

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

A report on the quality of education in

**Bryn Celynnog Comprehensive School
Penycoedcae Road
Beddau
PONTYPRIDD
Rhondda Cynon Taff
CF38 2AE**

School number: 6744019

Date of inspection: 16 March 2009

by

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Date of publication: 21 May 2009

Under Estyn contract number: 1202608

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

The inspection of Bryn Celynnog Comprehensive School took place between 16/03/09 and 19/03/09. An independent team of inspectors, led by Gareth Hawtin Buckland undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

LIST OF ACRONYMS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

A level	Advanced level
ALN	Additional Learning Needs
ARR	Assessment, recording and reporting
AS	Advanced Subsidiary
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CDU	Communication Disorder Unit
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
CSI	Core Subject Indicator
DDP	Departmental Development Plan
Dida	Diploma in Digital Applications
EBP	Education Business Partnership
ELQ	Entry Level Qualifications
ESDGC	Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship
FSM	Free School Meal
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
HMCI	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan
KQ	Key Question
KS	Key Stage
LAC	Looked After Children
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
NC	National Curriculum
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
PSE	Personal and Social Education
SDP	School Development Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
UA	Unitary Authority
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
WJEC	Welsh Joint Education Committee
WRE	Work Related Education
Y	Year

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Bryn Celynnog Comprehensive School is a single-site 11-18 mixed community school, situated in the village of Beddau, near Pontypridd, in the unitary authority of Rhondda Cynon Taf (UA). It has 1171 pupils on roll, including 213 students in the sixth form. At the last inspection in February 2003, there were 1386 pupils on roll, with 240 students in the sixth form. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of significant changes including the appointment of a new headteacher, who took up post in September 2006. In 2007-2008, the school remodelled its management structure into an extended leadership team.
2. Pupils are admitted from five main associate primary schools in Beddau and the surrounding area, including the villages of Tonteg and Church Village. A small number of pupils come from outside the catchment area. Formerly a mining community, the area is now largely residential.
3. Pupils come from the whole range of socio-economic circumstances, with the proportion entitled to free school meals (FSM) standing at approximately 11 %. Eight pupils are in the care of the UA and 14 are dual registered.
4. The school's intake represents the full range of ability. Twelve pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) and an additional 164 pupils are on the school's SEN register. This means that around 15% of pupils are recognised as needing additional support.
5. There is a 14-place UA Communication Disorder Unit (CDU) on site for pupils on the autistic spectrum. This is a facility for pupils in KS3 and KS4. In 2008, pupils from the CDU joined the sixth form for the first time.
6. The vast majority of pupils and their families speak English as their first language; very few pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds.
7. The school site includes a community education centre with a joint-use swimming pool, sports hall and youth centre. The community education centre includes a professional counselling service that is available to pupils. The school site includes extensive grounds and playing fields.

The school's priorities and targets

8. Since September 2006, the school's mission has been to 'Raise Standards' with particular emphasis being placed on attendance, punctuality, behaviour, dress, work ethic and standards of attainment.
9. The school's vision, outlined in the five-year strategic plan 2006-2011, is to develop the school into a centre of excellence for teaching and learning, whilst retaining its caring ethos. Key to the vision are:
 - the creation of robust learning partnerships at post-16;
 - ensuring excellent KS2-KS3 transition arrangements;
 - extending provision as a community-focussed school; and
 - a relentless focus on improving attainment.

10. Whilst the school actively promotes high standards, strong discipline and the celebration of success, it also believes in the education of the 'whole child', and aims to create opportunities for pupils and students to develop a strong sense of self-worth, confidence to face new challenges, and respect and compassion for others.
11. The school's published targets for 2009 are as follows:
- KS3 core subject results to show the following percentages of learners achieving level 5 or better in:
 - English 74%
 - Mathematics 80%
 - Science 81%
12. KS4 assessment results to show the following percentage of students achieving:
- five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades A*-C, or equivalent: 58%
 - five or more GCSE grades A*-G, or equivalent: 91%
 - Grades A*-C in English, mathematics and science: 44%
 - School attendance (Years 7-11) to reach a minimum of 92%.

Summary

13. Bryn Celynnog Comprehensive School is a good and improving school that has the leadership capable of making it become a very good school. Within the school, there are particular areas of strength including the:
- developments in learning in KS3 that are proving to be an exciting area of innovation within the school;
 - consistently good behaviour and attitudes displayed by pupils and students;
 - school's work on education for sustainable development and global citizenship (ESDGC);
 - exceptionally high standards of pastoral care for all pupils by members of the school's pastoral support team;
 - highly effective working partnership with the school council; and
 - school's provision for additional learning needs in the CDU.

Table of grades awarded

14. In the seven key questions, the inspection team awarded the following grades.

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?	3
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	2
6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	2
7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	2

15. Within the school's self-evaluation report, the school awarded itself a grade 2 for all key questions (KQ) except for KQ4 where the school deemed the judgement to be a grade 1. The team concurred with the school's judgements in most of the key questions but awarded the school a grade 3 for KQ3 and a grade 2 for KQ4.
16. Two of the reasons for the difference in grade in KQ3 are summarised as follows:
 - the school's lack of progress in developing appropriate provision for all aspects of the 14-19 Learning Pathways; and
 - insufficient monitoring and evaluation of recent curricular and learning developments to ensure coherence, continuity and progression.
17. In KQ4, there are some outstanding and several good features, particularly in the quality of care, support and guidance. However, arising from equal weighting for judging each part of this key question, the shortcomings identified in the quality of provision for additional learning needs and in the provision for equal opportunities, determined the award of a grade 2 rather than an overall grade 1.

Standards

Good features

18. Standards of achievement in the six subjects inspected during the inspection were as follows:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	5.2%	27.3%	9.1%	2.6%	0%
KS4	2.6%	27.3%	6.5%	1.3%	0%
Post-16	2.6%	14.3%	1.3%	0%	0%
Total%	10.4%	68.9%	16.9%	3.9%	0%

19. National targets (2010) for standards in schools are that lessons should be graded 3 or better in at least 98% of cases and grade 2 or better in at least 80%. In the six subjects inspected, pupils' standards of achievement are already very close to these national targets.
20. In 2008, the KS3 Core Subject Indicator (CSI) for the school was, at 64%, ten percentage points higher than the local education authority (LEA) figure and five points higher than the national picture. The school is in the third quartile when compared with schools of a similar intake. More girls than boys attained the CSI and the performance of girls placed them in the upper quartile whilst boys were in the lower quartile. The overall performance in KS3 was significantly better than in the previous year.
21. In KS4, the school has made good progress in attainment in GCSE and the results in 2008 continue the improving trend displayed by the school's results in recent years. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades in 2008 is an encouraging feature of the school's performance. In 2008, 54% of pupils achieved five or more A*-C grades or equivalent and 89% of pupils achieved five or more A*-G grades.
22. GCSE results compare well with those attained in the UA and across all Wales; they are equal to or better than the targets set by the school.
23. Overall, when compared with similar schools, the school's GCSE results in 2008 placed the school in the lowest 25% for most of the indicators. However, the residual picture, where comparing the performance in one subject with performances in other subject areas, was encouraging in 2008; ten subjects

performed better than the UA mean performance and high positive residuals are in evidence in several subject areas.

24. Across KS3 and KS4, value added is evinced in the 2008 results when performance is compared with attainment of pupils on entry to the school as well as the targets established for the pupils and the school.
25. The performance of sixth-form students remains good and in 2008, advanced level (A-level) results showed 56% of students gaining at least two A-C grades and 98% gaining two or more A-E grades. The average points score is significantly higher than the results in 2007 and, in 11 subjects, the school performed better than the UA mean performance.
26. All pupils, including those with SEN and those identified as looked-after children (LAC), make good progress in their learning. The roles of the personal and social education (PSE) programme and the range of new initiatives in learning in KS3 have successfully helped to develop a wide range of learning opportunities; the quality of the learning experience and associated standards in such areas have shown to be improving well.
27. Standards in all key skills, including the wider skills, have improved since the last inspection; they are now generally good. Pupils' key skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing are good across all key stages and in the sixth form. Since the last inspection, information communication technology (ICT), as an aid to learning, has developed very well and is now good.
28. Standards in the use of the wider key skills are generally good with the good development of problem solving and independent learning as well as pupils demonstrating a keenness to work with others in a range of contexts.
29. Pupils' personal, social and learning skills develop well as they progress through the school. Pupils are confident and are polite and personable to visitors, staff and each other.
30. Pupils understand the importance of good behaviour in a learning environment and behave responsibly around the school and in lessons. This helps to establish the classroom as a place in which effective learning takes place. The standards of behaviour and the level of respect afforded to all those involved in the school is a strong feature of the school.
31. Good progress is made in the development of students' personal, social and learning skills. They show positive attitudes towards their learning and engage willingly in tasks. Learners are courteous and respectful and contribute well to the life of the school by engaging in a wide range of activities including school performances, charitable work and being representatives on the school's council.
32. The mean level of attendance over the last three academic terms was approximately 90%; this is an improvement in the attendance rate of the school since the last inspection. This figure is at the same level as that for all schools in the LEA and only 1% lower than the national figure for the same period.

Shortcomings

33. Despite standards of speaking Welsh being good in Welsh second language lessons and a number of bilingual signs being visible around the school,

competence in bilingual skills is the weakest area of key skills development across both key stages and in the sixth form.

34. While the progress made by pupils across all key stages is generally good, the progress is not always commensurate with that expected by the individual subject areas or the school. This is exemplified in both the range of levels of individual targets set for each pupil and the high number of pupils who fail to reach their targets in one or more areas of learning.
35. Despite there being a year-on-year improvement in attendance, allied to the school meeting its own targets for attendance, the current attendance rate continues to be approximately 1% lower than that for schools of similar intake and below the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) target of 93%.
36. The unauthorised rate of absence in the school varies considerably across both KS3 and KS4 and, at a mean rate of over 5%, the school rate is significantly above the national rate of 1.8%.

The quality of education and training

Good features

37. The quality of teaching in all of the lessons observed was judged as shown in the table. The percentages relate to the total number of lessons observed in the six subjects and in other lessons.

97 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	9.3%	24.7%	8.2%	2.1%	0%
KS4	3.1%	25.8%	5.2%	0%	0%
Post-16	3.1%	14.4%	4.1%	0%	0%
Total %	15.5%	64.9%	17.5%	2.1%	0%
All-Wales %	17%	58%	22%	4%	0%

38. Good quality teaching is clearly a strong aspect of the school. When compared with the average figures for Wales, the percentage of lessons graded 1 (15.5%) falls slightly below the national average of 17%. However, the proportion of lessons judged grades 1 and 2 is, at 80.4%, significantly higher than the national average. Encouragingly, it is slightly higher than the WAG targets established for 2010.
39. The great majority of lessons is well planned, well organised and contains clear objectives that are generally shared with pupils. Pace within the lessons is generally brisk; pupils respond well to the tasks presented.
40. Where lessons displayed outstanding features, teachers had high expectations of the learners, provided challenging tasks and encouraged learners to accept responsibility for their own learning; questioning was probing and motivation was consistently high.
41. Most departments regularly undertake assessment accurately with self and peer-assessment carried out in a minority of subject areas. National curriculum (NC) levels are applied to specifically planned tasks throughout KS3. In KS4 and the sixth form, GCSE and advanced subsidiary (AS)/A-level grades are regularly referred to in the context of tasks that are being undertaken.
42. The school's curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of all pupils but more effectively in KS3 than in the 14-19 age range. Generally, the curriculum is

accessible to all and gives pupils and students the opportunity to achieve accreditation.

43. The option system in KS4 provides a wider provision of choice for pupils than that offered at the last inspection. This has been achieved through the inclusion of a number of Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) courses at levels 1 and 2.
44. The sixth form provision is broad and balanced and offers a range of self-delivered courses including a key skills programme and a well-planned PSE provision. The school's own AS/A-level programme is enhanced through collaboration with a neighbouring comprehensive school. Although numbers of students participating in these courses are currently very low, the school continues to make progress in addressing the agenda for Learning Pathways 14-19.
45. The school is a caring school providing significant contributions to the development and well-being of all its pupils.
46. The experience of pupils of all ages is broadened and enriched by the E3 Project. This is an initiative conceived and funded by the UA but impressively managed in the school. The range and variety of activities available, involving on average 500 pupils per week, the encouragement of responsible community action and the involvement of pupils in the planning of provision makes this an outstanding feature of the wider school curriculum.
47. The school effectively promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils through all aspects of school life. Mutually respectful relationships are very noticeable throughout the school.
48. The school has developed a range of successful partnership arrangements with employers, business and the local community; effective links exist with parents, who find staff readily approachable.
49. Provision for work related education (WRE) is good. The school has a long-standing relationship with the local Education Business Partnership (EBP) and this is constantly reviewed and improved. There is a calendar of WRE events mapped across the whole school, including the sixth form, and there are several WRE modules in the PSE programme.
50. Work experience in Y10 and Y11 is well organised and enhanced by a very good careers advice provision that includes mock interviews for all Y11 pupils.
51. The school has firmly embedded and strategically planned ESDGC thoroughly across the whole school; it is an outstanding feature of the school.
52. The school is a very caring and inclusive place where all learners are effectively guided, supported and challenged. There are some outstanding features in the way the school cares for, guides and supports its pupils. They are:
 - the exceptionally high standards of pastoral care for all pupils by members of the school's pastoral support team; and
 - the highly effective working partnership with the school council.
53. The good links with partner primary schools ensure that all pupils settle quickly into the routines of their new school. The transition arrangements on entry to the school

and beyond KS4 provide strong support for all pupils. The progress of pupils with SEN is carefully tracked and supported by the SEN co-ordinator (SENCO).

54. The outstanding feature in the school's provision for additional learning needs is the work of the CDU. The organisation of the unit by the teacher in charge, the diagnosis of pupils' needs and the planning to meet those needs are exemplary.
55. The well-being of all pupils and students is seen as paramount. There is a well-established link with Childline (CHIPS) and sixth-form students and KS4 pupils have been trained and act as peer supporters to younger pupils. The school is very successful in promoting the healthy development, safety and well-being of pupils. Healthy eating and lifestyle standards are good.
56. All staff receive regular training and written instructions on child protection issues. Health and safety issues and risk assessments that ensure the well-being of all members of the school community are undertaken conscientiously. Students and pupils feel secure in the school.

Shortcomings

57. Across the school, and at times within departments, the quality of assessment practice is considerably variable with inconsistencies in the rigour of marking and the quality of teachers' comments in the routine marking of books. In addition, in some subjects, pupils and students do not receive sufficient guidance on how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.
58. In many cases within annual reports to parents, pupils' targets for improvement do not provide adequate guidance on the next step of progress. This is particularly so where comment banks are being used.
59. Insufficient choice of courses at appropriate levels is available to learners in the 14-19 age range, leading to learners of all abilities being unable to choose an individualised, flexible and balanced learning pathway. At present, the school is not encompassing the more dynamic concept of the Learning Pathways 14-19 agenda.
60. There are no learning coaches available for pupils and students within the 14-19 programmes of study.
61. Though exceptions are negotiated, access to the sixth form is effectively restricted to those achieving grade B or better in their chosen subject at GCSE level. This clearly restricts access for those who may achieve grade C but wish, nonetheless, to continue their studies at AS level. In some circumstances, by negotiation, students achieving a grade C at GCSE are accepted onto AS courses with appropriate monitoring and support.
62. There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of recent curricular developments, such as the implementation of key skills across the curriculum, in order to ensure coherence, continuity and a sense of common purpose.
63. The range of provision for additional learning needs (ALN) does not include general learning support assistant (LSA) support in mainstream classes and this shortcoming is exacerbated by pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) not being sufficiently focused on each pupil's individual needs and targets for improvement.

64. There is evidence of pupils making stereotypical choices of subjects and courses at KS4 and in the sixth form.
65. The preponderance of either boys or girls in several teaching groups in both KS3 and KS4 appears to reinforce, rather than eradicate, gender stereotyping. In some instances in KS3, there is a marked gender imbalance of pupils in the accelerated groups, where girls dramatically outnumber boys.

Leadership and management

Good features

66. The headteacher, assisted by a strong senior leadership team (SLT), provides effective and inspirational leadership for the school. Her consultative style has contributed to a number of visible improvements in the manner in which standards can, and are, being raised. All staff are committed to what is happening at the school and share her high expectations about pupils' behaviour and attitudes.
67. Within the short tenure of her headship, the headteacher leads by example and embodies the values of a caring, inclusive community that are widely shared by staff at all levels.
68. Arrangements for meeting the training needs of staff are very good and are consistent with the core values of the school.
69. The governing body contains a range of expertise and experience. Governors fulfil their leadership role effectively, taking a strategic, leading role in planning, monitoring and evaluating. Decision-making processes are both efficient and effective; the process of budget control is both rigorous and astute, constantly securing the school best value for money.
70. The school's self-evaluation report is extensive and detailed and provides a thorough analysis of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. All departmental self-evaluation reports follow the same format and are, overall, detailed and accurate.
71. There is a well-established culture of self-evaluation in the school. The processes and procedures are clearly understood and valued by staff and pupils. The school uses self-evaluation effectively to promote higher standards of achievement and attainment. The new cycle of self-evaluation process, introduced about two years ago, has become firmly established in the school and middle managers play an important part in this process making a valuable contribution to school improvement.
72. The school has made good progress in addressing the key issues for action highlighted in the previous inspection report. Four of the six key issues have been successfully addressed although in the other two key issues, the school has not made as much progress. These issues are:
 - the level of achievement of boys when compared with that of the girls; and
 - developing the role of the form tutor.
73. Financial management is effective in the school and through diligent financial planning the senior managers and governing body have been able to turn a

deficit situation into one with a small surplus while, at the same time, continuing to provide appropriate funds for a continuous drive for school improvement.

74. Overall, when measured against its outcomes, the school meets the needs of all pupils and students and provides good value for money.

Shortcomings

75. The quality of the departmental self-evaluation reports is not consistent. A few departmental reports lack rigour and evaluations are not based on first-hand evidence.
76. The link role of senior leaders to specific departments, although established, lacks rigour especially within the areas of monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and the standards within the departments.
77. At present, there are no formalised arrangements for the monitoring of the work of the learning teams

Recommendations

In order to build on its current success, the school should:

- R1 further develop its strategies to ensure that all learners have equal access to every element of the Learning Pathways (14-19);
- R2 review all aspects of the current assessment, recording and reporting (ARR) processes to establish consistency of approach across all departments;
- R3 develop strategies to address the issues of stereotypes in pupils' choices of courses in KS4 and the Sixth Form as well as the gender imbalance in some of the accelerated groups in KS3; and
- R4 reconsider the responsibilities and effectiveness of the link role of senior leaders to middle leaders, with particular reference to their monitoring and evaluation role.

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

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

78. The grade awarded is the same as the school's self-evaluation grade.

Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

79. The following table shows the grades awarded for the standards that pupils achieved in KS3 and KS4 in the 63 lessons observed across the six subjects inspected:

63 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Key stage 3	6.3%	33.3%	11.1%	3.2%	0%
Key stage 4	3.2%	33.3%	7.9%	1.6%	0%
Combined KS3/KS4	9.5%	66.7%	19.0%	4.8%	0%

80. National targets (2010) for standards in schools are that lessons should be graded 3 or better in at least 98% of cases and grade 2 or better in at least 80%. Overall, in the six subjects inspected, pupils' standards of achievement are slightly lower than both these targets. However, the figures in the table indicate an improvement upon the performance at the time of the previous inspection.

81. Within each individual subject, the grades awarded were:

Subject	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Sixth Form
English	2	2	2
Science	2	3	2
ICT	3	2	2
Art	2	2	2
Physical education	1	2	2
Religious education	2	2	2

Their success in attaining agreed learning goals

Good features

82. In 2008, the KS3 CSI for the school was, at 64%, ten percentage points higher than the UA figure and five points higher than the national picture. Significantly more girls than boys attained the CSI. Overall, the school's performance placed it within the third quartile when compared with schools of similar intake; girls were in the upper benchmarking quartile while boys were in the lower quartile. The separate subjects of English and mathematics were both in the second quartile. The percentage of pupils attaining level 5 or above in each of the separate subjects of English and science is above 70% and, in mathematics, the figure is slightly under 80%.

83. In 2008, there was a significant improvement in the picture in KS4 when compared with the previous year. Only six subject areas were in a negative residual situation. Twelve areas were above the UA mean with ten areas being in a positive position.

84. In KS4, the school has built on the performance of 2007, producing a significantly improved set of results in 2008. The standards of attainment in GCSE in 2008 are such that they continue an improving trend.

85. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades or equivalent is an encouraging feature of the school's performance. In 2008, 54% of pupils achieved five or more A*-C grades or equivalent and 89% of pupils achieved five or more A*-G grades. 100% of pupils attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent.
86. The picture for the higher-achieving pupils, measured in the percentage of A* and A grades, demonstrates an upward trend.
87. GCSE results for 2008 compare well with the UA and national results and are better than the school's targets predicted. The five A*-C percentage is 3% above the UA figure but 6% lower than that for all-Wales. In 2008, 42% of pupils attained the CSI compared with 36% locally and 44% nationally.
88. The school's FSM figure places the school on the boundary of the first two benchmarking bands. Overall, when compared with similar schools, the school's GCSE results from 2008 place the school in the lowest 25% for most of the indicators. However, the residual picture in 2008 was a significantly different one to that of the previous year with ten subject areas performing better than the UA mean. High positive subject residuals were evident in several subject areas.
89. The school uses a range of data to set numerical targets for the end of each key stage and post-16. In KS4, the performance of the pupils in 2008 demonstrated a small level of value added when comparing the pupils' results with their attainment on entry and the targets set by the school.
90. From the evidence of the performance of the school, pupils of all abilities, at all stages of their learning, including those with SEN, are becoming increasingly successful in their work.
91. The development of key skills is in evidence across the school. The standards in key skills are generally good. Standards of speaking, listening, reading and writing are good across both key stages.
92. Pupils of all abilities listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. Pupils speak with good clarity and confidence in a range of contexts across the curriculum. Within whole-class and group discussions, pupils not only respond to questions but also have the confidence to raise their own questions and are capable of establishing good discussion and debate. This is a strong feature of pupils' development within the PSE programme.
93. Despite a significant proportion of the entry cohort having a reading age below their chronological age, access to the curriculum is not hampered by pupils' inability to read materials used in lessons.
94. A range of good examples of sustained and extended writing are evident in a number of areas of the curriculum. The quality of presentation is generally good and pupils take pride in the work they produce.
95. There is a wide range of evidence of numeracy being used within many areas of the curriculum; the ability of pupils to use number in a range of contexts is generally good across both key stages but standards are distinctly higher in KS4 than in KS3.

96. The developments in ICT are extremely good since the last inspection and the standard of ICT skills in KS3 and KS4 is now good and in line with the development of other key skills.
97. Standards in the use of the wider key skills are frequently good. Pupils demonstrate keenness when working together in pairs and in small groups. In these situations, the combination of high standards of discussion and high quality questioning, occasionally produces an exciting learning environment. In the best cases, this provides a strong basis for the observed, good development of problem-solving skills.
98. Good opportunities for the development of independent learning skills are available in both key stages and the standards are generally good. Pupils acquire new skills and knowledge and develop a range of new concepts and understanding through a variety of pieces of work in class and within core tasks and homework in KS4.

Shortcomings

99. Despite a number of bilingual signs being visible around the school, competence in bilingual skills is the weakest area of key skills' development across both key stages. Standards of Welsh speaking are good in Welsh second language lessons but the incidental use of the Welsh language is not in evidence sufficiently across the school. General use of the Welsh language was only evident in answering the register and in greeting pupils in the morning.
100. The culture of Wales is celebrated in the school but the standard of understanding of Wales and its culture is not sufficiently evident in many subject areas.

Their progress in learning

Good features

101. Pupils acquire new skills, knowledge, concepts and understanding, often applying these successfully within a range of new and challenging learning situations.
102. Pupils display interest and enthusiasm for, and demonstrate engagement in, the work they undertake. In the best cases, pupils reflect on the work they are doing, either individually or in small groups and such reflection is often done well by the pupils.
103. The quality of the learning experience in PSE, and the associated standards in such areas, have shown to be improving well.
104. The pupils make good progress through each transition point in their learning with pupils of all abilities, including those with SEN, progressing towards targets set. In the best examples, pupils are able to adapt their learning to unfamiliar situations within their learning experiences.

Shortcomings

105. Occasionally, pupils have difficulty in recognising and understanding the progress they are making and, when asked, are unable to explain how they can make further progress or have difficulty in recalling prior learning.
106. While the progress made by pupils is generally good across both key stages, this progress is not always commensurate with that expected by the subject

areas or the school with the vast majority of pupils failing to reach their targets in one or more areas of learning.

107. Many pupils have difficulties in transferring knowledge from one topic to another within subject areas as well as from one subject to another.

The development of their personal, social and learning skills

Good features

108. A significant factor contributing towards the standards of attainment is the contribution that pupils make through their very good personal, social and learning skills. They use these skills extremely well in all aspects of school life.

109. The attitude of pupils towards their work is very good. They are actively engaged in the tasks presented in lessons and often display an open enjoyment in their learning.

110. Pupils behave extremely responsibly around the school and in lessons. They understand the importance of good behaviour in a learning environment. The manner of pupils' movement between lessons is generally sensible and orderly; the school is a happy, caring and relaxed community.

111. The school is fostering a strong belief in the importance of self-discipline and working with others. This helps to establish the classroom as a place in which effective learning takes place. The standards of behaviour and the level of respect afforded all those involved in the school are strong features of the school.

112. The mean level of attendance over the last three academic terms was approximately 90%. This figure is at the same level as that for all schools in the UA and only 1% lower than the national figure for the same period. The school recognises that this level of attendance needs to continue to improve. Punctuality to school, registration and lessons is generally very good.

113. Over the twelve months prior to the inspection, there were 51 temporary exclusions and no permanent exclusions. Of these exclusions, in excess of 30 of them were from two year groups, namely Y8 and Y10. Only 15% of exclusions were for girls. Therefore, looking at the whole-school picture, the relatively low number of exclusions across the school is a favourable one.

114. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils is good. Pupils display maturity and understanding within a wide range of situations presented within PSE and many other areas of school life, such as in the school council.

115. Standards of care, respect and concern for others are good and are openly promoted within the school's PSE programme and many of the extra-curricular activities undertaken by the pupils. The standard of these features is openly visible within the daily work of the school. The development of these strengths helps to ensure that all pupils are capable of successfully adapting to the wider community beyond the school.

116. There are good work experience opportunities through an established work-experience programme. Employers' comments indicate the good contribution made by the pupils they receive.

Shortcomings

117. Despite there being a year-on-year improvement in attendance, and the school meeting its own targets for attendance, the current attendance rate continues to be approximately 1% lower than that for schools of similar intake and below the WAG target of 93%. The unauthorised rate of absence in the school varies considerably across both key stages and, at a mean rate of over 5%, the school rate is significantly above the national rate of 1.8%.

Sixth form

Their success in attaining agreed learning goals

Good features

118. The following table shows the grades awarded for the standards that sixth-form students achieved in the six subjects inspected:

14 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Sixth form	14.3%	78.6%	7.1%	0%	0%

119. At A-level in 2008, 56% of students gained two or more A-C grades and 98% gained two or more A-E grades. Sixteen per cent of all students gained an A grade; this compares favourably with the UA (6.9%) and the national (10.7%) figures. The average points score at A-level was significantly higher than that gained by students in 2007. All performance indicators improved on the results for 2007 and all school targets were met and, in some cases, exceeded.
120. Students listen respectfully to their teachers and peers. They put forward points of view with a growing confidence. Many students are capable enough to extend their responses and are articulate in discussions. There is good use and understanding of subject-specific vocabulary. In many subjects, there are good standards of discussion, particularly when students are given the opportunity to work collaboratively.
121. Reading skills are good. Students respond with understanding to a range of challenging texts. There is good progress in the development of critical analysis although students tend to rely on the teacher as expert.
122. Writing is often well organised. The development of ideas and arguments is in line with students' abilities. Students show that they competently use relevant quotations when necessary. In most cases, students are able to adapt language, style and format to fit the purpose of their writing.
123. Students' numerical skills are generally good. In a number of subjects across the curriculum, the students are able to use and apply these skills effectively and competently.
124. Students make good use of ICT to support their studies. They have easy access to computing facilities and are autonomous in using a wide range of appropriate applications in their work.
125. Students collaborate effectively with each other and reach good standards in creative and problem-solving activities. Most take the necessary steps independently to improve their own progress.

Shortcomings

126. The development of bilingualism is insufficient within the general development of key skills post-16. The culture of Wales is celebrated in the sixth form but the standard of understanding of Wales and its culture is not sufficiently evident in subject areas.

Students' progress in learning

Good features

127. Many students are achieving at least good standards. Evidence gathered suggests that students are committed to their work and making good progress.
128. Students carry out a wide range of challenging tasks, working independently on research projects and choosing appropriate sources of information for their work. This is resulting in students becoming analytical in their thinking. They generally respond well to their teachers' comments and advice, and make good progress.
129. There are some good examples of students making progress and becoming more mature learners, including instances of students challenging teachers and asking in-depth questions to confirm their understanding of principles, ideas and concepts.
130. There are occasions when students make their own purposeful notes and do not constantly rely on teachers for guidance and handouts and confidently contribute to debates, adding their own ideas and opinions.
131. Around 60% of Y11 pupils remain in the school for their sixth-form careers and a few students join from other schools. A large majority of Y12 students continues into Y13 to complete their studies and around 70% of these proceed to higher or further education after leaving school.

Shortcomings

132. There are no significant shortcomings.

The development of students' personal, social and learning skills

Good features

133. Good progress is made in the development of students' personal, social and learning skills. In lessons, they show positive attitudes towards their learning and engage willingly in tasks.
134. Students are courteous and respectful. They contribute well to the life of the school by engaging in a wide range of activities including school performances, charitable work, duties as mentors of younger pupils and being representatives on the school's council. They respond to their many challenges as sixth formers by behaving with a growing confidence and maturity.
135. The open policy for attendance in the sixth form is one that is having a direct impact on the sixth-form attendance rate. Staff rigorously monitor attendance in lessons and, even though the mean attendance for the last three terms was 67%, the attendance at lessons is well in excess of this figure. Students who attend generally arrive at school on time and are punctual to lessons.
136. The values and attitudes encouraged by the school in KS3 and KS4 are now prominent features in the sixth form. There are good opportunities for students to

learn about the global community, the locale in which the school is situated and the workplace; they are being prepared effectively for life after school.

137. Students' personal and social skills are good in all aspects. Their attitudes towards work, their peers and others, and the values they encompass, are developed well throughout their learning. They also demonstrate a very good awareness of issues relating to social and cultural diversity and are very effectively prepared to take their place in the community, higher education and the workplace.

Shortcomings

138. There are no significant shortcomings.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

140. The following table shows the grades the team awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment in 76 lessons observed in key stages 3 and 4 during the inspection.

76 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	11.8%	31.6%	10.5%	2.6%	0%
KS4	3.9%	32.9%	6.6%	0%	0%
Combined KS3/KS4	15.7%	64.5%	17.1%	2.6%	0%
*All-Wales %	17%	58%	22%	4%	0%

* Taken from the 2009 Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales (HMCI).

141. Within each individual subject inspected, the grades awarded for the quality of teaching were:

Subject	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Sixth Form
English	2	2	2
Science	2	3	2
Art	2	2	2
ICT	3	3	2
Physical education	1	2	1
Religious education	2	2	2

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

Good features

142. Since the last inspection in 2003, and particularly during the past two years, the school has focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and aims to become a centre of excellence for teaching and learning.

143. There were outstanding features in the quality of teaching in 16% of the lessons observed in KS3 and KS4. Teaching had good features and no important shortcomings in 65% of lessons, with a slightly higher proportion in KS4 than in KS3.
144. Nationally, as reported in the HMCI annual report 2009, 75% of lessons were judged grade 1 and 2 and 97% were graded 1 to 3. The school percentages are above these figures for lessons graded 1 and 2 and for lessons graded 1 to 3. With 80% of lessons across the two key stages graded 1 and 2, and 97% of lessons graded 1 to 3, the school met the WAG target set for 2010. Good quality teaching is a clear strength of the school.
145. In lessons where the teaching displayed outstanding features, teachers:
- exercise their authority well and establish very good relationships with their pupils. They maintain a calm and constructive atmosphere; encourage pupils to behave well and to apply themselves to their work;
 - share with pupils their very clear objectives for the lessons;
 - plan and prepare thoroughly, using an excellent range of strategies and stimuli to maintain the interest and needs of all learners;
 - have high expectations of success communicated through challenging tasks and use of praise to encourage and motivate pupils;
 - encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their own learning; and
 - constantly challenge and support pupils by asking probing questions.
146. Some of these features were often present in other lessons, but to a lesser extent.
147. Teachers' knowledge of their specialist subject is good. Many link learning content to previous learning and display interest and enthusiasm for their subject. Most teachers confidently use technology such as data projectors and interactive white boards to enrich pupils' learning.
148. In some lessons, teachers provide good opportunities for individual, pair and group activities, with good support materials prepared to meet the needs of learners of all abilities.
149. Many teachers review the progress made by pupils during the lesson and refer to the learning objectives while questioning pupils on their recall and understanding at the end of the lesson.

Shortcomings

150. Where there are shortcomings, occasionally teachers do not use activities adapted to provide all pupils with appropriately challenging tasks.
151. In some lessons, shortcomings include over-direction by the teacher, insufficient variety in the strategies used and activities which are mainly teacher-centred.
152. Pupils are not always entirely clear what they have achieved, or how they might have done something better, as teachers fail to summarise the lesson's main points. In many subjects at KS3, teachers rely to a great extent on the core tasks to consolidate pupils' learning.
153. There are few opportunities for pupils to develop and use their bilingual skills in subjects across the curriculum.

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

Good features

154. Procedures and practices for the assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' achievements have good features that outweigh shortcomings. Assessment procedures meet statutory requirements for the assessment and reporting of pupils' attainment by the end of KS3. In KS4, the procedures fully meet examination board requirements.
155. The school's ARR policy developed over the past two years, following a whole-school focus on assessment for learning, provides a framework to inform practice and to ensure consistency of procedures across the school. Examples of good levels of consistency are evident in some departments.
156. The school has reviewed its marking policy and introduced a light touch approach to routine KS3 work requiring teachers to provide feedback to pupils in the form of 'two stars and a wish'. Core tasks have replaced homework in KS3 and a national curriculum level assigned to each task and recorded. A review takes place of pupils' progress against targets each term using data collected following completion of the core tasks. There are good features in the marking and assessing of pupils' work in some subject areas.
157. In KS4, all key pieces of work are generally marked well against GCSE criteria. These, together with homework tasks, are regularly set and recorded to monitor pupils' progress; this is reviewed monthly throughout Y11. Assertive mentoring supports pupils who fail to achieve their targets. This proved beneficial in 2007-8 and this good practice continues.
158. In a minority of departments, teachers provide useful oral and written feedback to pupils, and at times, make use of meaningful self- and peer-assessment by providing clear guidance on the assessment criteria in pupil-friendly language tailored to the task.
159. The school's process of reporting to parents is good, providing two progress reports and one full report to all pupils annually; opportunities are available for parents and pupils to comment on the reports. The new full report comments on pupils' strengths and sets targets for improvement.

Shortcomings

160. The quality of assessments of pupils' work varies considerably across the school and between teachers in the same department. A substantial amount of routine marking is superficial and uninformative. Feedback to pupils in the form of 'two stars and a wish' is often unhelpful and inconsistently applied.
161. The level of challenge and demand in the core tasks varies from subject to subject.
162. Staff and pupils' understanding of assessment criteria are not consistent nor well developed; as a result, assessment is often not a benefit to pupils' progress.
163. In many cases within annual reports to parents, pupils' targets for improvement do not provide adequate guidance on the next step of progress. This is particularly so where comment banks are used.
164. Form tutors do not report to parents on pupils' personal, social and learning skills nor specifically on progress in key skills. There is no report for core physical education at KS4.

165. The school does not provide parents with regular reports on progress following completion of core task assessments.

Sixth Form

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

Good features

166. In the 13 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected and the eight lessons observed in the other subjects, the grades awarded for teaching and assessment were:

21 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Sixth form	14.3%	66.7%	19.0%	0%	0%

167. In 14% of lessons observed, teaching was good with outstanding features. In a further 67% of lessons, teaching was good with no important shortcomings and good features outweighed shortcomings in the remaining 19% of lessons. At 81%, the number of lessons graded 1 and 2 exceeds the national average and already meets the WAG's target of 80% by 2010.

168. Many of the outstanding and good features identified in lessons in KS3 and KS4 are also present in the sixth form. Additional features of good teaching observed include:

- more in-depth open questioning to develop students' understanding and depth of knowledge;
- more opportunities for students to develop as independent learners; and
- complex concepts clearly explained.

Shortcomings

169. Where there are shortcomings, these generally occur where the lessons are too teacher dominated. In a few cases, teachers asked too many closed questions and did not sufficiently exploit students' answers.

170. In a few lessons, the pace of the lesson was slow, tasks lacked challenge and students spent too much time copying directly from the board.

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

Good features

171. In the sixth form, the assessment, recording and reporting of students' work is generally good.

172. In day-to-day assessment of work, teachers identify strengths and indicate how improvements may be made. Many students are aware of the criteria for success and the requirements of the examination boards. In some subjects, teachers use self and peer assessment to good effect.

Shortcomings

173. As in KS3 and KS4, the annual subject reports are of variable quality in terms of subject commentary and some fail to identify subject-specific targets for improvement clearly.

174. A few students are unaware of the minimum target grades that they are expected to achieve.

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

175. The grade awarded by the inspection team was one grade below that proposed by the school in its self-evaluation report. The inspection team felt that, despite two outstanding features, the number of shortcomings, including the school's lack of progress in providing a coherent and flexible 14-19 curriculum, restricted the grade awarded to a grade 3.

Key stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form

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

Good features

176. Overall, the school meets learners' needs more effectively in KS3 than in KS4 and the sixth form.

177. In KS3, the curriculum is both broad and balanced. The Integrated Studies programme, running only since September 2008, provides a significant, skills-led innovation, combining the subject content of English, history and geography. The needs of the ablest linguists are met by the offer of Spanish as a second foreign language and Welsh is studied by all pupils to GCSE level, by means of the short or full course. Meanwhile, the school provides PSE and ICT as separate lessons, a provision established in response to criticism in the last inspection report.

178. The curriculum in KS4 has expanded since the last inspection with the inclusion of three BTEC Level 1 (L1) courses and a very successful Level 2 (L2) course in performing arts. Two further L2 courses are planned and there is some joint working with a partner school to provide a wider range of options for students studying beyond GCSE.

179. In the sixth form, students are offered, in conventional terms, a broad and balanced choice of AS and A level courses and all sixth form students have a lesson devoted to key skills. Some of the ingredients for a Learning Core 14-19 are in place by means of the PSE and key skills provision that spans KS4 and post-16.

180. Key skills are effectively developed through subjects in KS3 and KS4. They are identified in both planning documentation and in taught lessons, particularly in integrated studies, art, physical education, performing arts and PSE. This provision includes both the original and wider key skills and is at the centre of the school's aim to produce critical thinkers and independent learners. Year 11 pupils endorse this development and insist that key skills are an important aspect of their subject-based learning experiences.

181. The curriculum effectively meets the learning needs of both the most and least-able pupils, with challenging projects for the former and a well-organized basic skills programme for the latter.

182. The experience of pupils of all ages is broadened and enriched by the E3 Project. This project is an initiative conceived and funded by the UA but impressively managed in the school. Evaluation of the project is systematic in order to achieve constant renewal and improvement. The range and variety of activities available,

involving on average 500 pupils per week, the encouragement of responsible community action and the involvement of pupils in the planning of provision make this an outstanding feature of the wider school curriculum.

183. 'Philosophy for children' is an outstanding feature of the PSE curriculum in KS3 and KS4; it is embraced as a teaching device and encourages pupils to think reflectively, frame their own questions and debate competing views. It also contains a number of investigative, pupil-centred learning experiences. Such has been the appeal of this approach, that PSE is many pupils' favourite subject.
184. Personal and social education provides many opportunities for pupils to develop social, moral, spiritual and cultural perspectives. In addition, social responsibility and community action are encouraged by the E3 Project and various charity initiatives.
185. The promotion of moral awareness is strong in a number of subjects such as English and religious education, whilst multiculturalism and social diversity are particularly strong in art and religious education. The school recently hosted a visit by students from Pakistan, Russia, Finland, Roumania and Korea who demonstrated various aspects of their culture. Furthermore, the school is actively involved in a community project developing teaching and learning in Uganda.
186. Pupils' learning experiences are enriched further by effective partnerships with other providers and with the surrounding community.
187. Well-managed arrangements are in place for helping pupils cope with the transfer from primary to secondary school; these arrangements involve release of staff to teach for part of their time in the local partner primary schools. The current phase of E3 involves setting up collaborative enrichment activities with cluster primary schools and employing older pupils as supervisors.
188. Relations with higher education institutions are both cordial and productive. There is a very well-managed initial teacher training programme and arrangements for the induction of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and for teachers new to the school are very good.
189. The curriculum meets all legal requirements and the regulations of examining bodies. This is equally true of the integrated studies in Y7, which meets the needs of the NC requirements of the three component subjects.
190. There is a daily act of collective worship.

Shortcomings

191. In KS4 and the sixth form there is insufficient choice of courses at appropriate levels to enable pupils of all abilities to choose flexible and balanced learning pathways 14-19. The school uses existing vocational courses to provide a meaningful curriculum for lower attaining pupils. At present, this approach fails to encompass the more dynamic concepts of Learning Pathways 14-19.
192. There are no learning coaches available for pupils and students within the 14-19 programmes of study.
193. A-level courses established from collaboration with a partner school, and aimed at expanding the sixth form curriculum provision, have so far attracted only 12 participants from Bryn Celynnog.

194. Apart from a BTEC early years' course in Coleg Morgannwg, there are no vocational links with either of the two nearby further education colleges.
195. There is insufficient monitoring of recent curricular developments, such as the implementation of key skills across the curriculum, in order to ensure coherence, continuity and a sense of common purpose.

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

Good features

196. Provision for WRE is good. The school has a long-standing relationship with the local education business partnership (EBP) that is constantly reviewed and improved. There is a calendar of WRE events mapped across the whole school, including the sixth form, and there are several WRE modules in the PSE programme.
197. Work experience in Y10 and Y11 is well organised and there is a very good careers advice provision that includes mock interviews for all Y11 pupils. Meanwhile, the school's involvement with Compact has assisted in improving attendance and punctuality in line with workplace requirements. Compact has also helped to develop a sense of responsibility in pupils for their own actions. More proactive options are available in the form of the Young Enterprise competition, and the Dynamo Project, involving 269 pupils in Y9 and Y10.
198. The school takes learning about the language and culture of Wales seriously. The school allocates sufficient time to full-course Welsh up to GCSE level. All pupils follow either a short or full course in Welsh in KS4 but about 70% in Y10 follow the short course. The 'Cwricwlwm Cymreig' is embedded in many schemes of work and there is particularly strong development in ICT, history, geography and art, as well as through the less formal delivery through a school eisteddfod. There is a particularly striking display celebrating 'Welshness' on entry to the CDU.
199. Provision for pupils with SEN, including work experience, is a strong feature of the school. The vocational offer in KS4 and the sixth form, though a shortcoming in respect of Learning Pathways, shows a genuine attempt to meet the learning needs of less academic pupils. In 2008, for the first time, three pupils from the CDU, together with 5 pupils with ALN, entered the sixth form by means of the school's 'Step-Up' scheme.
200. Provision for the ablest pupils is similarly well managed. This well-defined group is involved in various challenge initiatives and invited to excel in academic, artistic and physical pursuits. A dedicated group of teachers regularly tutors the group and parents are involved in discussions about strategies for developing particular types of talent.
201. There is a widespread commitment in the school to the disadvantaged in both school and the community. The range of involvement in charity work is impressive. The E3 and 5x60 projects are very deliberately open to all pupils, regardless of academic or sporting ability. The reward system, the '1000 Club', recognises the effort and achievement in all pupils, rather than the attainment of a few.
202. Education for sustainable development and global citizenship is thoroughly embedded and strategically planned across the whole school. It is an outstanding feature of the school. The school holds three Green Flags and is

working toward the Platinum Award. The ESDGC co-ordinator actively promotes and champions the ESDGC agenda with support from members of the school council, SLT and staff. The school has been involved in a large number of initiatives aimed at raising pupils' awareness of sustainability and their role as citizens of the world.

Shortcomings

203. Despite the prominence of Welsh as a curriculum subject, there is little promotion of bilingualism or evidence of Welsh being spoken outside of Welsh language lessons.
204. The time allotted to the delivery of the short course in Welsh is, at an hour a week, insufficient for effective delivery of the syllabus.
205. Though exceptions are negotiated, access to the sixth form is effectively restricted to those achieving grade B or better in their chosen subject at GCSE level. This clearly restricts access for those who may achieve grade C but wish, nonetheless, to continue their studies at AS level.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

206. The school awarded itself a grade 1 in its self-evaluation report.
207. There are some outstanding and many good features, particularly in the quality of care, support and guidance. However, the insufficiency of outstanding features and the shortcomings in the quality of provision for ALN and in the provision for equal opportunities determine the award of a grade 2.

Key stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form

The quality of care, support and guidance to learners

Good features

208. There are outstanding features in the way the school cares for, guides and supports its pupils. They are:
- the exceptionally high standards of pastoral care for all pupils by members of the school's pastoral support team; and
 - the highly effective working partnership with the school council.
209. Relationships between pupils and all staff are very positive. In particular, the group of staff, making up the pastoral support team, is outstanding in ensuring an extremely effective caring and supportive atmosphere exists throughout the school. Members of this team have different areas of expertise. Some aspects of support begin even before pupils transfer to Bryn Celynnog, following the identification of potentially vulnerable children in Y6 of the five partner primary schools. Pupils readily express their appreciation of the team's work.
210. The school council provides a very effective way of listening to the 'pupil voice'. The council has been consulted on a range of issues, which have impacted on the quality of provision in the school. Members of the council have been trained in consultation skills. They display confidence and maturity and are outstanding for their commitment and hard work in leading or being involved in a wide range of projects.

211. The school works in close partnership with its partner primary schools. Pastoral links are strong and enhanced by a firmly embedded transition plan. Subject departments have links with the school's partner primaries and very good working relationships exist. The school organises an impressively wide range of link projects and activities to enhance transition in order to ensure that primary pupils feel secure and confident about the transfer to secondary school.
212. In addition to this work, the school provides a good induction programme for pupils at the start of every academic year helping them to reflect on their progress and to prepare them for the year ahead. The pastoral support team provides an induction programme for any pupil who joins the school midway through the year.
213. Form tutors provide aspects of support and guidance and are very aware of their role in ensuring high standards of uniform and that pupils come into school properly equipped for work.
214. It is currently the responsibility of heads of learning to monitor the academic progress of pupils and to support and mentor where appropriate. In Y11, a group of volunteers and senior staff support pupils as part of the assertive mentoring programme.
215. The school's revised PSE programme is acknowledged as a particularly effective contribution to the personal, social and moral development of the pupils.
216. The school has made progress in improving levels of attendance. There is follow-up of absence, including first-day absence telephone calls. The pastoral support team works in close partnership with the school's education welfare officer and undertakes intensive work in cases causing concern.
217. Advice and guidance on courses are given to pupils in Y9 and in preparation for post-16. Pupils receive guidance and advice regarding their career pathways and the school works well with the local careers service. There are also good links with the local EBP and pupils gain much from a range of entrepreneurial projects and experiences.
218. The school has appropriate policies on health and safety. Outside of the formal curriculum, the school is starting to make progress in addressing the issue of healthy eating and healthy lifestyles.
219. Child protection procedures are in place and are known by staff. The school has effective procedures for dealing with complaints.

Shortcomings

220. In planning for Learning Pathways 14-19 the school has not yet begun to develop the role of learning coaches or provided sufficient coaching opportunities for all pupils.
221. With the exception of Y7 and the sixth form, the form tutor does not currently play a formalised part in monitoring the academic progress of pupils. As a result not all pupils have access to this aspect of high quality personal support and guidance. The newly revised role of the Y7 tutor, which places emphasis on monitoring academic progress, will be reviewed by the school and will inform future practice.

The quality of provision for additional needs

Good features

222. The outstanding feature in the school's provision for additional learning needs is the work of the CDU. The organisation of the unit by the teacher in charge, the diagnosis of pupils' needs and the planning to meet those needs are exemplary.
223. Pupils in the unit are included in mainstream classes and whole-school activities wherever appropriate. The staff in the CDU undertake this involvement in mainstream learning situations with the utmost consideration, preparation and support. The IEPs of pupils in the unit are of the highest quality. The progress the pupils make is outstanding.
224. The school works effectively with its partner primary schools and with external agencies to diagnose and plan appropriate support for pupils with ALN. Their needs are effectively diagnosed and their progress is reviewed.
225. The range of provision for additional needs includes:
- a discrete learning support group in KS3, the composition of which is flexible in line with pupils' needs;
 - small group withdrawal for mathematics, reading comprehension and spelling through the Success Maker and ARROW programmes;
 - one-to-one reading support from learning support assistants, sixth form students and students from the University of Glamorgan; and
 - effective use of specialist support services.
226. Learning support assistants work effectively with named pupils in mainstream lessons. When supporting pupils in mainstream classes LSAs are generally, but not always, informed of the work that the pupils are undertaking in order to know how best to provide support.
227. The school is very effective in monitoring the behaviour of pupils. The work of the pastoral support team ensures that pupils, whose behaviour causes concern, receive a high level of support both through behaviour management programmes and on a one-to-one more informal basis.

Shortcomings

228. The range of provision for ALN does not include general LSA support in mainstream classes. At times, therefore, some pupils lack the extra support that they need in addition to that of the class teacher.
229. Pupils' IEPs are not sufficiently focused on each pupil's individual needs and targets for improvement. Although the expectation is for subject teachers to contribute subject-specific targets, the IEPs remain too general and not as helpful as they could be.

The quality of provision for equal opportunities

Good features

230. The school is very effective in providing a secure and supportive environment in which any oppressive and bullying behaviour is addressed. Pupils feel confident that any issues will be dealt with effectively.

231. The school promotes the progress of all its pupils, regardless of their background. Its current focus on support and challenge involves developing a well-considered and planned range of strategies to meet the needs of its more-able and talented pupils.
232. The needs of looked-after children are regularly reviewed. The progress of pupils with English as an additional language and ethnic minority pupils is monitored.
233. The school works very effectively to promote good race relations in everything it does. A race equality policy is in place and a detailed log is kept of any incidents.
234. The school works very hard to meet the needs of pupils with physical disabilities and makes every effort to ensure that disabled pupils are treated equally including physical adaptations to the building. A disability equality policy is in place together with an accessibility plan.
235. Pupils develop a good understanding of diversity and equal opportunities through a range of curricular experiences, in assemblies and through themed projects and events.

Shortcomings

236. There is evidence of pupils making stereotypical choices of subjects and courses at KS4 and in the sixth form.
237. The preponderance of either boys or girls in several teaching groups in both KS3 and KS4 appears to reinforce, rather than eradicate, gender stereotyping. In some instances in KS3, there is a marked gender imbalance of pupils in the accelerated groups, where girls far outnumber boys.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

Good features

239. The headteacher provides highly effective and inspirational leadership. She leads by example and her vision and sense of direction for the school are shared with and understood by all.
240. Since her appointment in 2006, the headteacher has devoted a considerable amount of effort towards raising standards. She has consulted widely on how the school should develop and staff at all levels have contributed to the formulation of aims, values and policies. All staff are committed to what is happening at the school and share her high expectations about pupils' behaviour and attitudes.
241. Members of staff new to the school are thoroughly immersed into the school's ethos. The headteacher regularly re-inforces the standards expected, both with

pupils and staff. The school keeps parents well informed about the school's priorities by frequent, worthwhile and informative newsletters.

242. From the outset, the headteacher targeted her initial efforts at establishing an ethos in which effective learning can take place. She insists that this is an essential prerequisite for raising academic standards and that it may take some time for this to be securely embedded. Nevertheless, the considerable improvement in GCSE results seen in 2008 may indicate that her actions are already bearing fruit.
243. The school takes due account of the WAG's priorities in its planning. The school is making good progress in the field of transition from KS2 to KS3, inclusion and education for sustainable development and global citizenship.
244. The school's target-setting procedures for pupils, based on prior performance data, are realistic. Development targets for individuals and groups of teachers derive from self-evaluation and feed both into departmental and whole-school development planning. They are of good quality.
245. Performance management arrangements work well at the school and lead to the identification of staff development needs. These needs are nearly always met and a limited amount of additional funding is available to fund teachers' continuing professional development (CPD), especially if it relates to raising standards. A member of the SLT administers staff development arrangements for both teachers and support staff effectively. The support of trainee teachers, the induction of NQTs and their subsequent early professional development is particularly impressive.

Shortcomings

246. There is less progress in the WAG's priorities of developing provision for Learning Pathways 14-19 and in developing pupils' bilingual competence. The school is at an early stage of planning how learning pathways can contribute to the broadening of pupils' experiences. Work with partners is underdeveloped.
247. There are inconsistencies in the rigour with which the performance of individual staff and teams is monitored. Some senior leaders do not monitor and evaluate the work of those they line manage in a sufficiently rigorous way. There is too much variation in the way that members of the extended leadership team monitor their areas of responsibility. At present, there are no formalised arrangements for the monitoring of the work of the learning teams.

How well governors or other supervisory bodies meet their responsibilities

Good features

248. The governing body understands its role and supports the headteacher in her drive for improved standards. They are fully involved in strategic planning and thoroughly test the headteacher's proposals before adopting them.
249. Lines of accountability are always visible; the governors will always ask for, and occasionally challenge, proposals for policy changes or major items of expenditure. Financial management is astute; the basis for any spending is on the financial committee working with the school to secure best value for money.

250. The governors know the school well and always have its best interests at heart. Through a series of sub-committees they discuss regular reports on the school's performance. In this way they hold the school to account as a critical friend.

251. The governing body meets all its legal requirements including an appropriate response to complaints, completion of an accessibility plan and production of its annual report to parents.

Shortcomings

252. There are no significant shortcomings.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

253. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.

254. The findings of the inspection team match very well those in the school's self-evaluation report. The grades are the same in five out of the seven key questions. The grades for KQ3 and KQ4 are one grade lower than those the school awarded itself in its self-evaluation report.

How effectively the school's performance is monitored and evaluated

Good features

255. The school's self-evaluation report, based on the seven key questions, is extensive and detailed. The report provides a thorough analysis of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. All departmental self-evaluation reports follow the same format and are, on the whole, detailed and feed into the school's document.

256. All senior leaders and most middle managers are well informed about performance in the area for which they are responsible and are fully committed to the self-evaluation process.

257. Senior leaders and a majority of heads of department use a wide range of first-hand evidence to analyse information. This includes external examination performance data, value-added data, internal and external reviews, lesson observations and scrutiny of written work.

258. The analysis of data on a whole-school basis is good. Many departments use a wide range of data available when making judgments about their performance in the self-evaluation report.

259. The cycle of self-evaluation process, introduced about two years ago, is firmly established in the school. Middle managers play an important part in the process and feel that they make a valuable contribution to school improvement.

260. A strong feature is the way that the school involves all members of staff at the start of the self-evaluation cycle by holding a whole-school review day in June each year.

261. There is a calendar of reviews and evaluation meetings throughout the year, involving managers, governing body, students and parents. The school council plays an important part in the process and is involved in both discussion and

decision-making. The school obtains the views of parents and pupils through questionnaires.

Shortcomings

262. Despite the format of self-evaluation reports being provided, the quality of the departmental self-evaluation reports is not consistent. A few departmental reports lack rigour and, on occasion, evaluations are not based on first-hand evidence.

263. Despite the provision of a strong database of performance data for each subject, a few departments do not use the large amount of data available to them when making judgements about performance. They use a selection of data from within a limited range and quality of evidence which does not necessarily provide a totally accurate analysis of performance.

The effectiveness of planning for improvement

Good features

264. The school uses all aspects of the school's self-evaluation process to inform the departmental development plans (DDPs) and the school development plan (SDP). This is a thorough and effective process.

265. Senior leaders meet with managers to evaluate departmental plans and self-evaluation reports. In these meetings they focus the discussion on pupils' performance and welfare; targets and priorities are identified. The SDP is a good working document. The SLT and the governing body review the targets and progress regularly.

266. The school allocates funds and resources to match its priorities as set out in the SDP and DDPs. The school monitors how the use of these resources, in various plans and initiatives, impact on school improvement.

267. The outcomes of self-evaluation, used to prioritise actions and bring about improvements, have resulted in measurable gains. These include:

- improved performances in KS3 and at GCSE;
- developments in the use of ICT across the school;
- the introduction of a number of strategies to challenge the more-able students; and
- better provision for the most vulnerable learners.

Shortcomings

268. There are no significant shortcomings

Progress since the last inspection

269. There were six key issues for action arising out of the last inspection. The first key issue had four subsidiary issues, all relating to the raising of standards. There has been good progress in a number of the areas, including:

- improved standards for the most able and middle to lower ability pupils in KS3;
- improved standards in ICT in KS3 and as a key skill across the curriculum;
- the promotion and provision of key skills across the curriculum including increasing opportunities for independent learning;

- ensuring that all school policies, procedures and initiatives are rigorously and effectively implemented;
- the introduction of enhanced measures to improve attendance; and
- the meeting of statutory and health and safety requirements.

270. Although there has been some progress in the other key issues, the school has not made as much progress in:

- the level of achievement of boys when compared with that of the girls; and
- developing the role of the form tutor.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

Good features

272. There are sufficient teachers and support staff to deliver the curriculum and for the school to run efficiently. There is a good balance between experienced teachers and those new to the profession.

273. Nearly all teachers are suitably qualified and trained to teach their specific subjects and to meet the wider curricular needs of the school.

274. The school has met all the workforce-remodelling requirements. Criminal records bureau (CRB) checks are made on all staff.

275. The staffing provision for support of learners with SEN is good. The SENCO coordinates a team of learning support assistants who provide substantial support for pupils with learning difficulties. This support is particularly effective in the well-resourced CDU.

276. Clerical and administrative support is effective and well organised. Caretaking, cleaning and technical support staff undertake their responsibilities conscientiously and make the best use of available resources.

277. Resources for departments are good. Capitation is allocated according to a formula to give each subject sufficient books, equipment and materials to teach the curriculum effectively. In addition to the formula-funding process, a bidding system ensures a fair distribution of supplementary funds to meet particular departmental or whole-school requirements. The school uses external curricular resources well. These include visits to theatres, museums and galleries and foreign travel.

278. Information and communication technology resources are good, demonstrating a significant improvement since the last inspection. The ratio of computers to pupils is now broadly in line with the national average. Digital projectors and interactive white boards enhance this provision in most classrooms; a separate e-learning suite and sixth form video editing facilities complete the overall ICT

provision. The library is used well, particularly for the Successmaker and ARROW support programmes that are overseen by the librarian.

279. Accommodation is adequate for the delivery of the curriculum. There are good sports facilities that include daytime use of the local community education centre. The school grounds are used well for a range of horticultural and eco activities. Adequate ramps and lifts provide good access to mobility-impaired people. The age and state of the buildings vary widely but regular maintenance and good decoration and displays of pupils' work help to make the environment attractive.
280. The leadership of the library has been developed successfully over the past 18 months. Reading clubs, visits by authors, poetry days and a range of competitions have all contributed to the dynamic use of the library by a large number of pupils from across the school who use the library each day.
281. Inspectors identified two health and safety issues during the inspection. The registered inspector brought these issues to the attention of the headteacher.

Shortcomings

282. Deterioration of the fabric of some of the buildings has led to much damage from rainwater penetration; this is detracting from the school being able to establish a positive learning environment and has placed some areas out of use pending repairs.

283. The library is small and has fewer books than is usual for a school of this size.

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

Good features

284. The school has overcome a deficit budget from previous years and is now in a surplus position for the current financial year; the school invests this surplus carefully. A modest contingency fund exists to cushion the effects of the predicted falling roll from 2010.
285. The school maximises its financial benefits through a range of grants and by extending its facilities to the community. It prioritises developments that have low financial cost, according to the strategic objectives of the SDP. The school is vigorous in its efforts to achieve best value for major purchases.
286. The sixth form is self-financing and gives good value for money. The sixth form adds to the ethos of the school and provides opportunities for sixth-form students to support younger pupils.
287. The workload agreement has been fully implemented. The organisation of teaching and learning responsibility posts has been well managed, focusing on raising standards and meeting pupils' pastoral needs. Time for planning, preparation and assessment is appropriate to the level of staff responsibility; staff appreciate this time and use it well.
288. The well-established, performance management system gives all staff access to a continuing professional development programme that effectively meets their needs.
289. Financial management is good. The bursar and clerical staff work closely with the head teacher and the governing body finance committee to ensure that the

finances of the school are well tracked and evaluated. The latest auditor's report was positive.

290. Overall, the school delivers good value for money.

Shortcomings

291. There are no significant shortcomings.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English

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

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

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

Key Stage 3

292. Results in KS3 level 5 and above are above UA and national figures and demonstrate an upward trend over the past three years. This represents good progress.

Good features

293. The significant majority of pupils listen with attention and respect to their teachers and to each other. They have clear recall and demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of their work. Most pupils are willing and eager to answer questions

294. Nearly all pupils promote ideas and opinions; more able pupils produce sustained and justified responses; a few are able to challenge and hypothesise.

295. The majority of pupils read aloud with accuracy; a minority does so with fluency; a few do so with expression. All pupils read a challenging range of appropriate non-literary texts, fiction, poetry and drama including texts that reflect the culture of Wales. A minority of the most able pupils demonstrate inferential and deductive reading skills. A significant majority of pupils make good progress in reading.

296. Many pupils write enthusiastically in a range of forms and for a variety of purposes including autobiography and persuasion. Fluency of writing is mostly in line with the ability level of pupils. Around half of the pupils improve their writing through careful planning and effective drafting.

297. Pupils with SEN make sound progress and produce work in line with their ability.

Shortcomings

298. A few pupils prefer to remain passive during group work.

299. The drafting skills of a minority of pupils are not well-developed.

Key Stage 4

300. Results at GCSE grades A*-C are below UA and national figures and close to local and national figures at grades A*-G. These results are in line with what might be expected from pupils of similar ability.

Good features

- 301. Most pupils listen with attention and respect to their teachers and peers. Many collaborate effectively in small groups and negotiate outcomes on a range of topics including themes and characters in novels and aspects of persuasive writing.
- 302. Many pupils speak with confidence in discussions and when answering questions. They interact productively in a manner that often takes their learning forward dramatically.
- 303. All pupils read an appropriate range of literary texts including prose works by Dickens, Lee and Wells, drama by Shakespeare and Miller and poetry by Yeats and Heaney. They also read a range of non-literary and media texts.
- 304. Most writing is completed well in response to a wide and appropriate range of tasks including analytical, literary comparison, imaginative writing and discussion of non-literary texts. The majority of pupils produces technically accurate work that expresses ideas with increasing fluency.

Shortcomings

- 305. A small number of pupils sometimes fail to draft and proofread their written work with sufficient rigour so that ideas remain underdeveloped and errors persist.
- 306. Boys achieve less well than girls.

Sixth Form

- 307. Results at A Level are below the national figure for grades A–B and close to the figure for grades A–E. Overall, these results are in line with what might be expected from students of similar ability. However, due to the size of the entry, comparisons with national figures may not be reliable.

Good features

- 308. Students co-operate well in group and pair work. They promote opinions and negotiate and present views with a growing confidence on a range of topics including the presentation of Lear's character and Capote's use of linguistic techniques in 'In Cold Blood'. A majority of students is confident when discussing texts.
- 309. Students read a wide range of texts of increasing complexity. They demonstrate a secure understanding of literary and non-literary devices. They know and use technical vocabulary to good effect.
- 310. Students produce a good range of written coursework including travel and narrative writing. The work of the most-able students is original and well crafted. Their response to literary texts often demonstrates sophisticated reading and considered knowledge of the text.

Shortcomings

- 311. In a few cases students lack confidence in group discussions and remain passive thus not developing their reasoning and analytical skills as well as they could.
- 312. The writing of a minority of students is neither sufficiently perceptive nor insightful.

Science

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

Key Stage 4: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

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

Key Stage 3

313. Over the past two years, pupils in KS3 have produced improving results with over 75% of pupils attaining L5 or above in 2008, five percentage points higher than the results in 2007. The 2008 results were above the national and UA means but placed the school in the third quartile when compared with similar schools.

Good features

314. Many pupils have a good recall of previous learning and can apply this to new situations. Pupils show a good understanding of food groups and are able to use this knowledge when designing a healthy diet. A few pupils were able to link certain foods to specific health problems.

315. Nearly all pupils use appropriate scientific terms when answering questions, both orally and in writing. They carry out practical work in a safe and competent manner. They make and record appropriate observations, and draw conclusions from the data collected.

316. Most pupils understand how to undertake a scientific investigation and can communicate the results of the experiment using tables, diagrams and graphs.

317. Many pupils understand the implications of modern science. They discuss these issues in science lessons and carry out research on these topics for the core assessments; such discussion and research are of a good standard.

318. In some lessons, pupils acquire new skills and achieve good standards. For example, pupils are able to understand how the reactivity of elements is related to their position in the periodic table.

319. Pupils with SEN take a full part in lessons and progress well in science.

Shortcomings

320. A few pupils find it difficult to recall and use details of previous work.

321. In a minority of lessons, pupils made relatively little progress. These pupils did not know how well they were doing and what they needed to do to improve.

Key Stage 4

322. The 2008 GCSE examination results in this subject were above the local mean and very close to the national mean for grades A*-C. In the last three years, the schools' results have followed the same pattern as the local and national pictures. The school's improvement in science has equalled the rate of increase across Wales, taking attainment in science above the all-Wales mean. For grades A*-G, the results in 2008 were above the local and national averages; these results are broadly in line with pupils' ability.

Good features

323. The majority of pupils uses their practical skills well. When asked, pupils are able to plan, record measurements in an appropriate table, with correct units,

construct graphs and measure gradients correctly. Many pupils can draw conclusions from their findings and evaluate their work.

324. Most pupils discuss their work using appropriate scientific vocabulary. They contribute to class discussions and ask appropriate questions to further their understanding. They recall recent work readily and have a good understanding of the basic scientific principles.
325. The majority of pupils demonstrates an understanding of increasingly complex concepts and processes for example, radioactive decay, electromagnetic spectrum and molecular structure.

Shortcomings

326. A significant minority of pupils fails to complete and correct their work.
327. A few pupils do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of previous work to actively take part in the lesson.
328. A significant minority of pupils does not know how well they are progressing or what they need to do to improve.
329. Pupils' skills of scientific problem solving, enquiry, data logging and independent learning are not at an appropriate standard for moving on to a sixth form course in science.

Sixth Form

330. Due to the small number of students entered at GCE advanced and at subsidiary levels, comparisons with local and national averages are not as valid as in KS3 and KS4.
331. In 2008, A-C grades obtained at GCE advanced level sciences were all above local and national averages. At GCE advanced subsidiary level, human biology and physics were above local and national means but chemistry and biology were below.
332. A-E grades obtained by students at both GCE advanced and AS levels were above the local and national averages for all subjects except chemistry.

Good features

333. Most students are able to recall previous work very well and demonstrate a good understanding of the complex topics being studied.
334. Most students demonstrate sound techniques and good investigative skills in their practical work.
335. Most students confidently use mathematical techniques in scientific calculations and can recall and apply correct formulae when, for example, measuring the speed of sound.
336. The majority of students makes good progress in relation to their ability.

Shortcomings

337. A minority of students is not capable of independent working, relying too heavily on the teachers' guidance; this limits their progress.

Information and communication technology

Key Stage 3: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

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

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

Key Stage 3

338. In KS3, there has been some improvement in results on the previous year and the school's performance at L5 and above is higher than the local and national means. However, the performance of girls, in 2008, is a concern.

Good features

339. Many pupils confidently access the network and manage their workspace effectively to support their learning.

340. Throughout the key stage, the majority of pupils confidently plans, creates and develops a range of presentations. Most demonstrate confidence in combining a variety of information and media and use a range of software, for specific purposes. In addition, a significant minority can reflect on their work and suggest appropriate improvements.

341. By the end of the key stage, most understand the need to produce more than one presentation to reach the higher levels of attainment and the majority is able to mail merge within a letter.

342. Many pupils can design and create a basic spreadsheet to carry out simple calculations and understand cell referencing. When challenged, the more able demonstrate advanced modelling skills.

343. The majority of pupils uses ICT tools and suitable information sources safely and legally, in accordance with school guidelines and the school ensures they understand that disclosing personal details can put themselves and others at risk.

344. Pupils with SEN are well integrated within the class and make good progress.

Shortcomings

345. Progression in the development of skills across the key stage, particularly the use of higher-order skills, is still in need of further development for many pupils.

346. There is little evidence of pupils' awareness of new developments in ICT or considering the social, economic, ethical and moral issues raised by the impact of using ICT.

347. The majority of pupils fails to reach their targets for learning.

Key Stage 4

348. In 2008, the results in the Diploma in Digital Applications (Dida) course were disappointing with only 54% achieving a pass grade and 65% of pupils achieving below the target grade. Changing the course to WJEC information technology is having a positive impact upon standards for 2009.

Good features

349. Most pupils show awareness of the basic functions of hardware and software and recognise the implications of using a computer network.

350. Many pupils respond well to a variety of stimulus material to support their own learning. They demonstrate a good understanding of ICT used in a specific context and are able confidently to apply this to a different scenario.

351. The majority of pupils plans independently for different purposes and demonstrates the ability to refine and present information to meet the needs of a specific audience. The more-able pupils evaluate their solutions in light of checking the plausibility and accuracy.
352. Most pupils demonstrate the ability to create a presentation using slide transitions and simple formatting techniques to meet the needs of a specific purpose and audience. They can enter data into a database and demonstrate basic data-handling skills such as simple searching on one field.
353. Many pupils create a spreadsheet model using a variety of data types and are able to use basic formula, functions and formatting techniques. A few of the more able pupils demonstrate the use of more complex features of modelling.

Shortcomings

354. A significant minority of pupils' folders in Y10 contains incomplete worksheets.
355. A minority of pupils does not demonstrate advanced skills in information handling and modelling in the coursework portfolio.

Sixth Form

356. In 2008, there was a dramatic improvement in the A to E grades in Y12 AS-level results over the previous year; however, a significant drop in numbers enrolled on the course accompanies this. Despite this improvement, the percentage of students attaining A-C grades is below local and national averages.
357. In Y13, A-level results have also improved with 84% of students attaining a grade A-E and 28% attaining A-C grades compared with 12 students entered A-level in 2007 with 8% gaining A-C grades and 33% A-E grades.

Good features

358. All students plan, implement and document their solutions with a clear understanding of the intended user and understand the need to develop a distinct house style.
359. Most respond well to the regular visual stimulus and constructive feedback, based upon explicit examination criteria, to support their own learning and make appropriate progress. This also supports the majority of students in applying their knowledge and understanding to past paper questions.
360. All students conduct appropriate research using a variety of sources, including the internet, and are discerning about the information they use.
361. Most understand the need to check the accuracy of layout and content and many students show maturity in critically evaluating their own solution and others, which informs them on how to improve.
362. By the end of the course, most students can import data from a variety of external sources and demonstrate use of advanced formatting techniques to create a professional quality solution.

Shortcomings

363. A minority of students lack confidence in using classroom discussion and peer assessment to develop and to deepen their own knowledge and understanding of each topic.

Art and Design

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

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

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

Key Stage 3

Good features

364. Pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of a wide range of different artists. They develop new techniques by working in the style of different artists in both two- and three-dimensional media.
365. Pupils have a good grasp of the essential use of line, tone, colour, textures, shape and form. They successfully use these elements creatively. In their observational drawing exercises they learn how to record with skill and accuracy.
366. They develop their knowledge of artists associated with Wales by working imaginatively in the style of Kyffin Williams and Peter Prendergast. They have a growing understanding and appreciation of the art of other cultures.
367. Pupils with SEN make good progress and achieve well for their abilities. The more-able pupils respond well to their more demanding tasks. The percentage of pupils working at the expected national level by the end of Y9 is above average.
368. Most pupils make a personal response when talking or writing about art.
369. Pupils apply the regular assessment process well leading to identifiable improvements in their work.

Shortcomings

370. Pupils do not visit art galleries and have limited first-hand knowledge of art of different periods.
371. Not all pupils learn how to use computers creatively to develop their skills in, or knowledge of, in the subject.

Key Stage 4

372. In 2008, GCSE examination results at grades A*-C were above the national average. Results for boys showed significant improvement to above the national average. This indicates good achievement for both girls and boys.

Good features

373. Pupils are growing as successful independent artists. Independent working is a strong feature of their successful learning. Their examination standards are such that their artwork is chosen as national exemplar material.
374. They know how to exploit both two- and three-dimensional media well. Their observational drawing from nature is a strong feature. In their annotated sketchbooks both boys and girls regularly demonstrate good creative outcomes.
375. In their large-scale painting they frequently use colour with some vibrancy. Pupils improve their knowledge of an even wider range of artists and designers by working in their styles. Following visits to the National Botanic Gardens of

Wales, their use of colour, shape and texture from natural forms is often done with considerable subtlety.

376. They know how to use computers creatively and in order to support their research.

377. Pupils of all ability levels achieve well. They have a clear understanding of the assessment process. They consistently use their self-assessment process to improve their work. They have a clear understanding of examination criteria and this enables them to meet course requirements for the higher grades.

Shortcomings

378. There are no significant shortcomings.

Sixth Form

379. In the A level examinations undertaken in 2008, results at grades A-B were above the national average with students achieving above expectation; this indicates very good achievement for these students.

Good features

380. Students are developing well as independent mature artists. Individual folders regularly demonstrate high craft skills in both two and three-dimensional media. Creative sketchbook work is often outstandingly good.

381. They show that they know how to effectively enrich their work from studying a range of different artists. They succeed equally well in their use of traditional craft techniques as they do with new computer-based media.

382. They respond positively to visits to art galleries and broaden their knowledge of different art periods. Most students show thoughtful responses when analysing art and writing about it.

383. They have a clear understanding of examination criteria which, together with their application of their assessment process, is a strong feature of their success.

Shortcomings

384. A few students do not express their personal opinions and judgements with sufficient clarity in their writing.

Physical education

Key Stage 3: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

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

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

Key Stage 3

Outstanding features

385. In KS3, boys of all abilities, and particularly those of either lower ability or with SEN, produce some outstanding work in gymnastics. They concentrate and focus on tasks, work hard to maintain very good movement quality in both practice and performance of their floor and apparatus work and make significant progress in lessons and over time.

386. In swimming and gymnastics, pupils regularly evaluate their own and others' work. They share information very effectively both orally in swimming and through use of ICT in gymnastics. They use this to adapt tasks for one another and focus on specific areas of improvement. As a consequence, groups of pupils often work on different but very relevant skills at the same time allowing them to improve at their own pace.

Good features

387. Most pupils make steady progress throughout the key stage. They remember what they have done previously and work hard to improve.

388. Most girls demonstrate good technique and confidence in swimming. They use a range of strokes, are confident underwater and, in the best examples, use racing dives and tumble turns.

389. In gymnastics, the practical work demonstrated by the boys shows good core strength and body tension.

390. In badminton, many girls maintain a rally using a good range of techniques. The most-able girls use court space skilfully, show a developing understanding of attacking and defending strategies, and can score and play to the rules.

391. Pupils understand the effects of exercise on their body and health. They have good knowledge of warm-up techniques that they apply appropriately. The 'junior leaders' devise and deliver warm-up sessions involving a good range of cardio-vascular activities, static and dynamic stretches.

Shortcomings

392. The progress of a few girls in Y7 and Y8 is affected by a lack of fitness.

393. A few pupils struggle with positioning in badminton which limits their range of shots.

Key Stage 4

394. GCSE results are above national and local averages for the higher A*-C grades with a significant proportion of A* and A grades.

Good features

395. In swimming, girls of all abilities talk in detail about stroke and life-saving techniques. They share knowledge and ideas to very good effect in working out how to execute skills such as entry for unknown water, 'huddle man' and 'HELP' positions. The more able show efficiency and stamina in extended tasks such as in treading water and swimming in layers of clothing. This is an outstanding feature.

396. Most pupils use their knowledge effectively to organise and execute good quality, relevant warm-up sessions.

397. There are many good examples of pupils helping one another to improve performance in the core programme. They show good knowledge in their observations of others in a range of activities such as, fitness, canoeing and trampolining, can identify good practice when given a clear performance model and give accurate advice on how to improve.

398. In basketball, the most able pupils undertaking the GCSE short course examination devise effective strategies and tactics that exploit their team strengths and opponents' weaknesses skilfully.
399. At GCSE, girls make good progress in their analysis of movement and some of the more able work systematically to construct clear coaching guidelines based on very good observations.
400. GCSE written work is generally well presented and thorough.

Shortcomings

401. There are no significant shortcomings.

Sixth Form

402. A-level results are below the national picture with 40% attaining A-C grades and 80% of students gaining A-E grades.
403. A small group of BTEC students achieved the higher distinction/merit grades in line with their abilities.

Good features

404. Written work is very well presented, detailed and thorough. Content demonstrates some good independent research by students and growing confidence in their use of technical terminology.
405. In group discussions, many students can explore ideas and concepts in some detail in their work on the mutually supportive network of spectators, the media and sponsorship. The more able students demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their questioning and logical development of ideas.
406. Year 13 students show good knowledge in their work on synoptic evaluation. They ask detailed questions of one another to improve understanding in revision sessions on exercise and sport physiology. Progress is good.

Shortcomings

407. At A-level, a small proportion of girls lack confidence in displaying their thinking and ability in oral situations impacting on the standards they achieve.

Extra-curricular sport

408. The school provides an outstanding range of sports activities and competitive opportunities through the 5x60 and e3+ programmes. Both of these programmes are very well attended by pupils. Activities observed include canoe polo, scuba diving, table tennis and cheer-leading.
409. School teams compete regularly and very successfully in local and national competitions and individuals are encouraged to pursue their interests to a high level through the close links with local clubs. Older students support and help with junior events and with inter-house competitions.

Religious education (including religious studies)

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

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

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

Key Stage 3

Good features

410. Most pupils recall correctly the major features of the different religions they study. They retell some of the important stories well in their own words, showing appropriate respect. Many pupils explain clearly and in simple terms what these stories mean to believers.

411. Most pupils consider thoughtfully the impact of values and beliefs on people's actions.

412. Most pupils explore with open minds many of the factors that influence their personal opinions on different issues.

413. Many pupils use relevant religious language and terminology accurately.

Shortcomings

414. A few pupils do not remember religious terms or names clearly and consequently, on times, mix them up.

415. A few pupils do not make links between religious teachings and contemporary moral and social values.

Key Stage 4

416. All pupils take a GCSE religious studies short course. Examination results in this subject for passes at A*-A and A*-C were below local and national averages in 2007 but above them in 2008. These results represent good achievement for these pupils.

Good features

417. Most pupils consider objectively the teachings of various religions on issues such as marriage and divorce, and prejudice and discrimination. Many refer appropriately to different traditions within the same religion.

418. Most pupils suggest valid reasons for different responses to ultimate questions. They demonstrate an understanding that issues may be complex and that answers may have to be partial or inconclusive.

419. Many pupils support their opinions with a good range of evidence, presenting these well both in discussions and in carefully structured essays. A few pupils, with due respect for others' views, anticipate and respond well to possible arguments.

420. Most pupils recall important religious stories and characters correctly.

421. Many pupils interpret religious language well. A few of them also understand how and why it is used.

Shortcomings

422. A few pupils do not draw on enough evidence to support their opinions or reflect fully on viewpoints other than their own.

423. A few pupils do not use religious terms well leading to mistakes in their recall of religious stories.

Sixth Form

424. No students have taken a public examination in this subject in recent years.

Good features

425. Many students weigh up well a range of contemporary responses to important moral issues such as war, the economy, family life and its responsibilities.

426. Most students draw well on earlier learning about religious teachings.

427. Most students put forward well-reasoned opinions, using evidence that they have researched, and are capable of active involvement in developing good discussions that arise from their opinions.

428. Students use religious language appropriately and in context.

Shortcomings

429. Many students do not refer to religious teachings other than those of Christianity.

430. A few students do not support their opinions with enough evidence.

School's response to the inspection

The staff and governors are pleased to receive confirmation that Bryn Celynnog is a good and improving school with the leadership capable of making it become a very good school.

The report uses the word 'outstanding' to recognise a number of key features: these include exciting areas of innovation in learning at Key Stage 3; the innovative Philosophy for Children (P4C) approach used in PSE lessons; the school's work on education for sustainable development and global citizenship; the effective working partnership with the school council; the exceptionally high standards of pastoral care for all pupils by members of the Pastoral Support Team; and the exemplary work of the Communication Disorder Unit.

We are particularly pleased that the report has praised the consistently good behaviour and attitudes displayed by pupils and students. We believe that good behaviour is a pre-requisite to effective learning, and we continue to be very proud of the way in which our pupils interact with staff, visitors and each other.

The report commends good quality teaching as a strength of the school. It is very encouraging that 80.4% of lessons observed were graded 1 and 2, which is significantly higher than the national average. We are also pleased that the report acknowledges the impact of our drive to raise standards of behaviour, punctuality, dress and attainment throughout all aspects of the school, highlighting the upward trend in relation to the academic standards achieved by the school in 2008 across all key stages.

As the school firmly believes in the education of the 'whole child', we are pleased that the report praises the personal and social development of the pupils, and the extensive range of extra-curricular activities available through the e3 programme.

In terms of future improvement, two of the four recommendations are already included in the School Development Plan.

The largely positive endorsement of our school that this report provides means that we can confidently move forward and build on the many strong features that are highlighted.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Bryn Celynnog Comprehensive School
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Penycoedcae Road Beddau PONTYPRIDD
Postcode	CF38 2AE
Telephone number	01443 203411

Headteacher	Ms Debra Baldock
Date of appointment	September 2006
Chair of governors	Mrs Marilyn Thomas
Reporting inspector	Gareth H Buckland
Dates of inspection	16-19 March 2009.

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	196	175	199	163	232	128	85	1171

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	65	12	71.5

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16.7:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	2.75:1
Average teaching group size	22.7
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	78.2%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school (Y7-Y11)
Term 1/Aut 08	93	91	89	88	87	NA	NA	89.9
Term 2/Sum 08	91	89	89	84	87	NA	NA	88.4
Term 3/Spr 08	93	91	90	89	87	NA	NA	90.3

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	11.18%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	58

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results

End of key stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2008															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 163															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School					1	1	13	11	31	36	6		0
		National						1	7	21	36	24	9		0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School						1	3	17	32	28	17	1	0
		National						1	8	20	28	27	14	1	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School						0	4	20	34	25	15	1	0
		National						1	6	21	35	26	10	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	64	In Wales
		57

Public Examination Results:

Summary of Secondary School Performance (1)

Pupils aged 15

Number of pupils aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 211

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	89	54	43	42	369
LEA Area 2007/08	98	84	53	37	36	340
Wales 2007/08	98	87	58	46	44	356
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	38	329
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	36	299

Number of boys aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 109

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	85	50	37	37	333
LEA Area 2007/08	97	80	46	35	34	314
Wales 2007/08	98	84	53	42	41	334
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	37	317
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	36	293

Number of girls aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 102

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	92	59	49	48	408
LEA Area 2007/08	99	88	60	40	39	368
Wales 2007/08	99	90	63	50	48	379
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	39	341
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	35	307

Summary of Secondary School Performance (1)

Pupils aged 15

	Percentage of pupils aged 15 who :		Percentage of boys aged 15 who :		Percentage of girls aged 15 who :	
	achieved one or more ELQ (2) only	Left full time education without a qualification (3)	achieved one or more ELQ (2) only	Left full time education without a qualification (3)	achieved one or more ELQ (2) only	Left full time education without a qualification (3)
School 2007/08	0.9	0	1.8	0	0	0
LEA Area 2007/08	3.6	1.5	4.7	1.8	2.3	1.2
Wales 2007/08	2.6	1.5	3.4	1.9	1.7	1.2
School 06/07/08	1.4	..	2.4	..	0.3	..
School 05/06/07	2.3	..	3.4	..	1.2	..

Pupils aged 17

	Number of pupils aged 17 who were on roll in January 2008: 90		Number of boys aged 17 who were on roll in January 2008: 39		Number of girls aged 17 who were on roll in January 2008: 51	
	Percentage of 17 year old pupils entering a volume equivalent to 2 A Levels who achieved the Level 3 threshold	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17	Percentage of 17 year old pupils entering a volume equivalent to 2 A Levels who achieved the Level 3 threshold	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17	Percentage of 17 year old pupils entering a volume equivalent to 2 A Levels who achieved the Level 3 threshold	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17
School 2007/08	92	631	87	683	96	592
LEA Area 2007/08	93	542	91	516	95	563
Wales 2007/08	94	631	93	596	95	659
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	..	..
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	..	..

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

(2) Entry Level Qualification

(3) As defined under the National Performance Indicator EDU/002.

.. Data not available

Public Examination Results:

Free School Meals, 2006 - 2008	2006	2007	2008
% of pupils entitled to Free School Meals	13.7	11.2	11.5
Free School Meal band	10%<FSM<=15%	10%<FSM<=15%	10%<FSM<=15%

Key Stage 4, 2006 - 2008	2006	2007	2008
% achieving the Level 1 threshold	..	80.9	88.6
Benchmark Quartile	..	4	3
% achieving the Level 2 threshold	..	48.4	54.0
Benchmark Quartile	..	4	4
% achieving the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE at grade A*-C in English or Welsh first language and Maths	42.7
Benchmark Quartile	3
% achieving the Level 2 threshold in the core subjects	42.2
Benchmark Quartile	3
Average wider points score	308.4	309.9	369.2
Benchmark Quartile	4	4	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

Inspectors spent a total of 46 days in the school and were joined by the school's deputy headteacher as nominee. They held a meeting before the inspection. During the inspection, inspectors visited:

- 97 lessons;
- registrations and assemblies; and
- some extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team met with:

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

The team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- 56 replies to the parents' questionnaire;
- comprehensive documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection;
- samples of pupils' reports; and
- a range of pupils' work.

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

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Gareth Buckland	Registered Inspector, summary, KQ1, recommendations, appendices
Gwynoro Jones	Lay Inspector Assistance with KQ4, KQ7
Tony Sparks	English
Keith Davies	KQ2, science
Alan Kelly	KQ3
Irene Mackie	KQ4
David Hughes	KQ5, science
Alun Griffiths	KQ6, science (lead)
Paul Martin	ICT
Debra Makin	Physical Education
Martyn S Williams	KQ7, Religious Education/Religious Studies
Eric Forster	Art
Susan Halliwell	Peer assessor Assistance with KQ2, KQ3
Rosemary Ripley	School Nominee

Acknowledgement

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

Contractor

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