appropriately in speech and writing. At KS3, the pupils delight in reading for pleasure. Throughout the school, they have a very good understanding of what they have read, and they can skim and scan very appropriately. They have outstanding skills when researching work, either from books or the internet and summarise information very skilfully. The pupils write well and at length in a variety of registers.
54. In general, pupils are fluent and confident in number work and are able to retain this knowledge well. They understand the properties of number and use suitable methods for calculation. In geography, pupils are able to put forward hypothesis, collect, present and analyse data, come to a conclusion and evaluate effectively using a wide range of statistical methods. However, in a number of subjects, pupils do not correctly scale and label axes in graphical work.
55. Pupils have a very high level of varied ICT skills. They very skilfully convey information for an audience using a variety of media; they use the internet well for individual research. They use ICT readily for computer aided modelling and control.
56. Pupils' bilingual skills, most readily demonstrated in Welsh lessons, are outstanding. They listen and understand spoken Welsh very well, they speak fluently and appropriately and can both ask and reply to questions. They adapt the language learnt to their own personal situation. They have a very good understanding of what they read and within the writing tasks expected of their level of expertise, age and ability, write well.

Pupils' progress in learning

57. Pupils of all ages and abilities achieve good standards in their knowledge, understanding and skills. Their awareness of their targets is outstanding and they know very well how they are progressing and what needs to be done to reach their targets. Their ability to evaluate their own work is outstanding.

58. Pupils with ALN make good progress and achieve their individual targets. Pupils who are 'more able and talented' also achieve well and make good progress.
59. Both boys and girls usually achieve just as well as each other in class. Boys, however, are often more willing to participate more actively and vocally in class in subjects such as English. Girls usually do better than boys in external assessments. Pupils in the county provision for pupils with Asperger Syndrome and Speech and Language Impairment generally achieve well and in many cases attain well in external assessments and examinations.
60. All pupils are making good progress and fulfil their potential for moving to the next stage of learning either within the school or when moving on from this school to further education, employment or training. The percentage of pupils gaining the highest GCSE grades (A* and A) was high in 2008. The percentage of those pupils leaving in summer 2008 who were not in education, training or employment was only 4 percent.

The development of pupils' personal, social and learning skills

61. The pupils' attitudes to learning, the interest they show in their work and their ability to sustain concentration is almost consistently outstanding. They work productively and make good use of their time
62. The pupils' behaviour in all aspects of school life has outstanding features. Their exemplary behaviour and positive attitude make lessons a pleasant and stimulating experience where learning is encouraged. There were no permanent exclusions during the year before the inspection and the number of temporary exclusions was relatively small.
63. The pupils are courteous to each other and to all school staff and visitors. This is an extremely friendly, happy school.
64. The pupils make outstanding progress in their moral, social and cultural development. They make good progress in their spiritual development. The concepts, skills and knowledge acquired during their PSE lessons are outstanding. They have good awareness of the "Cwricwlwm Cymreig" and an awareness and respect for people who are different from themselves. Their awareness of environmental issues is outstanding. Pupils' creative skills are outstanding in subjects such as English, drama and art, and they respond well to encouragement to develop healthy lifestyles.
65. They develop a good deal of independence as they work. In addition to the high standards achieved in their key skills, pupils' abilities in their wider key skills of working together, solving problems and improving their own learning are also good with outstanding features. They develop their thinking skills well and study well. All this means that they have a good grasp of the skills required for lifelong learning.

66. The whole school average attendance over the three terms preceding the inspection was 94%. Attendance is in the top quartile for similar secondary schools in Wales. In the year preceding the inspection, no year group fell below 92% in any term. The school takes appropriate account of WAG's current guidance on attendance.
67. Unauthorised absence is rare. Very few pupils arrive late and lessons start punctually throughout the day.
68. As a result of the well structured PSE provision and well planned work experience, the pupils develop an outstanding awareness of the world of work and of their own vocational strengths.
69. The pupils make good use of a busy community centre, the school's extensive sports facilities and popular school music and drama productions to interact with parents and the community at large.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

70. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.

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

71. The quality of the teaching in the 88 lessons inspected across the school was as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
31%	58%	11%	0%	0%

72. These figures compare very favourably with statistics reported in HMCI for schools' Annual Report for 2007 – 2008 where, in the secondary sector, on average, 75% of lessons were awarded either a grade 1 or grade 2 and 17% of those were grade 1 lessons.

73. The quality of the teaching in the 59 lessons inspected in the six subjects specifically inspected at this school was as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
39%	49%	12%	0%	0%

74. There is a high correlation between the grades awarded for the quality of teaching in those subjects inspected and subject standards, particularly in religious education and in Welsh.
75. In the 29 lessons observed where subject standards were not being specifically inspected, the percentage of lessons awarded a grade 1 for the quality of teaching was very similar to the average for Wales as a whole.
76. In the lessons where there are outstanding features, the timing and pace of the learning are very well managed, the level of challenge is finely tuned to balance high expectations with an appropriate level of difficulty. The professional pupil/teacher relationship reflects a very high level of mutual respect and a deep understanding of their mutual needs. Interactive whiteboards are used in true interactive fashion and, as a result, all pupils, of all abilities, become enthusiastically involved in their own learning and achieve high standards in lessons.
77. These features are also present to a lesser extent in most of the lessons awarded a grade 2. In general, the good features include:
- high quality and detailed planning;

- activities and tasks which are well matched to lesson objectives;
 - using an appropriate range of well timed tasks and teaching styles, according to the pupils' needs;
 - catering for a range of abilities and setting differentiated tasks;
 - equal opportunities for boys and girls with some appropriate, positive discrimination in favour of boys as regards the nature of tasks selected or texts studied;
 - catering for pupils with different linguistic, learning or behavioural needs in a subtle, non-discriminatory manner and involving all pupils in all activities;
 - explicit sharing of assessment criteria and empowering pupils to become involved in their own learning and to set their own targets for improvement;
 - matching the use of resources to the pupils' requirements and, in particular, making good use of modern technology for lesson planning and presentation;
 - addressing the needs of pupils with ALN exceptionally well in mixed ability classes.
78. There are shortcomings in a small minority of lessons. These are often varied in nature but the most commonly occurring features are the following:
- not involving the individual pupil in the discussion element of lessons;
 - not insisting that all pupils listen when giving instructions;
 - allowing some pupils to mark time and not providing them with extension tasks;
 - an imbalance between teaching and learning activities.
79. In addition, there are examples of the effective promotion of bilingualism, principally by the structured use of incidental Welsh in the classroom.
80. There are outstanding examples of teachers giving freely of their own time to support pupils with their academic work in the lunch hour and after school.
81. In most departments, teachers plan very carefully for the effective deployment of teaching assistants who, in general, provide outstanding support.

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

82. Assessment for learning, now in its second year, is being introduced over a three year period and it is already proving to be invaluable as a tool to raise standards. Most departments concentrate on this aspect of teaching, and are developing a good degree of expertise in this area. In several departments, there have been measurable improvements as a result of this whole school initiative.
83. The school also expects all teachers to use assessment of learning as a tool to inform both short and long term lesson planning and this policy is implemented. Pupils are set targets at pre-set, specific times during the year and are constantly challenged to achieve well in most lessons. However, it is not always clear how individual departments find out whether individual pupils have achieved their targets.

84. The school meets statutory requirements for assessing, recording and reporting pupils' achievements to parents. There is one interim report and one full report each year. These annual reports meet statutory requirements.
85. Currently, the school is developing a comprehensive electronic system of tracking each pupil's progress in all areas across the curriculum. It has already set up an unified approach that all departments adhere to as regards the timing of assessments. Two parents' evenings are planned annually as well as an additional opportunity for parents to discuss targets with learning mentors. All assessments and reports focus on six common areas of development, graded numerically, that provide parents with a clear snapshot of the pupil's progress and effort. A target is set for each subject. The degree of challenge implicit in these targets varies within and across subjects. The report also contains a section relating to each pupil's individual personal and social development and this is a commendable feature.
86. When writing the annual subject reports, departments are allowed to formulate their own subject specific comments. Some use statement banks whilst others prefer free writing, tailored to the individual. Across subjects, these comments vary in length and in the depth of analysis but there is an unified approach within subjects. In general, they are written in a style that parents can understand.
87. Parents can respond to assessments and reports at any of the meetings or on the target setting evenings. Also as the school has an open door policy, parents visit the school to discuss their children's progress at short notice, should they so desire.
88. Pupils' understanding of the purpose of assessment is good. They do not need to formulate responses to reports at a set time of the year as they are continually assessing their own learning. However, standards of self-evaluation are variable across departments. In general, they are good. In the best examples, pupils are fully involved in the process. They analyse their oral or written work and select their own targets for improvement. Some departments provide good opportunities for peer assessment which reflect the pupils' good understanding of the whole process.
89. The quality and extent of day to day marking is generally good. Key pieces of work are marked thoroughly. Should parents so desire, they are told at what level their child is working. The standard of written comments in formative marking vary within and across departments. However, much of the feedback is done orally and pupils are treated individually. At KS4, in the best examples, pupils are very aware of grade descriptors and know exactly where they stand in terms of what they have already achieved and what they need to do in order to gain a higher grade.

90. The school is in close contact with the feeder primary schools and much work has been done on common assessment standards and knowledge of each others' schemes of work. The school has confirmed accreditation for the end of KS3 assessment in seven subjects, including all the core subjects. Teachers are also members of subject panels within the county where assessment levels are discussed and, as a result, they become more expert at assessment. An unusually high number of teachers gain additional expertise at a national level through marking examinations or moderating for awards and also when they help to deliver In Service Educational Training (INSET) in some subjects.
91. The assessment of pupils with ALN is an outstanding feature.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

92. The grade awarded by the inspection team does not match the grade 2 awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report. The inspection team is of the view that the curricular provision for the range of pupils at the school has many outstanding features and consequently has awarded a higher grade.

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

93. The curriculum:
- meets the pupils' learning needs and reflects the aims for statutory school age pupils set out in the Education Acts of 1996 and 2005;
 - is broad and balanced for every pupil, including pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and ALN as well as those who are 'more able and talented';
 - provides equal opportunity and access for all pupils; and
 - meets the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
94. Outstanding features of the school's curriculum include:
- the detailed PSE provision, work-related education and careers education and guidance of the highest standard, in accordance with WAG guidelines.
 - the provision to develop pupils' moral, social and cultural development
 - the breadth of the accreditation possibilities for pupils at the end of KS4, including GCSE, Asset Languages (in Mandarin), vocational qualifications and COPE (the ASDAN certificate of personal effectiveness.)
 - the quality of the pastoral and curricular partnerships with other providers of subject choices at KS4 and effective transition between KS2 and KS3.
95. There are a number of good features in the way the school meets the learning needs and interests of its pupils. These include:
- the promotion of pupils' spiritual development;
 - the flexibility of the KS4 curriculum, which allows every Y10 pupil to choose freely from the options menu available;
 - the school's response to the 14-19 Learning Pathways' agenda, by offering currently some vocational courses at KS4, including Child Development, Health and Social Care, and Business and Communication Technology, and planning in detail a significant increase of KS4 options for September 2009, and
 - the arrangements for curricular continuity in a good number of subjects, and a continuity of pastoral care between KS2 and KS3 as pupils transfer from primary to secondary school.

96. The school systematically and effectively develops the basic skills of communication and numeracy for KS3 pupils; this includes extra literacy tuition. The school also supports a targeted group of KS4 pupils who require more support with numeracy and communication. These arrangements formed the basis for the reaccreditation of the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark.
97. However, the school's arrangements to ensure that the key and wider key skills form an integrated part of the curriculum and are used to raise pupils' standards of achievement are still developing.
98. The curriculum is enriched through an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities, which also contribute well to pupils' personal, social and cultural development.
99. The programme includes:
- cultural experiences through a variety of competitions and performances in music, sport and drama;
 - a wide range of clubs and after school activities to promote pupils' learning outside the classroom. These are valued by both parents and pupils, and
 - numerous educational visits to local places of interest, exchange visits and visits abroad to expand the pupils' horizons.
100. The school takes positive action to ensure equal opportunities for each pupil and to prevent stereotyping. The school gives high priority to social inclusion.
101. The school's partnership with parents, and other schools and institutions reinforce pupils' learning experiences and include the following outstanding features:
- parents are very supportive of the school; their views have been actively sought and acted upon. A regular newsletter highlights school events and activities;
 - close working partnerships with a number of external agencies, including voluntary and charity organisations' and
 - the outstanding progress of the links with other schools and institutions to further develop the 14-19 curricular options. As from 2009, KS4 pupils will have the opportunity of studying a wider range of courses, in partnership with other members of the South Flintshire Consortium.
102. In addition, the good features in the school's partnerships include:
- useful arrangements with higher education colleges for initial teacher training programmes;
 - numerous and beneficial projects with the local community and employers, which offer pupils worthwhile experiences of the world of work.

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

103. The partnership with parents, the community, schools and external agencies is good with outstanding features.
104. An attractive prospectus and regular newsletters inform parents about curricular and social aspects of school life. Meetings for parents are arranged at regular interval across the year.
105. A notable feature is the additional target setting evening where parents, pupils and staff share their aspirations and expectations for the coming year.
106. Parents expressed strong support for the school in the pre-inspection questionnaire. Generous financial contributions from the Home-School Association have been used to provide additional resources, including a school mini bus.
107. Extensive curricular and pastoral links ensure that pupils transfer smoothly from the feeder primary schools. These links include subject working groups and special transition events such as the successful forensic science, media and design challenges.
108. An outstanding example of partnership working is the anti bullying strategy prepared jointly by the local consortium of primary and secondary schools.
109. Good links are being developed with neighbouring secondary schools and colleges to jointly provide vocational courses for Y10 and Y11 pupils.
110. Visiting agencies such as the police, careers and health professionals give useful talks at school events and in PSE lessons. They and a trainee counsellor also provide pastoral support as the need arises.
111. There is an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, including lunchtime and after school clubs. Teams and individuals have achieved notable successes at county and national level in several sports and other areas.
112. Students are welcomed from many universities and colleges for periods of teacher training.
113. Work-related education is very well developed. An effective and enthusiastic co-ordinator oversees this aspect, ably supported by school office staff.
114. All Y10 pupils spend a period of work experience with local employers, for which they are thoroughly prepared.

115. In this anglicised part of Wales, pupils display a very positive attitude to the Welsh language and are keen to develop their bilingual skills.
116. They are encouraged to do so by the use of bilingual signage around the school and the regular use of incidental Welsh by staff.
117. All departments contribute to the School Eisteddfod. Except for Welsh as a subject, however, there is no formal Welsh medium teaching.
118. Provision of the the 'Cwricwlwm Cymreig' is good.
119. There is equal opportunity for all pupils in all school activities and this is an outstanding feature.
120. The school closely monitors the relative performance of boys and girls and is committed to tackling underachievement.
121. The school effectively promotes sustainable development and global citizenship, with two members of staff tasked to co-ordinate the work. The contribution of each individual subject has been mapped. The school has achieved silver status in the Eco Schools initiative.
122. An outstanding feature is the way pupils themselves take the lead in promoting sustainability through an active Eco Committee. Initiatives include recycling, waste minimisation, collecting litter, bulb planting and Fair Trade events. Pupils award stars for departments who display good practice and the pupils gain house points by pointing out examples of waste.
123. The school closely monitors its use of energy with the help of a direct link to county hall.
124. Pupils' understanding of global issues is well developed. As well as the contribution of subjects such as religious education and geography, there are established links with projects in several countries, including France, Morocco and South Africa.
125. With the aid of a county based officer, the school clearly identifies potential gaps in the labour market which are then drawn to the attention of pupils as they prepare to choose their subject options.
126. The entrepreneurial awareness of KS3 and KS4 pupils is developed in an outstanding manner in school "challenge" events and "house bonding" days and by inviting role models from business and industry to talk with, and motivate, the pupils.
127. The school has a long tradition of success in Young Enterprise competitions. Two teams of ten Y10 pupils are currently running mock companies. One was preparing to represent the county in the North Wales final at the time of the inspection.

128. The school actively promotes links with the community. The community centre, which is attached to the school, is used regularly by people of all ages. Its activities include a *crèche*, a youth club and a club for older people who regularly meet pupils for a chat and refreshments.
129. The school's sports facilities are well used by the public, including an all-weather artificial turf pitch and a recently opened hall, part funded by the National Lottery.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

130. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade the school awarded itself in its self-evaluation report.

The quality of care, support and guidance to learners.

131. The school's mission statement, namely 'Our Learning Community values and respects all the people in it as individuals and as members of the team,' is clearly reflected in the school's day to day activities and attitudes
132. An outstanding close community ethos makes the school a happy and caring community where the pupils feel safe.
133. The school plans and manages its care and support arrangements extremely effectively. Relevant policies are in place and in use. By working closely with pupils, parents, carers and employers and taking account of their views, the school makes appropriate and very effective use of outside agencies and services to support pupils' needs.
134. The school possesses a very clear support structure which promotes high subject standards as well as outstanding pastoral care.
135. Learning Managers and Learning Mentors, working together in a house system, know their pupils well and care for them with dedication. An accredited Learning Coach gives additional support where needed and the pupils very much appreciate her 'arms length' role.
136. An outstanding relationship exists with the parents and the community and there is a clear open door policy for parental contact. Most parents praise the excellent communication with the school. The pupils' planners provides an opportunity for further contact between parents and the school, and, at best, are well used by pupils, teachers and parents.
137. Arrangements are in place for representatives from all year groups to meet regularly as a School Council. Pupils' views are considered and discussed effectively.
138. Pupils are given good guidance, knowledge of employment opportunities, and advice when making choices about courses to follow. Options handbooks and subjects handbooks give the pupils wide and relevant information and guidance.

139. Comprehensive arrangements for KS2 to KS3 transition and extended liaison with catchment area primary schools, have successfully operated for many years, and consist of curriculum and pastoral liaison. These arrangements are a real strength of the school. The induction programme helps pupils to settle quickly as they arrive in school. Primary school pupils are given the opportunity to visit the school before transferring, thus ensuring a smooth transition to the secondary school where they feel secure. The Learning Adventure transition scheme effectively concentrates on skills activities with Y6 pupils.
140. An effective peer-support 'Buddy' system operates weekly throughout KS3; KS4 pupils support younger KS3 pupils. In addition, peer listeners are available at lunchtimes. These are greatly appreciated by the pupils and contribute to the caring ethos of the school.
141. The school provides a wide and effective PSE programme which is timetabled once a fortnight, and also on a daily basis during registration period, where relevant themes complying with the PSE Framework are thoroughly addressed and discussed. Lessons are presented effectively by Learning Mentors and specialists from outside agencies who are invited into the school. The programme is further enhanced by the opportunities that are provided naturally in subjects across the curriculum.
142. There is a holistic approach to monitoring pupils' punctuality, attendance, behaviour and performance. It involves successful team working by Learning Mentors, Senior Learning Mentors, senior managers, support staff, office staff and county specialists.
143. The school based Behaviour and Inclusion Coordinator, who is also a trained learning coach, provides another "arms length" point of contact for pupils.
144. Career education is thorough and well-planned, with a logical progression from Y8 to Y11. The careers co-ordinator works very closely with the visiting careers' advisor. Access to careers advice is increasingly on line.
145. Because of its provision, Argoed has been selected to take part in a pilot study aimed at creating a Quality Mark for Continuing Improvement in Career Education.
146. Though the careers service for pupils is outstanding, the careers advisor's room is rather small. During the inspection some brochures in the careers section of the school library were out of date.
147. Appropriate health and safety policies and procedures are operational, to ensure pupils' well being, health and safety. These include regular safety checks on equipment, first aid qualifications for staff and fire drills.

148. Close circuit cameras monitor all parts of the school. Healthy eating options are provided by the school canteen. All Y7 pupils attend a safety morning which highlights good practice and draws attention to possible dangers.
149. School staff are trained in basic counselling skills. Effective use is made of classroom assistants, and of external support staff such as the education welfare officer and health professionals.
150. A senior member of staff, together with a named member of the governing body, have responsibility for child protection. All members of staff are made aware of signs of physical and mental abuse and they are familiar with the county protocols and procedures to be followed in cases of concern.

The quality of the provision for additional learning needs.

151. The quality of the provision for pupils with ALN is good with outstanding features. The school is successful in meeting its aim of providing outstanding inclusion opportunities for pupils with a wide range of different additional learning needs
152. By using the information provided by the primary schools, the school successfully identifies pupils who need extra support before they arrive at the school. An effective process of identifying relevant pupils continues through effective links between the additional needs co-ordinator (ANCO) and the school's learning development team.
153. The manner in which the school has responded to requirements of the SEN Code of Practice is outstanding. Statements of special educational need are reviewed effectively. Parents and external agencies take a practical role in the process. All parents attended their child's annual review last year. The school register for ALN is updated regularly and is comprehensive
154. The Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) prepared relate well to the educational, behavioural and pastoral needs of pupils. Where relevant, they reflect the requirements of the pupil's statement of special needs. The plans are distributed to all departments. There are very good examples of individual plans influencing teachers' planning for lessons. Subject teachers are positive in their approach and have outstanding knowledge and understanding of pupils additional learning needs.
155. The pupils who are disapplied from a National Curriculum subject or have their curriculum modified, follow an appropriate alternative programme. Care is taken to provide learning opportunities that engage the interest of the pupils using a wide range of methods, resources and equipment, including ICT.
156. Pupils with ALN make outstanding progress which corresponds to their ability and additional learning needs. At the end of KS4 they all gain GCSE accreditation with the vast majority gaining at least one C grade.

157. The Asperger Syndrome and the Speech and Language Resource Bases provide outstanding support for the ALN pupils in their care. All the pupils in the two Resource Bases are successfully included in mainstream tutor groups and subject lessons. All the pupils are included in the school's target setting procedures and their attainments are, at least, in line with their predicted grades; the majority exceed these. Records show that progress in their personal and social skills is outstanding. A speech and language therapist works closely with the teacher in charge of the language resource in order to provide a very comprehensive service for the pupils. The wealth of expertise developed in these areas is successfully used to support other pupils who are not part of the Resource Bases. The two Resource Bases are well organised, attractive and very well resourced.
158. The teaching assistants give outstanding support to individuals and small groups of pupils in mainstream classes. Their work is targeted effectively to ensure maximum use is made of their time. They have developed outstanding expertise in teaching and supporting pupils and keep good records of progress made by the pupils in the lessons. These records are used for future planning. The teaching assistants' work is regularly monitored by the relevant teacher in charge and regular weekly meetings as well as informal daily meetings provide guidance and expertise when required.
159. Y11 pupils listen to Y7 pupils reading in their morning tutor groups. They make good contributions to pupils gaining the relevant reading and comprehension skills to tackle the KS3 curriculum.
160. The school has outstanding procedures to enable pupils with emotional or challenging behaviour to come to better terms with their difficulty and respond positively to school life. On the rare occasions when pupils exhibit challenging behaviour, staff reaction is informed by the detailed knowledge provided and the clear guidance provided by the SMT. The teaching assistants successfully support individual and groups of pupils in lessons. They offer guidance and often avoid confrontation and the disruption to other pupils' learning. The school's Behaviour and Inclusion Coordinator, together with the UA behaviour support teacher, also provide valuable support and guidance to individual pupils. Consequently the school's temporary exclusion rates are exceptionally low and no pupil has been excluded permanently over the last five years.
161. The ANCO provides outstanding support and guidance to learners and staff. Outstanding links have been established with a range of outside expertise. Parents are involved and know there is an open door policy for them if problems do arise. The well attended weekly parents' group provides parents with opportunities to share information and secures excellent links with school. The school as a whole is very supportive towards pupils with ALN and offers them a purposeful and caring environment within which they can reach their potential.

The quality of provision for equal opportunities

162. The quality of provision for equal opportunities is good with outstanding features.
163. The school has achieved outstanding success in creating a civilised, happy and caring community. All associated with the school co-operate to create a purposeful, friendly and supportive atmosphere where pupils are valued as individuals.
164. The school encourages pupils to have appropriate expectations. All courses are open to all pupils. The school recognises the diversity of pupils' backgrounds and abilities and provides a suitable and flexible curriculum. This includes appropriate support for English as Additional Language pupils as well as special arrangements for some learners to spend part of their course off-site.
165. There is good provision for most pupils from the whole ability range. Through Learning Pathways, the school offers more practical and vocational courses for those pupils who are suited to them. The 'more able and gifted' pupils have been identified and there are examples of good extension work and activities provided for them across the school's curriculum and outside school activities. The provision for ALN pupils is outstanding.
166. Outstanding success has been achieved in creating a climate where learners are free from harassment and discrimination. Pupils interviewed reported that there was no bullying in the school and were confident that any allegations of bullying would be dealt with promptly. Procedures for dealing with bullying are in place. Year 10 pupils, who have received appropriate training, offer good support through counselling and guidance for younger pupils.
167. The school monitors and compares the results of boys and girls. Every subject option is available to all pupils at KS4, and the school strives to challenge stereotyping when advising pupils on subject choices
168. The school works very hard to promote social inclusion so that awareness permeates through all the activities and the life of the school. It has an outstanding supportive pastoral system and good support from outside agencies to help any pupil experiencing difficulty in school, at home or in the community.
169. The school makes every effort to promote good race relations. The few learners attending the school from ethnic minority groups are making good progress and are well integrated. Within a number of subjects, including religious education, English and PSE, there are good opportunities for learners to learn about racism and human rights.
170. Pupils who are looked after by the local authority have relevant individual plans which are coordinated with social services. The school works closely with all outside agencies to provide outstanding support that ensures that the placements succeed.

171. The school has a relevant Disability Equality Scheme, and modifications have been made to parts of the building to ensure that all pupils can access all areas of the curriculum. Curriculum leaders ensure that all pupils can access trips and activities and that teaching assistant support is provided where relevant. The school has outstanding success in ensuring that no pupil suffers from less favourable treatment than others.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

172. This grade is higher than the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report. It is also higher than the grade awarded for key question 1. This is because the inspection team judged the clarity of the school's vision, the overall commitment to achieving the associated aims and objectives and the manner in which the school promotes aspirations at all levels as outstanding features.

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

173. The school's vision is made clear to staff, pupils and parents. All parties work well together and are totally committed to achieving the underlying aims and objectives of the mission. This is a particular strength of the school.

174. The school has developed well under the purposeful and strategic leadership of the head teacher. He is highly respected by staff, governors and the wider community. He works well with members of the SMT and with the governing body and this cooperation has been integral in moving the school forward.

175. The quality of leadership at all levels is good with outstanding features. Members of the SMT, curriculum managers, learning managers and senior learning mentors understand their roles clearly and carry out their responsibilities effectively. They are all committed to raising standards and this, together with the high level of cooperation and support that they receive from the staff and the focus placed on pupils' learning, has already influenced end of key stage assessments and examination results.

176. Every member of the SMT acts as a link person to subject departments and this role has been effective in aligning whole-school and departmental priorities and in the use of data to improve results and raise standards. The link person also plays a key role in departmental reviews.

177. The school is very successful in promoting equality of opportunity and aspiration for all. All pupils are given the opportunity to follow an appropriately broad range of subjects, and the success achieved by pupils with ALN is outstanding. Also all members of the teaching, administrative and technical staff are encouraged to undertake professional development. This, and the high level of staff empowerment, has had a positive effect on staff management development. In-service training is used effectively to address whole school issues and the training undertaken has had a positive effect on raising standards.

178. The quality of strategic planning is good. The SDP refers appropriately to national priorities. However, the targets are process related and do not refer sufficiently to the possible impact of the initiatives on pupils' standards and learning.

179. An effective process has been developed for setting targets based on individual pupils' prior performance. On the whole, the targets are challenging and realistic. In addition, there are effective strategies in place for the Senior Learning Mentors and the Learning Managers to identify and provide structured support for individual pupils to ensure their progress.
180. The system for performance management, which is operational for all members of the teaching, technical and administrative staff, is effective. Targets are set for each individual teacher's professional development and a target for whole-school development.
181. The school has successfully developed several national priorities. There are a number of good features, particularly the development of healthy schools' and eco-schools initiatives, primary-secondary transition, social inclusion and assessment for learning. The school has also contributed effectively to the authority's 14-19 Learning Pathways' network and has planned the introduction of several vocational courses.
182. Strong links and partnerships have been developed with other organisations that include primary and secondary schools, colleges of further and higher education, businesses and support agencies. These enrich the curriculum and provide pupils with a greater breadth of experiences.
183. The programme for the induction of newly-qualified teachers (NQT) and teachers new to the school is effective. Initial teacher training student teachers also receive very good support.

How well governors or other supervisory bodies meet their responsibilities

184. The governing body's contribution to the leadership of the school is effective. Individual professional expertise and interests are used to allocate responsibilities and this has had a positive impact on their work. The designated governor for SEN is very supportive of the work of the school.
185. Governors have high expectations and are beginning to act as critical friends. They have a clear understanding of the school's main priorities and a good knowledge of school performance. However, their role in relation to scrutinising the progress of whole school initiatives has not been developed fully.
186. Individual governors are linked to departments. They meet with curriculum leaders in order to understand more about the work and priorities of departments. This link role, however, is not sufficiently formalised to ensure consistency and in order to develop governors' capacity to evaluate examination results and the implementation of priorities noted in departmental development plans.
187. The governors have ensured that the school meets all legal and course requirements.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

188. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade in the school's self- evaluation report.

How effectively the provider's performance is monitored and evaluated

189. The school's self-evaluation report is an accurate and honest reflection of the school and what it needs to do to improve further. Although descriptive in some areas, the report was very well evidenced in order to justify opinions.
190. The findings of the inspection team correspond closely to the findings of the self- evaluation report. However, the inspection team awarded a lower grade in one of the key questions and a higher grade in two of the key questions.
191. Members of the SMT work closely with curriculum leaders to analyse and make effective use of performance data. There has been a sharp focus on using Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) data at an individual pupil level which compares performance across and within departments. This data is used effectively to recognise the needs of pupils, to set expectations for learning and to set aspirational targets. Use is also made of value added information from the Welsh Education Database (WED) data, which is made available to centres through the WJEC (Welsh Joint education Committee), as a potential means of improving performance.
192. Members of the SMT evaluate areas for which they are responsible and use this information effectively. This includes evaluation of the curriculum, professional development and Basic Skills. Curriculum leaders are well aware of the strengths and areas to be developed within their own departments.
193. The school conducts a thorough evaluation of the teaching against whole school priorities through bi-annual departmental reviews. This provides a common approach to self-evaluation where members of the leadership team work in partnership with curriculum leaders to recognise strengths and areas for improvement. Although useful, the reviews neither focus sufficiently on the standard of pupils' work in lessons and aspects of teaching that need to be improved in order to further improve classroom practice, nor provide an overview and timeline for the evaluation of cross-curricular and wider school issues. The performance management process supports the evaluation system which provides an effective link between school improvement and the professional development of teachers.
194. Effective use is made of county advisers to gather information and to support evaluation at senior management and departmental level.

195. Spot checks and interim assessments are used effectively by curricular leaders, senior learning mentors and learning mentors to track pupils' progress and to set appropriate individual targets for improvement.
196. Surveys are arranged to gather the views of employers, parents and pupils and are used effectively to develop provision. Pupils' views are communicated through the Student Council which has an impact on school improvements, as well as through other platforms including SNAG (School Nutrition Action Group), questionnaires on the House System and subject surveys on provision and learning. Staff opinions are actively sought and actions for further development are discussed through 'Staff Open Forums' and the 'Futures Group'. Support staff and teaching assistants are effectively involved in the evaluation processes concerning their areas of work.
197. Teamwork is a particular strength of the school. Members of the SMT, departmental teams, pastoral and inclusion teams and ALN teams are clear about how they are expected to contribute to the schools' success and the success of the pupils, and work well together in order to bring about improvement.
198. Information is relayed effectively to the governing body to promote their involvement in the life of the school. However, the evaluative role of link governors with individual subjects is not fully developed.

The effectiveness of planning for improvement

199. The SDP, departmental action plans and action plans for initiatives, all recognise appropriate tasks for improvement. Actions already taken have had considerable impact on teaching and learning. Evidence of improvements can be seen in the improved GCSE results and KS3 assessments over the last three years.
200. There is a clear link between whole school and departmental priorities and the strong links established between senior and middle managers ensure that improvements are evaluated. Annotated action plans provide evidence that they are working documents. However, criteria for success are task related and do not include reference to specific and measurable outcomes of what pupils might achieve or how the quality of teaching and learning might improve. Agreed criteria for evaluation are not specific enough within some action plans to lead to a 'sharper' evaluation and more appropriate actions for improvement.
201. The Investors In People – Leadership and Management award, however, gives evidence of the effectiveness of the improvement process.
202. Resources needed to carry out developments are financed within the school budget. They are sufficient to allow the school to support and implement its main priorities. These include the employment of two members of staff to provide for teacher lesson release and for departmental planning days. Additional funds are made available to middle managers on request. However, tasks within improvement and action plans are not clearly matched to financial costing.

203. The school has been successful in its application for an all weather pitch and a new sports hall. The improved facilities allow wider option choices for pupils in KS4 and further extra-curricular activities for all pupils. The improved ICT resources also allow greater provision for pupils and are available for effective use in all classrooms as a tool for effective teaching and learning.
204. Six key issues for action were identified in the previous inspection report, all of which have been effectively addressed. There has been a clear focus on ensuring effective teaching and learning through the development of appropriate teaching strategies and assessment for learning techniques across the whole school. Good practice is shared in middle managers' meetings, whole staff meetings and within departmental teams. Standards in Welsh have improved significantly since the previous inspection and although standards in music have been sustained, actions have been taken that will lead to future development in this area. Art was not a subject inspected during this inspection. A whole school numeracy policy has been developed and shared amongst staff and the health and safety issues identified have been addressed as well as possible.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

205. The grade the school awarded itself for this key question corresponds to the grade awarded by the inspection team.

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

206. The school is well staffed with appropriately qualified, experienced and highly committed teachers who deliver a broad and balanced curriculum.
207. Continual professional development for all members of staff is an outstanding feature in the school. This is done through in-house training and appropriate use of outside trainers. Moreover, each department is allowed a day off-site during the summer term to plan for the following year.
208. The school has an outstanding record of developing its own staff. Many members of staff have undertaken leadership and management training and been promoted from within.
209. The school is an 'Investors in People' institution and has also been accredited as meeting the Investors in People Leadership and Management model.
210. There is a carefully planned induction programme for new members of staff – as well as for NQT's and those on the Early Professional Development programme – and these are much appreciated.
211. Every member of the school's teaching, administrative and support staff take part in performance management. This is very good practice.
212. In order to implement the Workforce Remodelling agreement, the school has appointed a team of support staff including two cover supervisors and an inclusion and behaviour coordinator. The school also has two learning coaches, and eight other members of staff have accessed training as learning coaches.
213. The school is already implementing the 'rarely cover' section of the agreement where the teaching staff should have to cover only in exceptional circumstances. On a national level, this will become operational from September 2009. This enables the teaching staff to utilise their planning, preparation and assessment time to concentrate on teaching and learning. This was reflected in the school's very good GCSE examination results in 2008.
214. The school has a strong team of teaching assistants who provide excellent support to pupils and teaching staff.

215. The school is located in a 1970's concrete building located in large well maintained grounds. The striking design won awards at the time. However the building has no central focus point. Its different levels are confusing and the routes between the various parts of the building are sometimes tortuous.
216. The building's good features include excellent ICT facilities, a spacious design and technology department, a learning resource centre consisting of a video conferencing suite and a pleasant library, an attractive reception area, and excellent sports facilities which include a recently built sports hall funded by the Sports Lottery Fund.
217. Shortcomings identified at the time of the last inspection, and which are still present include the location of the music room behind a partition at the rear of the dining hall, and music rehearsal rooms which are not sound proofed and which are accessed only through the main music room. These are unsatisfactory conditions for the teaching of music and have an adverse effect on subject standards.
218. Other shortcomings include the mathematics department being situated in mobile classrooms, other classrooms being small for the classes accommodated, some science and physical education lessons having to take place in non-specialist classrooms, and the school hall which is unable to accommodate all pupils and which also serves as a dining hall. Some pupils expressed their justified concerns regarding the toilets.
219. Classroom displays produce a stimulating learning environment. In several corridors there are display panels covering aspects such as the work of the school council, sustainability and global citizenship.
220. The building is well maintained. It is kept clean and free from litter and has almost no graffiti. The school employs one day-time cleaner.
221. Resources throughout the school are good, and are appreciated by staff and pupils alike. Every classroom has an interactive whiteboard and each teacher has a lap-top.

How efficiently resources are managed to achieve value for money.

222. The school's budget is planned jointly by the bursar, who is a highly effective member of the SMT, and the head teacher. The governing body's finance committee receives a financial report each term.
223. The sharing of the capitation between departments is an open and transparent process. Resources are shared fairly between departments who can also bid for extra monies. The Bursar provides curriculum leaders with half termly financial reports. This ensures that the capitation is monitored effectively.

224. The head teacher, the bursar and the finance committee regularly review the level of reserves so that they remain within the Audit Commission's guidelines. For the past three years they have been at the 5% level suggested or below. A contingency fund of 5% is also kept annually. This is good practice. However, the SDP itself does not contain any financial costings.
225. The school has implemented the recommendations contained in the UA's latest Financial Audit Report.
226. Taking into consideration the good results in external examinations, the good teaching, the high quality curriculum provided, the outstanding care and support for the pupils and the outstanding leadership and management, the school offers good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English

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

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

227. Over the past three years, examination results have improved steadily at KS4. In 2008, when the pupils' English results are compared with those of other schools in the relevant free school meals' category, the numbers gaining A* - C grades at GCSE almost reached the top 25% of schools. The numbers gaining A* and A grades were also particularly good in 2008. Similar patterns were seen in English literature. A number of boys performed well and every single pupil gained a GCSE pass in English (language) in that year.
228. Trends have been similar in end of KS3 teacher assessment results, with the school's performance moving up from the lowest 25% of schools in 2006 to the top 50% of similar schools in 2008.
229. Overall, these results are in line with what might be expected of pupils of similar ability. Results compare very well with those of the county and of the whole of Wales.

Key Stage 3

Good features

230. Pupils listen very well indeed to their teachers and to each other in class. They respond particularly well to questioning and boys are especially keen to share their ideas. A majority of pupils expand on their answers without teacher intervention. This is a very commendable feature.
231. Almost all pupils across the ability range recall prior learning and the majority have a good understanding of subject concepts and grammatical terms.
232. When given the opportunity, pupils collaborate well in groups and listen respectfully to others' views before offering their own responses.
233. All pupils read a wide range of challenging texts, in line with their ability. They read aloud with appropriate tone and expression and this is a strength.
234. Departmental strategies are very successful in encouraging pupils to read for pleasure, and even reluctant readers and boys who have previously not enjoyed reading fiction, participate enthusiastically in a variety of reading tasks. Whole class sharing of views on favourite authors or selecting appropriate snippets of texts to read aloud are undertaken confidently.

235. When given support, pupils with ALN reach very good standards and read texts suitable for their age groups.
236. Apart from a few pupils with ALN, pupils in general write in a range of forms and for a variety of purposes and audiences. Almost all these pupils write with a good degree of accuracy.
237. Pupils' creative writing, particularly their story telling, is of a good standard. Occasionally, pupils write very effective poems, some of them responding to the stimulus of Eisteddfod competitions.
238. In Y9, the more able pupils have developed into sensitive and mature writers. They are able to transfer skills acquired at activities such as sense of place writing to enhance the descriptive detail in their stories. A few also create very successful cameo descriptions of character.
239. Pupils from Y8 onwards develop good knowledge of the English language, and the skills thus acquired impact on their wider appreciation of texts. In Y9, pupils are adept at tackling Shakespearean language and are developing good literary appreciation skills. Similarly, they identify and analyse techniques in transactional writing to a high standard, displaying impressive thinking skills.

Shortcomings

240. A few girls do not choose to respond orally unless prompted by their teacher and they do not participate as fully as most boys in their oral group work tasks.
241. A very small number of pupils leave written work unfinished and its presentation is variable.

Key Stage 4

Good features

242. In general, speaking is a strength. More able and confident pupils speak clearly and audibly and their contributions are well structured and mature.
243. Almost all pupils recall prior learning and use it very well, in line with their ability, to support class discussions. Pupils' oral pair work is a particular strength and group collaboration is good.
244. Many pupils no longer find time to read fiction for pleasure but their skimming and scanning techniques are very well developed and they are able to find relevant information quickly to support oral or written views. A majority are able to select and use quotations effectively in essays that display standards in line with expectations.

245. Reading aloud continues to be a strong feature.
246. Pupils are adept at evaluating language used in a wide range of reading texts and can explain clearly how it is used for effect.
247. Pupils display good standards in their written work. Most of them write at appropriate length and use the guidelines they are given well. Many transfer skills acquired when analysing reading texts to enhance their varied range of writing in different genre. Their transactional writing is particularly good whether it is reports, letters or pamphlets.
248. Pupils in the mid-ability range often produce interesting, well structured written pieces and their best pieces are very effective. In some instances, dialogue is used very well to develop character and to create the right atmosphere. This is particularly true when they write within the limits of their own experiences.
249. The most able pupils write in a controlled manner, using connectives, verbs and adverbs very skilfully and avoiding the overuse of adjectives. These pupils are also very good at writing literary essays and have laid strong foundations for any future aspirations to study at university.

Shortcomings

250. A few pupils, in Y11 in particular, speak in a less confident manner, making tentative suggestions and not developing their contributions.
251. A very few pupils do not express their written views with sufficient clarity at sentence level.
252. On occasion, there are a very few pupils who have displayed the ability to produce written work of a high or outstanding standard but do not consistently maintain these standards.

Welsh second language

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

Key Stage 4: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

253. At KS4, there has been an increase in the percentage of pupils sitting the Welsh Second Language full course examination with over 50% entrants in 2008, and the remainder studying the short course.
254. In the Welsh Second Language full course, in two out of the last three years, the percentages of pupils who have gained a Grade A*-C in GCSE have been much higher than the county and all-Wales percentage.
255. In two out of the last three years, just over half the pupils achieved Grade A*-C in the Welsh Second Language short course. There was a decrease in the percentage in 2008. However, it is still higher than that of the county and of Wales as a whole.

Key Stage 3

Good features

256. Pupils demonstrate a positive attitude towards their work. They listen carefully to their teachers and to each other, concentrate well and engage in their tasks enthusiastically and with evident motivation.
257. The ablest pupils easily understand the target language constantly spoken with them, and respond appropriately, usually with correct pronunciation. They also make constant and effective use of mini white boards to show their understanding. Pupils make good use of the support provided by the stimulating displays on the classroom walls to correct and extend their vocabulary and sentence patterns.
258. Pupils' standard of oracy is good. They are eager to contribute orally, as individuals, pairs or in their groups, and the most able pupils can do so confidently.
259. The most able pupils can discuss familiar subjects confidently, with the help of sheets and resources on an interactive white board which are prepared for them to enrich and extend their responses. They have a good grasp of the vocabulary and sentence patterns discussed in class which they vary purposefully as required.
260. The majority of pupils are willing to persevere and attempt to speak Welsh with each other in class, and enjoy doing so. This is a clear strength.

261. Pupils are able to read quite fluently the books, which are appropriate to their ability, that are provided for them to read for pleasure. With the support of the vocabulary in the books, they show enjoyment and the ability to discuss with their partners, and respond and express opinion about them with enthusiasm.
262. Pupils' writing is good, and shows increasing accuracy. They make the most of starters and the stimulating resources provided for them, often on the interactive white board. They do this often when working on written tasks and to develop more extended work.
263. Increasingly, pupils can write extended pieces for a purpose in different forms, for example an e-mail and letter, along with some creative writing. The standard of work of some of the most able pupils is good.
264. Written work is usually neatly presented and completed to a high standard.
265. When undertaking investigative work based on their reading books, for example, pupils make effective use of ICT. They use this also to present their work purposefully and to create attractive pamphlets and magazines.
266. Boys and girls produce work of a good standard.
267. Pupils with ALN make appropriate progress.

Shortcomings

268. A number of the less able pupils are quite tentative in their oral responses, and produce short responses within the familiar structures.
269. The written work of a number of pupils is short, and less developed in terms of length and accuracy.

Key Stage 4

Outstanding features

270. At KS4, pupils make outstanding progress in their linguistic skills. This is reflected in their very positive attitude towards their work, and towards the Welsh language and their pride when they learn the language to a very high standard.
271. The standard of oracy of some of the most able pupils is outstanding. By the end of the key stage in particular, pupils' grasp of Welsh and their ability to make confident and extended oral contributions, is outstanding.
272. Pupils read with clear understanding. When discussing youth culture in their groups, for example, they undertake the role of the characters in situations that they read about, in an outstanding manner. They do so easily, using the information gathered and applying it purposefully, often with the support of mind maps. Their reading aloud skills are a clear strength too.

273. By KS4, the standard of pupils' written work has developed outstandingly. The most able pupils can present outstanding pieces of extended work in a variety of forms and for different purposes. They show an outstanding grasp of sentence patterns and language and spelling accuracy.

Good features

274. Pupils talk with ease and discuss the work in question with increasing maturity when interacting with partners and peer groups. They use a wider range of vocabulary and language patterns in order to vary and extend their contributions.

275. Pupils give good consideration to what they need to do to improve their work by responding to the teachers' comments, and by considering the requirements of subject criteria.

Shortcomings

There are no important shortcomings.

Mathematics

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

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

276. Over the past three years, examination results have improved steadily at KS4. In 2008, when the pupils' mathematics results are compared with those of other schools in their relevant free school meals' category, the numbers gaining A* - C grades at GCSE almost reached the top 25% of schools.
277. The percentages of pupils who have gained GCSE grades A*-C over the last three years have been much higher than the figures for Flintshire authority and for those of the whole of Wales. The difference between the attainment of boys and girls has been greater than the difference for pupils across Flintshire and Wales.
278. Overall, these results are broadly in line with what might be expected of pupils of similar ability and there is consistent improvement in performance from KS3 to KS4.
279. The percentage of pupils who have gained Level 5 or above at the end of KS3 over the last three years has been consistently higher than local and national averages.

Good features

Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

280. Pupils in general are fluent and confident in number work and are able to retain this knowledge well. They understand the properties of number and use suitable methods for calculation.
281. Most pupils record the manipulation of algebra and solution of equations neatly and correctly. Pupils' skills in algebra progress effectively through both key stages.
282. Many pupils are able to use appropriate mathematical terminology when discussing their thinking process, explaining their ideas and their approaches to problems.

Key Stage 3

283. Most pupils are able to choose appropriate units and show a good understanding of estimation and measurement. Nearly all pupils know metric conversions and most are able to convert whole number metric units.

284. Pupils of all abilities show a good understanding of concepts from previous lessons, recalling facts about circles and an understanding of the relationships between radius, diameter and circumference.
285. Pupils show understanding of how to calculate averages.

Key Stage 4

286. Pupils of all abilities choose and apply appropriate strategies when solving problems.
287. The pupils studying the additional statistics GCSE course show good understanding of the concepts involved and are able to solve extended statistical problems well.

Shortcomings

Key Stage 3

288. A few pupils display uncertainty in multiplication and division of integers and decimals and in calculation involving directed numbers.

Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

289. A minority of pupils tend not to attempt more challenging tasks that would extend their understanding. A few follow previous methods mechanically rather than think carefully about the information given, ask pertinent questions and apply their knowledge to different problems.

Geography

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

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

290. GCSE results are significantly above the national and UA averages and broadly in line with prior attainment. KS3 teacher assessment results are consistently above national and UA averages.

Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

Good features

291. Boys and girls develop a good understanding of geographic concepts. They retain and recall detailed knowledge and communicate this coherently in class and through examples of extended writing.

292. Pupils with ALN achieve well.

Good features

Key Stage 3

293. Most pupils demonstrate retention and recall of geographical knowledge of topics studied, and are comfortable in the use of subject specific terminology.

294. In Y7, nearly all pupils can accurately locate the main physical and human features of Wales on a range of maps.

295. In Y9, many pupils have a detailed knowledge of the Brazilian rainforest, the destruction occurring and the impact on the global system. Most know how coastlines can be changed by natural forces and nearly all can identify some of the impacts on local people.

296. Most pupils have good understanding of geographical concepts and develop this understanding quickly in lessons.

297. Nearly all pupils in Y7 understand well the effects that geography has on transport links and provision in Wales and the difficulties this causes communities. A majority of pupils understand the factors contributing to differences in population density in Wales.

298. In Y8 most pupils understand the factors that effect temperature at different scales and many understand the way that the earth's orbit has on seasonal variation in the northern hemisphere. Most can also demonstrate understanding of the differences between climate and weather.

- 299. Nearly all pupils in Y9 understand fully the effect of man on natural environments with specific reference to Brazil.
- 300. Most pupils in Y9 have a good understanding of the physical factors that operate on the coastline at Scarborough and cause collapse of cliffs. Most also understand the impacts on local people and the issues that arise in managing the hazard.
- 301. In Y7, nearly all pupils develop mapwork skills and use these elsewhere in the key stage to locate places of study.
- 302. Most Y8 pupils draw appropriate conclusions from the data collected as part of fieldwork in Chester.

Key Stage 4

Good features

- 303. Many KS4 pupils have built up a significant body of geographic knowledge which they can recall and communicate to staff and other pupils.
- 304. Most pupils in Y10 know the characteristics of air masses and the key features of landforms. They have good recall of such information.
- 305. Many Y10 pupils understand the complex range of factors that lead to changes in weather patterns including the formation of depressions.
- 306. Most pupils in Y10 and Y11 have well developed understanding of factors leading to migration. Most have a very sophisticated understanding of the wide range of natural and human factors which can lead to significant change in a short time.
- 307. In Y11, most pupils know the key features of populations of less developed countries as well as economically developed countries. They also know well the historical pattern of population change in Britain and the world.
- 308. In Y11, most pupils demonstrate a high level of understanding of the factors leading to migration of Mexicans to the USA. They also understand the social and economic benefits and problems this may cause in both countries.
- 309. By Y11, many pupils have good understanding of geomorphic processes which change landforms. They also understand the role of man in managing these processes.

Shortcomings

Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

There are no important shortcomings.

Music

Key stage 3: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

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

310. The percentage of pupils who have gained GCSE grades A*-C over the last three years has been significantly higher than similar figures for the UA and for the whole of Wales. These results are higher than what might be expected of pupils of similar ability.
311. The percentage of pupils at KS3 gaining level 5 or above has improved over the past three years.

Key Stage 3

Good features

312. Pupils' listening and appraisal is focused suitably on musical elements.
313. Pupils use suitable warm-up exercises before they start to sing and sing in tune and in harmony.
314. Pupils, and boys in particular, are able to improvise with various vocal sounds using interesting rhythms.
315. Pupils combine vocal and instrumental sounds to produce interesting compositions.
316. When composing, pupils have sufficient knowledge and skills to combine a suitable range of musical resources, including voices, instruments and ICT.
317. The more able pupils use ICT successfully to refine their compositions.

Shortcomings

318. In Y9, pupils' composing skills are under-developed as many of the melodies composed are not interesting musically and rhythmically.
319. In Y9, some pupils fail to play in time and to a common pulse.

Key Stage 4

Good features

320. Pupils are able to identify technical and stylistic features of different periods and *genres*.

- 321. Pupils' listening and appraisal is focused on musical elements.
- 322. Some pupils' compositions display flair and originality.
- 323. Pupils' self-evaluation of their compositions concentrate on musical characteristics.

Shortcomings

- 324. Pupils' appraising is not integrated enough with performing and composing.

Religious education (including religious studies)

Key Stage 3: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Key Stage 4: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

325. The percentage of the pupils who gained GCSE grades A* to C in the short course has been substantially higher than the percentage for the UA and for the whole of Wales. The results are above what is expected from pupils with similar ability.

Key Stage 3

Outstanding features

326. Pupils across the ability range have outstanding factual knowledge and understanding of the units of work they study, which reflect the requirements of the local agreed syllabus.

327. They show their interest and their outstanding understanding of the topics studied by asking probing questions which further extend their own knowledge and understanding.

328. Less able pupils are making outstanding progress. They describe their own feelings and reflect on these, often referring to the religions that they study. They are confident when responding to teacher questions in the knowledge that their contribution is valued.

Good features

329. In Y7, pupils have a good knowledge of the Christian Rites of Passage and can relate personal experiences to the main aspects.

330. When they discuss their own and others' responses to questions about life, the world around them and religion, they use a good range of religious vocabulary appropriately.

Key Stage 4

Outstanding features

331. Pupils have outstanding factual knowledge and understanding of the short course syllabus. They recognise the importance of religious beliefs in shaping the identity of both individuals and faith communities.

332. Pupils build successfully upon the KS3 knowledge acquired and apply an outstanding range of religious concepts to present argument for and against a variety of beliefs, teachings and practices.

- 333. By the end of KS4, they have acquired an outstanding range of skills that enables them to explore religious and human experiences for themselves and to express and interpret different beliefs and practices as a means of making sense of human experience
- 334. Class discussion shows outstanding awareness of how inherited personality traits and experiences can influence behaviour, beliefs and attitudes towards issues such as euthanasia.

Good features

- 335. They have a good understanding of why people have different religious beliefs and traditions which provide a basis for moral and ethical values within a community.
- 336. Pupils with ALN are particularly successful in their GCSE, with all in 2008 gaining a grade well above their predicted grade with 60% gaining A to C grades.

Shortcomings

Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

- 337. The more able pupils do not always make the most of opportunities to fully explore the questions that flow from the lessons.

School's response to the inspection

The headteacher, staff and governors of Argoed High School are delighted that the inspection team recognised that the school has achieved outstanding success in creating a civilised, happy and caring community and that all associated with the school co-operate to create a purposeful, friendly and supportive atmosphere where all pupils are valued as individuals.

We are in complete agreement with the recognition of the staff's commitment to the pupils and the school as a whole. We acknowledge the fact that staff give freely of their time for our outstanding extra curricular programme and that this impacts positively on learning. The staff focus on teaching and learning strategies has been demonstrated by the high percentage of lessons awarded the top two grades. This innovative work and use of technology has now been shown to improve standards.

Inspectors identified that high levels of attendance, excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning result in very good academic and personal achievements. This was also identified as contributing to the continuous improvement of results since the last inspection in 2003.

We are also pleased that the inspectors acknowledged the outstanding features of our curriculum both in terms of its breadth and the skills that are developed through it. The fact that it provides the opportunity for all pupils to achieve their potential in their chosen areas of learning is something of which we are extremely proud.

The relationship between all members of the Argoed High School community, staff, pupils and parents has been recognised as a real strength. The inspectors state that the professional pupil/teacher relationship demonstrates a very high level of mutual respect and that pupils become enthusiastically involved in their own learning, achieving high standards in lessons.

We are very pleased that leadership at all levels within the school has received the highest possible grade and that the inspection report recognises that the school's response to initiatives and continual improvement in line with its shared vision and development plan is outstanding. We will continue this process to meet the recommendations identified by the inspection team by drawing up a post inspection action plan. This will be presented to all stakeholders. The school's response to the inspection will be included as an item on the agenda at the governors' annual meeting for parents.

In summary, we agree that taking into consideration the good results in external examinations, the high quality curriculum offered to pupils, and the outstanding care and support for the pupils, the school offers good value for money and an excellent learning environment.

The headteacher, staff, pupils and governors wish to thank the Registered Inspector Gareth Wyn Roberts and his team for the extremely professional, courteous and supportive manner in which they conducted the inspection.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Argoed High School
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-16
Address of school	Bryn Road Bryn y Baal Mold Flintshire
Postcode	CH7 6RY
Telephone number	01352 756414

Headteacher	Mr Simeon Molloy
Date of appointment	01.09.2005
Chair of governors / Appropriate authority	Mr Martin Craddock c/o the school Flintshire County Council County Hall Mold CH7 6ND
Reporting inspector	Gareth Wyn Roberts
Dates of inspection	16-20 March 2009

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total
Number of pupils	99	108	128	112	118	565

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	33	3	35.3

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	N/A
Average teaching group size	21.7
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	73.6%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection						
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Whole school
Spring 2008	96.2	94.5	94.6	92.4	91.9	94.6
Summer 2008	94.2	95.3	92.3	93.0	97.5	94.5
Autumn 2008	94.7	94.5	93.2	92.6	93.4	93.6

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	4%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	Temporary 5 boys, 4 girls, no permanent exclusions, none from ethnic minorities

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2008														
Total number of pupils in Y9: 111														
Percentage of pupils at each level														
			D	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	4	11	39	28	19	0	0
		National	0	1	1	0	2	6	21	37	24	8	0	0
Welsh	Teacher assessment	School												
		National												
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	5	13	27	38	18	0	0
		National	0	1	1	0	1	7	18	29	28	15	1	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	45	35	8	0	0
		National	0	1	1	0	1	5	19	36	27	11	0	0

- 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	74	In Wales	60

Summary of Secondary School
Performance (1)

LEA/School No. 664/4042

Pupils aged 15**Number of pupils aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 124****Percentage of pupils aged 15 who :**

	entered at least one qualification	achieved the Level 1 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE pass in English or Welsh first language and mathematics	Core Subject Indicator (2)	Average wider points score per pupil
School 2007/08	100	99	77	65	65	411
LEA Area 2007/08	98	90	57	45	45	348
Wales 2007/08	98	87	58	46	44	356
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	21	387
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	54	373

Number of boys aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 72**Percentage of boys aged 15 who :**

	entered at least one qualification	achieved the Level 1 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE pass in English or Welsh first language and mathematics	Core Subject Indicator (2)	Average wider points score per pupil
School 2007/08	100	99	71	57	57	400
LEA Area 2007/08	98	89	54	42	43	333
Wales 2007/08	98	84	53	42	41	334
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	21	366
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	49	351

Number of girls aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 52**Percentage of girls aged 15 who :**

	entered at least one qualification	achieved the Level 1 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE pass in English or Welsh first language and mathematics	Core Subject Indicator (2)	Average wider points score per pupil
School 2007/08	100	100	85	75	75	426
LEA Area 2007/08	98	91	61	48	48	364
Wales 2007/08	99	90	63	50	48	379
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	21	409
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	58	393

(1) For details on qualifications, point scores and contribution to thresholds, please see guidance at [SSSP guidance](#).

(2) For information about which syllabuses are included in each subject area see Notes for Guidance. For the provisional SSSP this will be the traditional GCSE definition. In the final SSSP, this definition will include a wider range of qualifications.

.. Data not available

Summary Report of Achievements of Pupils aged 15; 2007/08

LEA/School No. 664/4042

GCSE, ELQ(1) and Equivalent Achievements

Number of pupils aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 124

Percentage of pupils aged 15 who :

	achieved GCSE and vocational qualifications equivalent to five or more GCSE grades :	
	A* to C	A* to G
School 2007/08	77	99
LEA Area 2007/08	57	90
Wales 2007/08	56	86
School 06/07/08	72	97
School 05/06/07	68	95

GCSE results in selected subjects

Percentage of pupils aged 15 who:

	achieved a GCSE grade A* to C in		achieved a GCSE grade A* to G in	
	English (2)		Welsh (2)	
School 2007/08	79	99	61	87
LEA Area 2007/08	62	93	37	75
Wales 2007/08	61	90	41	66
School 06/07/08	70	97	56	84
School 05/06/07	66	94	51	84
	achieved a GCSE grade A* to C in		achieved a GCSE grade A* to G in	
	Mathematics (2)		Science (2)	
School 2007/08	69	98	81	100
LEA Area 2007/08	50	93	64	94
Wales 2007/08	51	89	60	89
School 06/07/08	65	97	78	100
School 05/06/07	63	96	74	98

Figures include pupils on Youth Access courses and similar schemes

(1) Entry Level Qualification

(2) For information about which syllabuses are included in each subject area see Notes for Guidance.

(3) Average wider points score includes all external qualifications approved for pre-16 use in Wales.

GCE A level/AVCE or AS level/ASVCE equivalent achievements (1)(2)

Number of pupils who were entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations/AVCE or AS/ASVCE equivalent : 0

Percentage of pupils aged 17 entered for 2 or more A level examinations/AVCE or AS/ASVCE equivalent who achieved 2 or more A level examinations or equivalent at grades :

	A - C
School 2007/08	
LEA Area 2007/08	64
Wales 2007/08	69
School 06/07/08	

(1) Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) and Advanced Subsidiary Vocational Certificate of Education (ASVCE)

(2) Figures do not include BTEC National Certificates and Diplomas

SECONDARY EXAMINATION DATA, 2006 - 2008

Argoed High School

664 4042

<i>Free School Meals, 2006 - 2008</i>	2006	2007	2008
% of pupils entitled to Free School Meals	5.9	6.2	4.3
Free School Meal band	FSM<=10%	FSM<=10%	FSM<=10%
<i>Key Stage 4, 2006 - 2008</i>	2006	2007	2008
% achieving the Level 1 threshold	..	97.9	99.2
Benchmark Quartile	..	1	1
% achieving the Level 2 threshold	..	71.1	76.6
Benchmark Quartile	..	2	2
% achieving the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE at grade A*-C in English or Welsh first language and Maths	..	..	64.5
Benchmark Quartile	..	..	2
% achieving the Level 2 threshold in the core subjects	..	..	64.5
Benchmark Quartile	..	..	2
Average wider points score	367.6	381.6	411.0
Benchmark Quartile	4	3	2

For 2004 onwards, the FSM percentage was based on pupils of compulsory school age only.

.. the data item is not available

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Ten inspectors, including the school's nominee, spent the equivalent of thirty seven inspection days at the school and met as a team before the inspection. The peer assessor was also present for the five days of the inspection.

These inspectors visited:

- 88 lessons or parts of sessions;
- registration sessions, assemblies and collective worship, and
- a range of extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team held meetings with:

- staff, governors and parents before the inspection;
- senior managers, teachers and support and administrative staff;
- representative groups of pupils from each year, and
- the school council.

The team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- pupils' attitudes and behaviour;
- 102 responses to the parents' questionnaire;
- a response by the UA;
- documents provided by the school before and during the inspection;
- a wide range of pupils' previous and current work, and
- samples of pupils' reports.

Following the inspection, the team held meetings with subject departments, senior managers and governors.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Mr Gareth Wyn Roberts Registered Inspector	Key question 1; first part Key Question 3; Context; Summary; Appendix.
Mr John Roberts Lay inspector	Second part Key Question 3 and also contributing to key questions 1, 4 and 7
Dr Gwynne Jones Core Team Member	Key Question 5
Mrs Gloria Davies Core Team Member	First part Key Question 4; Welsh 2 nd language
Mrs Anna Roberts Core Team Member	Key Question 2; English
Mr Heddwyn Evans Core Team Member	SEN and equal opportunity in Key Question 4; Religious Education
Mr Alun Llwyd Core Team Member	Key Question 7; Music
Mrs Bethan Cartwright Core Team Member	Key Question 6; Mathematics
Mr Michael Fahy Team Member	Geography
Mr John Hotchkiss Peer Assessor	Contributions to team meetings; examination of pupils' work; lesson observations
Miss Jeanette Rock School Nominee	Attendance at meetings; supplying information about the school; liaison with the school and helping with the arrangements

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Acknowledgement

The inspection team would like to thank the governors, staff and pupils of Argoed High School for their ready co-operation during the inspection.