

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Hawthorn High School
School Lane,
Hawthorn
Pontypridd
CF37 5AL**

School Number: 6744027

Date of Inspection: 25/02/08

by

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Hawthorn High School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their students. 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 Hawthorn High School took place between 25/02/08 and 28/02/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by Brian William Medhurst 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 students, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management and the contribution made by the school to its students' 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, student 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 students in a primary school who reach the age of 5 during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of students 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 students about career opportunities and to provide each student 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 students 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 students 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). <p>The wider key skills for students aged 14 to 16 are:</p> <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 student or a group of students.
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 students.
National Curriculum assessment	For secondary schools, this is the assessment of students 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 students. 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 17 years of age and 18 years of age, usually the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), Advanced Subsidiary level (AS level) and Advanced level (A level).
students with additional learning needs	Students who, for a wide range of reasons, have been identified as needing additional or modified support to help them learn successfully.
students with special educational needs	Those students, within the overall category of additional learning needs, who need specific support, which, for students with complex needs, may be recorded within a statement of special educational needs.
School Council	A representative group of students elected by other students 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 students entitled to free school meals. For this school that is over 20% and less than 30%.
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 students about the nature of life in the workplace.

Context

The nature of the provider

- 1 Hawthorn High School is a single site 11 – 18 mixed comprehensive school situated at the southern edge of Pontypridd, in the unitary authority of Rhondda Cynon Taf, 10 miles north of the city of Cardiff. There are 1038 students on roll, of whom 189 are in the sixth form. These figures are similar to those recorded at the time of the previous inspection in 2002. Projected figures for the future indicate falling rolls over the next five years.
- 2 Students are admitted from five main partner primary schools, but the catchment area is witnessing a falling birth rate. As a consequence, two of the school's original partner primaries have been closed. Additionally, one other primary school suffered a devastating fire that resulted in a destabilising impact on partnership working.
- 3 All socio-economic groups are represented at the school, but around 27% of the school's student population is entitled to free school meals, indicative of the significant social deprivation of the Rhydyfelin area. This figure is greater than the unitary authority's average figure and the national figure. Five students are in the care of the unitary authority and nine are dually registered.
- 4 None of the students speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard. Welsh is taught and examined as a second language only. No subjects are taught through the medium of Welsh.
- 5 Very few students come from minority ethnic heritages. Two students receive support teaching in English as an additional language.
- 6 The school's intake represents the full range of abilities. Three students have statements of SEN and there are an additional 144 students on the school's SEN register. This means that around 14% of students are recognised as needing additional support.
- 7 The school is housed in buildings located on a green field site, close to the River Taf, with extensive playing fields and leisure areas. The site includes a joint-use swimming pool, youth centre and community education centre.
- 8 The school was inspected previously in February 2002. Since then, the membership of the school's leadership team has changed somewhat. The headteacher and the two deputy headteachers were in post at that time, but all three assistant headteachers were not.

The school's priorities and targets

- 9 The school's mission statement is, "to provide the high quality of education which is the entitlement of children and the expectation of all parents."
- 10 The school has published quantitative targets for 2008 as follows:
- key stage 3 core subject assessment results to show the following proportions of students achieving level 5 or better in:
 - English 60%;
 - mathematics 61%; and
 - science 44%.
 - key stage 4 core GCSE assessment results to show the following proportions of students achieving:
 - 5 or more grades A* to C 54%;
 - 5 or more grades A* to G 90%;
 - grades A* to C in core subjects 44%; and
 - no formal qualifications 2%.
 - school attendance to remain above 90% (Y7 to Y11);
 - unauthorised absence to be less than 1% (Y7 to Y11); and
 - student exclusion days to remain below the unitary authority's average.
- 11 The school has also published qualitative targets for 2008 as follows:
- students to be aware of their achievements and be able to discuss their progress;
 - the Student Council to be actively involved in the standards of the school;
 - all subjects to be rated well on the external model of quality assurance used by the school;
 - a positive approach towards ethnic diversity evident in students' attitudes;
 - external agencies/organisations able to confirm the active involvement of the school in its community hinterland; and
 - students and staff to be able to report that the physical environment of the school is more conducive to learning.

Summary

- 12 Hawthorn High School has improved year on year since the previous inspection and is now is a very good school. Its students achieve well, most noticeably at the end of key stage 4 where, in 2007, they achieved exceptionally high standards in the GCSE examinations. The school's provision for students' care, guidance and support has many outstanding features.

Table of grades awarded

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

- 13 The grades in the above table agree with those awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report for key questions 2 and 6, but for key questions 1 and 4 we awarded one grade higher than that suggested by the school, because of the outstanding features present. For key questions 3, 5 and 7 we awarded grades one lower than those proposed by the school.

Standards

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Inspection Area	Key stage 3	Key stage 4	Sixth form
English	2	2	2
Science	2	2	3
History	2	3	2
Modern foreign languages	2	2	2
Religious education	2	3	2
Art	2	2	1

- 14 The following table shows the grades we awarded for the standards that students achieved in classes observed during the inspection in the six chosen subjects:

76 lessons	% Grade 1	% Grade 2	% Grade 3	% Grade 4	% Grade 5
Key stage 3	6	52	39	3	0
Key stage 4	7	60	33	0	0
Combined key stages 3 and 4	7	55	36	2	0
Sixth form	11	56	33	0	0
Whole school	8	55	36	1	0
<i>National figures for secondary schools 2006/2007 (all students)</i>	13	58	25	4	0

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

Key stages 3 and 4

- 15 National targets for standards in schools were that, by 2007, lessons should have been graded 3 or better in at least 98% of cases and grade 2 or better in at least 65%. The school's standards of achievement match the target for grade 3 or better and almost meet that for grade 2 or better.
- 16 At key stage 3, most students achieve good standards in two of the three core subjects. The 2007 mathematics results of 82% of students achieving level 5 or better was well above the local figure of 66% and the national average of 70%. Performance in science at level 5 or better has also improved steadily over six of the past seven years, always matching or exceeding the local average. The 2007 results in English were an improvement on those achieved in 2006, but in comparison with local and national figures, they were below average.
- 17 The 2007 results in GCSE examinations were the best achieved by the school to date. Forty-nine percent of the students achieved 5 or more grades A* to C and 89% achieved 5 or more grades A* to G. These were outstandingly good results. They represent outstanding progress from key stage 2 and compare very favourably with results achieved in similar schools, placing the school well within the best 25% of these.
- 18 Girls usually outperform boys in GCSE examinations, as is the case nationally, but the gap in performance is far less than that achieved in the unitary authority and in Wales overall.
- 19 In lessons in both key stages, there are many instances of students achieving high standards. Most noteworthy instances occur in the fast-track classes, where some students in Y11 are doing well pursuing AS courses. .
- 20 Students' communication skills in English are good. They listen well to teachers and to each other, and respond well to questions. Most read fluently and accurately and writing is generally good.
- 21 Students' bilingual competence develops well in key stage 3, but a significant minority of key stage 4 students who choose to study separate sciences are denied the opportunity to achieve bilingual competence, as they do not have Welsh lessons.

- 22 Most students' number skills are good with no important shortcomings. They use these effectively in several other subjects. Students' skills in using ICT are generally good, but not all subjects make best use of these skills across the curriculum. There is room for improvement in the application of key skills across the curriculum.
- 23 Most students make good progress, in the development of the wider key skills, such as demonstrating creativity and flair. Students' ability to work with others is good. They also show initiative and independence when constructing solutions to a wide range of problems.
- 24 Most students have positive attitudes towards learning and appreciate what their teachers do for them. Many are very well motivated and work hard to achieve good standards,
- 25 The vast majority of students behave well in lessons and around the school. They relate well to one another and are courteous to staff and visitors.
- 26 The school has worked hard to improve students' attendance with considerable success. Overall attendance for Y7 – Y11 in the last school year was 91%. In the benchmarked comparison, Hawthorn High School was first out of nineteen similar schools in 2007. This is an outstanding feature.

The sixth form

- 27 The school has an open enrolment policy for sixth form studies with a growing number of students seeking to return to pursue new non-A level courses that have been introduced, but the success in these is not yet reflected in national performance statistics.
- 28 Success at A level in 2007 in terms of the proportion of students achieving 2 or more grades A to C, at 52% was below the all Wales average figure, and below that achieved across Rhondda Cynon Taf as a whole.
- 29 In 2007, boys outperformed girls at A level, in terms of success at 2 or more grades A to C, by a significant margin, contrary to the local and national trends, but 100% of girls entered achieved 2 or more grades A to E.
- 30 Students' communication skills in English are good. They listen well, contribute effectively to discussions and collaborate well with each other. Reading and writing are good.
- 31 Students pursuing the Welsh AS and A level courses make good progress towards becoming fully bilingual, as standards are good.
- 32 Students have numerical skills that have good features and no important shortcomings. These skills are applied effectively in many subjects across the curriculum.
- 33 Many students' ICT skills are outstanding. Students make excellent use of computers in a range of subjects.

- 34 Students make good progress in the development of their personal, social and learning skills. In lessons, they show positive attitudes to learning. They are well motivated and focus on tasks.
- 35 Most students in the sixth form are positive in their attitudes to learning. Many of them are gaining good skills as independent learners. They contribute well to the life of the school, especially when helping younger students.
- 36 Students are courteous and respectful. The exemplary behaviour in the sixth form is outstanding.

The quality of education and training

- 37 The following table shows the grades we awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment in all the lessons observed during the inspection:

132 lessons	% Grade 1	% Grade 2	% Grade 3	% Grade 4	% Grade 5
Key stage 3	13	54	29	4	0
Key stage 4	14	64	22	0	0
Combined key stages 3 and 4	14	58	26	2	0
Sixth form	14	76	10	0	0
Whole school	14	62	22	2	0
<i>National figures for secondary schools 2006/2007 (all students)</i>	19	57	21	3	0

Key stages 3 and 4

- 38 The grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment almost match the national profile that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector detailed in the annual report for 2006/07 and the proportion of lessons gaining the equivalent of grades 1 and 2 has increased since the previous inspection.
- 39 Throughout the school, teachers work hard to provide students, whatever their prior attainment or aptitude, with appropriate learning experiences to achieve good standards.
- 40 Relationships between students and teachers are very good overall.
- 41 Generally, teachers plan their lessons very well, often using a variety of teaching methods. They often share learning objectives with students so that they know the standard of work that they are expected to achieve and how well they are doing.
- 42 When interviewed, students in most year groups agreed that most teachers expect them to do their best at all times.

- 43 Generally, teachers have high expectations of what their students can achieve and challenge them appropriately to realise their potential for success.
- 44 The assessment, recording and reporting of students' achievements have good features and no important shortcomings. The headteacher usefully collates the results of subject testing to provide valuable information of each student's achievements across the curriculum.
- 45 The curriculum meets students' needs and satisfies statutory requirements in key stage 3 and for students in the sixth form. This is also the case in key stage 4, except for those students whose curricular provision in Welsh and religious education is insufficient.
- 46 The school has been successful in gaining its second Basic Skills Quality Mark. There are, however, a few shortcomings for the development of students' key and wider skills across the curriculum.
- 47 Students' learning is often enhanced through their involvement in the many experiences available in the extensive programme of extracurricular activities.
- 48 The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with no important shortcomings.
- 49 Students' learning is enriched by positive partnerships with parents/carers, community, primary schools and other education providers.
- 50 Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is embedded into schemes of work in many, but not all, subjects.
- 51 The school has made good progress in raising the awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship. It is well covered in many schemes of work.
- 52 Work-related education is good with no important shortcomings. There are strong working links with Careers Wales and the local Education Business Partnership. The world of work is extensively explored through a well thought out programme of lessons, visits and activity days across all years.
- 53 The school is very successful in creating a supportive environment for students who come from a diverse range of home backgrounds. Students' social and personal development is a priority and the school is very sensitive to their personal circumstances. This is an outstanding feature.
- 54 The school's aim of providing high quality service to parents/carers and the community is reflected in the family ethos of the school. Each individual student is made to feel important and initiatives to support vulnerable students both in school and in the community support this.
- 55 The school actively challenges stereotyping. Students also have a tolerant attitude towards racial harmony.

The sixth form

- 56 Teaching in the sixth form is predominantly good with no important shortcomings. Ninety percent of the teaching observed was graded 1 or 2. The quality of relationships between teachers and students was consistently a good feature of all lessons observed.
- 57 Teachers do their best to prepare students for lifelong learning, by encouraging them to work independently and improve their own learning;
- 58 The assessment, recording and reporting of students' work is good. In day-to-day work, teachers identify strengths and indicate to students how improvements may be made.
- 59 The curricular programme in the sixth form offers a wide range of AS and A level courses, along with other courses that provide a variety of appropriate learning pathways. This is supplemented through consortium arrangements with two other secondary schools.
- 60 Overall, the school has made good progress in addressing national priorities for 14-19 Learning Pathways, vocational and work-related education.
- 61 Close links with the local community, businesses and industry help students become more aware of the world of work. The school is outstandingly well informed of employers' needs.
- 62 Students receive good pastoral and academic support and guidance from their teachers, tutors and outside agencies, and they are thus helped effectively to make informed choices about their future beyond school.

Leadership and management

- 63 Thanks to good leadership and management at all levels, the school enjoys much success in achieving its key purpose.
- 64 The headteacher provides a strong strategic direction for the school. He is ably supported by his deputies whose expertise and strengths are used to best advantage in pursuit of the school's aims. Thanks to the headteacher's vision for the future of the school and the hard work of all members of staff, the school has moved forward considerably in recent years.
- 65 Good communication is a strong feature of the school. There are many opportunities for all members of staff to meet and share information and to pursue agreed goals.
- 66 Overall, middle management is very effective in raising standards. Target setting has been highly effective in developing a climate of school improvement.
- 67 The school is committed to equality of opportunity. Teachers employ a variety of teaching strategies, from mixed ability, to setting by attainment, to discrete additional needs groups.

- 68 Governors understand their school and are also well aware of the community that the school serves and its needs. There is an appropriate range of committees to review different aspects of school business.
- 69 The school employs many comprehensive and rigorous procedures to monitor and evaluate its performance. It attempts to involve as many interested parties as possible in its review and evaluation programme. Priorities for improvement are clearly identified and realistic targets are set for future success.
- 70 The number of staff is sufficient for the school to run effectively and efficiently. Most teachers are appropriately qualified and trained to meet all aspects, subjects, and the wider needs of the curriculum.
- 71 Notwithstanding some old buildings, as a whole, the accommodation has good features and no important shortcomings and is sufficient for the numbers of students currently on roll. It meets the pastoral and academic needs of the curriculum.
- 72 Students benefit from the very good provision of ICT throughout the school.
- 73 There is, however, a shortcoming in that there are some students who cannot and do not study Welsh to the end of statutory schooling.
- 74 The school's effective management of resources to achieve value for money is a good feature, evidenced by the much improved level of students' achievements at key stage 4.

Progress since the previous inspection

- 75 Overall, the progress made in addressing the key issues for action highlighted in the previous inspection is good with no important shortcomings.
- 76 Since the previous inspection, standards have risen considerably across the curriculum, at key stage 4 in particular.
- 77 A comprehensive system of quality assurance is now well established, with middle managers playing their full part in the arrangements.
- 78 Attendance has improved appreciably, so much so that the school is now benchmarked first out of nineteen similar schools.
- 79 The use of tutor time is much improved.
- 80 Accommodation now provides a much better environment for learning than it did at the time of the previous inspection.
- 81 Statutory requirements are satisfied by the school's arrangements for a daily act of collective worship and for religious education for sixth form students.

Recommendations

- R1 Continue to raise standards in all subjects, attempting to eradicate shortcomings that have been identified.
- R2 Ensure that all pupils are taught Welsh throughout key stages 3 and 4.
- R3 Ensure that all pupils are taught sufficient religious education to cover the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus.
- R4 Further improve students' key skills through their coordinated development and use across the curriculum.

These recommendations have been recognised as developmental areas by the school.

The governing body is responsible for amending its current improvement 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 students achieve?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

- 82 The grade we awarded is one grade higher than that suggested by the school in its self-evaluation report. This is because of the outstanding features that occur in standards achieved, in comparison with similar schools.

Key stages 3 and 4

- 83 The following table shows the grades we awarded for the standards that students achieved in key stages 3 and 4 within the six subjects inspected in depth:

58 lessons	% Grade 1	% Grade 2	% Grade 3	% Grade 4	% Grade 5
Key stage 3	6	52	39	3	0
<i>KS3 national '06/'07</i>	10	57	28	5	0
Key stage 4	7	60	33	0	0
<i>KS4 national '06/'07</i>	14	57	24	5	0
Combined key stages 3 and 4	7	55	36	2	0

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

- 84 The 2007 national targets for standards in schools expected that lessons should be graded 3 or better in at least 98% of cases and grade 2 or better in at least 65%. The school's standards of achievement across the sample of six subjects almost match these targets. Those for 2010 indicate that standards in 100% of lessons should be graded 3 or better.

Students' success in attaining agreed learning goals

- 85 Detailed information about the good features and shortcomings of standards achieved by students in the six selected subjects can be found later in this report.
- 86 We evaluated students' performance in public examinations at the end of key stage 4, and in tests and by teacher assessment at the end of key stage 3 by comparing their accomplishments with the attainment of:
- all students in Wales;
 - students in Rhondda Cynon Taf; and
 - students in similar schools throughout Wales.
- 87 It must be noted that prior to 2006, key stage 3 students were assessed using national tests, and since then, end of key stage levels have been awarded as a result of teachers' assessments only.

- 88 At key stage 3, most students achieve good standards in two of the core subjects, as measured by the end-of-key-stage assessments. In mathematics, the improvement since 2003 is most noticeable. Attainment in this subject has improved in line with, and then above, the unitary authority's average. The 2007 outcome of 82% of students achieving level 5 or better was well above the local figure of 66% and the national average of 70%.
- 89 Performance in science at level 5 or better has also improved steadily over six of the past seven years, always matching or exceeding the local average. When three-year rolling averages are considered, science results are consistently better than the unitary authority's figures and nearly always above the Welsh average, despite a 'dip' in results in 2007.
- 90 English does not fare as well as mathematics and science at key stage 3. The 2007 results were an improvement on those achieved in 2006, but overall in comparison with local and national figures, they are below average.
- 91 Gender performance at key stage 3 generally shows boys doing less well than girls in English and mathematics, but matching them for science. This is largely in line with the situation in both the unitary authority and Wales. Results in English naturally impact on the core subject indicator. Rolling averages show that although performance has improved from 46% in 2002 to 49% in 2007, the figure remains below the local average. Once again, girls outperform boys by a notable margin.
- 92 When the school's 2007 key stage 3 data are compared with outcomes in similar schools, for mathematics, the school's results are well above average, for science, above average and for English, below average. The core subject indicator falls just below the average score.
- 93 The school is rightly proud of its GCSE entry figures. In 2007, 92% of students sat 5 or more GCSEs as compared with a unitary authority average of only 83% and an all Wales figure of 87%. Similarly, for entry to 1 or more GCSEs, the school figure at 98% was well above the unitary authority average of 93% and the all Wales entry of 95%.
- 94 At key stage 4, all available data is very positive and confirms the progress being made in raising standards, particularly in terms of value added outcomes. At the time of the previous inspection, success in terms of 5 or more grades A* to C stood at 37%; for 2007, the school achieved 49%, its best performance to date. Similarly, outcomes in the 5 or more grades A* to G range have climbed from 83% to 89% and for 1 or more grades A* to C from 72% to 80%.
- 95 Improvement can also be shown for 1 or more grades A* to G, with figures rising from 94% to 98%. This means that over the same period of time, school figures have caught up with and overtaken the unitary authority averages by a notable extent. For 5 or more grades A* to G, 1 or more grades A* to C and 1 or more grades A* to G, school figures have also improved to surpass the all Wales averages.
- 96 In terms of gender, boys' GCSE performances at 5 or more grades A* to C has increased from 36% in 2002 to 47% in 2007 – a figure above the unitary authority average and close to the all Wales figure. Progress in the same range for girls has

been steadier, rising from 46% to 50% but remaining below the local average of 53%. Boys have again improved in the 5 or more grades A* to G category from 76% to 89% and in the 1 or more grades A* to C range, from 64% to 80%. These figures are significantly better than those achieved in the unitary authority and in Wales as a whole. Girls, too, in terms of 5 or more grades A* to G have risen from 82% to 89% and now surpass the local figure and match that for Wales. This is also mirrored in the 1 or more grades A* to C range and the 1 or more grades A* to G range, where girls' performance has risen to outdo the local averages.

- 97 Welsh Assembly Government value-added summary data for 2005 showed the school to be adding significant value in the majority of factors considered. The data for 2006 showed the school to be performing at least as well as expected and significantly better than expected in the 5 or more grades A* to G category. Using the full socio-economic adjusted model from Fischer Family Trust, the figures show that, for 2004, there was no underperformance in any category and considerable improvement in many areas. This pattern was largely repeated for 2005 and for 2006. Similarly, other data shows that all ability groups, regardless of gender, are performing above expected levels.
- 98 When the school's 2007 GCSE performance is compared with that achieved in similar schools, it places the school well above average for all comparative aspects. Seven of the eight major measured outcomes show the school to be better than at least three-quarters of the other schools in the group.
- 99 The school's 2007 key stage 3 and GCSE figures, and comparisons with Rhondda Cynon Taf and all-Wales data can be found in Appendix 3 at the end of this report.
- 100 In lessons, in both key stages, there are many instances of students achieving high standards. For instance, in Y11 mathematics fast-track lessons, students are producing work that is well beyond GCSE standards. They are coping well with some rigorous and demanding aspects of the AS programmes of study. In art, Y11 students exhibit outstandingly good creative print-making skills. In science, most students have a good awareness of how scientific principles impact on applications of science in everyday life. In a Y9 English top set, students critically analyse challenging poetry and in their well-structured written discursive work, they counter argue and cross reference to very good effect. In French, higher attaining students have very good knowledge and understanding of a range of tenses. They also write extended sentences accurately. Key stage 3 students recall and apply previous learning well in religious education classes and apply this well in new and more demanding situations. History students extract information accurately from texts and other sources, and they make very perceptive comments during evaluation of sources. In this subject, students with SEN work well to produce graphs from their reading of sources of evidence.
- 101 Students' communication skills in English are good. In lessons, students usually listen with respect to teachers and one another. They respond readily to questions in class. Able students in particular, give extended responses and pose questions. Most understand and use subject vocabulary and adopt tone and speech to audience. They use Standard English when required.

- 102 Reading skills are good in relation to ability. Most students read fluently and accurately. Good progress is made by those students with additional learning needs who are receiving additional support. Students effectively skim and scan to identify and retrieve information and good progress is made in the development of skills of inference and deduction.
- 103 Writing is also good. Most students extend their writing when required. Students write in a range of forms. Most understand that they must adapt their style to suit audience and purpose of their writing. They usually set out ideas clearly and supply evidence to support a point of view. Good progress is made in organising and structuring work. A small number do not proof read their draft work effectively so that errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar are left unchecked. Able students in both key stages make very good progress.
- 104 Overall, the numerical skills of students have good features and no important shortcomings. In both key stages, there is evidence of good and very good standards especially with the more able in the fast-track sets. Students with additional learning needs are identified and receive good support. Y7 students identified as needing support in numeracy are paired with Y12 students at registration to receive helpful and valuable extra tuition on one morning a week. A small number of students lack confidence when applying their numerical knowledge in varying situations.
- 105 Students' skills in using ICT are generally good. In religious education, for example, students use ICT very effectively to research their projects. They obtain information from a range of sources and make outstanding use of presentation software to showcase their work. However, there is insufficient opportunity in general for students' to use their ICT skills in other subjects.
- 106 Bilingual competence develops well in key stage 3 as students have a positive attitude to learning Welsh. Students on the Welsh GCSE full course make further progress towards becoming fully bilingual as standards are good. A significant minority of key stage 4 students who choose to study separate sciences, however, are denied the opportunity to achieve bilingual competence as they do not have Welsh lessons.
- 107 Students make good progress in their wider key skills.
- 108 Their ability to work with others is good. In pair, group and peer assessment activities, students interact well with each other. They are respectful, supportive and appreciative of each other's ideas and efforts.
- 109 In a number of subject areas, students persevere well to investigate open ended tasks. They show initiative and independence when constructing solutions to a wide range of problems.
- 110 Students demonstrate good levels of flair and creativity in their performance and in the presentation of their work. This is clearly evident in lessons in art, child development, dance, design and technology, drama, English, French, media studies, music, religious education and Welsh

- 111 Students are fully aware of their levels, safe and challenge grades and many take the necessary steps to improve their work in order to achieve the higher grade.

Students' progress in learning

- 112 Across the curriculum generally, key stage 3 progress is steady, especially in light of key stage 2 outcomes, which tend to indicate attainment at entry showing no real progress. Standardised tests conducted by the school suggest that standards at entry have actually fallen over recent years.
- 113 For the period up to 2005, Welsh Assembly Government value-added summary data matching key stage 3 outcomes to prior attainment at key stage 2, showed the school as recording significant value added performance in each of the core subjects. For 2006, this significant performance was retained for mathematics and for science. The school is also pleased that by the end of key stage 4, the gaps in key stage 3 performances have been largely closed.
- 114 A noteworthy feature is the progress made by students over the years between 2003 and 2007. Welsh Assembly Government value-added summary data matching GCSE results to prior attainment at key stage 2, and taking into account various socio-economic and other factors, place the school above most other similar establishments. This is an outstanding feature.
- 115 Across the curriculum, most students do well and make good progress in lessons and over time. Those with additional learning needs make good progress, especially in the specially nominated classes and when in-class support is available for them. Many do very well in external examinations at the end of key stage 4.
- 116 Higher attaining, more able and talented students do well in many subjects because they are suitably challenged and encouraged to realise their full potential by the end of key stage 4.
- 117 In most lessons, students are told what is expected of them and what it is they are expected to learn. The best learners, who naturally make the best progress, use this information to good effect in determining what they have achieved, how well they are progressing and what they need to do next to maintain progress.
- 118 During interviews, most students said that they are clear about what is expected of them in terms of their work and behaviour, and how well they are doing. Most said that they were aware that teachers always expected them to do their best.

The development of students' personal, social and learning skills

- 119 The vast majority of students behave well in lessons and around the school. They relate well to one another and are courteous to staff and visitors. There are a few students who do not adhere to these good practices. Effective application of good discipline procedures prevents these individuals from disrupting lessons for anything other than a short time.
- 120 Most students have a positive attitude to learning. They are well motivated and want to succeed. The values and expectations promoted by the school are understood and respected with few exceptions.

- 121 In lessons, students are developing the capacity to work independently, particularly when they engage in self and peer assessments. They also appreciate opportunities in extracurricular clubs and activities and some act as class and year representatives on the School Council.
- 122 There is good progress in personal, social and moral development. For example, students engage in charitable work and those who enjoy music entertain senior citizens in Christmas parties held at the school. All show a good understanding of issues of equal opportunities and are sensitive towards diversity in society. Students with disabilities are well integrated and their needs understood. Students establish good relationships with their class-mates and teachers. They usually collaborate well and this has a positive impact on their learning.
- 123 Students respond well to good teaching. In a few cases, when lessons are insufficiently challenging and the pace of work slows, some students of middle to lower abilities engage in off-task behaviour. They chat among themselves and slow the pace of learning further.
- 124 Overall attendance for Y7 – Y11 in the last school year was 91%. Currently this year it is above that and on course towards the school's target of 92%. These figures are above the averages for the local authority (89.8%), all Wales (90.7%) and, particularly, those for similar schools (89.3%). In the benchmarked comparison, Hawthorn High School was first out of nineteen schools in 2007. This is outstanding.
- 125 Unauthorised absence is low, averaging 1.4% and rarely exceeding 2% at any time for any school year.
- 126 Most absence is for medical reasons, but holidays taken in term time and parentally condoned truancy make a noticeable contribution at certain times of year.
- 127 Except when there is difficulty with school transport, students are punctual to school and generally also to lessons.
- 128 The school encourages and provides for the development of good values and attitudes. Reinforced by good opportunities for students to learn about the community and workplace, learners are effectively prepared for life after school.

The sixth form

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

18 lessons	% Grade 1	% Grade 2	% Grade 3	% Grade 4	% Grade 5
Sixth form	11	56	33	0	0
<i>National '06/'07</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>

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

Students' success in attaining agreed learning goals

- 130 Detailed information about the standards achieved by sixth-form students in the six subjects inspected in depth can be found later in this report.
- 131 Transition rates into the sixth form have been consistent, with around 55% of students returning to post 16 study options. For Y12 into Y13, progression has tended to be approximately 60%. The school has an open enrolment policy for sixth form studies with a growing number of students seeking to return, but not necessarily to pursue AS or A level options. New courses such as Business & Technician Education Council (BTEC) have been introduced, but the success being recorded is not yet reflected in national performance statistics.
- 132 The grade profile for the last two years shows a pass rate of 64% for 1 or more grades A to C and 93% for 1 or more grades A to E. Of all grades awarded, 35% have been in the grade A to grade B range. The number of candidates being entered for 2 A levels over the period 2002 to 2007 has remained consistent as has the rolling average points score. The most recent Value Added Pass Rate Analysis data (2005 & 2006) shows the school to be maintaining its position in relation to the all Wales picture. Standards of performance remain affected by socio-economic factors with full value educational maintenance allowances being payable to between 55% and 60% of sixth form students in attendance.
- 133 In 2007, the proportion of students who achieved at least two A level results at grade C or better was 52%. This was below the unitary authority average of 61%, the all-Wales figure of 68% and the 74% achieved at the time of the previous inspection. The school's figure for grade E or better at 91% was below the 92% achieved in the unitary authority and the 94% in Wales as a whole. The average score per student of 16 was also below the local and Welsh averages. These results must be considered in the light of the open-entry policy mentioned above.
- 134 Boys outperformed girls in 2007 in terms of A level grades. Fifty-five percent of boys achieved 2 or more A level grades A to C, compared with 56% of boys in the unitary authority and 63% of boys in Wales. The corresponding figures for girls were 50%, 64% and 71% respectively.
- 135 For success measured by attainment at 2 or more grades A to E, girls outperformed boys. One hundred percent of girls achieved 2 or more A level grades A to E, compared with 94% of girls in Rhondda Cynon Taf and 95% in Wales. Boys' figures were 82%, 89% and 92% respectively.
- 136 In 2007, A level results in mathematics, further mathematics, art, religious studies and media studies exceeded Welsh figures in terms of the proportion of grades A and B achieved. Biology, mathematics, art, religious studies, law, media studies and physical education achieved similar success in 2006. Lesson observations, however, indicated some current underachievement in A level science.
- 137 The school's A level figures, and comparisons with Rhondda Cynon Taf and all-Wales data can be found in Appendix 3 at the end of this report.

- 138 Students listen respectfully to their teachers and peers. They respond to questions in class and are developing confidence in presenting ideas, opinions and research to their peers. They collaborate well in pairs and small groups. Able students counter argue effectively. There is good use and understanding of subject specific vocabulary.
- 139 Reading skills are good. Students respond with understanding to a range of challenging texts. There is good progress in the development of inference, deduction, critical analysis and cross reference.
- 140 Writing skills are also good in relation to abilities. Good progress is made in the organisation and presentation of ideas. Students sustain critical analysis well. They put forward opinions and use relevant quotations to illustrate their ideas and views. All adapt language, style and form to suit the purpose of their writing. A few students have difficulty in developing ideas with detail and depth.
- 141 Students pursuing the Welsh AS and A level courses make good progress towards becoming fully bilingual, as standards are good.
- 142 The numerical skills of students have good features and no important shortcomings. They are able to apply these skills in a number of situations in various subjects across the curriculum.
- 143 Many students' ICT skills are outstanding. Students make excellent use of computers in science, art and religious education. In science, an exceptional feature is students' use of their personal hand held computers to link to the school intranet and the wider Internet facilities.
- 144 Students collaborate effectively with each other and reach good standards in creative and problem solving activities.
- 145 A number of students take the necessary steps to independently review and improve their own learning and performance.

Students' progress in learning

- 146 In 2007, students progressed well from GCSE to A level in 7 of the 19 subjects entered, with outcomes exceeding expectations as indicated by prior attainment in GCSE examinations.
- 147 A high proportion, between 50% and 70% over time, of Y13 students progress to higher education. Many of the students who choose to leave at the end of Y12 progress to local colleges. Others enter employment or are accepted in apprenticeship schemes.
- 148 Students often make good progress through working collaboratively with their peers, engaging in detailed debate or undertaking research. Many of them are gaining good skills as independent learners, when encouraged and persuaded to do so by their teachers.

149 As mentioned above, in many subjects, students make good progress in using ICT to enhance their learning. Often, they also become innovative and creative thinkers, as in art, for example.

The development of students' personal, social and learning skills

150 Students make good progress in the development of their personal, social and learning skills. In lessons, they show positive attitudes to learning, are well motivated and focus on tasks. Students are developing confidence in putting forward ideas and opinions. They collaborate well in pairs and small groups and they respond well to teachers' written and spoken comments on their work.

151 Students are courteous and respectful and demonstrate an outstanding sense of responsibility. They contribute very well to the life of the school by engaging in extracurricular activities, the School Council and duties. They are trained to act as 'buddies' to younger students and are effective role models. They develop well as independent learners by engaging in charitable work in the locality and for people in other countries. Many students also engage enthusiastically in a range of community, national and international projects. They develop well as future citizens and are very respectful of diversity in society.

152 The exemplary behaviour in the sixth form is outstanding.

153 Attendance at morning registration in the sixth form is much more variable than lower down the school, but effective monitoring and appropriate encouragement ensure that students attend their timetabled lessons.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

154 The grade we awarded matches that suggested by the school in its self-evaluation report.

Key stages 3 and 4

155 The following table shows the grades we awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment in lessons observed in key stages 3 and 4 during the inspection:

103 lessons	% Grade 1	% Grade 2	% Grade 3	% Grade 4	% Grade 5
Key stage 3	13	54	29	4	0
Key stage 4	14	64	22	0	0
Combined key stages 3 and 4	14	58	26	2	0
<i>National figures for Y7 to Y13 (2006/2007)</i>	19	57	21	3	0

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

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

156 The grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment almost match the national profile that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector detailed in the annual report for 2006/07. Nationally, teaching and assessment were awarded a grade 2 or better in 76% of lessons, and grade 3 or better in 97% of lessons. The school achieved 72% and 98% respectively.

157 The proportion of lessons gaining the equivalent of grades 1 and 2 has increased from 65% to 72% since the previous inspection.

158 The grades are below the new Welsh Assembly Government target for 2010, that at least 80% of lessons should be grade 2 or better.

159 Throughout the school, teachers work hard to provide students, whatever their prior attainment or aptitude, with appropriate learning experiences to achieve good standards. Underpinning this hard work is a considerable depth of secure knowledge of the subjects they teach, which is often kept up to date by individual research and/or through professional development activities.

160 Teachers know their students well, being well aware of their strengths and shortcomings, and what they need to do to make progress. Most are very enthusiastic

about their teaching, and this often stimulates and motivates students effectively to good effect.

- 161 Relationships between students and teachers are very good overall. Hence, learning occurs in structured, yet enjoyable, environments. Teachers treat students as individuals, whatever their background or ability, and do much to raise students' self esteem and personal expectations in a wide range of subjects.
- 162 Generally, teachers have high expectations of what their students can achieve and challenge them appropriately to realise their potential for success. They plan their lessons well, so that learning activities are well-suited to students' needs and prior attainment. Often they provide extension tasks to challenge appropriately the most able students, and make available support activities for less able students. They also do their best to ensure that all students are involved in learning activities and deliver lessons at a brisk pace to maintain students' interest.
- 163 For most lessons, teachers have precise learning objectives, which they communicate clearly to students and then review with them, at the end of the session, how far the objectives have been met.
- 164 During lessons, teachers ask searching and demanding questions that require students to think carefully before responding, thus helping them to deepen their understanding of what they are studying.
- 165 Additionally, when support staff are available, teachers work well with them, so that all students have opportunities to achieve well.
- 166 There are several instances where the quality of teaching is very high. In these cases, teachers:
- because of high expectations, conduct lessons at an exceptionally high pace, but still keep students willingly involved, using every minute of the lesson to 'drive' students on;
 - challenge their students so well that they succeed beyond expectations;
 - use praise and encouragement so well that students feel very confident about their learning; and
 - give extremely detailed feedback to students on how to improve, as a natural part of the learning process.
- 167 Conversely, there are some shortcomings. This is because, in some cases across the curriculum, some teachers:
- fail to maintain a good pace of work, and students become disinterested;
 - do not challenge students sufficiently to think for themselves;
 - allow students to chat idly during a lesson or fail to implement the school's discipline procedures when students act inappropriately;

- dominate lessons and do not make full use of the range of teaching and learning styles available, such as group work or investigations to improve students' knowledge, understanding and skills; or
- provide unclear explanations that confuse students.

168 Many teachers also give freely of their own time to:

- help students with their coursework and/or homework;
- prepare students for external examinations;
- provide extra support for students with learning difficulties; and
- enhance students' education through the wide range of extracurricular activities.

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

169 The assessment, recording and reporting of students' achievements have good features and no important shortcomings, but procedures are not yet fully implemented across the curriculum.

170 The senior management team has devised an appropriate whole school policy based on 'Assessment for Learning'. The policy is clear and comprehensive. It offers useful guidance to support consistency of good practice in both teaching and learning. There is ongoing development of assessment systems and strategies in all departments and practice is usually good. Strategies are particularly well embedded in practice in English, modern foreign languages and physical education.

171 A particular strength is that almost all teachers clearly communicate the objectives of learning and the assessment criteria to students. They also usually write comments on classwork which identify how far students have met the criteria and how improvements may be made. In English, the detail and regularity of teachers' comments on work represents outstanding practice. In subjects such as English, Welsh, modern foreign languages and art, students are effectively involved in self and peer assessment so that they fully understand the criteria, their own strengths and areas where they need to improve. These good practices are appropriately being developed in other subjects.

172 The school uses non-statutory tests in key stage 3. The results of these are used to establish baseline assessments of each student and to indicate a minimum national curriculum level in each subject as well as a 'challenge' level to motivate progress. At the beginning of Y7, students are tested and outcomes are used to give a baseline assessment which is matched against teachers' assessments at the end of key stage 2. Students in Y8 and Y9 are also tested at the beginning of each academic year and National Curriculum levels are predicted. Testing is repeated at the end of each academic year for all key stage 3 students and new 'safe' and 'challenge' targets are set. In key stage 4, National Curriculum levels and baseline data are used to predict 'safe' and 'challenge' GCSE grades for all students. The school generates results of testing to all staff. Data gathering is rigorous.

173 Subject teachers and subject leaders use the data to review performance of individual students, teaching groups and year groups in day-to-day work, core tasks,

end of unit tests and annual tests. Progress is effectively monitored, underperformance is identified, action is taken and parents/carers are informed when necessary. Subject teachers and subject leaders also use the data to review lesson planning and schemes of work which are adjusted, if necessary, to ensure that teaching and learning meet the needs of students and National Curriculum requirements. The use of data leads to good assessment practice. A particularly good example of this is the sharing of targets with students. All are aware of their predicted and current levels and grades.

- 174 The headteacher usefully collates the results of subject testing to provide valuable information of each student's achievements across the curriculum. The data is scrutinised and a 'traffic light' system is used to identify students who are either achieving their targets, exceeding expectations or underachieving. This clear and helpful information is accessible to progress managers of each year group. They scrutinise the data across the range of subjects. A variety of strategies is employed aimed at improvement for those underachieving including identification of learning issues and effective liaison with appropriate staff. Students are monitored and in all cases, parents/carers are informed. Progress managers are newly appointed. The role is developing and the rigour of monitoring students' progress across the curriculum varies.
- 175 Subject leaders are required to ensure that assessments are accurate and fair. They monitor marking of books and organise departmental moderation and standardisation. The rigour of this practice also varies, but it is mostly good.
- 176 Organisation of assessment events and parents' and carers' meetings is good. There is an annual report of the progress of each student. They include comments on learning and study skills, overall performance and guidance for improvement in each subject. Attendance data is usefully included. In key stage 3 reports for English, science, mathematics and information technology are generated by the 'Goal National Curriculum Profile Testing'. Guidance for improvement written by subject teachers is usually subject specific, but there is some variation in quality between and within subjects.
- 177 Subject leaders analyse the results of external examinations with the headteacher. Usually, realistic targets for improvement are agreed. In addition, subject leaders ensure that the requirements of examination boards, the National Curriculum and Code of Practice are met.

The sixth form

- 178 The following table shows the grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment in the sixth-form lessons observed during the inspection:

29 lessons	% Grade 1	% Grade 2	% Grade 3	% Grade 4	% Grade 5
Sixth form	14	76	10	0	0
<i>National figures for Y7 to Y13 (2006/2007)</i>	19	57	21	3	0

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

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

- 179 The quality of teaching was adjudged to be best overall in the sixth form, with 90% of lessons being graded 1 or 2. Also, in the sixth form, the quality of relationships between teachers and students was consistently a good feature.
- 180 Many of the good features are similar to those recorded for key stages 3 and 4. Additional good features of teaching include more:
- opportunities for students to work independently and improve their own learning;
 - opportunities for students to interact and feed back their views on the subject being studied; and
 - rigorous questioning as a means of measuring students' understanding and depth of knowledge.

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

- 181 The assessment, recording and reporting of students' work is good. In day-to-day assessment of work, teachers identify strengths and indicate how improvements may be made. Subject teachers are also aware of predicted AS grades of each student based on GCSE results and of predicted A level grades. They monitor achievements in coursework and assignments and compare them with predicted grades. Those underachieving are supported, learning issues are discussed and parents/carers are informed of concerns when necessary. Students are aware of the criteria for success in subjects, their predicted grades, the requirements of examination boards and those of universities and colleges.
- 182 Subject teachers pass information on students' current attainments and study skills to pastoral staff. The head of the sixth form and the progress manager track progress of each student in a range of subjects. This is done once for students in Y12 and twice for those in Y13. Students whose progress is a cause for concern are supported and monitored, and parents/carers are invited to discuss the issues.
- 183 Comprehensive records are kept by both subject and pastoral staff. Reports are not provided for parents/carers annually but are available when requested.

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

184 The grade we awarded is one lower than the grade proposed by the school in its self-evaluation report. The grade 3 was awarded because, for a number of students in key stage 4, the school neither meets statutory requirements in its provision for Welsh, nor does religious education cover all the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. These are important shortcomings.

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

185 The curriculum meets students' needs and satisfies statutory requirements in key stage 3 and for students in the sixth form. This is also the case in key stage 4, except for those students whose curricular provision in Welsh and religious education is insufficient. Most students have the opportunity to gain accreditation through a number of learning pathways.

186 For the whole school, there are good features which outweigh shortcomings in the balance, breadth, flexibility, coherence and progression in the curriculum offered. Overall, learning experiences tackle social disadvantage and give most students equality of access to most of the curriculum.

187 In key stage 3, all subjects are given sufficient time to cover the programmes of study. Drama is also included in the curriculum for all students. However, for a small group of students in the three years, they are taught separately for the vast majority of lessons. This arrangement was a shortcoming in the last inspection and continues to limit their interaction with the rest of the year groups. Nevertheless, the vast majority of students with ALN leave school with GCSE qualifications.

188 In key stage 4, the provision includes a number of new GCSE courses including vocational courses in engineering, health and social care, leisure and tourism and applied information technology. Students can study the separate sciences, but this restricts their curricular provision in Welsh, religious education and physical education. This is an important shortcoming. A small group of students who have difficulty engaging fully in the mainstream curriculum follow a Youth Access programme. There are no links with other establishments within the local consortium in key stage 4.

189 The curricular programme in the sixth form offers a wide range of AS and A level courses at the school. This is supplemented through the consortium arrangements with two other secondary schools. At present, a small number of students are involved in this arrangement. In addition, the school offers further pathways with the Business & Technician Education Council (BTEC) National in Sport and the Diploma in Digital Applications courses. Collaboration with the local college and the secondary schools has resulted in BTEC level 1 courses in hairdressing, construction and care being offered.

- 190 Overall, learning experiences develop basic and key skills well, with the school having gained the Basic Skills Quality Mark. The main key skills are mapped in most schemes of work, and there is an increasing focus on the wider key skills in lesson plans. All students in Y12 are pursuing pathways to gain accreditation in the key skills of communication, application of number and information technology. The progress made in addressing the wider key skills as part of the Welsh BaccaLaureate programme, is not yet fully developed.
- 191 Many students' learning and social experiences are enriched by an extensive range of extracurricular activities offered by the school. A large number of students take part in sporting activities, gaining considerable success at both local and national levels. The annual drama/musical production is extremely successful and offers many students of all ages and abilities a range of valuable experiences. A number of visits to theatres, field trips and outdoor pursuits, in addition to a range of visits abroad broaden learners' experiences.
- 192 Learners' spiritual development is enhanced through the carefully prepared themes for acts of worship in registration groups and in assemblies. Students develop a good insight into values and beliefs through opportunities to discuss and reflect on issues raised. Students in key stage 3 in religious education lessons, and students in the sixth form in carefully structured whole-day events, further develop their understanding and awareness. This opportunity is not available for all students in key stage 4.
- 193 The school's emphasis on responsible behaviour, consideration of others and showing respect to each other, adults and visitors is seen in most aspects of its life. Learners show care for those less fortunate than themselves by raising substantial sums of money for local, national and international charities.
- 194 Students have a good awareness of their social responsibilities within the community of the school. The School Council provides opportunities for learners to exercise their responsibility, and many students in the sixth form provide effective support for a number of groups of students in key stage 3. In many subjects, students work together effectively in pairs and groups, learning mutual collaboration, and sharing ideas and information.
- 195 Learners' cultural development is fostered well in a number of subjects and through drama and musical events. Visits to European countries and further afield also help to develop their awareness of other cultures. Awareness of Wales and its culture is well developed in some subjects, but the Welsh ethos across the curriculum and in other aspects of school life is underdeveloped.
- 196 The partnership with parents/carers, community, education providers and other institutions enhances the learning experience for students and contributes significantly to their personal development. All of the appropriate expected links with home, community, schools and colleges are established.
- 197 The breadth of links in the community is an outstanding feature. It maintains a high, positive profile for the school and supports learning widely across the curriculum.
- 198 There are some good features, particularly :

- the quality of information provided for parents/carers with regard to GCSE and sixth form option choices, where constructive guidance is also given on potential career pathways; and
- the developing consortium links to provide a wider range of learning pathways.

199 The programmes for personal and social education, work-related education, and careers education and guidance meet national guidelines.

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

200 Work-related education is good with no important shortcomings. There are strong working links with Careers Wales and the local Education Business Partnership (EBP). Careers Wales advisers are actively involved daily in school, and the EBP provides excellent support brokering contact with a wide range of local employers for supporting activities.

201 The world of work is extensively explored through a well thought out programme of lessons, visits and activity days across all years. There is good reinforcement of learning through personal interviews with a professional careers adviser and useful work-experience placements in local companies for students in Y11 and Y12.

202 Industry and business provide further support for work-related education by supplying speakers to lessons and personnel to provide mentoring and mock interviews.

203 Provision for the development of bilingualism is good at key stage 3. Students make good progress over the key stage as they have a positive attitude to learning Welsh. Students who follow the full GCSE course at key stage 4 and AS and A level courses in Welsh continue to make progress, as standards are good. However, insufficient Welsh lessons are available for some key stage 4 students to become bilingual. This represents an important shortcoming.

204 Activities are arranged by the Welsh department for students to extend their use of the language beyond the Welsh classroom, such as visits to the theatre, taking part in concerts and competing successfully in both the Urdd and the National eisteddfod. Urdd personnel come into school to run a lunchtime club. However, the school does not have a policy for the development of bilingualism to ensure that the language and culture of Wales are actively promoted in the life of the school. Apart from music, opportunities are not planned for students to use their bilingual skills in other areas of the curriculum. The use of incidental Welsh around the school is rare and bilingual displays and notices are few.

205 Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is embedded into schemes of work in music, history, drama, media and religious education. An audit has not been carried out to ensure that Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is effectively embedded into schemes of work in all subjects.

206 The school has made good progress in beginning to raise the awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship. It is well covered in schemes of work in geography, personal, social and health education, science and religious education. Further input has been given in assemblies and by guest speakers to various groups of learners. The school has established a close link with an orphanage in India and a

school in Uganda. The school has recently been successful in gaining the Eco-schools silver award.

- 207 The school is outstandingly well informed of employers' needs. The very close working relationships with the local EBP and pioneering direct involvement in local Regeneration and Community First Groups ensure first class knowledge of local needs. The strong partnerships with Careers Wales and the University of Glamorgan inform comprehensively on wider national and international needs.
- 208 Entrepreneurial and other workplace skills are generally well developed. Students across all years take part in activity days that offer brief opportunities to develop teamwork and enterprise skills. Across all key stages students meet and listen to entrepreneurs through the Dynamo project. Careers lessons in Y9 are strongly based on group work and problem solving. The Young Enterprise Scheme in Y12 allows small groups of students to develop business skills, but such opportunities to experiment with such longer-time enterprise are not available lower down the school.
- 209 Overall, the school has made good progress in addressing a number of national priorities. There are strengths in the standards achieved, particularly at key stage 4, the development of some 14 -19 Learning Pathways, and the provision for work-related and vocational education. However, there are shortcomings in the development of bilingualism across the school.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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- 210 This grade we awarded is one grade higher than that suggested by the in its self-evaluation report. This is because the inspection team judged there to be outstanding features in the school's provision.

The quality of care, support and guidance to students

- 211 The school is very successful in creating a supportive environment for students who come from a diverse range of home backgrounds. The Learning and Personal Development Team has developed expertise in dealing effectively with students' attainment and welfare issues. Its members have a very good knowledge of the students. The team's work is effectively supported by the Pastoral Support Manager. Such collaborative work has established an ethos of mutual trust, positive relationships and very good corporate spirit within the school. This is an outstanding feature.
- 212 The school takes full account of parental/carers' views. They are generally supportive and well informed about their child's learning and school activities. Relationships with parents/carers are reinforced by the Home School Agreement, and student's diaries and achievement guides. The "Simply Click" ICT system contributes significantly to home-school links, bridging the communication divide between parents/carers and teachers. This is a noteworthy strength.

- 213 Students are provided with good quality advice in order to make decisions on the courses they choose at the end of key stage 3 and key stage 4. All subject sections in the detailed option booklets follow the same format and indicate progression routes to training and employment. Strong links with Careers Wales strengthen the school's effective careers education and guidance. Formal careers lessons, mock interviews, visits from university students, other schemes and activity days form the basis of an effective and comprehensive career support programme.
- 214 The school has good established pastoral and curricular links with its partner primary schools. Students report that the transition process was a very positive experience for them. Curricular bridging units in science and maths ensure a smooth progression in learning experiences. Activity days at the University of Glamorgan and a drama production "Coming to the Big School" by Y7 students help to ensure a trouble free transition for Y6 students.
- 215 Students' social and personal development is a priority and the school is very sensitive to individual personal circumstances. This is an outstanding feature. An effective cohesive support programme provides students with appropriate experiences relevant to their needs in the community. The support provided by a range of external support agencies is a very good feature.
- 216 The Youth Access initiative has been very successful in improving attendance, behaviour and punctuality. Students' social and personal development is effectively reinforced by activity days at both key stages in a range of topical and relevant issues.
- 217 The monitoring of attendance, behaviour, punctuality and performance is well developed and is an outstanding feature. Appropriate and achievable targets set by the year team leaders are carefully monitored and evaluated half termly by a deputy headteacher. An evaluation report against the stated targets is published to year group teams who are required to record intervention strategies. Underachieving and underperforming students are identified, carefully tracked and monitored.
- 218 Promoting healthy living is a strength in the school. Modules in the personal and social education programme and activities such as the "Junk Food Roadshow" strengthen the profile of a healthy lifestyle. Catering contracts have been revised to include healthier menus and contents of vending machines now include healthier options. A community fitness trail and a high quality all weather pitch have been established to encourage further participation in physical activity. The School Council has been prominent in promoting healthy living.
- 219 The number of qualified first aiders in the school is being reviewed and updated. A few health and safety issues were brought to the school's attention during the inspection.
- 220 The school has detailed child protection procedures, which are published in a booklet, provided for all staff to raise awareness. Appropriate workshop training is also provided. A deputy headteacher is the named person who attends annual update training.

The quality of the provision for additional learning needs (ALN)

- 221 Students with ALN are identified early following very good links with partner primary schools. The head of department visits all the primary schools and attends review meetings when appropriate. The school makes effective use of all available data including a variety of assessment procedures. Standardised diagnostic reading and spelling tests, applied at the beginning of key stage 3, provide further information to support planning for appropriate provision.
- 222 Key stage 3 students identified as having ALN are placed in small discrete classes for all lessons except physical education and personal and social education. They are socially integrated with their peers for registration and other school activities. All students access a broad and balanced curriculum, but there is little movement from these classes into mainstream teaching groups. There is more flexibility in key stage 4.
- 223 Lessons in the discrete groups are well planned. Varied teaching strategies allow students to succeed and achieve independent learning. There are good examples of tasks that are matched to students' abilities and using appropriate resources, but there are some inconsistencies, despite support provided by the head of the ALN department to all subjects, which is reinforced by regular link meetings to discuss ALN issues and individual students.
- 224 Key stage 3 students who experience difficulties in literacy and numeracy are withdrawn weekly to improve these skills. This support is carefully structured and students make steady progress.
- 225 Key stage 4 ALN students are offered the full range of option choices at both Entry Level and GCSE. They complete mathematics Entry Level in Y10, allowing them to concentrate on their mathematics GCSE course in Y11. This is good practice. The vast majority of students on the register leave school with an accredited qualification.
- 226 The school makes effective use of external support agencies. There are four support assistants employed by the unitary authority to provide the required number of hours support for individual students, but it is a shortcoming that the school cannot provide students with ALN or behavioural problems with sufficient support in mainstream classes.
- 227 The unitary authority funded Resource Specialist Base for Speech and Language is very effective in supporting students who have a specific speech and/or language impairment. Some also have difficulties with social use of language and are diagnosed Asperger's Syndrome. This support is a particular strength in the school and the students, mostly from outside the school's catchment, are fully integrated into its life. The speech and language therapist visits the school weekly. The centre is very effective in meeting both the learning and social needs of its students. The school has now been recognised for its good work in raising autism awareness by The Inclusive Schools Autistic Spectrum Disorder Research and Training Programme.
- 228 The requirements of the Code of Practice for SEN are satisfied overall. All students on the ALN register have a progress plan relating to individual needs. Targets are

shared with students, parents/carers and subject departments, at the beginning of the year. However, these targets tend to be insufficiently specific. Individual behaviour plans are the responsibility of the special educational needs coordinator, a deputy headteacher.

The quality of provision for equal opportunities

- 229 The school fully recognises the diversity in students' home backgrounds, and this is an outstanding feature. The school's aim of providing high quality service to parents/carers and the community is reflected in its outstandingly positive family ethos. Every individual is made to feel important and initiatives to support vulnerable students both in school and in the community support this ethos. As part of the multi-agency 'On Track' project, the school is effective in providing support and guidance to students and parents/carers in the most deprived areas of the community.
- 230 The school actively challenges stereotyping. It carefully monitors and compares the examination results of boys and girls, and ensures that each subject is open to all pupils regardless of gender.
- 231 Students have a tolerant attitude towards racial harmony. Units in the personal and social education programme, religious education and good quality school assemblies underline the importance of racial harmony and respect for other cultures. The school has clear procedures for dealing with racial issues. Visits to the Slave Exhibition and Sugar Trade Exhibition provide effective reinforcement.
- 232 The school's policy and procedures for dealing with oppressive behaviour are effective. Bullying issues are raised in drama workshops and reinforced by colourful posters around the school. The pastoral support manager provides additional appropriate support and advice to students, who confirm that incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- 233 The school's Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan are sufficiently thorough with outcomes and appropriate time scales. As the unitary authority's policy is to concentrate resources and facilities for the disabled elsewhere, access for potential wheelchair users in Hawthorn, except in the new building, is limited to the ground floor.
- 234 Recognition and respect for diversity are priorities in the school. Diversity is celebrated in many aspects of the curriculum. Recognition and respect are evident in the daily life of the school and are widely discussed in the religious education programme and are included in personal and social education units. Activities such as the Y9 conference on racial awareness and diversity and the sixth form conference "President for a Day" reinforce this respect. The very close links with an Indian orphanage, visited by a teacher and sixth formers, links with Uganda and strong support for local and national charities make this an outstanding feature.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

235 The grade we awarded does not agree with the grade 1 proposed by the school in its self-evaluation report. It is one grade lower mainly because of the shortcomings in key questions 3 and 7 that have not been addressed.

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

236 Thanks to good leadership and management at all levels, the school enjoys much success in achieving its key purpose: "to provide the high quality education which is the entitlement of all children and the expectation of all parents".

237 The headteacher is a successful leader and manager whose chosen structures of organisation, employed in the school, have been justified by the improvements that have occurred over time, most especially in the standards achieved in GCSE examinations.

238 The headteacher provides a strong strategic direction for the school. He is ably supported by his deputies whose expertise and strengths are used to best advantage in pursuit of the school's aims. The leadership team rightly gives high priority to strategic planning, and the school development plan provides a clear agenda for improvement. Self evaluation is clearly linked to planning. In all areas of provision there is strong focus on self evaluation and school improvement. Self reflection is encouraged in all staff. Such structures subscribe well to raising standards.

239 Managers in all areas of provision have considerable autonomy, but are accountable for their decisions and actions, and they subscribe well to the school's key purpose. Overall, middle management is also very effective in raising standards.

240 Good communication is a strong feature of the school. There are many opportunities for all members of staff to meet and share information and to pursue agreed goals. Directed time is used most advantageously for an annual programme of meetings. Examples of effective communication opportunities include occasions when:

- subject leaders and progress team staff meet with deputy headteachers;
- subject staff meet with subject leaders;
- form tutors meet with progress team staff;
- departmental special needs representatives meet with the special educational needs coordinator; and
- teachers new to the school meet with the senior mentor.

- 241 The school is committed to equality of opportunity. Teachers employ a variety of teaching strategies, from mixed ability, to setting by attainment, to discrete additional needs groups. At key stage 4, examination options ensure all students can access school-leaving qualifications whilst post 16, there is open enrolment to sixth form studies. Performance data confirms that equality and inclusion are embedded in school ethos. This was a major reason in the unitary authority choosing the school for the site of its Speech & Language Centre. Children in this unit are being successfully integrated into mainstream schooling.
- 242 Staff issues are also covered in the school's policies on equality and harassment in the work place. Similarly, staff training records show all members of staff have equitable access to professional development. All departments have been issued with national guidance documents concerning equality of opportunity for each given subject of the curriculum. There are, however, shortcomings in the curricular arrangements for Welsh and religious education that are highlighted in Key Question 3.
- 243 Other shortcomings that remain to be addressed are highlighted in Key Question 7. These include lack of technician support in areas of design and technology and insufficient learning support assistants.
- 244 Partnership and consortium working feature large in the school's planning. The school played a lead role in the completion of key stage 2 to key stage 3 transition planning and in constructing the current post 16 consortium arrangements. The 'E Bont Project', currently under development, further epitomises the school's commitment to this agenda. This has a potential partnership of 11 organisations including local business and higher education interests.
- 245 Target setting has been highly effective in developing a climate of school improvement. At key stage 4, there is an 'in-house' system of setting 'safe' and 'challenge zone' targets, which has tended to show an 80% accuracy. Departmental performance (targets and outcomes) are subject to detailed ipsative analysis with subject leaders as is the core subject indicator at key stage 3. Individual members of staff have specific quantitative targets built into their annual performance management reviews. All these issues are subject to detailed discussion in school improvement sub-committee meetings, external agency annual reviews and school in-service education and training days. The school keeps comprehensive records in its performance files. A similar system is being developed for attendance, behaviour and exclusion issues.
- 246 The above information is used to target improvement. Where underperformance has been identified, the school employs external advisers to work directly with departments, and/or individual members of staff, to help them make progress.
- 247 The school operates an effective staff appraisal system. Formal appraisal records are kept centrally and all new members of staff are encouraged to maintain a personal development portfolio. A number of teachers have received financial support from the school to acquire additional professional qualifications. Lesson observations of all teachers are recorded in an annual review programme both by senior staff or external advisers and by specific subject leaders. Use has also been made of General Teaching Council of Wales's grants to fund staff development for improved

performance. Non-teaching staff do not have an approved appraisal system; this is currently being considered by the unitary authority.

248 The re-alignment of teaching and learning responsibilities has been completed under the new workload agreement.

How well governors meet their responsibilities

249 Governors are not fully effective in executing their duties in management.

250 They understand their school and are also well aware of the community that the school serves and its needs. There is an appropriate range of committees to review different aspects of school business. There is sufficient expertise among governors to enable them to evaluate progress and contribute to strategic planning. In most respects they carry out these functions effectively.

251 Governors are informed of school performance and other issues principally through reports from the headteacher. Occasionally, comment is received from middle management and the School Council. Governors regard this information as adequate. They have only sparse understanding of the impact at classroom level of decisions they might make.

252 The school's self-evaluation report illustrates that there is regular discussion of the curriculum between governors, subject leaders and senior management. Despite this, provision for Welsh and religious education at key stage 4 does not meet statutory requirements.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

253 The grade we awarded matches that proposed by the school in its self-evaluation report.

254 The school's self-evaluation report addressed fully the seven key questions of the Common Inspection Framework and highlighted clearly good features and areas of ongoing improvement. It was a useful and informative document that supported the inspection process well.

How effectively the school's performance is monitored and evaluated

255 It is a strength of the school that all leaders and managers strive to improve the quality of provision and performance in the areas for which they have designated responsibility. Many of the procedures are long established and effective. The school's revised staffing structure (workload agreement) gives further emphasis to monitoring of, and training for, performance.

- 256 The school development plan was constructed in consultation with staff and gives clear strategic direction for ongoing improvement. The school's monitoring and evaluation and performance management policies detail what team leaders need to do to secure progress. They respond effectively to this requirement. Revised job descriptions for all promoted posts highlight the desire for quality and the challenge of raising standards.
- 257 The school maintains a comprehensive folder of departmental evaluation, covering data analysis, effectiveness of subject planning and quality of teaching. These reports are used to inform departmental development plans and strengthen the link with school development planning.
- 258 Increasingly, all subject areas are encouraged to complete self evaluations that form the basis for review meetings with senior staff, concerning progress being made. They do so well. A comparable scheme is now being introduced to year group development so that the quality of both academic and pastoral work is subject to similar evaluations. Managers make significant use of ipsative analyses of examination results to celebrate success and to highlight areas for further performance reviews.
- 259 All interested parties have ample opportunities to subscribe to the school's evaluation procedures. For example, students respond well in both whole-school issues and subject-specific aspects. Parents/carers are often invited to comment, but their response is very limited.

The effectiveness of planning for improvement

- 260 When areas for development are identified, resource needs are specified whether these be for materials, equipment or training. Budget headings include an element for project funding of initiatives so that departmental resources are not unduly strained by new work. The school is also active in seeking grant funding for improvement and has been successful in a number of areas including:
- New Opportunities Funding for out-of-hours learning;
 - Learning for Prosperity (2) 16 – 19;
 - Global Individualised Learning funding;
 - Youth Access Project; and
 - ICT Community Development.
- 261 Overall, the progress made in addressing the key issues from the previous inspection is good with no important shortcomings.
- 262 The school has consistently achieved good results when value-added factors are included, and the trend of improvement remains ongoing. When similar schools data are considered, the school is always in the top 25% for relevant factors. In 2007, the school achieved its best-ever GCSE results with 49% of key stage 4 students achieving 5 or more grades A* to C and 89% achieving 5 or more grades A* to G.
- 263 A comprehensive system of quality assurance is now well established and subject leaders have extended their understanding of data analysis. The systems now in place are a significant contributing factor in ongoing school improvement.

- 264 Attendance at all levels is closely monitored and has been at least 90% in 4 of the last 5 years. Similarly, actual attendance 2002 – 2005 was above the unitary authority average and in the top quarter of similar schools. In 2006/07 the school recorded attendance of 91.6%, its best effort to date, placing it first out of nineteen when deprivation factors are taken into account.
- 265 Members of the progress team are now required to monitor tutor time and present portfolio evidence of support to students. Form tutors use an extended registration period for the delivery of personal and social education each half term.
- 266 The new teaching block, secured after much hard work, has been a real bonus to school development. A refurbishment plan for remaining accommodation is part of the school's annual spending pattern. Capital programmes (funded by the unitary authority) continue to be pursued in respect of the English block and the gymnasium. A shared funding project has now seen the opening of the school's excellent Astro turf facilities.
- 267 The school has worked hard to improve the provision for daily acts of collective worship, but availability of sufficient space for meaningful assemblies remains an issue. The whole school assembly was discontinued following a health and safety at work risks assessment. Nevertheless, statutory requirements are satisfied. Each year group and each key stage have weekly assemblies. For days/times where assemblies are not possible, the religious education department has provided form groups with appropriate material. Provision for religious education in the sixth form is through a consortium-agreed suspension of timetable at appropriate times in the year, for the development of spiritual and moral welfare.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 268 The grade awarded by the inspection team is one lower than the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report. This was mainly because the shortcomings within staffing in key stages 3 and 4.

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

- 269 The number of staff is sufficient for the school to run effectively and efficiently. The profile shows that about 28% of teachers have 25 or more years experience and 41%, including one newly qualified teacher, have 10 years or less. One further teacher works very effectively in the speech and language centre.
- 270 Most teachers are appropriately qualified and trained to meet all aspects, subjects, and the wider needs of the curriculum.
- 271 In a very small number of subjects, non-specialist teachers are used. However, the impact on student achievement is minimal because of effective support from heads of department and thorough in-service education and training.

- 272 Long-term absence of teachers in a small number of subjects has had an adverse effect on standards and has resulted in some underachievement. This is a shortcoming, over which the school has no control.
- 273 The four unitary authority financed learning support assistants provide very good help and encouragement to the number of students identified as having learning and behavioural problems. They work effectively with all subject teachers and the special needs coordinator.
- 274 Four extra learning support assistants provide supervision of the 'quiet room' and support key stage 3 literacy teaching. In doing so, some of them release teachers to concentrate on working to raise standards. Their remaining time is used either for subject administration or for in-class support. Overall, though, allocation of time for support in classes is insufficient and ineffectively prioritised. This is a shortcoming.
- 275 All administrative staff ensure that the office, reception and reprographic areas run efficiently. The site manager and his assistants are responsible for the security and day-to-day maintenance of the site and contribute effectively to the daily routines of the school.
- 276 Technician support in science, ICT, and in the resistant materials area of design and technology is very good. However, there is no technician support for the food, textiles and catering areas resulting in valuable teaching time being used for preparation of materials, essential laundry and room maintenance. This is a shortcoming.
- 277 The quality and quantity of learning resources for key stages 3 and 4 have good features that outweigh shortcomings. There is a good supply of a wide range of textbooks, and a creative range of subject materials produced in house.
- 278 Provision of ICT equipment for the teaching of discrete ICT lessons and for use by all subjects is a very good feature. There are 5 main rooms with other computer suites of varying sizes in science, technology, geography, careers, additional learning needs and physical education. Every teaching room has a computer and an Internet access point.
- 279 Five trolleys, each with twenty laptop computers, strategically placed on floors throughout the school, enable access for all subjects. These trolleys can be booked and used to enhance teaching. However, on many occasions, the laptops do not work efficiently. Reasons are mainly of a technical nature and often discourage teachers from using them. This is a shortcoming.
- 280 Across the school are 20 interactive white boards and 20 digital projectors that are used to enhance teaching in a number of subjects. With the use of commercial software and computerised presentations, they are mainly used very effectively.
- 281 In design and technology, the computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment, and the recently-acquired laser cutter enable students to have a wide range of experiences and opportunities.

- 282 An effective use of out-of-school resources, including visits to art galleries and theatres and trips abroad, enriches the curriculum. A range of visiting speakers enhances students' learning experiences.
- 283 There is no traditional library or learning resource centre provision for use by students in key stages 3 and 4, before school, at break times, lunchtimes or after school. Students do not have the opportunity to experience the use of a library for independent learning and research. This is a shortcoming. There are, however, opportunities for individual work and research in subject bases and through a variety of computerised learning environments. The Virtual Learning Centre allows students to access resources 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This is further enhanced with access to the computer system via the Youth Club, local Young Peoples Centre and Libraries (a community initiative).
- 284 A very good feature is the development of 'Simply Click' – a secure web and communication project. At present, it is in the early stages of use and includes:
- a calendar of events and a school magazine for the community at large;
 - a notice board for students and parents/carers;
 - a discussion area for the school to collect the views of students and parents/carers;
 - communication between the school and students and parents/carers; and
 - a learning area to be used by students and parents/carers, that contains zones on homework, revision and catch up, and curricular materials for subjects.
- 285 For post 16 students, there is a good range and supply of text books and equipment. Students use their dedicated study room facilities for independent learning and research. They have full use of a suite of 14 computers in their study room. Students studying science subjects are part of a pilot scheme to use the 'Simply Click' project. Each student has been given a pocket personal computer to enable immediate access to the curriculum zone that includes specific tutorials and other information.
- 286 The school occupies a large site. It consists of six separate buildings including an early twentieth century infant school, the main school that opened in 1973, and two new blocks that were opened in 1989 and 2006. The main school exterior has a 'tired' look, whilst the new blocks of varying external build give a fresher appearance.
- 287 As a whole, the accommodation has good features and no important shortcomings. It is basically sufficient for the number of students currently on roll and meets the pastoral and academic needs of the curriculum. Accommodation for the sixth form is sufficient for both the academic and pastoral needs of the curriculum
- 288 Most rooms throughout are fit for purpose and large enough to cater well for most class sizes. Room conditions vary from very good in the new blocks to tired and dated elsewhere. Teachers make the most of their situation with colourful and attractive displays in classrooms and corridors, providing an effective and, at times, stimulating learning environment. However, in the new blocks, the small number of display boards available limits the opportunity for display in classrooms and corridors.

- 289 Very good physical education facilities include the swimming pool shared with the community, the new Astro turf area, and the well-maintained playing fields. The gymnasium is dated and lacks suitable storage areas for equipment.
- 290 Despite the extreme varying ages of the buildings, overall, the interior of the school is well maintained and decorated and has a clean, fresh appearance. The school grounds and buildings are kept clean and mostly litter free.
- 291 The very good condition of the students' toilets throughout the school, including the refurbished ones in the main building, is noteworthy.

How efficiently resources are managed to achieve value for money

- 292 Overall, the school's management of resources to achieve value for money is very good, due mainly to the much improved level of students' achievements at key stage 4
- 293 The deployment and management of nearly all staff are good and make efficient and effective use of their time, expertise and experience. A good feature is the use of a native French teacher in sixth form conversation lessons, which maximises impact on the learners. However, on occasions, the deployment of learning support assistants is inefficient and unproductive.
- 294 A very good feature is the development of teaching staff. Professional development is linked to performance management, the school development plan and the needs of departments and individuals. It is very well coordinated. Courses attended by staff are carefully evaluated and used to the school's benefit.
- 295 Programmes of support for newly qualified teachers, for the extended professional development of recently qualified teachers, and for initial teacher training students are exemplary.
- 296 The school has implemented its strategy for the workload agreement. It has made provision in the timetable for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment.
- 297 The headteacher, after consulting all interested bodies, has implemented the school's initial structure for the new teaching and learning responsibilities. However, due to the present staffing situation, this is to be reviewed shortly.
- 298 The financial management of the school is very good. The headteacher, the responsible deputy headteacher, and the governing body's sub-committee for finance effectively and efficiently manage the available budget. The school conscientiously pursues all available grants and sponsorships.
- 299 The finance sub-committee receives detailed up-to-date reports from the headteacher at its regular meetings. Financial decisions are well focused on curricular needs and educational priorities identified in the school development plan.
- 300 Initial subject capitation distribution uses a formula-based system. Additional amounts are available for projects listed in development plans. Further bids from heads of department to finance curricular changes and initiatives are also evaluated.

- 301 The day-to-day running of the school's finances is efficient. The headteacher and subject leaders are provided with immediate breakdowns and current balances. Spending is closely and carefully monitored.
- 302 The minor recommendations of the recent auditors' report have been addressed.
- 303 The school reviews and uses its resources and finances very prudently, effectively and competently.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English

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

304 GCSE results in both English Language and English Literature at in the last two years have been below national averages for grades A* to C. They are above those of students in similar schools and represent good achievement.

305 In 2007, A level results in English Literature were slightly below the mean for grades A to C achieved by students nationally. Nevertheless, they represent good achievement for the students involved.

Good features

Key stage 3

306 Students usually listen attentively. They recall previous learning and show a good knowledge and understanding when they respond to questions in class discussion. Able students often extend responses.

307 Most collaborate well in small groups. They put forward ideas to problem solve, justify opinions and negotiate group discussions effectively.

308 All read a range of challenging fiction, poetry, drama and non-literary texts and video.

309 All students skim and scan for information. There is good understanding of what is read in relation to ability.

310 Students make good progress in the development of critical analysis. They recognise devices used by writers such as persuasive techniques and they know the effects of these on readers. Able students use skills of inference and deduction. Students with additional learning needs generally make good progress in mainstream classes particularly in oral skills and in the understanding of their work.

311 Students write in a range of forms and for a variety of purposes. Most attempt to adapt tone and language to audience. Folders of best written work show that students improve writing by knowing the criteria for success and by planning and drafting. All extend their writing when required. Presentation of work is usually good. Able students write balanced arguments and organise their discursive work well. They include counter arguments and cross references. They can create mood and atmosphere in narratives. Most students are making good progress in using effective imagery.

Key stage 4

312 Students usually listen attentively to the teacher and to each other. They engage in class discussions, showing a sound knowledge and understanding of their work. They collaborate well in small groups, put forward opinions, justify ideas with

reference to texts and reach a group consensus. They report group views to the whole class effectively, often using Standard English and a technical vocabulary.

- 313 All students have a clear understanding of plots, characters, themes and the social and historical contexts of set texts. There is sustained analysis in the critical appreciation of challenging fiction, poetry and non-literary texts. There is good analysis of language, recognition of devices used by writers and understanding of the effects of these on readers. Students sustain arguments and justify opinions with inclusion of appropriate quotations.
- 314 Students, including those with additional learning needs, write in a range of forms and for a variety of purposes and audiences. Written work is usually improved by planning, drafting, self-assessing, the use of models and knowledge of the criteria for success and requirements of examination boards.

Post 16

- 315 Students listen to the teacher and to one another with respect. They co-operate well in pair and group discussions. They put forward opinions, negotiate and present views with a growing confidence.
- 316 Students analyse and respond to an appropriate range of challenging texts orally and in extended critical essays. They demonstrate a clear understanding of characters, plots, themes and concepts as well as the social, cultural and historical backgrounds of set texts. There is good understanding and use of subject vocabulary and recognition of techniques used by writers for effect.
- 317 All make good progress in response to diagnostic comments written by teachers. By the end of the course most students produce well-crafted critical writing which includes appropriate quotations and cross references. Arguments are usually clear and well structured.
- 318 All students know and understand assessment criteria and examination board requirements.

Shortcomings

Key stages 3 and 4

- 319 Students of middle and lower abilities do not always include sufficient depth and detail in written work.
- 320 Proof reading is sometimes insufficiently rigorous so that errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar are left uncorrected.

Key stage 3

- 321 A small number of students of middle to lower ability do not always listen attentively. They sometimes call out responses and slow the pace of learning.

Post 16

- 322 A small number lack confidence in putting forward ideas to the class.
- 323 In a few cases, critical analysis lacks depth and detail.

Science

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

324 The proportions of students in 2006 and 2007 who gained GCSE grades A* to C were slightly lower than the figures for the unitary authority and for the whole of Wales. However, the school performs well above most similar schools.

325 Over the same period, in AS and A level examinations in biology, chemistry, human biology and physics, the mean grade has been lower than those for the unitary authority and Wales in the majority of examinations.

Good features

Key stage 3

326 A good majority of students across the ability range possess sound knowledge and understanding of a wide range of topics.

327 A majority of students can recall and use concepts well to solve a range of scientific problems in familiar and unfamiliar situations.

328 The majority of students possess a good understanding of some of the scientific principles considered in areas such as transfer of energy, reactivity of metals and effects of healthy lifestyles.

329 Overall, the majority of students use scientific terms accurately in many problem solving activities and responses to questions.

330 Students with additional and special learning needs make sound progress relative to their ability.

331 Students mainly develop good practical skills, recording and analysing results appropriately. Most work safely and collaborate well.

332 The majority are developing a number of important investigative skills in their portfolios, as a good foundation for their work in key stage 4.

Key stage 4

333 More able students and a majority of average ability students have a good understanding of the more complex principles developed in the key stage.

334 A majority have a good recall of previous work and can apply their knowledge to a range of tasks and applications of science.

335 Many students develop a good understanding of the contribution that science makes to the development of industry and its impact on the environment.

336 Most undertake practical work confidently, work systematically and record measurements with precision. They have completed case studies and investigations to a good standard.

337 Students with additional or special educational needs make good progress in the course that they are following.

Post 16

338 A small majority make good progress in the four courses studied.

339 Generally, a small majority of students have a good recall and understanding of previous work and a ready recall of concepts and principles.

340 A small majority are able to apply their theoretical understanding to a number of problems involving the analysis of data and problem solving to confirm their knowledge of the topic.

341 A small majority communicate their knowledge and understanding well, and can explain how certain concepts have an impact on patterns of scientific behaviour.

342 In lessons where practical skills were observed, students are confident in some procedures and can analyse their observations to give a valid explanation to certain predictions.

Shortcomings

Key stage 3

343 A minority of average and lower ability students have a less secure recall and understanding of current and previous work.

344 They have difficulty in applying scientific principles to some tasks and applications in both familiar and unfamiliar situations and to offer explanations of behaviour they observe.

Key stage 4

345 A minority of average and lower ability students have not mastered some concepts thoroughly enough. They have some difficulty applying their understanding in some scientific problems.

346 A minority have not evaluated experimental procedures and results in sufficient detail to access the higher marks.

Post 16

347 A significant number have an insecure understanding of previous work, and have difficulties applying important concepts in scientific problems.

348 A number of students do not undertake sufficient independent study to consolidate work covered in lessons or to extend their understanding of the topics being covered.

History

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

349 GCSE results have been below local and national averages over the last two years. A level success at grades A to C was below local and national averages in 2007, but above both averages in 2006. Overall, achievement matches and sometimes exceeds expectations.

Good features

Key stage 3

- 350 Students have good levels of knowledge and understanding and can recall their previous learning successfully. They use their knowledge well to make effective links to new topics and historical problems, using subject-specific vocabulary accurately. Most students have good oral skills and many are confident in responding to questioning.
- 351 Students have a good ability to identify and explain the causes of change over time and they can trace the consequences of such change. They are confident in extracting accurate information from a wide variety of sources of historical evidence, and, by the end of key stage 3, they can identify the difference between the long-term and short-term causes of change.
- 352 Students have a good understanding of chronology. They make good progress in evaluating the historical evidence which they use to address historical problems, applying their background knowledge and understanding effectively to arrive at reasoned judgements.
- 353 Students of all abilities make good progress in developing their investigative and problem-solving skills when considering historical problems. They ask appropriate questions of primary and secondary sources of evidence and show growing confidence in historical enquiry. By Y9, students with ALN make good progress in sifting appropriately adapted sources of evidence, to arrive at reasonable conclusions on the problem of the likely identity of Jack the Ripper.
- 354 Most students succeed in testing the sources for bias, reliability and utility. As they mature, they show awareness of the operation of propaganda and most can explain its causes and effects. The majority of students use the sources of evidence successfully to construct balanced arguments in their oral and written work.
- 355 By the end of the key stage, a significant number of above average and some average ability students, show a growing awareness of why differing interpretations of history can emerge. They show that they understand the importance of using the source attribution in coming to their judgements.

356 Most students are successful in selecting, organising and communicating information in a variety of ways in their oral and written tasks. Above average ability students produce some good and, sometimes, very good pieces of extended writing which are carefully planned and well expressed and presented.

357 Students with ALN make good progress in acquiring the key historical skills. Their recall of previous learning and their ability to extract information from sources of evidence is secure, overall.

Key stage 4

358 The majority of students continue to build upon the key and historical skills which they have acquired in key stage 3. Overall, most students, especially those of above average ability, approach the demands to investigate historical problems with greater maturity and depth of response.

359 Most students make good progress in their oral skills, especially in Y10. Contributions to class and group discussions are generally articulate and students gain confidence by posing relevant questions.

360 Students can provide appropriate explanations for the differences in the attitudes and motivation of people in the past by asking more complex questions of the sources of evidence. In Y10, students effectively compare and contrast Nazi educational initiatives with their own curriculum and opportunities.

361 The written work of the majority of students is appropriately organised and presented. These students show good progression in their extended writing skills by the end of key stage 4 by developing the ability to construct a balanced argument in their essays and source evaluations. Some develop their research and independent learning skills in order to improve the quality of their coursework.

Post 16

362 Students have good levels of knowledge and understanding of the historical debates surrounding the development of the Chartist movement and of the rise of Fascism in Nazi Germany.

363 Most students make good progress in developing their oral skills. In Y12, some students make insightful extended responses to questioning and also ask pertinent and thoughtful questions to enhance their understanding.

364 Most students make good progress in mastering the historiography of the periods which they are studying. They become increasingly confident in identifying and explaining the differences in interpretation found in the work of academic experts in these periods.

365 Students learn to ask increasingly complex questions of the sources of evidence and are confident in their recognition of the operation of bias and propaganda. Most use their developing analytical skills effectively to adopt an evaluative approach to the problems they are considering. They are successful in identifying the clues from the attributions of the sources which they evaluate.

366 The majority of students, especially in Y12, produce well-argued, balanced essays and source evaluations. They have good skills in selecting and organising the material which they use to respond to the challenging problems which they are required to consider.

Shortcomings

Key stages 3 and 4

367 There are significant variations in the quality of written work produced by a minority of students. Some do not complete their written tasks regularly; this has an impact upon the progress they make in developing their extended writing skills and in their ability to record their learning for future reference.

368 A minority of students produce indifferently presented written work. Their standards of spelling, punctuation and use of language are underdeveloped.

369 A significant minority, especially in key stage 4, do not include sufficient detail in their written responses to tasks and challenges. They do not produce work of sufficient depth and analysis to justify the argument which they seek to make. Some difficulties with source evaluation and interpretation hinder them from fully explaining the historical significance of the points which they make in their arguments.

370 A minority of average and below average ability students are uncertain about analysing the utility of some source material.

371 A lack of confidence in presenting an extended oral response to questioning in lessons, hinders the progress of a minority of students.

Post 16

372 A small number of students continue to find evaluation of sources difficult. As a result, their written work lacks the depth and insight to enable them to present a well balanced and convincing argument. These students do not provide enough examples to strengthen the points which they make.

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

373 In 2007, GCSE examination results exceeded both the national and local averages, with 40% of all students gaining A*/A grades. This represents a considerable improvement on the previous two years where results were equal to or below these averages. There are no recent A level results upon which to comment.

Good features

Key stage 3

- 374 Students read and respond to French with confidence. They are able to recognise cognates to gain an understanding of new language.
- 375 In speaking activities, most students speak with accurate pronunciation. Higher attainers are able to correct their own responses from memory when prompted.
- 376 Standards of written work in French are good. Most students progress from using words and phrases to writing extended pieces. For example, higher attainers write about their ideal holiday, using a wide variety of tenses, including the imperfect and conditional.
- 377 Most students can recall previously learned vocabulary and structures, some do so from memory. By Y9, most are able to use a variety of tenses with confidence and accuracy.
- 378 Higher attaining students are able to manipulate past, present, future and conditional tenses to add detail to their writing and speaking.
- 379 Where students have access to ICT, they use it creatively to illustrate their writing and support their language learning.

Key stage 4

- 380 Most students use their extensive grammar notes and their increasing knowledge of structures to improve their spoken and written work.
- 381 Students read for gist well by drawing upon their prior learning and using their knowledge of cognates to assist them.
- 382 Extended writing becomes more accurate and detailed as students progress through the topics.
- 383 The positive attitudes of most students to learning French makes them eager to further develop their language skills.
- 384 Most listen well to native speakers and are able to extract relevant detail and deduce meanings of new vocabulary.
- 385 Students of all abilities make effective use of dictionaries and reference materials to understand more complex texts and to develop written work.
- 386 Higher attainers display a good grasp of key structures and use this well in their preparation for speaking and writing assignments.

Post 16

- 387 Students can extract information accurately from a range of texts, including original material, by translating and answering questions.

388 Dialogue with teachers in the target language enables students to develop their speaking and listening skills. The good relationships between teachers and their students foster a confidence to converse in French.

389 Clear progression is evident in students' folders during the course of Y12. Students have developed a deeper vocabulary base and understanding of grammar and structures.

Shortcomings

Key stage 3

390 Disruptive behaviour by a small minority of students prevents them from developing their language skills. It also has an adverse effect on other students' learning.

391 Lower attainers and those with additional learning needs display weaknesses in writing, due to low levels of literacy.

Key stage 4

392 Some students have an inadequate grasp of grammar and vocabulary, which hampers their progress in speaking and writing activities.

Post 16

393 Some students display basic errors in pronunciation skills.

394 Students' translations do not always convey meaning accurately.

Religious education

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

395 Over the last two years, the percentage of grades A* to C in the GCSE full course has been much lower than both local and national averages. In 2007, there was an improvement of 10% more gaining A* to C grades.

396 The number of entries for A level examination in 2006 was very small so a meaningful comparison with national figures is difficult. In 2007, the percentage gaining grades A to C was similar to the unitary authority and slightly below all of Wales. The percentage of A/B awards was higher than national averages. These results represent good achievement for these students.

Good features

Key stage 3

397 Students of all abilities show secure knowledge and understanding of the units of work studied.

- 398 Students can explore topics such as relationships and stewardship showing understanding of commitment and responsibility and displaying awareness of religious responses.
- 399 The majority demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the life and significance of the founder of Christianity and can describe and begin to explain its main practices and beliefs such as birth and death, demonstrating an awareness of the diversity within the faith.
- 400 All students have accurate knowledge and understanding of the origin of Judaism its beliefs, practices and worship.
- 401 They can select, organise and communicate information through a wide range of written tasks, using a variety of formats to present work to a good standard, using key terms correctly.
- 402 The ability to evaluate and offer a reasoned point of view develops across the key stage, with the more able having good recall of previous learning.
- 403 Lower ability students achieve well with targeted resources. They involve themselves fully in exploring topics such as death and express a simple viewpoint.

Key stage 4

- 404 In both the optional full and short GCSE course, most students demonstrate sound knowledge and understanding of the beliefs, traditions and practices of Christianity and Judaism in class discussion and written work, using key terms correctly.
- 405 They can describe and explain the diversity of beliefs and practices within Christianity. Higher attainers relate them to their own experiences of life.
- 406 The majority of students can explore and evaluate different responses to contemporary religious and moral issues, such as care of the environment, and express a personal viewpoint. Higher attainers offer reasoned extended answers.
- 407 In the full GCSE course, students can explain how commitment to a particular religion influences lifestyle and behaviour. Written work is accurate, well presented and organised by students of all abilities.
- 408 In the core lessons, students engage in a positive manner and recount, with respect, elements of belief and practices that they have studied.
- 409 Lower attainers make progress in their understanding of key concepts.

Post 16

- 410 All students develop a secure factual knowledge and understanding of religious ethics and the origin, beliefs and practices of Hinduism and have a good insight into the way religious beliefs influence the lifestyle and actions of adherents.
- 411 They analyse and evaluate religious, philosophical and ethical concepts and theories increasingly confidently and effectively to formulate appropriate judgements.

412 Most students achieve good standards in written work, and can select and present factual information and arguments in an organised, coherent manner. The more able use a variety of sources to enrich their essays.

413 Most show good use of religious terminology and language orally and in their written work.

Shortcomings

Key stage 3

414 The written work of a minority of students does not show the same level of confidence and detail as their oral contributions.

Key stage 4

415 GCSE full and short course students do not always respond in sufficient detail and depth in their written work and do not develop arguments sufficiently in evaluation exercises.

416 In core lessons, which have a limited amount of time, a significant minority of students are unable to build on previous learning and have insufficiently secure knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and traditions to explore issues and topics in any depth.

Post 16

417 A minority of students do not evaluate arguments in sufficiently critical detail.

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

418 GCSE results in the last 2 years have been below national averages for grades A* to C. In the most recent examination, boys achieved in line with the national average. Students with additional learning needs perform particularly well in achieving the higher grades. These results are better than would be expected for students of similar ability.

419 A level results in the last 2 years have been above the national average for grades A and B and represent very good achievement for these students.

Outstanding features

Post 16

420 Students are blossoming as independent creative artists.

421 The standard of their observational drawing and creative development, particularly in painting, is outstandingly good. Their use of surface decoration and imagery in ceramics is also of exceptional quality.

Good features

Key stage 3

- 422 Students make rapid progress in acquiring the essential craft skills of use of line, tone, colour, texture and shape. They are developing their knowledge and understanding of art by researching different artists' work.
- 423 Students 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. Most show skill in creative computer-generated design.
- 424 Observational drawing skills are developed well, and students show imagination and creativity in their responses. They often use colour with some verve.
- 425 Students develop an awareness of the art and culture of Wales and an appreciation of the art of a range of other cultures.
- 426 Students with additional learning needs achieve above the level expected of them because their individual needs are well addressed. Gifted and talented students demonstrate above average standards of skill and creativity in computer-based artwork.

Key stage 4

- 427 Students are growing as confident and independent artists. Their understanding of composition is particularly good. They are able to research a chosen artist, develop new craft skills, and enrich their folders by working in the artist's style. When writing and talking about their work, they demonstrate good analytical judgements.
- 428 They further develop their formal observational recording skills in line and tone to a very high standard. Their use of printmaking as a design and craft process is consistently and outstandingly good. Collage and pastel is often exploited with some panache and colour continues to be used well.
- 429 In graphic-design tasks they demonstrate better than average skill, particularly when using computers.
- 430 They have a good understanding of the scope of art.

Post 16

- 431 Students' use of the printmaking process continues to be a strength. They develop new skills in a range of new craft techniques and in computer-generated artwork.
- 432 They show an awareness and understanding of both contemporary and historical art.
- 433 They have a clear understanding of the examination requirements. Their personal written topics show a thoroughness of research and a clear presentation of their personal views. They know how to support their sketchbook work with useful annotation.

Shortcomings

Key stages 3 and 4

- 434 Students' further progress and achievement of higher grades is limited by a lack of understanding of how they can use the assessment process to raise the standard of their work.

Key stage 3

- 435 Students' knowledge and understanding of a broader spectrum of art is limited.

Post 16

- 436 There are no shortcomings.

School's response to the inspection

The headteacher, staff and governors are pleased to report the very positive findings from the Estyn inspection. It is gratifying that the very high standards being achieved overall within the school and the exceptionally high standards at GCSE level have been fully recognised. It is clear that the professional and positive manner with which the teaching and support staff discharge their duties has been fully acknowledged within this complimentary report.

Comments about the current high standards achieved by so many of our pupils reflect the quality of teaching and learning right across the school. Good teaching is recorded as being a strength that has been recognised in the 76% of classes where teaching was grade 1 or grade 2. The students' social and personal development has always been a priority for the school and has been recognised by the inspection team as an outstanding feature. In addition, the development of literacy, ICT, and other key skills across the curriculum is playing a significant part in the raising of standards in all key stages. To improve learning further, our development plans already highlight the need to use formative marking and assessment more effectively to enable pupils to set themselves realistic targets and understand how to make further progress towards their targets.

Our monitoring procedures are well established, analysing and evaluating all aspects of school life, this has been recognised by the inspectors on their evaluation of the schools' procedures. Combined with identified good management at all levels and extensive opportunities for continued professional development, we feel confident about being able to provide sustained improvements in standards of achievement across the school in years to come.

The continued development of our broad and balanced curriculum will enhance the already expansive opportunities for pupils in key stage 4 and the sixth form to follow pathways that suit their own particular learning needs. The extension of our vocational and alternative curricular arrangements, featured in the report, will need to be further developed, providing sufficient funds are available.

The school is extremely proud of the fact that the quality of care, guidance and support for our pupils has been recorded as 'good with outstanding features'. This is a reflection of the hard work of our staff in striving to give all our pupils every opportunity to succeed at all levels. Behaviour in the school is reported to be 'of a very high standard'; courtesy and respect is prominent in a happy community where pupils show tolerance and good humour. The school will continue to integrate pupils irrespective of gender, race or ability and appreciates the need to develop and expand Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig. The school is committed to enhancing the local and global environment. The headteacher and leadership team, in conjunction with the support of the unitary authority, will continue to set a clear vision and a strategic direction to raise standards for the future.

We welcome the extremely supportive comments within the report and acknowledge the areas that can be further developed to enhance standards further in this "very good school".

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Hawthorn High School
School type	Community
Age range of students	11 - 18
Address of school	School Lane Hawthorn Pontypridd
Postcode	CF37 5AL
Telephone number	01443 841228

Headteacher	Mr James S Williams
Date of appointment	September 1997
Chair of governors / Appropriate authority	Mrs Helen Cook
Reporting inspector	Mr Brian W Medhurst
Dates of inspection	25 th to 28 th February 2008

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of students	157	177	166	181	168	121	68	1038

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	62	3	63.96

Staffing information	
Student: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16.5 : 1
Average teaching group size	21
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	78.52

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	94.9	91.4	91.9	90.5	92.0	89.2	86.9	92.2
Term 2	93.0	90.4	90.0	90.4	87.4	83.8	85.4	90.1
Term 3	91.8	89.8	91.6	89.8	89.9	74.6	89.1	90.6

Percentage of students entitled to free school meals	26.3
Number of students excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	48

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2007														
Total number of students in Y9: 179														
Percentage of students at each level														
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8+
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	1	0	0	0	1	15	30	28	21	5	0
		National	0.2	0.7	1.2	0.4	0.3	1.5	7.5	20.9	35.2	23.6	8.30	0.1
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	1	0	0	0	2	4	11	31	31	18	1
		National	0.2	0.6	1.0	0.4	0.2	0.7	6.2	17.9	24.5	32.5	15.4	0.4
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	30	30	32	2	0
		National	0.2	0.7	1.0	0.3	0.1	0.5	6.2	19.2	33.0	27.1	11.5	0.1

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

Percentage of students 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 students aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ	
Number of students aged 15 on the school roll in January 2007	210
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per student	38

The percentage of 15 year old students who in 2007:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	92	83	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	49	48	54
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	89	81	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	39	35	40
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	98	95	96
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	80	70	77
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	97	90	93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	3	10	7
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	0	4	2

For students aged 17, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs			
Number of students aged 17 in January 2007	46		
Number of students entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2007	44		
Number of students entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2007	2		
	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of students entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	52	61	68
Percentage of students entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	91	92	94
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	16	18	20
Number of students who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	0		
Number of students who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	0		

UA Unitary Authority

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Sixteen inspectors (including the school's nominee and a peer assessor) spent the equivalent of 52 days at the school.

132 lessons were observed, covering all areas of the curriculum.

Inspectors attended assemblies, tutorial sessions, registrations, and observed a range of extracurricular activities.

Inspectors held many discussions with the headteacher, members of the school's leadership team, heads of department, staff with whole-school responsibilities, and members of support staff.

The registered inspector and a colleague inspector met with the governing body prior to the inspection week and they reported the main findings to them following the inspection.

Work across the curriculum, from representative students from each year group, was examined. Students' work was also scrutinised elsewhere and during lesson observations.

Inspectors held formal discussions with groups of students selected from Y7 to Y13. They also talked with many students informally.

Prior to the inspection, the registered inspector met the staff.

Four parents/carers of students attended the pre-inspection meeting. Twenty-six replies to the questionnaire were received and analysed. A few parents/carers also wrote to the registered inspector.

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

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team Member	Responsibilities
Mr Brian W Medhurst Registered Inspector	Key Questions 1, 2, 5 & 6
Dr Michael H L Snow Lay Inspector	Contributions to Key Questions 1, 3, 4 & 5
Mr Glyn Davies	Key Question 3; Sixth-form coordination; Science
Mrs Lynne Bithell	Contributions to Key Question 1, 2 & 3; English
Mr Alan Edwards	Key Question 7; Contribution to Key Question 1
Mr Gwyn Griffiths	Key Question 4
Mrs Mary Crandon	Contributions to Key Questions 1 & 3
Mr Keith Hopkins	Contribution to Key Question 1
Mrs Margaret Herbert	Contribution to Key Question 1
Mrs Anne Newman	History
Mr Eric Forster	Art
Mr David Jones	Science
Ms Deborah Wring	Modern foreign languages
Mrs Nerys Cossey	Religious education
Miss Deborah Wilcox	School's nominee
Mr Brynmor Butcher	Peer assessor

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Acknowledgement

The inspection team would like to thank the governors, staff and students of Hawthorn High School for their courtesy and co-operation during the inspection.