

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

A report on the quality of education in

**Holywell High School
The Strand
Holywell
Flintshire
CH8 7AW**

School number: 664 4012

Date of inspection: 19/01/09

by

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

The inspection of Holywell High School took place between 19/01/09 and 23/01/09. An independent team of inspectors, led by Neil Trevor Jones undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a **standard** inspection.

Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Holywell High School is an English medium community comprehensive school for 11-18 year old pupils and students, maintained by Flintshire Local Education Authority. It has 779 pupils on role, including 102 students in the sixth form (Y12 and Y13), compared to 910 pupils at the time of the previous inspection, in 2003. The average size of a year group is 135. Including the headteacher, there are 52.8 (full-time equivalent) teachers. There are 49 full-time and 5 part-time teachers.
2. The school serves the town of Holywell and villages in the North West corner of Flintshire; there are 13 primary schools in the catchment area. According to the school, the socio-economic profile of the catchment area is mixed. Nearly half the school's pupils (48%), live in areas designated as 'community first' wards. Some parts of the catchment area are in the 10% most deprived 'Lower Layer Super Output Areas' category in Wales. Rural villages in the catchment area are relatively more affluent.
3. 17.5% of pupils are registered as being entitled to free school meals (FSM), which is substantially higher than the county average (8.3%) and Wales (14.2%). Over 99% of pupils belong to the white ethnic group. Two pupils receive teaching support in learning English as an additional language.
4. The difference between the attainment of pupils on entry to the school compared to the county average, measured using Cognitive Ability Test data, is significant. However, the difference fluctuates in different years. The current Y7 has 34% of pupils with a score above the mean, compared to a county average of 44%. In Y9, the difference is 27%.
5. 16 pupils (about 2.4% of Y7 – 11 pupils) have a statement of special educational needs (SEN), which is slightly lower than the national average (3.4%). In addition, 100 pupils are on the school action and school action plus stages of the Code of Practice for pupils with SEN. Three pupils have National Curriculum disapplications. 12 pupils are 'looked after' by a local authority.
6. The vast majority of pupils (97%) come from homes where English is the predominant language spoken; 2% of pupils are from homes where Welsh is the main language. All pupils in key stage 3 (KS3) study Welsh as a second language. At KS4, 37% of Y10 pupils study the full course for Welsh as a second language, 52% the short course and 11% do not study Welsh. In Y11, 38% study the full course and 62% the short course.
7. The current headteacher was appointed to the school in September, 2007. The school was last inspected in May, 2003.
8. The school received a standard inspection in January, 2009.

The school's priorities and targets
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9. The school's main priorities, as set out in the School Improvement Plan (SIP), for 2008 – 2011 are:

- to raise standards of achievement for all students
- to provide excellent learning experiences for all students in order for them to develop as autonomous and lifelong learners;
- to enhance the professional learning and development for all staff so that they continue to learn, acquire new skills, understanding and knowledge in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century learner.

The following are the school's quantitative targets for 2009:

Key stage 3 indicators	% at level 5 or higher at the school
English	68
Mathematics	64
Science	64
Core Subject Indicator (CSI)	49
Difference between performance (CSI) of girls and boys	8
Key stage 4 indicators	% achieving the indicator
% entered for at least 1 GCSE	100
% gaining 5 or more GCSE A*-C	45
% gaining 5 or more GCSE A*-G	90
CSI	40
Difference between performance (CSI) of girls and boys	4
% leaving without a qualification	0
% unauthorised absences	0.5

Summary

10. Holywell High school is in a period of transition. Under the leadership of the new headteacher, initiatives are in place aimed at raising standards and expectations. However, these initiatives are yet to impact fully on teaching, learning and pupil performance, which were judged to have important shortcomings. In accordance with the Education Act 2005, I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that this school is in need of significant improvement.

A. Table of grades awarded

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

11. The inspection team has awarded a lower grade than that awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report for five of the key questions. The team has agreed with the grade awarded by the school for key questions 5 and 7.

B. Standards

12. The grades awarded for standards in the specified subjects inspected are as follows:

Subject	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Sixth Form
English	3	3	2
Science	4	3	3
Modern foreign languages	3	3	3
Physical education	2	3	2
Design and technology	2	2	2
Business	-	2	2

13. In the lessons observed in the above subjects, the percentage of lessons that attained the different grades in KS3, KS4 and the sixth form are as follows:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Key stage 3	0%	39%	49%	6%	6%
Key stage 4	4%	37%	44%	15%	0%
Sixth form	5%	65%	30%	0%	0%
Whole-school	3%	45%	43%	7%	2%

14. The percentage of lessons awarded grades 1 and 2, namely 48%, is much lower than the corresponding percentage (71%) for secondary schools in Wales, as reported in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's (HMCI) annual report for 2006-07. The 3% of lessons awarded a grade 1 is also substantially lower than the national average (13%).
15. When compared to the previous inspection, in the six subjects inspected, standards have improved only in design technology in key stages 3 and 4.

The quality of test, assessment and external examination results.

16. During the last three years, the results of pupils in the end of KS3 assessments have been inconsistent. In 2007, assessments placed the school in the highest quartile for English, above the median for mathematics and the Core Subject Indicator (CSI) and below the median for science, in comparison with similar schools in Wales, with regard to Free School Meals (FSM). In 2008, end of KS3 assessments placed the school in the lowest quartile for English, mathematics, science and CSI, in comparison with similar schools.
17. There are important shortcomings in pupils' performance in GCSE examinations. During the four year period 2005 - 08, there was no improvement in the main performance indicators at the end of KS4, when comparing the school's results with those of similar schools across Wales, in respect of FSM levels. In 2008, the school was in the lowest quartile of similar schools for the CSI, the percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C and the average points score.
18. In 2006, 2007 and 2008, the percentage of pupils who gained five or more A* - C GCSE grades, five or more A* - G grades and the CSI, was considerably lower than the county and Welsh averages.
19. In all the main indicators, the performance of boys at the school is lower than the girls' performance.
20. During the three year period, between 2006 and 2008, there has been a general decline in the performance of students in the 'A' level examinations. In 2006, the percentage of students who succeeded in gaining two or more passes at grades A-C in the 'A' level examinations was higher than the county and Welsh averages.

21. In 2007, the percentage of students who succeeded in gaining two or more passes at grades A – C was similar to the county average but lower than Wales; in 2008, the school's percentage was lower than the county and Welsh averages.

Standards in key skills

22. Pupils' and students' standards in the key skills show good features outweighing shortcomings.
23. In KS3, pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills have good features outweighing shortcomings. In KS4, pupils' literacy and ICT skills are good. Students achieve good standards in their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Pupils' and students' bilingual skills are not well developed.

The progress learners make in their learning

24. Pupils' progress in learning shows good features outweighing shortcomings. When pupils are appropriately challenged and involved in work that is provided at a suitable pace, containing a variety of activities, good progress is evident. In the six subjects inspected, there was a clear correlation between the quality of the teaching and the progress made by pupils. In a few lessons, where teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour effectively, pupils make less progress than they should.
25. The progress students make in their learning is good. Students show positive attitudes towards their learning and a responsible attitude towards their work.
26. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

Standards in personal, social and learning skills

27. Pupils' standards in the personal, social and learning skills show good features outweighing shortcomings. Students' standards are good.
28. Pupils' and students' social, cultural and moral awareness is good but their spiritual awareness is not so well developed.
29. Pupils and students are generally well motivated and are eager to work in lessons. However, in KS4, a few pupils are less eager to engage with the task in hand and are unable to sustain concentration throughout lessons.
30. The school has a friendly atmosphere. Most pupils are well behaved and willing learners.
31. Whole school attendance over the last three terms was just below 90%. While absenteeism is higher than the county and national averages, it is lower than the figure for similar schools, in respect of FSM levels.

32. Pupils' ability to work independently is limited and the skills required for problem-solving and improving their own learning are not well developed.
33. In general, pupils and students are prepared well for their future roles in work, education and the community.

C. The quality of teaching, training and assessment

34. The table below shows the quality of teaching in the 108 lessons observed throughout the school:

Quality of teaching	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
All subjects	8%	55%	24%	9%	4%

35. When compared with the national profile for Wales for 2006-7 as reported in HMCI's annual report, the percentage of lessons graded 1 (8%) falls below the national average of 19%. The percentage of lessons graded 1 and 2 (63%) is also below the national average of 76%.
36. In lessons graded 1 or 2, the good features of teaching include:
 - well planned lessons, with clear objectives shared with pupils;
 - teachers' good knowledge of their specialist subjects;
 - teachers' enthusiasm for their subject, and
 - teachers and learning support assistants working well together to provide good quality support for pupils with special educational needs.
37. In the less effective lessons, there are shortcomings and some of these are deemed to be important. They include:
 - limited classroom management skills, with poor control of the learning environment, and pupils making very little progress;
 - insufficient planning, with little direction given to pupils. Learning outcomes are not discussed with pupils, resulting in a failure to engage the learners;
 - low expectations, a lack of challenging activities with the pace of lessons being slow, and
 - very few planned opportunities for pupils to work independently.
38. The SIP shows a clear priority to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

39. The quality of the assessment of pupils' work varies across the school. In some subjects, marking is infrequent and gives little guidance to learners on how to improve their work.

D. The degree to which teaching satisfies the needs of the range of pupils at the school

40. The curriculum generally meets the learning needs of the range of pupils and students in the school, and is broad and balanced for every pupil.

Good features include:

- the flexibility of the KS4 curriculum, which allows every pupil to choose freely from the options menu;
- the school's response to the Learning Pathways agenda, by offering a number of vocational courses at KS4;
- the establishment of good links with partner primary schools, and
- very good extra-curricular opportunities for more able and talented pupils.

Shortcomings include:

- the provision, development and co-ordination of the key and wider-key skills, in order to raise pupils' achievement;
 - the Learning Core requirements of Learning Pathways are at a developmental stage only, and
 - for some pupils, the statutory requirements for the teaching of Welsh and for collective worship are not followed.
41. The curriculum is enhanced through a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as cultural activities, clubs and after school activities and numerous educational visits.
42. The school's partnerships with parents, other schools and institutions reinforce the learning experiences well. The school has effective links with local employers.
43. The school promotes pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development well.
44. There are, however, insufficient opportunities for pupils and students across all key stages to develop the necessary independent skills needed for lifelong learning.

E. The quality of the care and guidance pupils and students receive

45. The quality of care, support and guidance for learners has good features that outweigh shortcomings. The school is a caring and civilised community that is inclusive for pupils from a variety of backgrounds.

46. Heads of year fulfil their duties conscientiously and provide pupils and students with a secure base for learning. Every half-term, they effectively identify pupils who display a changed pattern in achievement, effort or behaviour. However the present system is not systematic enough to identify pupils who might require support at an earlier stage.
47. Form tutors know their pupils well and provide suitable guidance and support for the pupils in their care.
48. The induction programme for new pupils is very good as is the relationship with partner primary schools. The residential course at the end of Y6 is an outstanding feature.
49. Parents receive purposeful information about the life of the school and are regularly consulted.
50. Pupils' attendance is appropriately monitored.
51. The school has a well documented behavioural system. Pupils are well aware of the standards expected from them and nearly all respond in a positive manner.
52. The School Council plays an active part in the daily life of the school.
53. Healthy lifestyles are promoted across the school and most learners are aware of the importance of healthy eating and the importance of diet and exercise.
54. All members of staff are aware of procedures and protocols to protect pupils from abuse.
55. The quality of the provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) has good features which outweigh shortcomings. The school as a whole is supportive towards pupils with ALN and offers them a caring environment.
56. The school is very successful in supporting pupils with challenging behaviour. The school is proactive in dealing with bullying. Pupils indicate that any incident of bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively by staff.
57. The school offers equal opportunities to each individual, whatever their social, educational, ethnic or linguistic background.

F. Leadership and management

58. The school's leadership and management has good features outweighing shortcomings.
59. Since his appointment in September, 2007, the headteacher has developed an honest and self-critical culture, focussed on raising expectations and performance. Appropriate initiatives have been introduced by the Senior Leadership and Management Team (SLMT), and there is evidence that these are impacting positively on pupils' achievement.

60. Overall, the leadership skills of heads of department are inconsistent. Heads of year are very effective in their pastoral support of pupils.
61. The school has responded well to some WAG priorities such as inclusion and links with partner primary schools; others, such as sustainable development and the introduction of the Welsh Bacalaureate are not so well developed.
62. There are effective procedures to identify the developmental needs of staff.
63. The governing body is supportive and undertakes its duties effectively as a 'critical friend'. Governors contribute effectively to the work of the school. However, governors have not ensured that the school fulfils all statutory requirements.
64. There are some good features in the process of self-evaluation, and school evaluation is now becoming established within an annual cycle. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of departmental evaluation reports, some of which are descriptive rather than analytical in nature.
65. The process and outcomes of self-evaluation are now resulting in a clearer understanding of the school's performance compared to similar schools in Wales.
66. The current School Improvement Plan (SIP) identifies appropriate priorities for improvement. However, there is a lack of clarity and understanding of the link between the self-evaluation process and the strategic planning cycle.

G. Effective and efficient use of the school's resources and value for money

67. The school has sufficient teaching staff to deliver its curriculum. Ancillary and support staff work efficiently to promote the effective running of the school. Workforce remodelling has taken place in line with current guidelines.
68. Departmental capitation allowances have recently been reduced, in line with the school's current financial situation, and as a result it is difficult for departments to update teaching resources.
69. The school buildings are generally satisfactory and the school managers and governors have worked hard to improve the school's environment. There has been significant investment to allow disabled pupils access to all parts of the building. However, some parts of the building are still in need of improvement.
70. The bursar works effectively with the headteacher to monitor the school's budget. However, the school's budget has been in deficit during the last two years, contrary to the recommendations of the Audit Commission.
71. Due mainly to timetabling constraints, the use made of staff in some curricular areas is an important shortcoming.

72. Having considered the overall current situation, the inspection team is of the opinion that the value for money provided by the school is adequate.

H. How well the school has addressed issues identified in the previous inspection

73. The school has not responded well to many of the key issues identified in the report following the previous inspection.

Recommendations

The school needs to:

- R1: *improve standards of achievement in those subjects where there are shortcomings, particularly in science at KS3;
- R2: *improve external examination results;
- R3: *continue to implement strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning, in order that all pupils are stimulated and challenged;
- R4: develop and implement whole-school and classroom strategies to develop pupils' key and wider key skills, including those for independent learning;
- R5: *develop assessment as a tool for improving teaching and learning and the use of monitored individual pupil targets to raise expectation and performance, and
- R6: meet all legal and statutory requirements.

*The SIP for 2008 – 2011 includes steps to deal with this recommendation.

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

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 4: Some good features, but shortcomings in important areas

74. The grade awarded by the inspection team is one grade lower than the grade 3 that the school awarded itself in its self-evaluation report. The school did not give sufficient consideration to how pupils' attainment compares with that of pupils in similar schools. In addition, the standards achieved by pupils in the lessons observed fell well short of the averages for Wales in 2006-07, as recorded by HMCI.

Pupils' success in attaining agreed learning goals

75. The following table shows the standards achieved in the six subjects of the curriculum specifically inspected:

Subject	Key stage 3	Key stage 4	Sixth form
English	3	3	2
Science	4	3	3
Modern foreign languages	3	3	3
Physical education	2	3	2
Design and technology	2	2	2
Business studies	-	2	2

76. The standards that pupils achieved in the eighty lessons observed at the different key stages in the subjects inspected are shown in the following table:

Standards	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS 3	0%	39%	49%	6%	6%
KS 4	4%	37%	44%	15%	0%
KS3 + 4 combined (60 lessons)	2%	38%	47%	10%	3%
Post 16	5%	65%	30%	0%	0%
Whole school	3%	45%	43%	7%	2%

77. The percentage of lessons awarded grades 1 and 2, namely 48%, is much lower than the corresponding percentage (71%) for secondary schools in Wales, as reported in HMCI's annual report for 2006-07. The percentage of lessons awarded grade 1, namely 3%, is also substantially lower than the national average, 13%.
78. When compared to the previous inspection, standards have improved in design and technology at KS3 and KS4, standards have been maintained in English at KS3, in modern foreign languages (MFL) at KS4 and physical education at KS3 and KS4. Standards have declined in English at KS4, in science at KS3 and KS4 and in MFL at KS3.

Quality of test, assessment and external examination results

Key Stage 3

79. During the last three years, pupils' results in the end of KS3 assessments have been inconsistent.
80. In 2006, assessment results placed the school below the median for English and in the lowest quartile for mathematics, science and CSI, in comparison with similar schools across Wales, with regard to FSM levels.
81. In 2007, assessment results placed the school in the highest quartile for English, above the median for mathematics and the CSI and below the median for science, in comparison with similar schools.
82. In 2008, results placed the school in the lowest quartile for English, mathematics, science and the CSI.
83. Value added statistics prepared by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) for 2006/2007 show the school is in the highest quartile of similar schools for adding value to the percentage of pupils obtaining Level 5 or above in English, but below the median for mathematics and the CSI and in the lowest quartile for science.

Key stage 4

84. There are important shortcomings in pupils' performance in GCSE examinations.
85. During the four years 2005-2008, there was no improvement in the main performance indicators at the end of KS4, when comparing the school's results with those of similar schools across Wales, in respect of FSM levels.
86. In 2005, in comparison with similar schools in respect of FSM levels, the school was below the median in respect of the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-G grades at GCSE and in the lowest quartile in respect of the percentage of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C, the CSI and the average points score.
87. In 2006, in comparison with similar schools, the school was in the lowest quartile for all four indicators.
88. In 2007, the school was below the median for the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-G grades and the CSI, and in the lowest quartile for the average points score and the percentage gaining five or more A*-C GCSE grades.
89. In 2008, the school was in the lowest quartile for all four indicators.
90. In 2006, 2007 and 2008, the percentage of pupils who gained five or more A* - C GCSE grades, five or more A* - G grades and the CSI, was considerably lower than the county and Welsh averages.

91. Over the same period, the GCSE average wider points score per pupil was also lower than the county and Welsh average.
92. In 2007 and 2008, the percentage of pupils obtaining the level 1 and level 2 thresholds was lower than the county and Welsh averages.
93. In all the main indicators, the performance of boys at the school is lower than the girls' performance.
94. WAG value added statistics for 2006/2007 show that the school is in the lowest quartile of similar schools for adding value to the percentage of pupils who achieve five GCSE grades A* - C, five grades A* - G, average points score and the CSI during KS4.

Standards in the key skills

95. Pupils' communication skills have good features that outweigh shortcomings at KS3 and good features with no important shortcomings at KS4.
96. In both key stages, pupils display good standards in speaking. Pupils can express opinions, describe in detail, discuss and come to conclusions. Generally, pupils listen quite well to their teachers and to each other and are able to follow the development of ideas and respond to questions. There is good use and understanding of subject vocabulary. However, in both key stages, a few pupils do not listen respectfully to teachers or to one another.
97. Pupils reading skills are generally good. Most read aloud with accuracy and fluency and have a clear understanding of what is read. In KS3, pupils' reading skills have good features that outweigh shortcomings. A few pupils in KS3 are not able to read to the expected standard. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress in reading.
98. The quality of pupils' written work is inconsistent. Most pupils present their work well and their spelling and punctuation are good on the whole. The more able pupils understand that there are different modes of writing and adapt their style to suit their audience and the purpose of the piece of work. A few pupils, however, produce untidy and poorly presented work, which is often left unfinished, and their spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors are left unchecked.
99. Pupils' numerical skills have good features outweighing shortcomings. Most pupils display their numerical abilities well and are confident in applying their skills in science, technology and business. However, a few pupils have limited numerical skills and lack the confidence and motivation to apply their skills in new contexts and to everyday situations.
100. In KS3, good features outweigh shortcomings in ICT. Pupils do not always make good use of the few opportunities they are given to develop their skills and are insufficiently challenged in ICT lessons. Pupils' skills in using ICT develop well during KS4 particularly in business and design and technology and pupils use computers successfully to research, prepare and present information and to communicate their ideas.

101. Pupils' bilingual skills do not develop well, as they have few opportunities to use Welsh in different situations, in or out of lessons.

Pupils' progress in learning

102. Pupils' progress in learning shows good features outweighing shortcomings.
103. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils succeed regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background.
104. Gifted and talented pupils also make good progress, but there is little to spur on these pupils in class to achieve exceptionally well.
105. When pupils are appropriately challenged and involved in work that is provided at a suitable pace, containing a variety of activities, good progress is evident. In the six subjects inspected, there was a clear correlation between the quality of the teaching and the progress made by pupils. In a few lessons, where teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour effectively, pupils make less progress than they should.
106. Some pupils do not have a clear idea of the level at which they are working, in relation to examination grades. As a result, many pupils are not fully aware of how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve.
107. In KS4, a minority of pupils fail to understand their work and what is expected of them, respond poorly to the educational demands made of them and as a result are not well placed to move on to the next stage of learning.

Standards in personal, social and learning skills

108. Pupils' standards in the personal, social and learning skills show good features outweighing shortcomings.
109. Pupils' social, cultural and moral awareness is good, but their spiritual awareness is not so well developed.
110. In KS3, the majority of pupils are motivated and are eager to work in lessons and contribute to tasks but some individuals are not as motivated and willing to work. In KS4, a few pupils are not willing to engage with the task in hand and are unable to sustain concentration throughout lessons.
111. The school has a friendly atmosphere. Most pupils are well behaved and willing learners. They show respect to one another and to adults. Pupils are aware of the school's high expectations and there is a good rapport between pupils and teachers. A few pupils are disruptive in class and this has an adverse effect on their learning.

112. Whole school attendance over the last three terms was just below 90%. It was regularly below 90% in KS4. While absenteeism is higher than the county and national averages, it is lower than the figure for similar schools, with a similar percentage of pupils receiving FSM.
113. Nearly all pupils arrive punctually. Lessons start and finish on time.
114. On the whole, pupils work well with each other, in pairs and group-work, and show respect, care and concern for others. Pupils explore their views openly and are willing to listen to opinions they may not share.
115. Pupils' problem solving skills display good features that outweigh shortcomings.
116. Pupils' ability to work independently is limited and the skills required for improving their own learning display some good features but also important shortcomings.
117. Pupils show a good awareness of the diverse religions and traditions of the world. They empathise with others, as is shown by the regular collections for charitable causes.
118. Pupils are familiar with local industry, businesses and community organisations. They play an active part in community life. A good number of pupils opt for vocational courses in engineering and child development and vocationally related courses in applied science and business studies. Pupils are keen to participate in school music and drama productions which provide a good interface with parents and the community at large.

Post 16

119. In the twenty lessons observed in the six subjects specifically inspected, the percentage of lessons awarded each grade for student standards in the sixth form is as follows:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Post 16	5%	65%	30%	0%	0%

120. When compared to the previous inspection, standards were maintained in English, design and technology, physical education and business studies but standards have declined in science and MFL.

Students' success in attaining agreed learning goals

121. During the three year period, between 2006 and 2008, there has been a general decline in the performance of students in the 'A' level examinations.
122. In 2006, the percentage of students who succeeded in gaining two or more passes at grades A-C in the 'A' level examinations was higher than the county and Welsh averages.

123. In 2007, the percentage of students who succeeded in gaining two or more passes at grades A – C was similar to the county average but lower than Wales; in 2008, the school's percentage was lower than the county and Welsh averages.
124. In 2007 and 2008, students' average wider points score was substantially lower than county and Welsh averages. In 2007, the percentage of students achieving the level 3 threshold was above the county average and similar to Wales. In 2008, the percentage of students achieving the level 3 threshold was lower than the county and Welsh averages.

Standards in the key skills

125. Students' communication skills are good. Students:
- speak very well, using a wide vocabulary confidently when presenting information and expressing opinions;
 - listen well and respond intelligently to the contributions of fellow students and teachers;
 - respond well to a range of texts and their reading standards are sound, and
 - write effectively for a range of purposes. Writing is often well-structured and organised.
126. Students are confident in discussing numbers and apply their number skills well in other subjects, such as science and business.
127. Students' ICT skills are well developed and they apply them effectively in the subjects studied to support their learning.
128. Their bilingual skills are not well developed.

Students' progress in learning

129. The progress students make in their learning is good.
130. Students show positive attitudes towards their learning and a responsible attitude towards their work. However, students are not always aware of how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.
131. In general, students respond well to the educational demands placed on them and are in a good situation to move forward to the next stage of learning.

Students' standards in personal, social and learning skills

132. The standards of students in personal, social and learning skills are good. Students:
- show interest in their work and contribute well in lessons;

- demonstrate good behaviour and are considerate and courteous;
- act as effective peer listeners and confidants to younger pupils;
- co-operate well, help each other and show sensitive appreciation of each other's opinion, and
- develop a good understanding of the workplace and their local community.

133. A few students do not attend school regularly.

134. The research skills of some students, and their ability to work independently, are underdeveloped.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 4: Some good features but shortcomings in important areas

135. The grade awarded by the inspection team is one grade lower than the grade 3 that the school awarded itself in its self-evaluation report. The team judged that there were significant shortcomings in important areas in both teaching and in the use of assessment.

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

136. The following table shows the grades awarded for the quality of the teaching in the lessons observed throughout the school:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Key stages 3 and 4 and 6 th form combined (108 lessons)	8%	55%	24%	9%	4%

137. When compared with the national profile for Wales for 2006-7, as reported in HMCI's annual report, the percentage of lessons graded 1, (8%), falls below the national average of 19%. The percentage of lessons graded 1 and 2 (63%) is also below the national average of 76%.

Key stages 3 and 4

138. The following table shows the quality of teaching in the 60 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected and 26 lessons in other subjects, in KS3 and KS4.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6 Subjects	8%	54%	23%	10%	5%
Other subjects	11%	39%	31%	14%	5%
All subjects	9%	49%	26%	11%	5%

139. Teaching has good features and no important shortcomings in 63% of lessons at KS4. In KS3 the comparable figure was 56%.

140. In lessons where there were outstanding features in the teaching:

- the professional working relationships and excellent interaction within the classroom stimulate and motivate pupils of all abilities to participate fully and to give of their best:
- lessons have a challenging pace that ensures all pupils have a continuous focus, and
- well selected or carefully differentiated tasks are set.

141. In lessons where there were good features, the above were often present, but they were not as well developed. The good features include:
- well planned and well organised lessons;
 - clear objectives that are shared with pupils and revisited in plenary sessions;
 - teachers' good knowledge of their specialist subjects and their familiarity with recent developments in their field;
 - teachers' enthusiasm for their subject, making lessons engaging and relevant to the pupils, and
 - teachers developing pupils' previous knowledge, skills and understanding.
142. Other examples of good teaching practice include teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) working well together to provide good quality support for pupils with special educational needs. In the best examples of co-operation between teachers and LSAs, both parties make very good use of individual educational plans (IEPs) to set targets and to monitor progress.
143. Some teachers make good use of activities that require pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding of Wales and they promote the Curriculum Cymreig very well.
144. Good features outweighed shortcomings in 26% of lessons at KS3 and KS4. These shortcomings in grade 3 lessons include:
- very little variety in teaching methods and strategies and no differentiated tasks;
 - very few planned opportunities for pupils to work independently or to assess their own learning, and
 - little use of information and communication technology or other key or wider key skills, where appropriate, to enhance learning and teaching.
145. There were important shortcomings in 16% of lessons in KS3 and KS4, including:
- low expectations, a lack of challenging activities with the pace of lessons being slow;
 - limited classroom management skills, with poor control of the learning environment and pupils making very little or no progress;
 - insufficient or ineffective planning in order to meet lesson objectives, and
 - too little direction given to pupils, resulting in a failure to engage them.
146. In many lessons, homework is not used effectively to extend pupils' understanding of the work.
147. The SIP shows a clear priority to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Recently, efforts have been made to identify effective strategies to promote teaching standards across the school.

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

148. The use of assessment in planning and improving learning has some good features but shortcomings in important areas.
149. The school's policy for assessment, recording, and reporting offers guidance on the schools' assessment procedures but, as the policy has not been updated since 2003/04, it does not give sufficient guidance to teaching staff on current assessment procedures.
150. The school meets the statutory requirements for assessment and reporting at KS3. Teachers also meet the regulations and satisfy the examination board requirements at KS4. The school has successfully participated in standardisation and moderation activities at the end of KS3 and so is making progress in improving the rigour of teacher assessments.
151. The use of targets to improve achievement varies from subject to subject. The analysis and use of performance data is inconsistent.
152. The quality of marking pupils' work is inconsistent. Although in some subjects it is carried out well, there are others in which marking is infrequent and gives very little guidance to learners on how to improve their work.
153. Assessment is used constructively in only a few departments. In the best examples, however, teachers provide pupils with specific oral feedback which gives them a clear indication of their strengths and areas for improvement. A majority of pupils are aware of their own targets and know how to improve some aspects of their work.
154. In a small number of lessons, assessment becomes an important aspect of the learning and pupils are expected to take part in a dialogue with the teacher and with each other about what makes one piece of work better than another, and how work can be improved. This good practice is not replicated in most lessons.
155. The school assesses pupils' attainment and effort effectively and provides one full report and one interim report (with the exception of Y11) to parents annually, thus meeting statutory requirements. Pupils and parents have opportunities to respond to the reports via the head of year. However, annual reports to parents are not sufficiently subject specific and do not always provide pupils and their parents with a clear indication of how to improve.

Post 16

156. In the 20 lessons observed in the six subjects being inspected and the two lessons observed in other subjects, the grades awarded for teaching and assessment were as follows:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6 Subjects	5%	75%	20%	0%	0%
Other subjects	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
All subjects	5%	77%	18%	0%	0%

157. In lessons graded 1 or 2, where teaching has good and outstanding features, teachers:

- have very high expectations and students are encouraged to develop into independent learners;
- have a very constructive working relationship with students;
- possess thorough and current subject knowledge;
- plan opportunities for students to constructively evaluate their own work and the work of other students, and
- prepare and support students very well to meet the requirements of external examinations.

158. There were shortcomings in the quality of teaching in 18% of lessons in the sixth form. They include:

- inappropriate pace and lack of differentiated tasks where required;
- little variation in methodology with lessons being “teacher centred”;
- few opportunities planned for independent work or the development of students’ key or wider key skills, and
- work which is not sufficiently stimulating and challenging.

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

159. In the sixth form, the use of assessment in planning and improving learning has good features outweighing shortcomings.

160. The quality of the assessment and marking of students’ work is inconsistent.

161. In most subjects, teachers have a good knowledge of their students’ strengths and weaknesses. They support students with helpful diagnostic comments on their work and orally in lessons. This enables students to become familiar with the course requirements but encouraging students to self assess and to use peer assessment as a tool for improving their own learning is not common practice. Those students who are not achieving their target grades are identified and supported.

162. Records of achievement for sixth form students give details of their efforts, attendance, as well as their minimum expected grade, together with the grade they are currently working at. This provides a useful overview of progress.

163. The school meets the statutory requirements of examination boards.

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

164. The grade awarded by the inspection team does not agree with the grade 2 awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report. The school does not ensure that there is a coherent and co-ordinated provision for developing key skills across the curriculum and that pupils acquire the skills required for life-long learning.

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

165. The curriculum:

- generally meets the pupils' learning needs and reflects the aims for statutory school age pupils set out in the Education Acts of 1996 and 2005;
- is broad and balanced for every pupil, including pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and ALN;
- provides equal opportunity and access for all pupils and students; and
- provides personal and social education, work-related education and careers education and guidance, in accordance with WAG guidelines.

166. A daily act of collective worship is not provided in a few tutor groups.

167. There are a number of good features in which the school meets the learning needs and interests of its pupils and students. These include:

- the flexibility of the KS4 curriculum, which allows every pupil to choose freely from the options menu available;
- the school's response to the 14-19 Learning Pathways' agenda, by offering a number of vocational courses at KS4, including Engineering, Child Development, Applied Science, Business and Communication Technology;
- the establishment of good links with the partner primary schools, which ensure continuity and progression in the curriculum across KS2 and KS3. An outstanding feature is the Aberystwyth residential course for Y6 pupils, which has been introduced in co-operation with local primary schools. Both parents and current Y7 pupils state it has greatly helped the transfer from primary to secondary school, and
- very good extra-curricular opportunities for more able and talented pupils organised by the school and at county level.

168. There are however, some shortcomings, including:
- the provision and development of ICT, which is not effectively coordinated across all subjects in KS3; there are no opportunities for pupils in KS4 to follow an accredited course in ICT, and
 - the fact that the statutory requirement for Welsh is not followed for a very few pupils in Y10, who follow the ASDAN course.
169. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Agency's Quality Mark. However, the school does not have a clear whole school and classroom strategy to ensure that the key and wider key skills form an integrated part of the curriculum and are used to raise pupils' standards of achievement. This is an important shortcoming.
170. The curriculum is enriched through a wide range of extra-curricular activities. These contribute well to pupils' personal, social and cultural development. The programme includes:
- cultural experiences through a variety of competitions and performances in music and drama;
 - a wide range of clubs and after school activities to promote pupils' learning outside the classroom. These are valued by both parents and pupils, and
 - numerous educational visits to local places of interest, exchange visits and visits abroad to expand pupils' horizons.
171. The school promotes pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development well. The PSE programmes are carefully planned and they give pupils and students wide and relevant experiences which meet the WAG guidelines. The programmes are strengthened by the contribution of several outside agencies.
172. The school takes positive action to ensure equal opportunities for each pupil and to prevent stereotyping. The school gives high priority to social inclusion.
173. The school's partnership with parents, other schools and institutions reinforce pupils' and students' learning experiences and include the following good or outstanding features:
- parents are very supportive of the school; their views have been actively sought and acted upon. A regular newsletter highlights school events and activities;
 - close working partnerships with a number of external agencies, including voluntary and charity organisations;

- very good links with partner primary schools which have been used effectively to develop transition arrangements from KS2 to KS3;
 - good partnerships with higher education colleges for initial teacher training programmes;
 - numerous and beneficial projects with the local community and employers, which offer pupils worthwhile experiences of the outside world, and
 - an outstanding partnership with the Flintshire Forest School project, which is organised in conjunction with the Plas Derw Trust. The project enables pupils in Y7 to participate in a number of outdoor activities, thus developing their problem solving skills and their ability to work effectively with others.
174. Links with other schools and institutions to further develop the 14-19 curricular options have not progressed sufficiently. As from 2009, however, KS4 pupils will have the opportunity of studying a wider range of courses, in partnership with the county Learning Core Centre.

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

175. There are many good features in the way in which the learning experiences offered respond to the needs of employers and the wider community.

The good features include:

- effective links with industry and employers in order to develop pupils' understanding of the world of work;
 - the work-experience programme arranged for all Y10 pupils and most Y12 students with local employers. The arrangements are carefully planned and monitored by the Work Experience Co-ordinator; learners receive good induction and post-experience briefings, and
 - the school's links with local industry, businesses and community organisations. Pupils and students are encouraged in a variety of ways to play an active part in community life. Pupils are helped by a local business organisation to complete mock job applications and to practice mock interviews.
176. The school has introduced several initiatives to promote the Cwricwlwm Cymreig. These include a bilingual newsletter to parents, bilingual notices, promotion of Welsh cultural events, including the Eisteddfod and an audit of subject contribution to the Cwricwlwm Cymreig. However, planned opportunities to nurture pupils' bilingual skills within the classroom are generally limited.

177. Global citizenship within the school curriculum has good features that outweigh shortcomings. It is highlighted in subjects such as religious education and PSE lessons. Pupils show a good awareness of the diverse religions and traditions of the world. They show empathy with others by arranging regular collections for charitable causes.
178. The school is currently paying increasing attention to aspects of sustainable development but it does not meet current WAG expectations for promoting sustainability. There are good features but also important shortcomings in the manner in which sustainable development is addressed. A member of staff runs an after school conservation club which raises awareness of environmental issues. However, sustainability is yet to be fully developed across the curriculum and form a part of daily school life.
179. The school pays good attention to the needs of employers. There are outstanding examples of entrepreneurial work in the design and technology department; pupils and students in Y11 and Y12 have achieved considerable success over the years at county and national level with Young Enterprise and Engineering projects.
180. Y12 business students, working in partnership with the local council, do excellent work in investigating which businesses are more likely to succeed locally.
181. Role models from industry and business visit the school as part of the "Dynamo" project run by the Careers Company. There is, however, no whole school strategy to ensure subject contribution to the entrepreneurial agenda, by developing pupils' skills to establish and run new business ventures.
182. The school is actively involved in its local community. Its facilities are used by various clubs and associations. It is working with the local Communities First Partnership on a scheme to build a community centre on a redundant part of the school premises.
183. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils and students across all key stages to develop the necessary independent learning skills for lifelong learning.
184. The school has developed aspects of the 14-19 Learning Pathways agenda in conjunction with the local Network, with the expansion of the vocational options menu at KS4 and post-16. However, aspects of the Learning Core requirements are currently at a developmental stage only.

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

185. This grade is lower than the Grade 2 awarded by the school for this key question in its self-evaluation report. The grade awarded by the inspection team reflects a number of shortcomings and in particular the quality of the monitoring of learners' progress and its impact on examination results.

The quality of care, support and guidance to learners.

186. The quality of care, support and guidance for learners has good features that outweigh shortcomings. The school is a caring, civilised and inclusive community.

187. Heads of Year fulfil their duties conscientiously and provide pupils and students with a secure base for learning. They have a good understanding of the performance of individual pupils across subjects. Every half-term they effectively identify pupils who display a changed pattern in achievement, effort or behaviour. However, the present system is not systematic enough to identify pupils who might require support at an earlier stage. Monitoring of pupils' performance across the subjects is at an early stage and is not yet effective in improving standards.

188. In KS4, all pupils receive additional support in subjects when preparing for their examinations. In Y11, underachieving pupils receive structured and useful support from individual mentors and the learning coach.

189. Form tutors know their pupils well and provide suitable guidance and support for the pupils in their care. The quality of the morning tutorial sessions observed by inspectors varied from good with no important shortcomings to some with good features but shortcomings in important areas. In the better examples, pupils are engaged in meaningful tasks and good use is made of the time. In others, pupils were left to their own devices.

190. The school has comprehensive information handbooks for transition periods which present the range of available options. Open evenings and individual consultations enhance the guidance for making choices. The school's careers co-ordinator provides valuable guidance and information; the teachers and the Careers Officer also offer good guidance for pupils when they make career choices during Y11 and Y13.

191. The induction programme for new pupils is very good, as is the relationship with feeder primary schools. The residential course arranged by the high school at the end of Y6 is an outstanding feature. Y7 pupils indicate that it helped them to settle down quickly, make new friends and become happy and confident in their new environment. The Forest School activities encourage vulnerable pupils to gain in confidence and self esteem and to make their transition to secondary school less daunting.

192. Parents receive regular information about school life. They are welcomed to school to discuss any concerns. The school regularly consults parents by means of questionnaires to discover their views about different aspects of school life. Nearly all parents who responded said that they are happy with the information that they receive.
193. The school's administrative officer appropriately monitors attendance. She prepares regular analyses for the leadership team and heads of year. Despite very good support from the education welfare officer, the police liaison officer, and hard work by the school, attendance figures are still low and show little improvement since the last inspection. However, attendance is higher than the figure for similar schools, in respect of FSM levels. The school is developing vocational courses in the KS4 curriculum. The attendance of pupils following the ASDAN course in Year 10 has improved, as a result.
194. The PSE programme is broad and complies with the WAG framework guidelines. External agencies such as the police, health and social services make key contributions in presenting the programme. PSE encourages pupils to talk about relevant subjects, to discuss current issues and matters that are important and relevant to them. It also helps them with their learning and social needs.
195. The school has a well documented behavioural system. Pupils are well aware of the standards expected from them and nearly all respond in a positive manner. The school has clear structures and guidelines to deal with pupils who disrupt lessons. However, not all teachers follow the school guidance on withdrawal of disruptive pupils from class.
196. There were only two permanent exclusions during the year preceding the inspection. Correct procedures were followed in cases where pupils were excluded temporarily for unacceptable behaviour.
197. The Silent Learning Room (SLR) is effective in preventing individual pupils from disrupting the learning of others. It also gives pupils the opportunity to receive counselling, to reflect on their behaviour and to establish personal strategies that they can use in mainstream classes.
198. The School Council plays an active part in the daily life of the school. Pupils and students acknowledge that it gives them appropriate opportunities to express their opinions and recommendations. They indicate that the school considers their deliberations and responds to them.
199. Healthy lifestyles are promoted across the school. Most learners are aware of the importance of healthy eating and the importance of diet and exercise.
200. The school has good, relevant procedures to promote the health, safety and well-being of every pupil. It has prepared relevant risk assessments relating to the school site and to external visits and appropriate records are kept. An appropriate number of staff have recognised First Aid qualifications.

201. All members of staff are aware of procedures and protocols to protect pupils from abuse. A member of the SLMT is in charge of supervising these arrangements and he performs the task conscientiously. Very good links have been established with a number of relevant outside agencies.

The quality of provision for additional learning needs

202. The quality of the provision for pupils with ALN has good features which outweigh shortcomings.
203. By using the information from the primary schools and standardised tests, the school successfully identifies pupils who need extra support when they arrive at the school. An effective process of identifying relevant pupils continues through effective links between the additional needs co-ordinator (ANCO) and the heads of year.
204. The manner in which the school has responded to the SEN Code of Practice is outstanding. It prepares IEPs for the pupils which include very good targets that relate well to the educational, behavioural or pastoral needs of the pupils. The targets are set and agreed with pupils and nearly all parents are involved. Targets are specific and achievable in a set time and become an incentive for pupils. Where relevant, the IEPs reflect the requirements of the pupil's statement of special needs. These plans are distributed to all departments. There are very good examples of individual plans influencing teachers' planning for lessons.
205. Statements of SEN are reviewed effectively. Parents and external agencies take a practical role in the process. The school register for ALN is updated regularly, is comprehensive and contains all the relevant information about pupils' ALN. The three pupils in KS4 who are disapplied from Welsh follow an appropriate ASDAN course as an alternative.
206. Extra support is provided for pupils with statements of SEN in small groups in English and mathematics. It is a shortcoming that a minority of these groups are taught by non-specialist subject teachers.
207. Paired reading is successfully used to improve the reading skills and fluency of 29 Y7 pupils. These periods are well organised and good training and guidance is provided for the sixth form students who take part in this scheme.
208. There is no designated learning resource area for pupils with ALN to receive extra specialist support relating to their individual needs.
209. LSAs offer effective support for individuals and small groups of pupils. They work closely with subject teachers and provide pupils with continuity, security and support. They often help to avoid difficulties and assist teachers to meet individual educational and emotional needs. However, in some classes, the LSAs are not directed effectively by the class teacher.

210. The school is very successful in supporting pupils with challenging behaviour. Pupils on the SEN register who have been identified as having behavioural difficulties all have IEPs. The plans include the setting of appropriate targets that are agreed with the parents or carers and the individual pupil. Pupils who disrupt classwork are “internally excluded” under individual supervision in the SLR for a specific period of time.
211. The ANCO provides good support and guidance to learners and staff. She has a clear vision of how to develop the provision. She is well supported by the SLMT and the designated governor for ALN. Very good links have been established with a range of outside agencies. Parents are involved and know there is an open door policy for them if problems do arise. The school as a whole is very supportive of pupils with ALN and offers them a caring environment.

The quality of provision for equal opportunities

212. The quality of the provision for equal opportunities has good features and no important shortcomings.
213. The school’s equal opportunities policy ensures that there is no discrimination against any member of the school community. The school has conducted a detailed audit of subject contributions to equal opportunities.
214. All courses are open to all pupils. The school recognises the diversity of pupils' backgrounds and provides a flexible curriculum. This includes appropriate support for pupils learning English as a second language and special arrangements for some learners to spend part of their course off-site.
215. In KS4, the school offers more practical and vocational courses for those pupils who are suited to them in line with WAG recommendations and requirements in Learning Pathways 14 -19. More able and talented pupils have been identified and there are outstanding examples of work and activities designed to challenge them outside the school curriculum in private schools, universities, and on county led courses. However, in lessons observed inspectors saw few opportunities for more able pupils to be challenged and no different tasks were set.
216. In religious education, pupils study examples of inequality, racism and prejudice. Teachers successfully use these studies to promote good race relations and respect for different cultures, religions and social groups. The few pupils from minority ethnic groups integrate naturally with their peers.
217. The school is proactive in dealing with bullying. A recent review, which involved a number of outside agencies, helped the school to further refine its policy. An outside agency has trained a number of students as points of contact for younger pupils if they experience any problems. Pupils indicate that any incident of bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively by staff.

218. The school works very hard to promote social inclusion and this is reflected through all the school's life and activities. The school has a comprehensive pastoral system and good support from outside agencies to help and support any pupil or student experiencing difficulty in school, at home or in the community.
219. Pupils who are looked after by the local authority have relevant co-ordinated individual plans with Social Services. The school works closely with all outside agencies to secure appropriate support.
220. The school has prepared a disability access plan and suitable changes to the building are nearly complete to enable less mobile learners access to the relevant parts of the building.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

221. The grade awarded by the inspection team agrees with the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.
222. The grade awarded for this key question, grade 3, does not correspond to the grade awarded to key question 1, namely grade 4. This is due to the good features of management and planning for improvement implemented under the leadership of the recently appointed head teacher. He has introduced a number of appropriate initiatives and there is evidence that these measures are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' and students' achievement.

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

223. Since his appointment in September 2007, the head teacher has given the school clear direction and leadership. He has a clear vision based on equal opportunities for all pupils regardless of background or ability. Under his leadership there is a new culture developing in the school which is honest and self critical, leading to higher expectations, focussed on pupils' needs.
224. The SLMT share the head teacher's vision and they work well together in ensuring the effective running of the school. Their individual strengths complement each other well. The SLMT have correctly identified their priorities for improvement and are actively pursuing them.
225. Overall, middle managers are effective in their roles. The heads of year are very effective in their pastoral support of pupils. However, the standard of leadership displayed by heads of departments is inconsistent. Thorough self-evaluation processes and detailed strategic planning are not effectively carried out in every subject.
226. An appropriate SIP has been drawn up to meet the current aims and objectives of the school. The majority of the departmental improvement plans (DIPs) support and promote the SIP's objectives. However, the DIPs vary in quality and in their effectiveness as a means of improving the quality of teaching and learning within individual departments.
227. The school has clear policies and procedures that are based on the pupils' and students' needs. However, a few of the policies need to be updated.
228. The school has ensured that all pupils have equal opportunities. No pupil is disadvantaged on the grounds of social, linguistic or cultural background.

229. The school has responded well to national and local priorities such as social inclusion, Learning Pathways 14-19 and curricular and pastoral links with feeder primary schools. However, bilingualism, sustainable development and plans to introduce the Welsh Baccalaureate with the relevant emphasis on key skills throughout the school are in need of further development.
230. There are very good links with the partner primary schools, colleges of higher education and employers. Links with other partners and providers to expand students' and pupils' choice have not been developed sufficiently.
231. A well structured process has been set up to set targets for individual pupils and departments. The school sets realistic and challenging targets for achievement, based on Cognitive Ability Test (CAT) results, for all pupils at all key stages. The use of monitored targets to improve pupil performance and for the early identification of those underachieving is currently being developed.
232. The performance management provision for all staff has recently been reviewed. The process starts with an interview with line managers and this also provides opportunities for teachers to evaluate their own work. There are procedures to identify the developmental needs of staff but these are not consistent across subjects. Following courses, staff often share information and good practice with each other.
233. Newly Qualified Teachers are well supported.
234. Two members of the SLMT have completed a course that leads to the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH).
235. Through restructuring of the ancillary and administrative staff, the school has succeeded in meeting the requirements of the national workload agreement for teachers.

How well the governors meet their responsibilities

236. The governing body is supportive and enthusiastic and undertakes its duties effectively as 'critical friends'. Members have a wide experience of the world of education and beyond and use their expertise effectively to contribute to the work of the school.
237. The governing body co-operates well with the SLMT to set a clear strategic direction for the school. It is involved in formulating and discussing policies and the governors are well-informed about all aspects of the work of the school.
238. Individual members of the governing body are aware of the work and performance of a few departments. However, this good practice has not yet spread to all departments.

239. Though well designed and informative, the current school prospectus does not contain all current WAG requirements; neither does the last governors' annual report to parents. Governors do not ensure that the school fulfils all course and statutory requirements. A small number of KS4 students do not follow a course in Welsh. A few morning tutorials do not conform to guidelines for collective worship. The governing body has not ensured that the school takes account of the Audit Commission's recommendations when adopting the school's current budget.

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings.

240. The grade awarded by the inspection team is one grade lower than the grade 2 the school awarded itself in its self-evaluation report. The team judged that there are inconsistencies and shortcomings in the self-evaluation process and a lack of progress in addressing key issues identified in the last inspection.

How effectively the school's performance is monitored and evaluated

241. There are some good features in the process of self evaluation. The school and departmental self evaluation reports are based on the Estyn Common Inspection Framework. This is the first year of implementation and represents a major shift in establishing a culture of self evaluation throughout the school. The school's self-evaluation report, prepared for the inspection, draws on subject evaluation reports as well as reviews carried out by external agencies and the SLMT.

242. School evaluation, driven by the head teacher, is now becoming established within an annual cycle. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of departmental self evaluation reports, some of which are descriptive in nature and lack depth and rigour in identifying strengths and shortcomings.

243. The school involves parents, students, staff and the UA in the self evaluation process. Self evaluation is informed by lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, questionnaires for parents at parents' evenings, a programme of subject reviews and analyses of examination results including, for the first time, comparisons with schools within the UA and Wales.

244. There is inconsistency in the understanding and ownership of the monitoring and self evaluation process within the school. This is an important shortcoming. Middle managers have not prioritised matters sufficiently and self-evaluation is not focussed primarily on the standards achieved by pupils. However, leaders at all levels are beginning to understand the importance of rigorous and honest self evaluation.

245. The process and outcomes of self evaluation have resulted in a clearer understanding of the schools' performance relative to similar schools in Wales, and of the need to raise standards of achievement. Departments vary in their approach and a majority have still not developed their use of data analysis sufficiently in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Some departments are beginning to use this information strategically.

246. The school's self evaluation report identifies the main areas for improvement, but the grades it awarded itself in five of the seven key questions differed from those of the inspection team, who awarded one grade lower in key questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6. The school underestimated the shortcomings in teaching and learning within some subject areas, as well as inconsistencies in its academic monitoring and in leadership and middle management.

The effectiveness of planning for improvement

247. The current SIP identifies three main priorities for development. The objectives, implementation activities, timeline, key personnel, resources and costing, success criteria, monitoring systems and evaluation evidence are detailed within the plan. However, success criteria do not always include quantifiable numerical targets to enable leaders and managers to undertake meaningful evaluation of progress made. Resources and costing, although listed, do not include financial costs.
248. The SIP preceded the self evaluation report and the plan focuses on the main priorities identified by the head teacher, in consultation with staff and governors. Pupil targets for all departments, based on CAT data, are included within the plan. In the next published cycle, self evaluation will guide the SIP.
249. DIPs follow the same format as the SIP but are of variable quality. They do not always address shortcomings or quantify the expected improvement in pupil standards. During the current cycle, DIPs were required, appropriately, to include the three priorities identified within the SIP as well as one subject priority.
250. Within departments there is a lack of clarity and understanding of the link between the self evaluation process and the strategic planning cycle. DIPs do not focus sufficiently on quantifiable targets for improving standards. As a result, the procedures for monitoring and evaluating progress against targets are unclear.
251. The use of targets for improvement for individual pupils is inconsistent across subject areas. As a result, pupils do not always understand what they need to do to improve.
252. The performance management process identifies staff training needs linked to school, subject and individual priorities. Targeting resources and funding on appropriate training needs is achieved within the available budget. The performance management cycle has recently been refined, with improved monitoring and the inclusion of class performance targets.
253. The self evaluation procedures and development planning, introduced within the last year, are as yet insufficiently embedded to have impacted on teaching and learning.
254. The lack of progress in addressing the five key issues identified in the last inspection is an important shortcoming.
255. Of the subjects inspected, only in design and technology have standards of achievement improved from satisfactory as reported in the last report. In one subject standards have remained the same, but in three of the subjects, standards have fallen in one, or more, key stages.

256. Marginal improvement has taken place in pupils' and students' attendance figures. Standards have not improved in pupils' ICT skills across the curriculum in KS3.
257. The lack of coordination and consistency in the procedures and quality of assessment and in recording individual pupil's progress remains.
258. The school still does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for some pupils.

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

259. This grade agrees with the grade the school awarded itself in its self evaluation report. It corresponds to the grade awarded to key question 5 but is higher than the grade awarded to key question 1. The reason for this difference is that, in the team's view, the new SMLT has taken measures to improve both subject standards and the quality of teaching. Though these have yet to impact on examination results, they are beginning to have an impact on pupils' standards in class and in raising pupils' expectations.

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

260. The school has a comparatively low pupil:teacher ratio of 14:1 (the county and Welsh averages being 16.6:1) and has sufficient teaching staff to deliver its curriculum. Teachers are appropriately qualified in their specific subjects. Teachers who teach outside their subject specialism receive adequate support. Newly and recently qualified teachers are well supported in accordance with requirements.
261. The LSAs who are employed by the UA, the learning coach, the technicians, the librarian and others who have direct links with pupils, such as those employed to cover staff absences, provide good support to promote pupils' learning.
262. Administrative staff work efficiently and collaborate well to promote the effective running of the school from day to day. Some administrative staff have received recent relevant training.
263. Workforce remodelling has taken place in line with current guidelines. Developmental opportunities are enhanced through appropriate and relevant INSET for teachers, in line with school and departmental improvement plans whenever resources or opportunities allow.
264. The school has ensured that teachers have the required planning, preparation and assessment time but this has not yet shown any measurable improvement in pupil performance.
265. Departmental capitation allowances have recently been reduced in line with the school's current financial situation, and as a result it is difficult for departments to replenish book stocks and other resources.
266. The school has recently invested in new ICT resources for the business studies department and the library and obtained external funding to invest in a video conferencing centre. Through a creative scheme involving the e-learning foundation, all Y8 pupils have access to a digital learning assistant (a mini laptop). However, there is a lack of modern ICT resources in the technology department. Most classes do not have electronic whiteboards. Some do not have data projectors.

267. Books are generally worn, some are dated and pupils have to share textbooks in a number of classes.
268. The school buildings are generally satisfactory. The campus is able to cater for the present pupil numbers and departments. Some classrooms are rather small for the numbers of pupils in some teaching groups.
269. The school managers and governors have worked hard to improve the school's environment. Corridors have been redecorated and areas such as toilets and the canteen refurbished. The new "bistro" is a very popular addition.
270. The redesigned reception area provides an attractive first point of contact for visitors to the school. It also helps to prevent unauthorised entry.
271. On a difficult sloping site, there has been significant investment to allow wheelchair access to all levels and floors. This work is almost complete. The building of a boundary fence and installation of CCTV has greatly reduced vandalism outside school hours.
272. Cars and pedestrians are kept well apart. There is a designated area for school buses which is properly supervised at the relevant times.
273. The school building and its vicinity are kept clean and tidy, though long standing rubbish has collected on boundaries away from the main hubs of activity.
274. Some areas of the school building are still in need of improvement. There are numerous examples of leaking roofs and peeling plaster. The school is aware of other areas that need to be updated in line with current expectations. The gymnasia do not currently provide a stimulating learning environment.

How efficiently resources are managed to achieve value for money

275. The head teacher is responsible for the school's budget at the strategic level. He is establishing good practice by linking the SIP closely with the DIPs and raising awareness of the requirement to link these plans to the school budget.
276. Over the past two years, the school's effective bursar, assisted by the financial officer and guided by the head teacher, has reviewed the school's budgetary accounting. The bursar maintains constant contact with the UA, produces statements relating to the school's current financial position on a frequent basis and governors receive relevant documentation twice a term.
277. The school has responded to all the fairly minor issues raised in the UA's 2007 financial audit.
278. During the last two years, the school's budget has been in deficit. The Audit Commission does not consider such a situation to be good practice. However, the school has reached an understanding with the UA and has agreed strategies to rectify the situation over the next two years.

279. The school has recently reviewed its performance management system. The staff's professional needs are now clearly identified and plans are being implemented to fulfil expectations.
280. Due to timetabling constraints, the use made of staff in some curricular areas has important shortcomings. These include:
- a significant number of classes taught by more than one teacher at KS3, which hinders continuity and has a detrimental effect on standards;
 - large numbers of learners in some technology classes, and
 - 'clashes' in the timetables of a few sixth form students.
281. There are shortcomings as regards the value for money provided by the school in its post-16 provision. The school co-operates with only one other provider to offer one additional course at post-16 level. Whilst the majority of subjects offered have sufficient numbers of students opting for them, a few, especially in Y13, are studied by a small number.
282. Overall, the school has sufficient resources to support the teaching and learning but current shortages in allocations are impeding progress in a few areas. It is not possible to meet all departmental priorities.
283. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum. It also provides very good pastoral support for pupils and appropriate professional and leadership development opportunities for staff, as evidenced by the school's re-designation with the Investors in People (IIP) standard and its gaining the IIP Leadership and Management standard in 2007. The SLMT has already implemented steps to support pupil's learning with a view to improving performance in GCSE examinations.
284. Having considered the overall current situation, the team is of the opinion that the value for money provided by the school is adequate.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English

Key Stage 3: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Post 16: Grade 2: Good features and no significant shortcomings

285. Over the past four years test and examination results have fluctuated in KS3 and KS4. However, results are consistently below those of the county and the Welsh averages and those for schools in the same FSM category.
286. At Advanced level, numbers sitting the examination were small but, in general, students have performed in line with their ability.

Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

Good features

287. The majority of pupils listen well to the teacher and to one another in most lessons. They respond very well to questioning and are eager to share ideas. Most pupils across the ability range recall prior learning adequately.
288. Most pupils collaborate well in speaking and listening tasks when they work in pairs and groups.
289. All pupils, in both key stages, read a good range of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and media texts, displaying understanding in line with their ability. Many, across the ability range, know the conventions of a range of texts such as legends, horror stories and scripts. They recognise a number of techniques used for effect by authors and try to emulate them. Able pupils and a minority of lower ability pupils refer to texts to support their views.
290. Most pupils read aloud accurately and a majority of them use appropriate intonation. Pupils with ALN use good "word attack" skills and enjoy participating in reading activities.
291. Pupils write in a range of forms and for different audiences. Pupils at KS3 respond particularly well to opportunities to experiment with media language.
292. Able pupils in KS4 produce well structured and effective writing in response to literary texts. Pupils at both key stages and across a range of abilities, produce interesting creative pieces. Some boys in particular, who have problems with some mechanical aspects of writing, respond very well to certain topics and display good vocabulary and produce effective descriptive writing.

- 293. Pupils across the ability range, from Y8 onwards, acquire a good understanding of Shakespearean language and as they mature, engage with the dramatic texts that they study. More able pupils show sound knowledge and understanding of the plays, poetry and novels they study. Most pupils understand inference and they empathise with character.
- 294. Pupils in KS3 have started to evaluate their own work and derive benefit from this self assessment, from peer assessment and whole class reflection upon learning in individual lessons.

Shortcomings

- 295. Some pupils in both key stages lack confidence in class and group discussions. They do not volunteer responses and rarely expand on their ideas, depending heavily on their teacher.
- 296. A few boys in Y7, in particular, lack focus and concentration, occasionally shouting out their responses. Similarly, some pupils in KS4 also display lack of focus and spend some lesson time off-task.
- 297. A small but significant number of pupils in both key stages work at a slow pace when writing. They do not always write at appropriate length and leave a few tasks unfinished.
- 298. Errors of punctuation and spelling persist in the work of a minority of lower ability pupils.

Post 16

Good features

- 299. Students listen constructively to their teacher and respond well orally, offering extended responses and views that they are able to support though close reference to text. This is particularly true in Y13.
- 300. Students in Y12 and Y13 read a range of challenging texts and are sufficiently confident to offer their personal interpretations in both oral and written forms. Through literature they gain experience of controversial and complex issues.
- 301. Students write well structured essays. They show developing ability to weave quotations effectively into their work. Nearly all write at appropriate length with sound technical competence. Literary criticism terms are used correctly and by Y13, students know exactly which criteria must be met in examinations.

Shortcomings

- 302. There are no significant shortcomings in the sixth form.

Science

Key Stage 3: Grade 4: Some good features, but shortcomings in important areas.

Key Stage 4: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Post 16: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

303. GCSE results over the last four years have remained relatively consistent, falling in 2007 but showing some improvement in 2008. Overall, results in the last four years have been well below UA and Wales averages for passes at A* to C. Benchmarking data, comparing similar schools, consistently place the school's science results in the lowest quartile.
304. Advanced level results in biology, chemistry and physics cannot be meaningfully compared to national pass rates due to the very small number of entries. Value added data, however, indicates that the results are much lower than those achieved nationally by students of similar ability.

Key Stage 3

Good features

305. A majority of pupils have good knowledge and understanding of a range of scientific topics such as acids, alkalis, elimination of waste and toxins and energy changes. They are able to recall previous work when questioned, and understand the contribution science makes to society.
306. Many pupils of all abilities undertake practical work enthusiastically when provided with the opportunity. They confidently complete practical activities safely as instructed.
307. A majority of pupils acquire scientific skills relative to their ability.

Shortcomings

308. A minority of pupils have poor recall and understanding of current and previous work. The learning acquired during their lessons is limited.
309. The progress of a significant number of pupils is hindered by their failure to complete work in their folders.
310. A minority of pupils have difficulty using scientific and technical vocabulary accurately. This limits their understanding and contribution to classroom discussions.
311. In some lessons, many pupils do not make progress at an acceptable pace as they lose concentration and drift off task. The poor behaviour of some pupils adversely affects the learning of others.

Key Stage 4

Good features

- 312. Many pupils have good knowledge and understanding of current and previous work. They are able to extract relevant scientific data and information from a range of resources, including the internet, and record them accurately.
- 313. Many are able to apply their understanding of science to their own and others' decisions about lifestyles, and they appreciate the contribution of science to modern society.
- 314. Many pupils listen attentively and contribute well during class discussions. They work diligently, are able to plan effectively, and complete the majority of tasks.
- 315. In practical activities, a majority of pupils are able to follow procedures and use equipment correctly and safely. They make careful and accurate measurements and observations and most record their results in a suitable manner. Pupils understand the importance of reliable and fair tests.

Shortcomings

- 316. A few pupils have poor recall and understanding of information from their previous lessons.
- 317. In class discussions, some pupils across the ability range are often satisfied with brief answers to questions and are reluctant to provide extended responses.
- 318. A minority of pupils are inattentive, show little interest and do not work at full capacity.
- 319. The progress of a few pupils is hindered by their absence from lessons.

Post 16

Good features

- 320. A majority of students achieve good standards. They have good knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts in the three subjects.
- 321. Most students are interested in their work. A majority participate well in classroom activities, and are prepared to contribute to discussions.
- 322. Most students' practical and investigative skills are developing well. They are aware of the importance of safety and they work confidently. A majority make careful and accurate measurements and observations, recording and presenting data appropriately. They are able to correctly complete various numerical calculations when required.

Shortcomings

323. A few students have difficulty in completing mathematical calculations and in applying their scientific knowledge and understanding to new problems.
324. A minority of students in the three subjects do not have the required depth of understanding of previous work. They lack the confidence to contribute during question and answer sessions.

Design and technology

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

325. The percentage of pupils gaining GCSE results with grades A*-C was a little lower than the county and national averages in 2007. In 2008, the percentage was much higher than the Welsh and county averages in product design but much lower than the average in resistant materials. Overall the results reflect good attainment for the pupils involved.
326. In 2007 the percentages of students who gained grades A-C at AS and A level were well above the average for the UA and Wales. However, the number of students involved is too small to make any meaningful comparison with local or national averages. There were no AS or A level candidates in 2008.

Key Stage 3

Good features

327. Nearly all pupils are developing a good understanding of the design process and associated principles across the material areas and can apply these skills well in their project work.
328. Most pupils plan effectively for the making stage of their work and can work accurately and methodically when using tools to shape and process materials.
329. A majority of pupils produce well-crafted and finished products across the material areas. They are developing a good understanding of the materials used in resistant materials and textiles.
330. Most pupils are developing a good knowledge and understanding of the functions of food and can use sensory analysis well to evaluate food such as pizza and pasta products. They combine ingredients well when making bread and use equipment and utensils effectively.
331. Lower ability pupils and those with ALN are well supported in lessons, enabling them to make good progress in their designing and making skills. The product outcomes produced by almost all of them are good and show that they achieve their potential.

Shortcomings

332. In resistant materials, pupils' designs are mainly constrained to the timber sizes available to them. Few pupils use computer aided manufacturing equipment, except for very basic embellishment work.

333. Pupils' presentation skills vary widely and are generally too low in a few design folders.

Key Stage 4 – Product design and resistant materials

Good features

334. Most pupils understand the design process well and make good use of a design process to guide their project work.
335. The most able pupils investigate original designs well and collect effectively the relevant material that helps them finalise their design decisions.
336. A majority of pupils use computer aided design software well to enhance and support some of their presentations.
337. Almost all pupils have good practical making skills. The most able have very good skills as seen, for example, in their storage design solutions.
338. Lower ability pupils and those with ALN, in all groups, when given support and guidance, make good progress and achieve well in relation to their abilities.

Shortcomings

339. A few pupils display weaker spatial awareness skills in their work. In their design folios annotation is sometimes untidy and this spoils what in essence is good graphical communication work.
340. Pupils do not use computer aided manufacturing techniques in their work except at a basic level and as a result product outcomes tend to lack this aspect of creativity.

Post 16

Good features

341. Most students have a good understanding of the principles of design. They can all produce original, creative and appropriate design solutions within the resources available to them.
342. All students carry out thorough research work using a range of sources. Existing products are analysed in great detail.
343. Most students deal with contemporary concepts well and show a good awareness of this in their design ideas. Students use multi-materials in their products effectively.
344. Most students make good use of ICT, including computer aided design software, to produce, present and develop design outcomes of a good standard.

345. The practical skills of most students are good overall and very good in the work of the best students. Work is well crafted and well finished using a range of processes.

Shortcomings

346. Only a few students use quick freehand drawing techniques to develop design ideas.
347. Students' knowledge, understanding and use of computer aided manufacturing equipment are at a basic level and are the weakest element of their work.

Modern foreign languages

Key Stage 3: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Post 16: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

348. GCSE results in French and German have been significantly below local and national averages for A* - C and similarly numbers of pupils achieving A* and A grades in recent years have been lower than those to be expected for pupils of similar ability, particularly in French.
349. The success rates for the small number of pupils following Entry Level French are good in both French and German. Entries are too small at A level standard for valid comparisons to be made.

Key stage 3

350. All pupils study French. More able pupils study German as an additional language in Y9.

Good features

351. Most pupils are able to read and identify key points from short passages in the target language.
352. Most pupils throughout the key stage are able to produce short extracts of writing in the target language using support materials and writing frames.
353. Pupils with ALN achieve good standards in tasks closely matched to their ability.
354. Pupils in Y7 across the ability range achieve good standards in all four language skills.

Shortcomings

355. Most pupils do not speak the language confidently. They frequently rely on prompts or respond to questions from their teacher.
356. Many pupils do not write at length or use tenses, other than the present, confidently.
357. Pupils across all year groups have difficulty in understanding the target language as spoken by native speakers.

Key Stage 4

Good features

358. The coursework of the majority of pupils is of a good standard in both French and German. Pupils show increasing awareness of the grammar of the target language. In their written work they are able to:
- use a range of tenses appropriately;
 - write using extended sentences, and
 - express and justify opinions.
359. Most pupils are able to read and understand extracts written in the target language and pick out the main points.
360. Pupils beginning the GCSE German course in Y10 achieve good standards.

Shortcomings

361. Many pupils of middle and higher ability lack confidence when speaking the target language; they do not use the language spontaneously; they frequently respond to questions with single words or short phrases.
362. Many pupils struggle to recall, recycle and build upon previously acquired language when writing and speaking.
363. Most pupils have difficulty in understanding the target language as spoken by native speakers.

Post 16

Good features

364. Students are able to understand passages of authentic written French and German and pick out the main points.
365. Most students write at length, using a good range of vocabulary and more complex sentences.
366. With support, most students are able to understand the gist of authentic French and German when spoken by the teacher or in recorded material.

Shortcomings

367. Students generally lack confidence when speaking the target language; they prefer to respond to questions and do not readily initiate conversation.
368. The quality of students' written work is sometimes marred by basic grammatical and spelling errors.

Physical 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

369. For the last 3 years, the percentage of pupils who gained GCSE grades A* - C in the subject are well below the UA and national averages. Results show a high percentage of pupils gaining a D grade.
370. At 'A' level, results continue to improve with performance at grades A-C and A-E in 2008 comparing favourably with local and national norms. AS results however were very disappointing in 2007 and 2008

Key Stage 3

Good features

371. Pupils listen attentively, respond enthusiastically and enjoy contributing to the activities in lessons.
372. Pupils show respect and empathy for other pupils' ideas and physical abilities, compete fairly and handle success and failure appropriately.
373. Pupils of all abilities have a good attitude to participation and learning and most are motivated to do well. Around half of the pupils have good leadership skills.
374. Most of the pupils are knowledgeable and have a good understanding of the importance of personal health, fitness and well being. In nearly all lessons, pupils understand the importance of intense warm ups, stretching exercises and a relevant cool down.
375. The majority of pupils can apply and adapt their skills effectively in a variety of contexts to cope with the varying physical demands of each activity.
376. In competitive activities, pupils display a good understanding of the main principles of the games. They can play small sided games and full games by the end of KS3. Their passing skills and the use of space is good.
377. In adventurous activities, pupils respond enthusiastically to their tasks and nearly all the pupils are able to perform complex tasks efficiently. Many learners make good decisions in constantly changing situations, including anticipating and adapting their performance in response to others.
378. In creative activities, pupils are able to plan and perform a sequence of gymnastic movements individually or as part of a group. Many pupils' work showed good body tension, flow and clarity of shape. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of the basic shapes and their relevance in creating all gymnastic movements.

Shortcomings

- 379. Pupils do not develop their evaluation and feedback skills sufficiently, in order to judge their own and others' performance and to improve the efficiency, quality and variety of their work.
- 380. A few Y7 pupils lack basic skills. This impairs their ability to improve their standards and techniques.

Key Stage 4

Good features

- 381. Pupils following the GCSE course understand the skeletal structure well, with many pupils being able to link theory with practical work.
- 382. In competitive games, the majority of pupils demonstrate increased efficiency, fluency and sensitivity in more complex tasks and when working with others.
- 383. In Y10, many pupils make connections between health and the benefits of regular exercise and fitness, effective performance and active lifestyles. Pupils show good knowledge, understanding and skills of physical education through new areas of activity.
- 384. Pupils with ALN make good progress in the subject on a level which is appropriate to their ability and understanding.

Shortcomings

- 385. Many pupils do not develop their independent learning skills sufficiently, and many are over reliant on their teacher.
- 386. Pupils do not develop their evaluation and feedback skills sufficiently, so that they can judge their own and others' performance and use this information to improve the efficiency, quality and variety of their work.
- 387. The more able pupils following the GCSE course do not develop their work to levels that match their potential.

Post 16

Good features

- 388. The standard of work produced by students who follow the AS and A2 course in Physical Education is good. Nearly all students are able to relate the theoretical aspects of the subject to the practical activities and can give personal examples in their chosen sport or activity.

- 389. Nearly all students can give extended answers to specific questions, as well express an opinion, debate and discuss complex issues from the syllabus.
- 390. Most students demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the PE syllabus.

Shortcomings

- 391. A few students do not recall and understand knowledge from their previous lessons.

Business studies

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

Post 16: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

392. GCSE results in Business and Communications Systems were significantly higher than national averages in 2007, but in 2008 were slightly lower, although value added scores were higher.
393. The results in the GCE Applied Business Single and Double Courses were significantly higher than the national averages in 2007, but were slightly lower in 2008, although value added scores were higher.

Key stage 4

Good features

394. Nearly all pupils have developed a good understanding of business terminology and can apply a range of business concepts to a cross section of tasks.
395. All pupils can relate their work to the real world of business and industry and this ensures that their class discussions are more meaningful.
396. Most pupils understand the value of Human Resources and can discuss staff recruitment, selection and dismissal of staff in depth.
397. ICT is used effectively by all pupils to access information, create databases and spreadsheets and to improve the presentation of their work.
398. Most pupils have good listening, speaking and numeracy skills and contribute well to classroom discussion and when working in pairs.

Shortcomings

399. A few pupils do not achieve suitable standards because of their lack of concentration during lessons.

Post 16

Good features

400. All students demonstrate a well-developed understanding of business terminology. In their work, they can apply more complex concepts, including current issues and problems facing the business world.
401. All students produce a good portfolio of a Business Plan, which shows a clear understanding of concepts such as business planning, financial planning and cash flow, marketing and promotion.

- 402. Nearly all students are confident in contributing to classroom discussions; they listen attentively and respond well to challenging questioning and ideas, offering coherent and well thought out arguments.
- 403. All students use ICT very effectively to investigate and analyse data and improve the presentation of their work.
- 404. All students make good use of visits to local businesses and input from local industry to enhance their knowledge and they can apply this effectively in portfolio work and classroom discussion.

Shortcomings

- 405. A few students do not complete their work on time.

School's response to the inspection

The governors, head teacher and staff welcome the view of the Inspection team that Holywell High School is in a period of transition under the leadership of the new Head teacher. We welcome the team's view that the school has a clear direction and vision. We are delighted by the number of parent/carers questionnaires that were returned and this is commented on by Inspectors as it shows a strong support base amongst the parent/carers body. We recognise that some of the initiatives relating to the required improvements are beginning to have a positive impact but they have not yet had time to come to full fruition and that further significant change and improvements are necessary.

We believe strongly that the team, led by the Registered Inspector, conducted the Inspection in a very rigorous and thoroughly professional manner and we feel that this is worthy of note.

We are very pleased that the Inspectors feel the school has a friendly atmosphere and that pupils are well behaved and willing learners. The fact that Sixth Formers show good progress in their learning is also a feature that we recognise as well as their considerate and courteous attitude towards others. We are glad that the Inspectors noted the very good links with partner primary schools and the outstanding experience Year 6 pupils receive during the Aberystwyth residential.

The recognition of the school as being a caring, civilised and inclusive community is something that we also feel reflects life at Holywell. The report also highlights the very effective work of the Heads of Year in providing a secure base for learning. The commitment and hard work of staff at the school draws praise especially the support given by all the ancillary staff to the teachers. It also indicates that the work of the School Council is recognised and its members are given appropriate opportunities to express their opinions and make recommendations. Inspectors praise the excellent extra curricular provision for the more able and talented whilst noting that more able pupils and students need more challenge in lessons and we acknowledge this. The work of the Additional Needs department is also praised and we welcome this especially the view that the quality of individual education plans for children with additional needs is outstanding enabling them to make good progress in their learning and achievement.

The Inspectors learnt that the school deals quickly and effectively with any incidents of bullying and that we are a school that works hard on ensuring social inclusion; this concurs with the school's view. It is encouraging to note that the Inspectors recognise much good practice in teaching and learning and in some instances outstanding practice. The school recognises that it is an urgent priority for this excellent practice to be consistent across all subjects and Key Stages.

We are pleased that in the report four of the six recommendations that are made concur with the priorities of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) 2008-2011 – Excellence in learning and achievement for all; which is in its first year. The need to improve significantly standards of teaching, learning and pupil and student achievement is key to the school's improvement agenda. The school's developing self evaluation and improvement cycle needs refinement and we accept this. The school's self evaluation report and the recommendations from the Inspection report will formulate the objectives in the second year of the SIP with the priorities remaining as follows:

- to raise standards of achievement for all students
- to provide excellent learning experiences for all students in order for them to develop as autonomous and lifelong learners;
- to enhance the professional learning and development for all staff so that they continue to learn, acquire new skills, understanding and knowledge in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century learner.

The school welcomes a revisit by Estyn in spring 2010 in order for progress to be monitored and we are confident that during the revisit there will be further evidence of improvement in teaching, learning and outcomes for pupils and students.

A copy of the school action plan in response to the inspection recommendations will be made available to all parents and carers. The governors' annual report to parents and carers will inform parents on the progress made in terms of the inspection recommendations.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Holywell High School
School type	Community, secondary, comprehensive
Age range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	The Strand, Holywell, Flintshire
Postcode	CH8 7AW
Telephone number	01352 710011

Headteacher	Mr John Putt
Date of appointment	September, 2007
Chair of governors	Mr. J. Mills
Reporting inspector	Dr Neil Trevor Jones
Dates of inspection	19-23 January 2009

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	120	146	136	139	136	62	40	779

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	49	5	52.8

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	14.0 :1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	-
Average teaching group size	20
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	73.6%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	92.4	94.0	92.7	87.8	84.1	87.4	88.1	89.8
Term 2	89.8	91.2	89.5	87.7	91.3	82.1	91.2	89.3
Term 3	92.8	90.7	90.9	88.6	87.5	86.3	89.0	89.7

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	17.5%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	81 temporary 2 permanent

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2008														
Total number of pupils in Y9:135														
Percentage of pupils at each level														
			D	A	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School						12.6	34.1	44.4	8.1	0.7		
		National				0.4	1.5	6.1	21.3	37.1	24.2	7.9	0.3	
Welsh	Teacher assessment	School												
		National												
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School						5.9	29.6	28.1	25.9	10.4		
		National	0.5	0.1	0.5	0.4	1.3	6.7	18.1	28.9	27.5	14.8	1.2	0.1
Science	Teacher assessment	School						3	33.3	34.1	25.9	3.7		
		National	0.6		0.5	0.2	0.7	5.1	19	35.6	27.2	10.8	0.1	

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

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by teacher assessment		by test	
In the school	44.4	In the school	-
In Wales	59.6	In Wales	-

**Public Examination Results:
Holywell High School**

SSSP

**Summary of Secondary School Performance
(1)**

LEA/School No. 664/4012

Pupils aged 15

Number of pupils aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 147

Percentage of pupils aged 15 who :

	achieved at least one qualification	achieved the Level 1 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE pass in English or Welsh first language and mathematics	Core Subject Indicator (2)	Average wider points score per pupil
School 2007/08	100	79	35	27	24	256
LEA Area 2007/08	98	90	57	45	45	348
Wales 2007/08	98	87	58	46	44	356
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	25	263
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	25	268

Number of boys aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 76

Percentage of boys aged 15 who :

	achieved at least one qualification	achieved the Level 1 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE pass in English or Welsh first language and mathematics	Core Subject Indicator (2)	Average wider points score per pupil
School 2007/08	100	72	28	21	21	229
LEA Area 2007/08	98	89	54	42	43	333
Wales 2007/08	98	84	53	42	41	334
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	23	240
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	23	245

Number of girls aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 71

Percentage of girls aged 15 who :

	achieved at least one qualification	achieved the Level 1 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE pass in English or Welsh first language and mathematics	Core Subject Indicator (2)	Average wider points score per pupil
School 2007/08	100	86	44	34	28	284
LEA Area 2007/08	98	91	61	48	48	364
Wales 2007/08	99	90	63	50	48	379
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	28	286
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	27	291

- (1) For details on qualifications, point scores and contribution to thresholds, please see guidance at [SSSP guidance](#).
 (2) For information about which syllabuses are included in each subject area see Notes for Guidance. For the provisional SSSP this will be the traditional GCSE definition. In the final SSSP, this definition will include a wider range of qualifications.
 .. Data not available

Holywell High School

SSSP

Summary of Secondary School Performance
(1)

LEA/School No. 664/4012

Pupils aged 15

	Percentage of pupils aged 15 who :		Percentage of boys aged 15 who :		Percentage of girls aged 15 who :	
	achieved one or more ELQ (2) only	Left full time education without a qualification (3)	achieved one or more ELQ (2) only	Left full time education without a qualification (3)	achieved one or more ELQ (2) only	Left full time education without a qualification (3)
School 2007/08	2	1.4	3.9	2.6	0	0
LEA Area 2007/08	0.9	1	1.2	1.3	0.7	0.8
Wales 2007/08	2.6	1.5	3.4	1.9	1.7	1.2
School 06/07/08	3.3	..	4.7	..	1.9	..
School 05/06/07	3.7	..	5.4	..	1.9	..

Pupils aged 17

	Number of pupils aged 17 who were on roll in January 2008: 46		Number of boys aged 17 who were on roll in January 2008: 25		Number of girls aged 17 who were on roll in January 2008: 21	
	Percentage of 17 year old pupils entering a volume equivalent to 2 A Levels who achieved the Level 3 threshold	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17	Percentage of 17 year old pupils entering a volume equivalent to 2 A Levels who achieved the Level 3 threshold	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17	Percentage of 17 year old pupils entering a volume equivalent to 2 A Levels who achieved the Level 3 threshold	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17
School 2007/08	85	430	82	392	88	476
LEA Area 2007/08	94	576	93	542	95	605
Wales 2007/08	94	631	93	596	95	659
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	..	..
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	..	..

(3) For details on qualifications, point scores and contribution to thresholds, please see guidance at [SSSP guidance](#).
 (4) Entry Level Qualification
 (5) As defined under the National Performance Indicator EDU/002.
 .. Data not available

Holywell High School

School Type: Secondary

Linguistic Delivery: Bilingual or English

LEA/School No. 664/4012

Number of SEN Unit/Special Classes: 0

Number of Pupils on Roll in NCY 11: 144

Percentage of compulsory school age pupils eligible for FSM 2007/08: 15.7

Percentage of compulsory school age pupils eligible for FSM 06/07/08: 17.7

Percentage of compulsory school age pupils on SEN register: 21.1

Percentage of 15 year old pupils on SEN register: 18.4

Level of Welsh Bacallaureate Offered:

Post-16 Pupils			Pre-16 Pupils	
Advanced	Intermediate	Pilot Foundation	Pilot Intermediate	Pilot Foundation

Welsh Bacallaureate Offered: No

Data not applicable

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Twelve inspectors spent the equivalent of 42 inspection days at the school and met as a team prior to the inspection.

Inspectors visited:

- 108 lessons; 80 in the six subjects inspected and 28 in other subjects;
- registrations, assemblies and acts of collective worship, and
- a variety of extra-curricular activities.

The inspection team held meetings with:

- staff, governors and parents before the inspection;
- senior managers, teachers, support and administrative staff;
- groups of pupils representing every year group;
- the school council, and
- representatives of organisations who have links with the school.

The team also considered the following:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- 108 responses to the parents' questionnaire and 23 letters or comments on the questionnaires from parents;
- documentation provided by the school both before and during the inspection;
- a wide range of pupils previous and current work, and
- samples of pupils reports.

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

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team Member	Responsibilities and Contributions to the Key Questions
Dr. Neil Trevor Jones Registered Inspector	Summary, recommendations Responsibility for key question 1, Appendix
John Roberts Lay Inspector	Contributions to key question 1, 3, 4 and 7
Gwilym Williams	Responsibility for key question 5, Contributions to science
Ellen Roberts	Responsibility for key question 3 Modern foreign languages
Ieuan Jones	Responsibility for key question 2, Physical education
Keith Davies	Responsibility for key question 6, Science
Anna Roberts	Responsibility for key question 7, English
Susan Edwards	Contributions to science
Heddwyn Evans	Responsibility for key question 4
Tudur Williams	Business
Keith Hopkins	Design technology
Gareth Wyn Roberts	Contributions to modern foreign languages
Mr. Jeff Collins, assistant head at the school, school's nominee	Representing the school, helping with the administration of the inspection, contribution to team meetings
Mrs. Ethnie Hughes, the peer assessor.	Contributions to lesson observation, evaluation of pupils' work and team meetings

Acknowledgement

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

The contractor for this inspection was:

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