

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School
Waun-y-Pound Road
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6LE**

School Number: 6774067

Date of Inspection: 03/03/08

by

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Ebbw Vale 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 Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School took place between 03/03/08 and 06/03/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by Terence Andrew O'Marah undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

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

There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a **standard** inspection.

Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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A glossary of terms used in this report

achievement	Inspectors judge achievement by how well learners are doing in relation to their ability and by the progress they make. (See also attainment.)
additional learning needs (ALN)	This term covers a very wide range of needs. It includes learners who: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• have special educational needs (SEN);• are disabled;• have medical needs;• have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties; are more able and talented than most of their classmates; and are learning English as an additional language.
attainment	How well learners are doing as measured in national tests and in the qualifications or credits they gain. (See also achievement).
benchmark data	This refers to assessment information that schools use to compare their performance with that of other schools.
bilingualism or bilingual skills	The ability to speak, read and write in two languages.
careers education and guidance	A planned programme to teach pupils about career opportunities and to provide each pupil with individual career guidance.
collective worship	By law, schools must hold collective worship (assemblies) which must be wholly or mainly Christian in nature.
core subject indicator (CSI)	This indicator shows the percentage of pupils who attain the level expected of them in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh as a first language.
core subjects	English or Welsh, science and mathematics.
English as an additional language (EAL)	This refers to pupils whose first language is not English.
exclusion	When a learner is told not to come to school either for a fixed term (for example, one week) or permanently.
key skills	The key skills are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• speaking;• listening;• reading;• writing;• using numbers (numeracy); and• using information and communications technology (ICT). The wider key skills for pupils aged 14 to 16 are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• problem solving;• improving their own learning and performance; and• working with others.

Learning Pathways 14 - 19	The National Assembly's strategies for developing and improving education and training opportunities for 14 to 19 year-olds referred to in 'The Learning Country' (2001) and 'Learning Country: Learning Pathways 14-19' (2002)
learning support assistants	Trained assistants, who work alongside qualified teachers in the classroom. They may work with an individual pupil or a group of pupils.
looked-after children	Children who the local authority has legal parental responsibilities for. The term is used to describe all children who are named in a care order, or who are provided with accommodation on a voluntary basis for more than 24 hours. Used to be called 'in care'.
National Curriculum	The subjects, and subject content, that all maintained schools must provide for all pupils.
National Curriculum assessment	For secondary schools, this is the assessment of pupils at the end of key stage 3 in English or Welsh, science and mathematics. In key stage 4, this is provided through a range of approved qualifications, the most common of these being the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE).
personal and social education	This includes all that a school carries out to promote the personal and social development of its pupils. It includes all the planned learning experiences and opportunities that take place not only in the classroom but also in other areas of school experience which are features of the values and community life of the school.
public examinations	Nationally recognised examinations commonly taken at 16 years of age and 18 years of age, usually the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and Advanced level (A level).
pupils with additional learning needs	Pupils who, for a wide range of reasons, have been identified as needing additional or modified support to help them learn successfully.
pupils with special educational needs	Those pupils, within the overall category of additional learning needs, who need specific support, which, for pupils with complex needs, may be recorded within a statement of special educational needs.
school council	A representative group of pupils elected by other pupils to discuss matters about their education and raise concerns with senior managers and governors of the school.
similar schools	All those secondary schools in Wales that have a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.
statutory requirements	All of those aspects of school provision that the Welsh Assembly Government requires schools to provide.
vocational studies (courses)	Courses of study related to career or employment skills.
work related education	Teaching pupils about the nature of life in the workplace.

Context

The nature of the provider

- 1 Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School is an 11 to 18 mixed school situated on the northern outskirts of Ebbw Vale. Currently, there are 657 pupils on roll compared to 850 at the time of the previous inspection in March 2002. There are 131 students in the sixth form. There are a further 29 joint registered students in the sixth form. The school serves an elongated catchment area stretching three to four miles to the south. Many of the areas served by the school are deprived in socio-economic terms, with unemployment levels well above national averages. 22% of pupils aged 11 to 16 are entitled to free school meals.
- 2 The school's intake covers the full range of ability but has significant numbers whose ability and reading ages are well below average. There are 10 pupils with statements of educational needs and a further 108 with specific needs. The school does not have a special educational needs unit, provision is via smaller, specific classes with additional support.
- 3 Pupils are overwhelmingly white British. No pupils speak Welsh as a first language at home and only two pupils do not speak English at home as a first language.
- 4 Playing fields are located across a main road via a Pelican crossing access. Pupils are transported by bus to the leisure centre for physical education lessons. Indoor facilities for physical education on the school site are very limited.

The school's priorities and targets

- 5 The school's motto is: "Learning for Life Achievement for All"
- 6 The school's main priorities continue to be:
 - raising standards of pupils' achievement and the quality of learning and teaching;
 - providing an appropriate curriculum for the needs and aspirations of all our pupils;
 - developing further our partnerships with primary schools, other secondary schools, further education providers and the community to increase opportunities for our pupils;
 - continuing to improve the resources of the school for the benefit of pupils, staff and the community; and
 - continuing to improve pupil attendance and the positive ethos of the school and the role of the school in the community.
- 7 Curriculum and pastoral team improvement plans mirror school priorities and build upon objective self-evaluation.
- 8 The school sets challenging targets with the Unitary Authority (UA) each year to help improve performance and add value to pupils' achievements as they progress through the school.

Summary

- 9 The school is successful in achieving its aim “to provide a learning environment that is stimulating, well ordered and caring with appropriate challenge and support for all”. Improved approaches to teaching and learning are having a positive impact on standards. An outstanding feature is the collaborative work with primary schools that ensures that the move to the secondary school is a positive experience for all pupils.

Table of grades awarded

Key Question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	2
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	2
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	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

Standards

Grades for standards in the six subjects inspected

Subject	Key stage 3	Key stage 4	Post 16
English	2	3	2
Mathematics	3	2	2
Geography	2	2	2
Modern foreign language	2	2	2
Art	2	2	1
Physical education	2	2	2

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

- 10 Since the previous inspection, modern foreign languages has improved in both key stages and at post 16, physical education has improved in key stage 4 and at post 16 and mathematics has improved in key stage 4. Other standards are as they were in 2002, except that English is now one grade lower in key stage 4.

11 The standards achieved in the six subjects inspected were:

79 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Key stage 3	6%	69%	22%	3%	0%
Key stage 4	4%	69%	23%	4%	0%
Post 16	6%	94%	0%	0%	0%
Whole school	5%	75%	17%	3%	0%

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

- 12 There has been a significant improvement since the previous inspection. The school almost meets the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) target for 2010, that 98% lessons should be awarded grade 3 or better.
- 13 Results of standardised tests indicate that the overall ability of each Y7 cohort is below both local and national averages and is declining annually.
- 14 In key stage 3, after several years of improvement, results in the national curriculum assessments of the core subjects and the core subject indicator (CSI) fell in 2007, when they were below national, but close to local averages.
- 15 In key stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades has fluctuated over recent years and is currently below both Wales and local averages. The proportion gaining five or more A* to G grades matches the national average.
- 16 In key stage 3, compared with similar schools, results in mathematics, science and the CSI are just below the average, whilst English results match those in the bottom quarter. In key stage 4, mathematics compares well with the best of these schools. English and the CSI are just below average and science is in the bottom quarter.
- 17 Post 16, there has been a decline in the proportion of students gaining A to C grades at A level, and in the average points score per student. However, in 2007, the school had its best ever A level pass rate at A to E grades and its best ever AS level results.
- 18 In 2007, the school met most of its targets for examination results agreed with the UA, and all post 16 students attained their individual target grades.
- 19 Pupils with additional learning needs and emotional difficulties make good progress and achieve well relative to their ability.
- 20 Pupils' and students' have good listening skills, and respond to instructions and contribute to discussions. The majority read accurately and fluently. They write in a range of forms and for a variety of audiences and purposes, although there are often errors and occasionally work is left unfinished. Students' written work is often extended, and well organised and expressed.
- 21 Pupils' numerical skills are better in key stage 4 than in key stage 3. There are good standards, especially those of more able pupils. At post 16, students are able to use and apply these skills competently.
- 22 Pupils' and students' information and communications technology (ICT) skills are good. Some subjects provide insufficient opportunities to use these skills.

- 23 Both pupils and students solve problems competently and show initiative and independence. They work well together in pair and group work.
- 24 Most pupils and students show exemplary behaviour in school and treat each other and their teachers with respect. A very small minority misbehave in lessons.
- 25 Standards of achievement in a small number of the lessons seen had outstanding features. In these, the quality of group work and pupils' and students' ability to communicate and share ideas was outstanding. In most lessons, standards were good. Pupils and students had good recall of previous work, researched accurately, used technical terminology confidently and concentrated throughout the lesson. Where there were shortcomings, work in some books was incomplete and pupils and students often lacked confidence when expressing their views.
- 26 Most pupils understand the values and expectations promoted by the school, and have a positive attitude to their work. Their personal, social and cultural development is good, as are their social and learning skills. They accept roles such as school councillors and take part in a wide range of sporting, charitable and extra curricular activities. Post 16 students contribute positively to the life of the school. Pupils and students have a good understanding of equal opportunities issues and are sensitive towards diversity in society. Those with disabilities are well integrated and cared for.
- 27 Attendance is above the average for similar schools in Wales. There has been an outstanding improvement since the previous inspection.

The quality of education and training

121 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Key stage 3	9%	66%	23%	2%	0%
Key stage 4	5%	67%	23%	5%	0%
Post 16	28%	68%	4%	0%	0%
Whole school	12%	67%	19%	2%	0%

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

- 28 Quality has improved since the previous inspection. The school is very close to the WAG target for 2010, that 80% of lessons should be grade 2 or better.
- 29 Teachers strive to provide all pupils with opportunities to achieve good standards. They know their pupils well, and what they need to do to improve. There are good relationship between teachers and pupils.
- 30 In the good lessons seen, teachers had high expectations of their pupils, lessons proceeded with pace and activities were matched to pupils' needs. The teaching at post 16 had many strengths, including outstanding planning, probing questioning and opportunities for students both to research and debate issues. Where there were shortcomings, teachers failed to maintain a good pace, had expectations that did not extend pupils, and limited students' opportunities to work independently.
- 31 Procedures and practices for marking, assessment and the recording of pupils' and students' achievements are good overall. The reporting of pupils' achievements to

parents/carers has outstanding features. A detailed assessment database is used to monitor pupils' and students' progress and to set challenging targets.

- 32 The curriculum has balance, breadth, flexibility and progression and there is good progress in developing the 14 to 19 curriculum as part of local networks. In key stage 4, there is insufficient time given for statutory physical education. There is insufficient co-ordination and monitoring of the teaching of key skills.
- 33 The Y7 project is an outstanding feature. It helps pupils to settle into their new school, and to develop important critical skills. Topics are based on Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig so that pupils develop skills, knowledge and understanding within the context of contemporary Wales. The language and culture of Wales are insufficiently promoted across the rest of the school.
- 34 The programmes for personal, health and social education, work-related education and careers education and guidance are well planned.
- 35 Parents have easy access to the school and there is an active Parents Teachers and Friends Association. There is a regular school newsletter.
- 36 The school plans the care of pupils well. It works closely with external agencies, primary schools and parents to provide an inclusive community for all learners. Child protection procedures are in place and health and safety issues are undertaken conscientiously. The school has gained the Healthy Schools' Award.
- 37 The school works to ensure that pupils are free from harassment and discrimination. Pupils are confident that the school will react positively should they seek support and that allegations of bullying are dealt with promptly.
- 38 There is an active school council which has two representatives on the school's governing body. It has a monthly column in the local newspaper.
- 39 The special educational needs register is updated regularly and statements are reviewed effectively. Pupils who are looked after by the UA or have English as an additional language (EAL) are well supported and cared for. Learners with restricted mobility have access to the school buildings and most of the grounds.
- 40 Pupils are encouraged to have appropriate personal expectations. All courses are open to all pupils. Good arrangements for social inclusion include part day release to a local college for a small number of pupils in key stage 4.

Leadership and management

- 41 The headteacher and his leadership team provide a clear sense of direction and maintain and promote high expectations. The majority of middle managers carry out their responsibilities well.
- 42 There are good procedures to monitor the quality of education provided. These include a detailed annual analysis of examination data and an accurate self-evaluation report. The outcomes from self-evaluation are increasingly being used to inform planning for improvement both at school and subject level.

- 43 In a small number of subjects, leadership, self-evaluation and planning need improvement.
- 44 The governors provide a strong sense of identity and direction for the school. All the required policies have been approved and applied across the school.
- 45 Progress in addressing the Key Issues identified in the previous report has been mixed. It includes the outstanding improvement in attendance, the continuing failure to meet the requirement to provide pupils with a daily act of collective worship and the inability to secure physical education facilities at the school.
- 46 There are sufficient, appropriately qualified teachers. Non-teaching staff provide good support. The professional development of teachers, support for recently qualified staff and for initial teacher training colleagues, is good.
- 47 The accommodation meets the needs of the curriculum. A good feature is the refurbished pupils' toilets. There is a good supply of text books and ICT equipment.
- 48 Financial management is very good. The school reviews and uses its resources and finances well and provides good value for money.

Recommendations

In order to improve, the school should:

- R1: raise the overall attainment in public examinations and particularly in the proportion of pupils gaining the core subject indicator at GCSE;
- R2: further improve pupils' standards in the key skills;
- R3: further develop both pupils' bilingual skills and their awareness of the culture of Wales;
- R4 improve leadership and self-evaluation in the small number of subjects where it is below the standard of best practice in the school; and
- R5 improve the time provided for statutory physical education in key stage 4.

Note

Two Key Issues remain unresolved from the previous inspection:

- "meet statutory requirements for the provision for a daily act of collective worship".
- "continue to develop the facilities on the campus, especially for physical education and recreation, in the form of indoor sports facilities and outdoor hard playing surfaces".

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

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade: 2 Good features and no important shortcomings

- 49 The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
- 50 The following table shows the standards achieved in the six subjects inspected:

Subject	Key stage 3	Key stage 4
English	2	3
Mathematics	3	2
Geography	2	2
Modern foreign languages	2	2
Art	2	2
Physical education	2	2

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

- 51 Compared with the previous inspection, modern foreign languages has improved in both key stages and both mathematics and physical education have improved in key stage 4. Elsewhere standards are as they were in 2002, except that English is now one grade lower in key stage 4.
- 52 The standards that pupils achieved, at the different stages, in the six subjects inspected were:

62 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Key stage 3	6%	69%	22%	3%	0%
Key stage 4	4%	69%	23%	4%	0%
Key stages 3 and 4	5%	69%	23%	3%	0%

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

- 53 The school has exceeded the target of 65% of lessons to be graded 2 or better, set by the WAG for 2007, and is only one percentage point below the target set for 2010, that 98% should be grade 3 or better. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) reports that the average for all schools inspected in 2006/2007 was that 71% of lessons were graded 2 or better, and 13% were graded 1. There has been a significant improvement in overall standards in the school since the previous inspection.

Pupils' success in attaining agreed learning goals

- 54 The school tests all pupils on entry, using commercial standardised tests. The results over the past five years indicate that the overall ability of each Y7 cohort is below both local and national averages and is declining annually.
- 55 In key stage 3, after several years of improvement, results in the national curriculum assessments of the core subjects and the CSI fell slightly in 2007. All three subjects are at least 10 percentage points below the equivalent national averages, but are

close to local averages. Girls outperform boys in English, but in mathematics and science, and for the CSI, results are broadly similar. In 2007, the school met all the targets for attainment in key stage 3 that it had agreed with the UA.

- 56 In key stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades has fluctuated widely over recent years. Results are currently below both Wales and UA averages. Since the previous inspection, there has been no sustained trend for improvement. Girls typically outperform boys – a situation that was reversed in 2006. In 2007, the 39% of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades met the target agreed with the UA. The three year rolling average up to and including 2007, for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A* to C, is above the figure for the three years to 2006. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A* to G matches the national average.
- 57 Results in all three core subjects fell in 2007. English and science and the CSI were below both the UA and Wales averages. Mathematics was above local averages and only two percentage points below Wales. The CSI was 23% in 2007. In English, overall results for boys have improved over three years, whilst those of girls have declined. Over this period, both genders have improved in mathematics, but boys dipped in 2007. In science, girls' results have declined over three years, whilst boys' attainments have fluctuated widely. In 2006/2007, 16 Y11pupils were taught off site. Few gained qualifications, but all were included in the school entry cohort.
- 58 In key stage 3, when compared with similar schools, performance in mathematics, science and the CSI are just below the average, whilst English results match schools in the lowest quarter. In key stage 4, mathematics compares well with the top quarter of schools, and the average GCSE points score gained by pupils is in the top half. English and the CSI are just below average for these schools, but science is in the lowest quarter.
- 59 Across the school, pupils with additional learning needs achieve well relative to their ability and make good progress. In art, they achieve well in three dimensional work, in modern foreign languages they show enthusiasm in speaking in the target language. In English, whilst some lack confidence in class discussions, most have a good understanding of what is read, and are prepared to tackle unfamiliar words. In physical education they achieve good standards in practical activities. They show a good understanding of geographical structures and terminology, and in mathematics they make good progress in their understanding of number and area.
- 60 A rigorous target setting process is agreed with the UA. Targets are based on a joint analysis of previous examination results, predictive data and the school's current assessment of pupils' progress. Targets set are designed to be, and are, challenging but attainable. In 2007, all key stage 3 targets were achieved, but at key stage 4, two targets were narrowly missed.
- 61 Listening skills are good. Most pupils listen with respect to their teachers, visitors and one another. They respond to instructions promptly and contribute to class discussions. Able pupils make extended responses. Most use Standard English, subject specific vocabulary and adapt tone and language to suit audience. They collaborate well in pairs and small groups.

- 62 The majority of pupils read an appropriate range of texts and engage in private reading during tutor periods. They read accurately and most are fluent. All skim and scan for information and research skills are good. Able pupils develop good critical analysis skills, including inference and deduction. Pupils of middle and lower abilities are less confident in interpreting what is read, and are more reliant on teachers.
- 63 Pupils write in a range of forms and for a variety of audiences and purposes. Most adapt language, form and style to suit the purpose of their writing. Written work is extended when required and often well organised and expressed. Good progress is made in the development of discursive writing although critical analysis can lack depth and detail. Pupils' writing is improved by drafting but insufficiently rigorous proof reading leaves errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar unchecked. In a few cases, writing is left unfinished.
- 64 The numerical skills of pupils in key stage 3 have good features that outweigh shortcomings. There is evidence of good standards, especially with the more able pupils. Pupils identified as needing support in numeracy benefit from extra tuition. Pupils in key stage 4 have good and very good standards, especially the more able. In both key stages, a small minority of pupils lack confidence in their numerical skills, especially when applying this knowledge in varying everyday situations. Pupils with additional learning needs receive good support and make good progress.
- 65 Pupils' ICT skills are good throughout the key stages. Across the curriculum, when given the opportunity, most pupils use ICT well to research their work and to enhance the presentation of their findings. However, some subjects provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop and use their skills constructively in their work.
- 66 Pupils' bilingual skills are underdeveloped.
- 67 In many subjects pupils make good progress in their wider key skills. They solve problems competently and show initiative and independence. Their work demonstrates a good level of understanding, flair and originality. Nevertheless, there is insufficient emphasis on the development of these skills in some subjects.
- 68 Pupils work well together. In almost all subjects pupils are co-operative in pair and group work. They discuss their work fully and share ideas and resources well. With very few exceptions, pupils are respectful, supportive and considerate of each other.
- 69 Pupils are often creative in the way they develop their ideas and outcomes. This is clearly evident in work seen in art and design and technology.

Pupils' progress in learning

- 70 In a small number of the lessons observed standards were good with outstanding features. In these lessons, pupils' feedback to the class following group discussions, the quality of their group work and behaviour were outstanding. They had outstanding ability to communicate and share their ideas.
- 71 The majority of lessons had standards that were good with no important shortcomings. In these lessons pupils:
- had good recall of previous work;

- researched and extracted work from texts accurately and promptly;
- assessed their own and peers' work accurately;
- were able to sustain their concentration throughout the lesson;
- spoke confidently and accurately; and
- often extended their writing.

72 In the lessons with some shortcomings, some work in books was poorly presented or incomplete. Pupils often lacked confidence in expressing their views in class discussions and in some lessons were too dependent on the teacher. In a small number of classes, pupils chatted when they should be working.

73 They have a good understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses, and many know what they need to do next in order to improve.

74 In the majority of subjects, pupils make progress that is at least appropriate, and is often good, and are well prepared for the next stage of their education or training.

The development of pupils' personal, social and learning skills

75 Pupils understand the values and expectations promoted by the school. Most have a positive attitude to their work. They are co-operative and want to succeed. They are usually well organised and generally make good use of their planners to record information. Pupils in Y7 are particularly well motivated in project lessons. They appreciate opportunities to experience lessons in English, humanities, and life skills with their form tutors. They develop good relationships with peers and their form tutor and settle quickly into the school.

76 Pupils are developing well the capacity to work independently. New teaching and learning strategies, such as exploration of different learning styles, the development of critical thinking skills and peer self-assessment have improved opportunities for pupils to develop as independent learners. In key stage 4, pupils are generally well motivated, but a small number of passive learners are too reliant on their teachers.

77 Pupils make good progress in personal, social and learning skills. They adopt roles such as school councillors and participate well in extra curricular activities. They engage in projects to support charities in the locality, nationally and in Uganda. They are respectful of their environment and engage in recycling.

78 Pupils have a good understanding of equal opportunities issues and are sensitive towards diversity in society.

79 They take part in community projects and there is good understanding of the community in which they live. Pupils have a good understanding of issues of bullying and are confident that if incidents did occur then they would be supported effectively. Pupils with disabilities are well integrated and their needs are generally understood.

80 The vast majority of pupils show exemplary behaviour in all areas of school. They treat each other and their teachers with respect in all their interactions, are courteous and supportive. They are helpful to visitors.

- 81 A very small minority disengage too easily from what they should be doing and misbehave in lessons. Although this may occasionally disrupt learning, the school's excellent discipline procedures, which are applied rigorously, ensure that such disturbances are uncommon and brief.
- 82 Average attendance for Y7 to Y11 in the last year was 89.9%. So far this year it averages 90.6% and is on course to meet the school's target of 91%. Unauthorised absence averages about 3%. Although still below the WAG targets, these figures are above the average for similar schools in Wales. Since the previous inspection, there has been an outstanding improvement in attendance of eight percentage points.
- 83 The school encourages and promotes good values and attitudes, and the development of key and personal skills well. Allied with good opportunities to learn about the community and workplace, learners are prepared effectively for life after school.

Post 16

- 84 The following table shows the standards achieved in the six subjects inspected:

Subject	Post 16
English	2
Mathematics	2
Geography	2
Modern foreign languages	2
Art	1
Physical education	2

- 85 Standards in modern foreign languages and physical education have both improved by a grade since the previous inspection. Standards in art, English, geography and modern foreign languages have been maintained.
- 86 The standards that students achieved in the six subjects inspected were:

17 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Post 16	6%	94%	0%	0%	0%

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

- 87 HMCI reports that the average for all schools inspected in 2006/2007 was that 17% of lessons were graded 1, and 66% were awarded a grade 2. The school has a high proportion of lessons awarded grade 2.

Students' success in attaining agreed learning goals

- 88 Post 16, there has been a decline in the proportion of students gaining A to C grades at A level from 53% in 2005 to 28% in 2007, together with a fall in the number of candidates from 45 to 29. and in the average points score per student from 17 to 12. In 2007, all students attained their individual target grades, and the school had its best ever A level pass rate at grades A to E and its best ever AS level results.

- 89 Students listen respectfully to their teachers and peers. They respond to questions in class when called upon. Some students in Y12 lack confidence in presenting their views to the class but able students in Y13 are articulate and extend their responses. They put forward ideas, justify opinions and counter argue. All collaborate well in pairs and small groups.
- 90 Reading skills are good. Students respond with understanding to a range of challenging texts. All show that good progress is made in the development of critical analysis skills.
- 91 Writing skills are also good. Written work is often well structured and expressed. Good progress is made in written assignments. Students develop arguments well and use relevant quotations competently. They all write in a range of forms, adapt language, style and form to suit the purpose of their writing.
- 92 Students' numerical skills have good features and no important shortcomings. They are able to use and apply these skills competently in various subject areas.
- 93 Students use ICT skills effectively to research for information from the Internet and to enhance the presentation of their work.
- 94 The bilingual skills of most students are underdeveloped.

Students' progress in learning

- 95 In only one of the observed lessons were students' standards of achievement judged to have outstanding features. These were their development of visual ideas and their creative sketchbook work.
- 96 In the lessons that were good with no important shortcomings, students had a good recall of their previous work and used technical terminology correctly. Written work was well organised and presented and was of a good standard. Students could recognise and extract relevant information from written and other sources accurately. They were capable of answering searching questions in class accurately and most were prepared to explain their reasoning.
- 97 In a few classes, students lacked confidence when answering questions and the skills to work independently.

The development of students' personal, social and learning skills

- 98 Good progress is made in the development of students' personal, social and learning skills. In lessons, they show positive attitudes to learning. Most are well motivated, focused and responsive to guidance from teachers.
- 99 Students respond well to opportunities to develop independence. They engage in peer and self-assessment, they collaborate well in pairs and groups, and present information to the whole class. Students have benefited from the school's critical skills initiative. For example, they use their own preferred learning style to build up notes. This supports revision of learning. There are good examples of students contributing positively to the life of the school. They successfully act as 'Pals' to help young pupils develop strategies to deal with bullying. Some are trained as 'buddies' to support the

development of reading. They also develop personal and social skills by being involved in community work, charity work, competitions, extra curricular activities and the school's council. Students are good role models.

- 100 The behaviour of students is outstandingly good, and attendance in Y12 and Y13 is good.
- 101 Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education or training.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

Key stages 3 and 4

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

96 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Key stage 3	9%	66%	23%	2%	0%
Key stage 4	5%	67%	23%	5%	0%
Key stages 3 and 4	7%	67%	23%	3%	0%

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

- 104 The grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment are very close to the national profile that HMCI reported in his annual report for 2006/2007. Nationally, the averages for all lessons in the secondary schools inspected were 19% at grade 1, 57% grade 2, and 97% of lessons grade 3 or better. The grades awarded in this inspection are close to the WAG targets for 2010, that at least 80% of lessons should be grade 2 or better.
- 105 The number of lessons gaining the equivalent of grades 1 and 2 has increased significantly from 59% to 74% compared with the previous inspection. Those awarded grade 1 have decreased from 17% to 7%. However, the number of lessons awarded the equivalent of a grade 4 has also decreased, from 8% to 2%.
- 106 The vast majority of teachers are very committed and strive to provide pupils of all abilities and background with many opportunities to achieve good standards.
- 107 The atmosphere in almost all lessons is supportive and friendly as a result of the good, constructive relationships between teachers and pupils. Teachers know their pupils well, are aware of their strengths and shortcomings and what they need to do to make progress.
- 108 Most teachers' subject knowledge is good and they are familiar with new developments in their field. Many show considerable enthusiasm for their subject and make their lessons engaging and relevant to pupils.
- 109 A strong feature in many lessons is the quality of planning. Lesson objectives are shared, so that pupils are clear about the standard of work expected, and what

should be learnt by the end of the session. In many lessons, teachers identify the key skills they expect pupils to apply and practise.

- 110 In lessons which were graded 2 or better, teachers had high expectations of what their pupils could achieve and challenged them appropriately to realise their potential for success. Lessons proceeded with pace and activities were well-suited to pupils' needs and prior attainment. In many lessons, teachers asked searching questions that required pupils to think deeply, share ideas and helped them to extend their understanding of what they were studying. In most lessons, teachers prepared good quality resources to stimulate learning.
- 111 Many of these good features were also present in grade 3 lessons and the small number of grade 4 lessons. However, in just over a quarter of lessons observed, there were shortcomings where teachers:
- failed to maintain a good pace for the lesson so that pupils lost focus on the lesson objectives; or
 - had expectations that did not extend pupils, with the tasks set being too predictable and lacking sufficient challenge; or
 - over-directed the lesson so that pupils had insufficient opportunities to think for themselves and work independently.
- 112 Many teachers give freely of their time to help pupils with their coursework assignments and preparation for external examinations. The small number of learning support assistants (LSAs) provide effective support for pupils with learning and behavioural difficulties.

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

- 113 Procedures and practices for the assessment and recording of pupils' achievements are good overall, with outstanding features in the school's process of reporting pupils' achievements to parents/carers.
- 114 The school's policy gives clear guidance and expectations of practice, and is based on 'Assessment for Learning.' Assessment practices are particularly good in art, English, modern foreign languages and physical education. In most other departments, practice is good. In almost all subjects, there is good quality feedback to pupils and valuable involvement of pupils in peer and self-assessment. Inconsistencies remain in the practice of these strategies in mathematics, science and Welsh. All teachers communicate to pupils the objectives and success criteria of their learning.
- 115 The school's assessment database is comprehensive. Baseline information, teachers' assessments including some from key stage 2, standardised tests results, reading ages, spelling ages, agreed targets and information on preferred learning styles are entered on to the system. These are effectively used to inform the grouping of pupils, to identify pupils with additional learning needs, to set individual targets and to guide teaching strategies.
- 116 The reviewing and monitoring of pupils' progress is outstandingly well organised. All teachers ensure that pupils know their predicted levels and grades. The database is kept up-to-date so there is effective and continuous monitoring of progress across the

curriculum and parents/carers can be contacted if necessary. Form tutors helpfully review progress with pupils in individual interviews during progress weeks. Pupils who are a cause for concern are identified by form tutors. An action plan, identifying support strategies, is provided for those underachieving and those exceeding targets.

- 117 Subject leaders keep manageable records of pupils' day-to-day achievements and efforts. They also ensure that assessments are accurate by organising departmental moderation and standardisation. Pupils are made aware of the criteria for success in external examinations and the requirements of examination boards.
- 118 The regularity and range of information provided for parents/carers is outstanding. A good quality full annual report is produced for all pupils. In addition, parents/carers of pupils in key stage 3 receive two interim reports a year whilst those in key stage 4 receive one. Full reports usefully include comments on progress, effort, targets for improvement in all subjects, attendance and a comment on pupils' personal, social and learning skills. There are opportunities for both pupils and parents to respond. Annual meetings for parents/carers are arranged to follow the production of reports.
- 119 Subject leaders ensure that the requirements of examination boards, the National Curriculum and Special Educational Needs Code of Practice are met.

Post 16

- 120 The following table shows the grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment.

25 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Post 16	28%	68%	4%	0%	0%

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

- 121 The quality of teaching at post 16 has many strengths, and is the highest in the school.
- 122 Compared with the previous inspection, the percentage of lessons awarded the equivalent of grades 1 and 2 has increased from 81% to 96%. There has also been a significant increase in the percentage of lessons awarded a grade 1. Only one lesson was awarded a grade 3. The proportion of lessons graded 2 or better exceeds the average for those schools in Wales inspected in 2006/2007 as reported by HMCI.
- 123 At post 16, some of the outstanding features observed in key stages 3 and 4, were seen more frequently in lessons. The outstanding features in over a quarter of lessons were:
- the planning of lessons with clear objectives and challenging activities;
 - the regular in-depth questioning to probe the understanding of complex principles; and
 - the opportunities for students to research from different sources, debate issues and feed back their findings to the group.
- 124 Many of the good features identified in key stages 3 and 4 are also evident at post 16. Also particularly noticeable, is the good quality of relationships between teachers

and students. Students commented on this feature and the ready support at all times, during interviews.

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

- 125 Recording and reporting of students' work is good throughout and, particularly in art, there are outstanding features. In day-to-day assessment, teachers identify strengths and indicate how improvements may be made. Students are aware of the criteria for success and the requirements of examination boards.
- 126 Teachers use the school database effectively. Students are informed by their teachers of the minimum target grades that they are expected to achieve. Subject teachers monitor progress, comment on individual pieces of work and set subject specific targets for improvement. Twice each year, they enter on to the database current working grades for attainment and effort. They identify underachievers and students negotiate their own targets for improvement.
- 127 There is also effective monitoring of progress across the range of subjects. Form tutors review grades awarded by subject staff and help students to set targets for improvement. Pastoral leaders, who are informed of students who are a cause for concern will, where appropriate, devise action plans, offer support and inform parents.
- 128 Parents/carers receive good information on students' progress. Each year they receive an interim and full report. In addition, a parents'/carers' evening is arranged for each year group.

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

- 129 The grade we awarded is one lower than the grade proposed by the school in its self-evaluation report. Although there are many good features, a grade 3 was awarded because the school does not provide the required daily act of collective worship for all pupils and students.

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

- 130 Overall, the curriculum meets pupils' and students' aspirations, and gives them the opportunity to achieve accreditation through a number of learning pathways.
- 131 Generally, the curriculum offers balance, breadth, flexibility and progression. The school has embarked on a number of initiatives at key stage 4 and at post 16 in response to the Learning Pathways recommendations.
- 132 In key stage 3, the majority of subjects are given sufficient time to cover the programme of study, and drama is included in the teaching programme for all pupils. However, Welsh is allocated less than the recommended teaching time across the key stage, which is a shortcoming.

- 133 In key stage 4, the provision includes a number of new GCSE courses including vocational courses in business and leisure and tourism. Some pupils can also access a further vocational option with courses at the local college on one afternoon per week in catering, construction, engineering and hair and beauty. A small group of pupils who have difficulties engaging fully in the mainstream curriculum follow an alternative programme linked to a provision in the local community, the local college and the business resources centre. The provision for statutory physical education is a shortcoming. The allocation of a single 50-minute period coupled with having to travel to a local leisure centre, means that pupils receive, at most, 30 minutes teaching time per week.
- 134 The curriculum programme at post 16 offers a good range of AS and A level courses. The programme is effectively supplemented by a well-organised link with a local secondary school. This has extended student choice and rationalised teaching resources effectively. The school also offers level 2 courses in health and social care, travel and tourism and the diploma in digital applications.
- 135 Overall, learning experiences develop basic and key skills, with the school having gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark. The main key skills are mapped in most schemes of work, and there is a focus both on these and the wider key skills in lesson plans. Pupils in Y7 can gain accreditation in communication, and it is planned for Y8 pupils to attain a similar qualification in the application of number and eventually in information technology in Y9. Y12 students are also pursuing accreditation through the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness route. However, at present, the co-ordination and monitoring of the teaching of both key skills and the wider key skills does not fully ensure consistency of provision and implementation.
- 136 Many pupils' and students' learning and social experiences are enriched by a good range of extra curricular activities offered by the school. A large number of pupils and students take part in sporting activities, gaining success at both local and national levels. A number of clubs meet regularly and there is good support in preparation for examinations. Visits to theatres, trips abroad and involvement in school productions broaden learners' experiences. The Duke of Edinburgh scheme is well supported at bronze, silver and gold levels and recently included a visit to Morocco.
- 137 Learners' spiritual development has good features which outweigh shortcomings. A number of subjects contribute to learners' spiritual development by giving them opportunities to gain an understanding, and a feeling of curiosity in reflecting on creative work, poetry and the natural world.
- 138 Year assemblies give pupils the opportunities to reflect on respect, care for others and contemporary moral and social issues. Suitable materials are prepared for a 'thought for the day' for tutor groups. However, in a significant minority of groups seen during the inspection, there was no act of collective worship and the school does not therefore meet statutory requirements.
- 139 Pupils' moral, social and cultural development has good features and no important shortcomings.
- 140 The vast majority of pupils and students treat the staff, each other and the environment with respect. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and respond

positively to the trust shown in them by the school. Pupils and students show their concern for others by initiating and supporting events that raise substantial amounts of money to support local and national charities.

- 141 The school council provides good opportunities for learners to take responsibility and contribute to the ethos and social life of the school. Post 16 students help younger pupils through support against bullying, listening to them read and by giving assistance to individual pupils in class.
- 142 The knowledge and understanding of different cultures is well reflected in aspects of the work of many subjects and in a number of extra curricular activities.
- 143 Pupils' learning experiences are enhanced by the partnerships with parents, community and other education providers.
- 144 Pupils and parents are made fully aware of the wide range of educational pathways available to them through open evenings, the prospectus and informative option booklets. Parents have easy access to school and reports inform them well on pupils' progress. They can participate in an active Parents Teachers and Friends Association that gives strong support.
- 145 Parents and the community are kept aware of school activities and successes through a widely distributed newsletter, and the school council has a useful monthly column in the local newspaper. The local community benefits from the public service element in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme and reciprocates by providing mentors, speakers and training opportunities that support curriculum learning. The school has well-developed links with public services, who support the school's pastoral role well.
- 146 Links with the partner primary schools are outstanding. The development of transition arrangements have significantly enhanced pastoral support for learners and provided exceptionally broad based curriculum continuity. The Y7 Project is an outstanding feature of the key stage 3 curriculum. This approach, where form tutors in Y7 teach English, geography, history, religious education and skills for life lessons to their tutor groups, is successful in helping pupils settle into their new school, and develop a range of critical skills to support the rest of the curriculum. Topics are based on Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig. Pupils develop skills, knowledge and understanding within the context of contemporary Wales.
- 147 Good links with other education providers give ample breadth of choice to the curriculum. The well-established partnership with initial teacher training institutes brings new students to several subject departments. This ensures a regular input of fresh ideas.
- 148 The programmes for personal, health and social education, work-related education and careers education and guidance are well planned and meet the WAG guidelines.

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

- 149 Work-related education is good. It is centred on a work-experience placement for all pupils in key stage 4, and for students in Y12, whose vocational courses require it.

Other students in Y12 and Y13 are encouraged to pursue part-time jobs in order to develop work-place skills and to learn to manage personal finance.

- 150 Y7 and Y8 pupils, in the skills for life course usefully explore personal skills and job requirements. In Y9, tutoring by a professional careers adviser leads to a good understanding of GCSE option choices in relation to potential careers. All pupils in Y10 benefit from a well-organised two week work-experience. Careers Wales oversee good training, prior to placement, and effective de-briefing afterwards. A team of school staff usefully monitor all placements during the work-experience.
- 151 There is a good range of supporting activities for groups of learners such as workplace visits, a Careers Fair, enterprise/challenge activities in Y9 and Y12, mentoring and mock interviews.
- 152 Provision for the development of bilingual skills has good features which outweigh shortcomings. Pupils have a positive attitude to learning Welsh. In key stage 4, the numbers who follow the full Welsh GCSE course are increasing. All other pupils follow the short course. Welsh is also available at AS and A level. However, the time allocated to Welsh in Y8 is insufficient to ensure a sound base in key stage 3 for success in key stage 4 and post 16. The school has a policy for the development of bilingualism, which has not been implemented, so that, other than in the Y7 Project, the language and culture of Wales are not actively promoted in the life of the school. The use of incidental Welsh around the school is rare. Pupils have the opportunity to use their Welsh outside the classroom through the school eisteddfod, visits to Llangrannog and a Welsh television studio. Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is effectively embedded in the schemes of work of some subjects. However, no audit has been carried out to check that it is embedded throughout in all subjects.
- 153 The school has made good progress in raising the awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship. It has drawn up a detailed policy with initiatives directed by an active steering group and good coverage in the English, geography, religious education, science and skills for life schemes of work, and presentations in assemblies. There are at present, a number of successful recycling initiatives in operation, with plans to recycle other materials in future. The school has established a close link with a school in Grenada and helped to fund a well project for a school in Uganda.
- 154 There is a close and effective partnership with Careers Wales and useful input from governors with extensive knowledge of the local community. In addition, there is dialogue with the many representatives from local businesses that support work-related education. Together, these ensure the school maintains a good and current awareness of the needs of employers.
- 155 Entrepreneurial and other business skills are generally developed well.
- 156 The Y7 project is an outstanding example of learning through application of critical skills, and problem solving is a good feature in many lessons. Pupils across all key stages have opportunities to meet and listen to entrepreneurs through the Dynamo Project. There are short-term enterprise/challenge days for Y9 and a successful Young Enterprise scheme allows interested students to develop business skills.

157 Overall, the school has made good progress in addressing a number of national priorities. There are considerable strengths in the Transition Plan, the progress with some 14 to 19 Learning Pathways, and the provision for vocational and work-related education. However, at present, there is an important shortcoming in the lack of development of bilingualism across the curriculum and in the life of the school.

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

Grade 2: Good features with no important shortcomings

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

The quality of care, support and guidance to learners

158 The school plans its pupil care and support well, working in close co-operation with all relevant external agencies, partner primary schools and parents, in order to provide an inclusive community for learners from different backgrounds.

159 The school's partnership with parents is good. There is an open door policy and parents feel welcome in school. Their views are given good consideration and any individual concerns are dealt with promptly. The Parent, Teacher and Friends Association provides valuable support and parents readily join in when approached for assistance with fund-raising activities or social events.

160 Key stage co-ordinators and pastoral team leaders manage their teams of form tutors effectively. Communications between members of the pastoral team are good. They monitor pupils' progress well throughout the year and follow up any concerns. Weekly themes for the 'thought of the day' are planned, opportunities are provided for pupils to read, and their home-school books are checked.

161 An established school council of elected form representatives which has helped to provide both improvements in the school and insights into pupils' views and ideas. A positive development is the inclusion of two members of the school council on the school's governing body.

162 A good personal and social education programme is taught through a weekly lesson. It has a detailed structure and meets the WAG requirements. Form tutors teach most of the programme, with appropriate support from external speakers. Good guidance on study skills is provided at an appropriate time each year. Useful school booklets support pupils and parents as they choose their key stage 4 and post 16 options. Teachers give freely of their own time providing good support for learners during lunchtime and after school. The work of the Careers Wales adviser is well integrated into the school curriculum and pupils and students value the advice they receive.

163 A significant number of key stage 4 pupils receive additional support in some subjects. In addition, in Y11, underachieving pupils receive structured and useful support from individual mentors which successfully enabled a number of pupils to improve their GCSE grades in 2007.

- 164 Teachers are successful in sustaining good standards of behaviour throughout the school. The vast majority of pupils respond positively so that relationships between adults and learners are good with a prevailing spirit of partnership. The 'remove room' is used effectively to stop individual pupils from disrupting the learning of others. A reward system has a positive impact on behaviour.
- 165 Correct procedures were followed in the few cases where pupils were excluded permanently or temporarily for unacceptable behaviour. For those pupils who return to school there is good support, including the use of the school counsellor and relevant outside agencies.
- 166 The system for recording attendance and punctuality is administered accurately. With the help of the educational welfare worker the school takes immediate action when concerns are identified.
- 167 Healthy eating and lifestyle standards are good. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools' Award and regularly consults pupils and students on maintaining a healthy school. They also have a good knowledge of the importance of exercise in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Useful guidelines on healthy living and lifestyles are included in the pupils' planner.
- 168 Child protection procedures are well documented, and all staff have received training and written instructions on how to respond to issues or incidents that might arise. Health and safety issues and risk assessments which ensure the well-being of the learners are undertaken conscientiously.

The provision of additional learning needs

- 169 The provision for learners with additional learning needs has good features and no important shortcomings.
- 170 Subject teachers are responsible for providing suitable work for learners with additional learning needs. There are good links between the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and subject teachers. The SENCO ensures that subject teachers are well informed and distributes relevant information, including pupils' Individual Education Plans (IEPs). There are good examples of differing tasks and work is presented in a way that is relevant to each pupil's ability and learning needs. In most subjects, pupils with additional learning needs achieve good standards. The UA provides support for a small number of these pupils.
- 171 Four LSAs provide good support for some pupils with additional learning needs in mainstream classes. The work is targeted effectively to ensure optimum use of time. They have developed good expertise in their work. Post 16 students also provide useful support in some lessons. However, in some mainstream classes, there is a shortage of classroom support for pupils with additional learning needs.
- 172 Some 53 pupils are currently withdrawn from mainstream classes to receive additional help with their literacy or numeracy skills. Good use is made of ICT programmes to enhance the work. The additional learning needs teacher and the LSAs co-ordinate the work very well. Records show that pupils are making good progress in gaining the relevant skills.

- 173 The school achieves a good level of success in enabling pupils with emotional difficulties to come to much better terms with their particular needs. Every effort is made to resolve problems and to assist learners facing difficulties. Good use is made of external support and parents in the process. There are also good links with the local Pupil Referral Unit.
- 174 The Y7 Project and the SENCO's visits to primary schools ensure that there are very effective arrangements to identify pupils in need of extra support. As well as the identification of pupils who require help with their basic skills, the more able pupils are also identified, and additional activities and opportunities are provided to help meet their educational needs.
- 175 The special educational needs register is updated regularly and statements are reviewed effectively with parents, external agencies and the UA. Pupils have appropriate IEPs or pastoral education plans which relate well their needs and ability and, where appropriate, to their statements. Relevant targets are set which are shared with the pupils and parents.
- 176 The SENCO provides good guidance and is supported effectively by a specialist teacher, the student counsellor and the LSAs. The two Individual support rooms are well organised and include a variety of materials to support pupils with learning difficulties. However, the distance between the two rooms does not give a coherent focus for the work within the school. There are very good links between the SENCO and external agencies. The monthly joint panel meetings are a valuable resource in identifying relevant support for individual pupils.
- 177 The good support provided by the leadership team and the governors ensures the inclusion of all pupils in the full life of the school.

The quality of provision for equal opportunities

- 178 The school encourages pupils to have appropriate expectations. All courses are open to all pupils. Good arrangements for social inclusion include day release to a local college for a small number of pupils in key stage 4. Vocational courses are also available.
- 179 The school is successful in creating a climate where pupils are free from harassment and discrimination. They are confident that the school reacts positively should they seek support with any difficulties and that allegations of bullying are dealt with promptly. Procedures for dealing with bullying are well understood and are implemented efficiently and effectively. Post 16 students offer good support through counselling and support for younger pupils.
- 180 Social inclusion measures, including additional support for those pupils considered to be at risk, are carefully managed and monitored.
- 181 Pupils who are looked after by the UA have good pastoral plans and the school has good working relationships with social services and other relevant agencies. Suitable strategies are in place to meet the needs of pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL). Records show that previous EAL pupils who attended the school have either gone on to further education or found employment locally.

182 The school makes every effort to promote good race relations. The few learners attending the school from ethnic minority groups are making good progress and are well integrated. Within a number of subjects, there are good opportunities for pupils to learn about racism and human rights.

183 The school has audited its provision learners with restricted mobility. They now have access to the school buildings and most of the grounds.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

184 The inspection team judged that the effectiveness of management across the school was better than the grade 3 the school awarded itself in its self-evaluation report.

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

185 Leadership and management across the school are mostly very effective. The headteacher and his leadership team provide a clear sense of direction and maintain and promote high expectations. Links between the leadership team and middle managers are good and are important in effecting change. The majority of middle managers carry out their responsibilities well.

186 There are many good features. Consultation is good, as is the enthusiasm shown by many leaders. There are good relationships and clearly shared aspirations. Many areas of the school are well managed, with good planning and attention to detail. The day-to-day running both of academic and pastoral areas is good. In a small number of subjects the management and leadership have outstanding features.

187 In the few subjects where middle management has some shortcomings, the shared sense of purpose is less evident and there is less rigour and attention to detail in monitoring and planning for improvement.

188 All the required policies have been approved and are applied consistently across the school.

189 The leadership team take full account of national priorities and are making good progress in developing the 14 to 19 curriculum as part of the local area network and the post 16 consortium with other local schools. The transition work between key stage 2 and key stage 3 has outstanding features. The development of pupils' bilingual skills is insufficient.

190 The school is very effective in its promotion of equal opportunities, and has good measures in place to ensure pupils are safe and free from harassment.

191 The school sets targets annually in consultation with the UA, based on an analysis of a wide range of data. In 2007, the school achieved just over half the agreed targets, narrowly missing the remainder, indicating overall that the agreed targets are challenging but realistic.

192 All teachers are observed teaching as part of an effective Performance Management policy. Appropriate objectives and training are agreed. An established, comprehensive annual cycle co-ordinates assessment activities, monitoring and self-

evaluation, and planning. Annual examination results are analysed in detail, outcomes of which are integrated into the annual improvement plans.

- 193 The school plans the continued professional development of teachers effectively, to meet both the needs of the school and those of the individual teachers. The link role of members of the leadership team is important in the identification of these needs.
- 194 Well structured procedures are in place to monitor the quality of education provided and the work of individual teachers.
- 195 The governors have a strong awareness and understanding of the community served by the school. Their thorough knowledge of the school and their roles in its management enable them to contribute very positively to strategic planning.
- 196 Their involvement in monitoring the quality of provision is effective. Governors are very well informed on school procedures and performance, by detailed reports from the headteacher. They integrate this information into their good understanding of regional and national trends in education, together with the needs of their community. Good use is made of link governors to monitor firsthand the effectiveness of policy decisions at classroom level.
- 197 The governors provide a strong sense of identity and direction for the school which are clearly set out in the prospectus and annual report to parents. They work hard, and generally successfully, to ensure that all statutory requirements are met but during the inspection, a small number of classes were not provided with a suitable act of collective worship.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

How effectively the school's performance is monitored and evaluated

- 199 The school's self-evaluation report is a comprehensive document that correctly identifies most good features and shortcomings. The leadership team has an accurate understanding of the quality of education being provided at the school. The self-evaluation report helpfully identifies sources of evidence and areas for development, so providing a sound foundation for subsequent improvement plans.
- 200 There are many examples of very effective monitoring and evaluation at department level, including the thorough and detailed analysis of examination results, rigorous monitoring of pupils' books, a shared culture focused on improvement, class observations and helpful and constructive links with members of the senior leadership team. In a small number of subjects this work is less comprehensive or rigorous when compared with the rest of the school, and self-evaluation is occasionally over descriptive and insufficiently evaluative.

- 201 A detailed, published annual schedule that integrates the school assessment activities, learning and teaching reviews, pupil reviews, self-evaluation and improvement planning is in its second full year of implementation, as a development from the school's previous systems. There are clear links between evaluation and planning and the model allows for an incremental development of school and subject self-evaluation reports over the full school year. This new system has had a positive impact on the school.
- 202 All teachers can expect to be observed teaching three times a year, once as part of Performance Management, once by their curriculum leader and once as part of Key Stage reviews. In addition, the leadership team conducts routine subject reviews, which includes monitoring of schemes of work, pupil progress, homework and pupils' books and coursework.
- 203 The opinions of pupils and parents are sought through the work of the school council and through attitude surveys.

The effectiveness of planning for improvement

- 204 The outcomes from self-evaluation are increasingly used to inform detailed planning for improvement both at school and subject level. The school improvement plan, which is a useful management document, helpfully identifies responsibilities for delivery, resources, success criteria, deadlines and who will monitor progress. Both team and pastoral improvement plans have to reflect school priorities and most also derive their individual priorities from their self-evaluation reports. The outcomes from self-evaluation are not addressed in sufficient detail in the planning in a small number of subjects.
- 205 Annual targets for improvement in external examinations are set in agreement with the UA, following rigorous analysis of data and school assessment results, and are suitably challenging.
- 206 Progress in addressing the Key Issues identified in the previous report has been mixed. There has been outstanding progress in improving attendance, which is now eight percentage points higher than it was. There has been some improvement in standards attained across key stages 3 and 4, which has to be judged against a measured decline in the overall ability of pupils as they enter the school. The school now monitors its activities well, and time in tutor periods is now used more effectively. Good progress has been made in improving the quality of reports to parents, and in the use of ICT across the curriculum. There has been a slight improvement in the provision of time for Welsh in key stage 3, food and textiles are now taught in Y8, and there is now provision of religious education at post 16. The school still fails to meet the requirement to provide all pupils with the opportunity to participate in a daily act of collective worship, and the physical education facilities at the school have not been improved.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

207 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.

208 There are sufficient teachers for the school to run efficiently, with a good blend of experienced teachers and those new to the profession. Most teachers are appropriately qualified and trained to meet all aspects, subjects, and the wider needs of the curriculum.

209 The four learning support assistants work well with subject teachers and the head of learning support. They provide good support and encouragement to a number of pupils with learning and behavioural problems.

210 The two cover supervisors look after classes for absent staff, otherwise they are well deployed in pupil support roles.

211 The business manager, administrative and caretaking staff ensure that the school site, offices, reception, reprographic area and the library run efficiently.

212 There is effective technician support in art, food technology, information technology, textiles and science.

213 Overall, the quality and quantity of learning resources for both key stages 3 and 4 have good features which outweigh shortcomings. The range and supply of text books are good and the school produces a wide range of effective subject materials.

214 Provision of ICT equipment throughout the school is a good feature. There are five IT rooms, each with approximately 30 computers. Further smaller groups of computers are in art, textiles, learning support and in the library.

215 There are 10 interactive white boards and 20 digital projectors, which are effectively used to enhance the quality of teaching in a number of subjects.

216 Each classroom has a computer used to record attendance and assessment data. Teachers use these well on occasions, to enhance their teaching with the use of interactive projectors.

217 Good use of out of school resources enriches the curriculum. This includes visits to museums, art galleries, theatres and abroad. A range of visiting speakers enhances pupils' learning experiences. An increasing number of pupils and students achieve Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

218 The library is small for the number of pupils on roll. Overall, the stock of fiction and reference books is also comparatively small for a school of this size. It has a suite of 10 computers, is open during the school day and is used at break-times, lunchtimes and after school. Pupils use the library for independent learning, to improve the

presentation of their work and for research on the Internet. However, the present layout of large furniture limits the number of pupils who can use it at any one time. Subjects can book the use of the library during lessons.

- 219 For post 16 students, there is a good range and supply of text books and equipment.
- 220 The accommodation has good features which outweigh shortcomings, is sufficient for the numbers of pupils currently on roll, meets most of the pastoral and academic needs of the curriculum.
- 221 Internally, the school has a clean, fresh appearance in a number of areas but, elsewhere some areas are drab. The main staircase has been helpfully fitted with stair lifts.
- 222 There are colourful and attractive displays in many classrooms and corridors which provide an attractive and at times stimulating learning environment. In other areas displays are less appealing and there are few examples of pupils' work on show.
- 223 Most rooms are fit for purpose and are large enough to cater well for most class sizes. The majority are well maintained and decorated but others are shabby and uninspiring.
- 224 A good feature of the school is the good condition of the refurbished pupils' toilets.
- 225 The accommodation's main shortcoming is the poor provision for physical education facilities. This lack of indoor sports facilities and outdoor hard playing surfaces was highlighted as a Key Issue for action in the previous report.
- 226 Other shortcomings include:
- the music room which is in need of complete refurbishment with heating that is so noisy, it interferes with listening tasks;
 - a very cold drama studio; and
 - ageing laboratories.
- 227 The school grounds and buildings are kept clean and litter free.
- 228 Accommodation for post 16 students is sufficient. The students have their own large common room and two adjacent small study rooms. Their main work area is the library.

How effectively and efficiently resources are managed to provide value for money

- 229 The deployment and management of nearly all staff are good and make efficient and effective use of their time, expertise and experience.
- 230 The professional development of teaching staff is a good feature. It is linked to the outcomes of Performance Management, the school improvement plan and the needs of departments and individuals. It is very well co-ordinated and courses attended by staff are carefully evaluated and used to the school's benefit. The school has joint training days with the other five schools in the Blaenau Gwent cluster.

- 231 The programmes and support for newly qualified teachers, for the extended professional development of recently qualified teachers and for initial teacher training colleagues are efficient and thorough.
- 232 The school has implemented its strategy for the workload agreement. It has made provision in the timetable for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment.
- 233 Following consultation with all interested bodies, the headteacher has implemented the school's structure for the new teaching and learning responsibilities.
- 234 The financial management of the school is very good. The headteacher, the business manager and the governing body's committee for finance effectively and efficiently manage the available budget. All grants and sponsorship that are available are actively pursued.
- 235 The business manager is responsible for the efficient day-to-day running of the school's finances. The headteacher and subject leaders are provided with regular and immediate breakdowns of current balances. School spending is closely and carefully monitored.
- 236 The minor recommendations of the recent auditors' report have been addressed.
- 237 Financial decisions focus well on the curriculum needs and the educational priorities identified in the school improvement plan. The initial allocation of subject capitation is systematic and based on pupil and student numbers, time in the timetable and weightings. When finance is available, subject leaders can bid for extra to implement curriculum changes and initiatives.
- 238 The school reviews and uses its resources and finances well and provides good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English

Key stage 3:	Grade 2	Good features and no important shortcomings
Key stage 4:	Grade 3	Good features outweigh shortcomings
Post 16:	Grade 2	Good features and no important shortcomings

239 GCSE results in English language in the last two years have been below national averages for grades A* to C. These results are slightly lower than would be expected for pupils of similar ability. Results in English literature in the last two years have also been below national averages for grades A* to C, but above those for UA.

240 A level results in English literature in the last two years have been below national averages for grades A to C but are broadly in line with those of the UA.

Good features

Key stage 3

241 Pupils listen with respect to teachers' instructions, explanations and questions and they respond promptly. They listen with interest to the ideas and opinions of peers.

242 They explain ideas clearly, demonstrating a very good understanding of their work. For example, they explain the impact on audience of persuasive language used in poster design. They collaborate very well in groups, delegate responsibilities, listen to the ideas of others and negotiate the collective viewpoint of the group. In presentations to the whole class, they speak clearly, confidently and use appropriate Standard English. All pupils know the criteria for effective group work.

243 All pupils, including those with additional learning needs, read a wide range of fiction, non fiction, drama and poetry. All pupils read for pleasure. Most demonstrate a good knowledge of set texts. There is good recall of plots and understanding of characters. Reading is usually accurate and fluent. The least able are well supported in developing reading skills and good progress is made. All pupils locate and extract information well. Able pupils interpret what is read with a growing confidence and they understand inference and devices used by writers.

244 Pupils write in a range of forms and for a variety of purposes. They usually write with a clear sense of audience. All understand the conventions of different genres. Key pieces of written work demonstrate that pupils can improve writing by drafting, knowing the criteria for success and by peer and self assessment. Able pupils structure their writing well and produce well organised arguments and effective narratives.

Key stage 4

245 Most pupils listen respectfully to the teachers and to each other. All collaborate productively in pairs and small groups. The most able are confident in putting forward ideas and opinions.

- 246 Pupils of all abilities read a wide range of challenging texts. They have a clear understanding of plots, characters and the social, cultural and historical contexts of set texts. Skills of interpretation reflect their abilities. The more able pupils in particular understand inference and the use of literacy devices. They include appropriate references to support their ideas and opinions.
- 247 Writing is usually good in relation to abilities. Pupils extend their writing when required and adapt language to purpose and audience. Able pupils produce written work which is usually well organised and structured. Arguments are clear and well developed and narratives convey mood when needed. The coursework of able pupils includes appropriate use of references, quotations and technical terms.
- 248 Most pupils with additional learning needs make good progress. All pupils improve writing by knowledge of the criteria for success and the requirements of examination boards.

Post 16

- 249 Students listen attentively to the teacher, one another and recordings. They respond to questions and put forward opinions with a growing confidence. The most able counter argue with close reference to the text to support opinions. There is good use and understanding of Standard English and subject terms. For example, students in year 13 know the characteristics of Senecan tragedy.
- 250 There is also good understanding of the social and historical contexts of set texts. For example, students know and understand the ideas and culture of Jacobean society. They are aware of different interpretations of set texts given by other readers and they analyse these competently before forming their own judgements. Able students communicate very good knowledge and understanding of characters, plots, themes, concepts and language. Most are developing well their understanding of the ways in which writers use their language to communicate ideas and meaning.
- 251 Written work is usually well structured and coherent. By the end of the course, most students produce well-crafted writing, which includes appropriate quotations where necessary. Able students include detail and in-depth analysis of language. Standards are improved by drafting, knowing the criteria for success, examination board requirements and by responding to teachers' comments for improvement. Coursework represents good progress in relation to abilities.

Shortcomings

Key stages 3 and 4

- 252 A small number of pupils of middle to lower abilities leave written work unfinished at times.
- 253 They do not proof read effectively so that errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar persist.

Key stage 4

- 254 In the writing of pupils of middle to lower abilities, critical analysis can lack depth and detail. There is insufficient focus on language and how the writer uses devices for effect.

Post 16

- 255 Students in Y12 lack confidence and hesitate in putting forward a point of view in class discussions.

Mathematics

Key stage 3:	Grade 3	Good features outweigh shortcomings
Key stage 4:	Grade 2	Good features and no important shortcomings
Post 16:	Grade 2	Good features and no important shortcomings

- 256 GCSE results over the last three years have fluctuated, but are on an upward trend for A* to C grades. At present, they are just below national averages but above local averages. These results are higher than would be expected for pupils of similar schools.
- 257 All the more able Y11 pupils, who sat the GCSE statistics examination, achieved A* to C grades.
- 258 There were no entries for the A level examination in 2007, and the previous two years had relatively small entries. However, in 2006 and 2005, attainment for A to C grades was 78% and 62.5%, and for A to E grades was 100% and 75% respectively. These results were in line with students' efforts and abilities.

Good features

Key stages 3 and 4

- 259 Most of the more able pupils make good progress.
- 260 More able pupils across the age and ability ranges answer questions orally with clarity, understanding and accuracy.
- 261 Most pupils are developing a sound knowledge of number, vulgar fractions, decimal fractions and percentages and the relationship between them.
- 262 They have spatial awareness and understand the concepts of area and volume, using appropriate units.
- 263 Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress.
- 264 Most pupils across the ability ranges use calculators appropriately and effectively in their work.

Key stage 3

- 265 Most pupils benefit from the lesson starter activities that review work from previous lessons.
- 266 Pupils in Y7 are developing an understanding of basic algebra and can solve simple linear equations through the use of function machines.

267 Lower ability Y8 pupils can calculate the volume of cuboids using the appropriate units.

268 Most Y9 pupils can calculate the areas of rectangles, squares and parallelograms and hence the areas of triangles, using the appropriate units.

Key stage 4

269 The good standard of coursework enhanced GCSE results.

270 More able Y11 pupils understand the basic concept of vectors and can apply this knowledge to solve appropriate problems.

271 Lower ability Y11 pupils are aware of the basic facts of probability and can apply them to work out questions from situations in everyday life.

272 More able Y10 pupils can use factorising to solve quadratic equations.

273 Lower ability Y10 pupils can draw scatter diagrams to represent data and are able to interpret the appropriate type of correlation.

Post 16

274 Y13 students have a very good understanding of a range of concepts in pure mathematics and statistics or mechanics. They are learning to adapt this knowledge to solve associated questions.

275 The more able Y13 students are extending their studies to include further pure mathematics modules at AS level.

276 Y12 students are making very good progress in understanding the basic concepts of pure mathematics and statistics.

277 Students who have difficulty in understanding concepts and techniques, especially in Y12, improve when given individual support.

Shortcomings

Key stage 3

278 A small minority of pupils have poor concentration and listening skills. As a result, they are unable to attempt the task set without the help of the teacher.

Key stages 3 and 4

279 More able pupils in a small minority of lower ability classes do not achieve their potential.

280 A minority of pupils lack confidence in their mathematical abilities.

281 They do not always complete their work or correct work that is wrong.

Post 16

282 There are no significant shortcomings.

Modern foreign languages

Key stage 3:	Grade 2	Good features and no important shortcomings
Key stage 4:	Grade 2	Good features and no important shortcomings
Post 16:	Grade 2	Good features and no important shortcomings

- 283 GCSE results in French and German in 2006 were below national averages for grades A* to C and A* and A, and were in line with pupils' ability.
- 284 2007 GCSE German results were below average for grades A* to C and A* and A, and were in line with pupils' ability. Results in French were above average for grades A* to C but below average for A* and A, and represent good achievement for these pupils. In French, boys did better than girls in 2006; girls did better than boys in 2007. In German, both genders performed similarly in both years.
- 285 A level French results were below the average for Wales in 2007, but in line with students' ability.
- 286 In French in 2006, and in German in both years, entries were too small for valid comparisons.

Good features

Key stage 3

Note: All pupils study French. More able pupils study German as an additional language in Y8 and Y9.

- 287 Most pupils have good listening skills. The language studied is used for most purposes in the classroom and pupils do not often need instructions repeated. Many pupils follow authentic recordings at first hearing and identify relevant details.
- 288 Most pupils speak confidently in reply to questions about themselves and other people, and in role play activities. They are developing good accents.
- 289 Most pupils read and use dictionaries to good effect.
- 290 Many pupils in Y8 understand simple texts dealing with past and present tenses in both languages. This demonstrates, for those beginning German, rapid progress.
- 291 Most pupils write sentences, paragraphs and longer pieces appropriately for their age and ability. Spelling is usually correct.
- 292 Pupils with additional educational needs achieve well in tasks closely matched to their abilities. Many of them speak confidently and enthusiastically.

Key stage 4

- 293 Most pupils read, listen to and understand a good range of authentic material in each language. They grasp, for example, the important points of printed publicity material and recorded interviews with native speakers, and regularly use their prior learning to work out the meaning of unfamiliar complex sentences and paragraphs.

- 294 Many pupils navigate foreign websites confidently.
- 295 Most pupils respond unselfconsciously to the use of the target language as the normal language of the classroom, and gain confidence in using it themselves.
- 296 Most pupils answer questions promptly. A few take the initiative, making spontaneous and relevant contributions to discussions, with good accents and intonation.
- 297 Many pupils write coherently at length. They have a good vocabulary and use different tenses appropriately to develop their ideas.
- 298 Most pupils beginning Spanish in Y10 build up their communication skills quickly. They soon distinguish and use both formal and informal language well.

Post 16

- 299 Most students in Y12 listen and read well in French and German.
- 300 They follow a wide variety of different styles of language and understand a good range of vocabulary, dealing with topical issues such as the impact of the recent smoking bans in European countries.
- 301 Most students use the languages studied appropriately for general purposes in class. They respond promptly to questions.
- 302 Students write short pieces accurately in French; most write accurately, at greater length, in German.
- 303 Y13 students achieve well in both languages, in relation to their ability.
- 304 Most structure written work thoughtfully with a good level of accuracy.
- 305 When reading or listening, most apply their prior learning effectively to grasp at least the main points of authentic material. Many students competently work out the meaning of unfamiliar language.
- 306 The most able speak with some ease, expressing well-reasoned views using an accurate range of language. Written work is well argued and reflects wide reading and research.

Shortcomings

Key stage 3

- 307 Many pupils lack confidence when speaking outside a clearly defined structure in both languages, hesitating much more and being less accurate.
- 308 A few pupils, mainly those of lower ability, do not pronounce words properly. Without support they find difficulty in writing in sentences.

Key stage 4

- 309 A minority of pupils, in all three languages, do not speak or write confidently and accurately at length.

310 In French and German in particular, they use a narrow range of language, making errors in word order and in the forms of verbs.

311 Their accents are often inaccurate, and show the influence of their home language strongly.

Post 16

312 Many Y12 students are reluctant to start conversations and do not speak confidently at length.

313 A minority of Y12 and Y13 students do not structure or develop ideas well in extended writing. This work is also less accurate.

Geography

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

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

Post 16: Grade 2 Good features and no important shortcomings

314 GCSE results in the last two years have been below the national averages for grades at A* to C, and are generally in line with pupils' ability.

315 A and AS level results in the last two years have been broadly in line with national averages for A to C grades. These results are in line with students' ability.

Good features

Key stage 3

316 Almost all pupils demonstrate a good understanding of why people migrate, using a case study of the movement of Mexicans to the USA. Pupils appreciate the conflicts which can arise in the USA between the indigenous peoples and the Mexican immigrants.

317 Two-thirds of the pupils possess a sound grasp of the location of place. They are confident in locating areas within the local region, Wales and further afield in the UK and Italy.

318 Pupils understand the significance of plate boundaries in the development and occurrence of volcanic eruptions. They understand some of the catastrophic effects of volcanic events on the activities of mankind, property and the natural environment.

319 Pupils with additional learning needs complete work of a good standard. They display a sound grasp of geographical features such as the earth's structure, plate margins and population movement.

320 About three-quarters of pupils develop good geographical skills. They use information booklets, textbooks, worksheets, photographs and atlases confidently.

321 Pupils map and understand the changes taking place in the population totals in the counties of Wales. They interpret population choropleth maps accurately in response to set tasks.

Key stage 4

322 Almost all pupils understand fully the differing characteristics of the temperate coniferous and the tropical rain forests. They have a good grasp of how trees in different parts of the world adapt to meet the conditions within their environment.

323 Coursework assignments based on fieldwork conducted on the Cold Knapp pebble beach and in Abergavenny, demonstrate the pupils' sound grasp of the geographical skills of investigation, analysis, interpretation and recording. Their understanding of patterns and processes in physical and human geography is good.

324 Their standard of geographical skills is good. Pupils use maps, source materials and ICT confidently to achieve good outcomes.

325 About three-quarters of pupils possess a good understanding of the causes of coastal erosion and its effects on vulnerable coastal areas. They can describe the management techniques employed by local authorities to counteract cliff recession.

326 Nearly all have a secure knowledge of geographical terms, using them with increasing precision and accuracy.

327 Pupils with additional learning needs achieve a good standard of work relative to their ability. They apply a range of geographical skills very successfully to complete set tasks.

328 Almost all pupils understand the potentially damaging effects of the exploitation of natural resources within the tropical rainforests of Papua New Guinea. They appreciate the conflicts which arise among different groups of people, when any commercial exploitation is planned.

Post 16

329 Almost all students display a good understanding of a wide range of statistical techniques, map skills and ICT to research, analyse and record their coursework data. With very few exceptions, coursework assignments are of a good standard.

330 Nearly all students have a sound grasp of geographical terminology. They use the vocabulary appropriately and accurately, in a variety of contexts.

331 Students display a good understanding of the importance of sustainable development policies in the management of the world's resources. They describe and explain accurately the factors controlling the flow of water through the mouth of the Murray river in Australia.

332 Nearly all students demonstrate a good level of geographical understanding and skill.

333 Students have a sound understanding of the demographic transition model. They have a good grasp of factors responsible for the UK, Sweden, and Japan's entry into stage 5 of the model, where death rate exceeds the birth rate.

Shortcomings

Key stage 3

- 334 A few pupils do not possess a sufficient grasp of some key geographical terminology.
- 335 The presentational skills of a few pupils, especially the less able, have an adverse effect on standards.

Key stage 4

- 336 The standards of few pupils are compromised by their failure to complete tasks in sufficient detail and depth.
- 337 A few pupils cannot distinguish between causes and effect with reference to coastal studies.

Post 16

- 338 Some aspects of students' written and oral work demonstrate a lack of the precision and rigour expected at AS and A levels.
- 339 A few students are reluctant to contribute orally in class.

Art

Key stage 3:	Grade 2	Good features and no important shortcomings
Key stage 4:	Grade 2	Good features and no important shortcomings
Post 16:	Grade 1	Good with outstanding features

- 340 GCSE results in the last three years have been broadly in line with, or above, national averages for grades A* to C. Boys achieve particularly well. These results represent very good achievement for these pupils.
- 341 A level results in the past year were well above national averages for grades A to B. Boys achieve particularly well over time. These results are in line with students' ability.

Good features

Key stage 3

- 342 Pupils make good progress in acquiring the essential craft skills of use of line, tone and texture. They are developing their knowledge and understanding of art by researching the work of a range of artists. They understand how music can influence their use of shape and colour from their study of Kandinsky.
- 343 Pupils are responding positively and imaginatively to the varied methods and ideas to which they are exposed. They are able to work with a range of materials and develop their work creatively in both two- and three-dimensions. All show skill in creative computer-generated design.

- 344 Observational drawing skills are developed and pupils show imagination and creativity in their responses.
- 345 Pupils develop an awareness of the art and culture of Wales and an appreciation of the art of a range of other cultures. They know how to use art to express their spiritual values.
- 346 They have a good understanding of how they can use the assessment process to improve the standard of their own work.
- 347 Pupils with additional learning needs achieve well in understanding and making because their individual needs are well addressed.

Key stage 4

- 348 Pupils are developing as independent artists. They are able to research a chosen artist, develop new craft skills, and enrich their folders by working in the style of the artist. When writing and talking about their work, they demonstrate a knowledge of an appropriate art vocabulary and good analytical judgements.
- 349 Through their visits to art galleries and their work with visiting artists, they have a better understanding of the scope of art.
- 350 Pupils with additional learning needs demonstrate good standards in design and in large-scale, expressive, sculptural forms.

Good and outstanding features

Post 16

- 351 Students are developing above-average independent learning skills. They regularly achieve better examination results in art than in their other subjects.
- 352 Their use of their developing art skills to creatively express personal, moral, social and gender issues is outstandingly good. Their experimental sketchbook work consistently demonstrates outstandingly good thinking skills.
- 353 They are able to develop their ideas in a small range of two- and three-dimensional media.
- 354 The standard of their research and personal analysis of a chosen artist is well above average. Girls speak confidently and use Powerpoint presentations exceptionally well to express their views.
- 355 They have a good understanding of examination requirements. They know how to improve their work because they regularly apply their self and peer assessment processes diligently.

Shortcomings

Key stage 3

- 356 The amount of time that pupils are able to spend practising craft skills is below average and this hinders the standard of their work.

357 Pupils' knowledge and understanding of a broader spectrum of art are limited by their reliance on secondary sources.

Key stage 4

358 The creativity of some pupils' work in sketchbooks is restricted by an over-reliance on found images. Girls are less confident when talking about their work.

Post 16

359 There are no important shortcomings

Physical education

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

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

Post 16: Grade 2 Good features and no important shortcomings

360 In 2007, 60% of entries for GCSE gained A* to C grades, with 100% gaining grades A* to D. Over the last three years, results have been below local and national averages, but are broadly in line with similar schools.

361 Whilst in 2006, only 33% of AS level students gained an A to E grade, in 2007, 80% of a much larger cohort did so. In 2007, 50% of a very small Y13 entry gained A to C grades, with 100% gaining A to E grades. There were no A level entries in 2006. Results at both AS and A level are below local and national figures.

Good features

Key stages 3 and 4 and Post 16

362 Almost all pupils and students work hard to improve during lessons and make good progress. Most know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve; they can also evaluate others' performance accurately and identify how the performance best matches activity-specific levels.

363 Boys' and girls' participation levels are very good throughout. Almost all those who cannot take part still change into appropriate kit and are fully involved in peer evaluation and coaching.

364 Pupils and students with additional learning needs make good progress in all physical activities and in all key stages.

Key stage 3

365 Most boys and girls understand the benefits and effects of exercise on health and well-being. Many boys and girls lead warm-up activities well and are able to identify appropriate stretches for particular muscle groups. Almost all know the technical names of the muscle groups and use them in the right context.

366 In gymnastics, most Y8 girls remember previously learned work well. They know and understand the elements that make for quality in performance. The most able show higher order skills, and perform partner sequences with good extension and control.

They hold balance positions securely, and link the actions into a sequence with good timing and flow.

367 Very few pupils in Y7 or Y8 cannot swim a width of the pool. Almost all can enter deep water confidently and under control. A significant majority of pupils can describe correct front crawl technique in detail. Many pupils swim the stroke well, with good technique and line in the water. The most able can also do the correct breathing, and sustain this skill over an extended distance. Almost all have good survival skills. They can float, tread water and surface dive and the most able work together well to perform an assisted swim efficiently.

Key stage 4

368 In trampolining, most Y10 pupils perform a range of skills well. They can link the skills together into a flowing sequence and control both their height and position on the bed. The most able can perform more demanding routines, linking more than eight skills with quality and control.

369 Y10 pupils can dribble a basketball in practice-drills, keeping it under control when changing directions and moving into a space before passing. Most can use a chest and bounce pass when unopposed, and sustain their skills in a game. The most able players show good vision and use the wider space well.

370 In Y10 GCSE swimming, almost all girls swim front crawl effectively, with good technique, line, body position and flow. The best swimmers can tumble turn with good style, at optimum depth, sustaining body-poise and flow.

371 Most Y11 GCSE pupils recall and understand the structure of the heart, and can label a diagram from memory. The most able spell complex technical terms correctly. They can explain clearly the main reason for the difference in heart rates when lying, sitting and standing.

372 In climbing, all Y11 GCSE pupils can tie knots, use a harness, belay and use the correct calls. The more able show good flexibility and are self-assured when climbing, changing their foot-holds to follow a better line. Several pupils can abseil with precision and control. They all work very well to support and guide a partner on a climb, and assist confidently in a controlled descent.

373 In badminton, most Y11 GCSE pupils play a range of shots, selecting the most appropriate shot for their position on the court, whilst also considering where their opponent is positioned. The most able move well around the court; they show good balance and can vary the length, direction and power of their chosen shot

Post 16

374 Students use ICT well to support their learning and to present their assignments. They research information from the Internet and create, select and import suitable images and text, which improves the quality of the presentation of their work.

375 AS students remember work they have previously learnt on the principles of learning skills and techniques well. All can identify different stages of learning and apply their knowledge from different sections of the course, for example, the importance of praise and motivation. All can identify confidently the strengths and weaknesses of

different coaching methods. Most can suggest a progressive and balanced programme for a specific sport or activity.

- 376 A level students remember previous work in the Historical Studies section of the course very well. They can apply their knowledge and understanding of sport before and after the industrial revolution to match images and descriptions. They discuss the possible range of answers in groups, with each making valuable contributions to the discussions and showing a considerable depth of knowledge. Their written work is well-organised and presented.

Shortcomings

Key stage 3

- 377 A small number of pupils fail to maintain good technique in swimming over an extended time and a similar number do not show enough tension, extension, balance and control in gymnastics.

Key stage 4

- 378 A few pupils do not move into the best position to play their shots in badminton and find it difficult to sustain a rally. A small number of lack spatial awareness in basketball.

Post 16

- 379 One or two AS level students lack confidence in their ability and need considerable support from their peers or the teacher to plan appropriate activities for the different stages of learning.

School's response to the inspection

The inspection findings recognise that Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School is successful in achieving its aim "to provide a learning environment that is stimulating, well ordered and caring with appropriate challenge and support for all".

We are pleased that Inspectors identified significant improvement since our last inspection and aspects of outstanding practice in areas of our innovative work.

A particular achievement, and improvement since our last inspection, is the standards observed in lessons and the quality of teaching training and assessment, both of which are well above the 2006-07 averages for schools in Wales and are virtually at the WAG targets for 2010. Improvements in mathematics, physical education and modern foreign languages were also highlighted. Art and geography maintained their high standards.

Outstanding features of the school are:

- the transition work with primary schools and the Yr 7 project;
- reporting to parents;
- improvements in attendance since the last Inspection; and
- many examples of highly effective teaching and learning strategies in the classroom.

It is gratifying that inspectors judged the behaviour of most of our pupils to be exemplary, that they treat each other and their teachers with respect and that they show a positive attitude to their work. In lessons they work well together, solve problems and demonstrate real competence in Key Skills.

The school is an inclusive community for all learners with a curriculum which is broad, balanced, flexible and appropriate to the needs of our pupils. Support structures ensure pupils feel safe and secure and encourage them to participate in the life of the school.

Our staff know their pupils well and what they need to do to improve and the monitoring and evaluation of our work clarifies how we can improve further.

We will, as a school community, take from this inspection many things that will help us move forward;

- The aspects of our work that are good and outstanding. We will build upon these, sharing good practice and raising expectations of all.
- The key recommendations from the report which will inform our School Improvement plans in both the short and long term to gain consistency across the school and raise standards for our pupils further.

- In all parts of the report there are many things that we will identify that need to be improved. In particular, even though we have achieved many targets agreed with the LEA for exam results, we will develop and put in place strategies to raise examination results to a greater extent in the future.
- We will inform parents of how we will respond to the inspection report in our School Improvement plan and report progress to both Governors and parents on a regular basis to highlight how well we are doing.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School
School type	Community
Age-range of pupils	11 to 18
Address of school	Waun-Y-Pound Road Ebbw Vale Gwent
Postcode	NP23 6LE
Telephone number	01495 303409

Headteacher	Mr. M.M. Fahy
Date of appointment	01/09/2001
Chair of governors/ Appropriate Authority	Mr. R. Barrett
Reporting inspector	Mr. T.A. O'Marah
Dates of inspection	3rd to 6 th March 2008

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	72	82	114	111	147	75	56	657

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	43	2	44.74

Staff information	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	14.8:1
Average teaching group size	19.9
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	74.5

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole School
Term 1	94.8	93.0	92.7	90.2	93.4	97.0	96.8	93.2
Term 2	93.1	84.7	85.9	89.5	86.4	93.7	88.8	88.3
Term 3	90.4	87.6	86.6	83.0	96.7	94.3	97.8	89.7

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	22
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	58

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2007													
Total number of pupils in Y9:112													
Percentage of pupils at each level													
			D	N	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
English	Teacher assessment	School	4	0	0	0	0	10	32	46	7	0	0
		National	0.7	0.2	0.4	0.3	1.5	7.4	21.6	35.8	23.9	8.0	0.2
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	2	11	28	31	21	6	0
		National	0.6	0.2	0.3	0.3	1.1	7.4	18.4	25	30.4	15.7	0.6
Science	Teacher assessment	School	3	0	0	0	0	6	30	45	15	0	0
		National	0.8	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5	6	18.8	34.1	27.6	11.5	0.1

- D Pupils who have been disapplied, or pupils for whom teachers were unable to provide an assessment.
 N Pupils not awarded a level for reasons other than disapplication
 W Pupils who are working towards level 1.

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language) by teacher assessment	
In the school	45
In Wales	58

Public Examination Results:

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ	
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2007	142
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	34

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2007:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	80	84	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	39	43	54
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	77	82	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	23	29	40
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	90	94	97
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	69	70	77
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	86	89	93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	14	11	7
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	0	3	3
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	-	-	-
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	-	-	-

For pupils aged 17, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs	
Number of pupils aged 17 in January 2007	99
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2007	29
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2007	18

Report by Terence Andrew O'Marah
Ebbw Vale Comprehensive School, 03/03/08

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	28	49	67
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	72	90	94
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	12	15	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	-	-	-
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	-	-	-

UA Unitary Authority

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

A team of 12 inspectors, together with the school's nominee, spent four days in the school.

Prior to the inspection, full discussions were held at the school, between the registered inspector and the headteacher, based on the school's self-evaluation report. During the inspection, a meeting was also held with an officer from the Education Department of the UA.

The registered inspector held meetings with staff, governors and parents (12 parents attended) prior to the inspection.

In total, 121 lessons were observed. Of these 79 were in the six subjects which were inspected in detail. All teachers at the school were observed teaching at least once. Three assemblies and 23 form periods were attended.

Inspectors interviewed members of the leadership team, subject leaders, pastoral team leaders and other staff with whole school responsibilities, including members of support staff.

Pupils' and students' work was scrutinised, both as part of a structured cross-curricular book review, and within lessons.

Inspectors held formal discussions with groups of pupils and students from each year and with the school council. They also talked to many pupils and students informally, both in lessons and about the school.

21 parents returned a questionnaire sent out by the school prior to the inspection.

Comprehensive documentation, including the school's self-evaluation report, was scrutinised before and during the inspection.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team Member	Responsibilities
Terry O'Marah	Registered inspector: key questions 1, 5 and 6
Mike Snow	Lay inspector: behaviour; attendance; community; work-related education; governors
Glyn Davies	Core team: key questions 2 and 3; Post 16; general observation
Lyn Bithell	English ; core team: assessment, recording and reporting; literacy; personal and social education
Alan Edwards	Mathematics ; core team: key question 7; numeracy
Heddwyn Evans	Core team: key question 4; spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; general observation
Eric Forster	Art
Martyn Williams	Modern foreign languages
Huw Llewelyn	Geography
Pru Davis-James	Physical education
Mary Crandon	General observation; bilingualism
Keith Hopkins	General observation; information and communications technology
Paul Freegard	Nominee

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Acknowledgement

The registered inspector and his team wish to thank the governors, teachers and pupils of the school for their co-operation, tolerance and help during the inspection.

