

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Newbridge School
Bridge Street, Newbridge
NP11 5FR**

School Number: 6764031

Date of Inspection: 20/10/08

by

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Newbridge 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 Newbridge School took place between 20/10/08 and 24/10/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by Peter Guy Carter, undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

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

There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a **standard** inspection.

Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Newbridge School is an 11-16 mixed, community school, maintained by Caerphilly County Borough Council. There are 877 pupils on roll, compared with 921 at the time of the last inspection. The school serves the small town of Newbridge and the area around it. The school attracts children from outside the catchment area.
2. Pupils generally come from areas which are neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged although a minority comes from areas which are economically disadvantaged. Around 14% of pupils are entitled to have free school meals. This is a little lower than the national average. English is the predominant language in all but a small number of homes. No pupils have Welsh as their first language. A few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds.
3. Pupils represent the full range of ability, although there are more less able pupils than able pupils. Thirty-one pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN) and a further 97 have been identified as needing some support. On site, the school houses the local education authority's (LEA) Inclusion Centre for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
4. A new headteacher was appointed during the last academic year. She took up her post in January 2008. The two deputy headteachers were in post at the time of the last inspection in March 2003.

The school's priorities and targets

5. The school's aim is the pursuit of excellence. This is encapsulated in the new motto, 'Inspire, Succeed, Excel'. The school development plan (SDP) 2008 - 2011 focuses on four areas:
 - standards;
 - learner aspirations;
 - learner skills; and
 - the development of cross-curricular themes.
6. The SDP also identifies three core strands which are regarded as central to the achievement of the school's aim. These are:
 - an increasing emphasis on personalisation;
 - a co-ordinated, collaborative approach; and
 - a strong and consistent emphasis on self-evaluation.

Summary

7. Newbridge School is a very good school with outstanding features in learners' achievements, the quality of education provided and in the leadership and management of the school. The proportion of lessons where the highest grade was awarded for standards and teaching is unusually high. The school is making good progress towards achieving its aim of being recognised as a centre of excellence. The inspection team agreed with all but one of the grades awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report (SER).

Table of grades awarded

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

Standards

8. The grades awarded for standards in the six subjects inspected at each key stage (KS) are set out below.

Standards in six subjects at each key stage		
	KS3	KS4
English	2	2
Design and technology	2	1
Information and communications technology	1	1
History	1	1
Music	2	1
Physical education	2	1

9. The following table shows the percentages of grades awarded for standards at each stage and in both stages combined in 62 lessons inspected in the six subjects.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	41%	59%	0%	0%	0%
KS4	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Whole school	45%	55%	0%	0%	0%

10. At KS4, results in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations have shown a marked improvement in recent years and were outstanding in 2008. They were significantly higher than local and national averages in all key indicators of performance.
11. Standards in all six subjects inspected have good features and no important shortcomings. In information and communications technology (ICT) and history at both key stages and in design and technology, music and physical education at KS4 there are outstanding features. The proportion of lessons observed where the highest grade was awarded for standards is unusually high. It is well above the corresponding figure for all secondary schools in Wales inspected in 2006-2007, as reported by the Chief Inspector.
12. Standards are at least good in all core skills. Pupils' listening and ICT skills have outstanding features. The way in which pupils work collaboratively in many lessons is also outstanding. Pupils' bilingual competence has some strong features and is developing well. Almost all pupils make frequent use of the Welsh language to greet each other and visitors to the school.
13. All pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN) make good progress in learning. They achieve standards which are generally good or better in relation to their abilities. They make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
14. The school is an orderly community where pupils show high levels of respect for their teachers and each other. Pupils' behaviour is exceptionally good, both in lessons and around the school. They have positive attitudes to learning, sustain good levels of concentration and persevere with their work.
15. Attendance is close to, but a little lower than the national average. Despite the school's efforts to improve attendance, it is below the average for schools where a similar proportion of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals. This is a cause for concern. Punctuality at the start of lessons and the school day is generally good.

The quality of education and training

16. The school provides a stimulating setting for learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils and between groups of pupils are outstanding. Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise are particularly strong features and greatly benefit the school and its pupils. There were outstanding features in two lessons out of every three observed in the six subjects.
17. In all subjects, teachers' planning is of consistently high quality. All plan very well to support pupils with additional learning needs appropriately and

challenge, stimulate and motivate the more able and talented. All teachers provide a good range of interesting learning experiences and activities for pupils, including individual, pair and group work. They use questioning very effectively. In many cases, teachers' questioning encourages pupils to develop important skills for lifelong learning.

18. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and accurately. Most teachers involve pupils well in both self and peer-assessment. Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve. Marking is generally good. However, there are variations within and between departments in the quality and consistency of teachers' comments.
19. Many reports to parents are helpful and informative. Where they are less helpful, they are too general and lack a clear focus on what pupils know, understand and can do in the particular subject. In a minority of cases, targets are also too general. The school meets all statutory and regulatory requirements for recording and accrediting learners' achievements.
20. The curriculum meets effectively the learning needs and interests of pupils. It enables pupils to make outstanding progress at both key stages. At KS4 there is a wide range of options that gives pupils the opportunity to gain relevant qualifications. The outstanding commitment to developing the curriculum to meet the needs of KS4 pupils, which the school has shown over a number of years, makes it well placed to meet its future targets for providing increased choice and flexibility.
21. The range of extra-curricular provision is outstanding. Many pupils take part in a good range of music, sporting and drama activities. There are numerous educational visits, in Wales and abroad, and many guest speakers visit the school. A very wide range of out-of-hours revision courses is provided for KS4 pupils. Overall, pupils' involvement in extra-curricular experiences makes an outstanding contribution to the standards they achieve.
22. The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. The school meets well its strong commitment to developing pupils' bilingual competence. There are very good links with partner primary schools, including curricular links that foster pupils' progress. The school has good links with Coleg Gwent, parents and the local community.
23. The school promotes education for sustainable development well. Pupils and staff show good awareness of the importance of this aspect of the life and work of the school.
24. The quality of care, guidance and support that pupils receive is good with outstanding features. A strong emphasis on teaching and learning as well as pastoral support ensures all staff members have a positive impact on pupils' welfare. This is reinforced by an established and coherent pastoral structure. Close communication between well-motivated heads of year and form tutors provides a firm basis for pastoral arrangements.

25. Parents' involvement is encouraged through an 'open-door' policy and frequent contacts. Information booklets for parents and regular bulletins are valuable sources of information. The school provides impartial guidance for pupils to make appropriate choices at the end of KS3 and KS4. The early input of Careers Wales in personal and social education (PSE) lessons helps pupils plan for the future.
26. The school council is an effective forum for pupils to voice their opinions on learning and teaching and issues such as bullying and the school environment. Links with partner primary schools have outstanding features. They help pupils settle in quickly and happily. There are meaningful and established curricular links with primary schools in many subjects.
27. The school's clear commitment to pupils' well-being and personal and social development is outstanding. It is reinforced by a well-planned PSE programme. Personalised support initiatives ensure that every pupil has access to advice and guidance of high quality. The use of systems to monitor and improve pupils' attendance and performance is in the process of development.
28. The provision for ALN has outstanding features. A number of very effective strategies are used well to meet the needs of individual pupils. Links with subject departments are a particular strength. They have led to very effective adaptations of teaching methods and the use of different resources to meet individual needs. A small team of dedicated learning support assistants (LSA) provides very effective support in class. They also help implement carefully planned literacy and numeracy strategies.
29. The Newbridge Inclusion Centre provides outstanding support for KS3 pupils from other schools in the county with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The centre is successful in managing their behaviour as well as supporting their learning. The experienced staff members promote pupils' self-esteem expertly and develop the potential of pupils with particular needs. The work of the centre is closely aligned to the school's mainstream curriculum. This enables pupils to return to mainstream classes when they are ready.
30. The friendly and caring ethos of the school promotes good behaviour. Pupils feel they are treated fairly. Pupils of all abilities, including those with disabilities, are encouraged to take part in all aspects of school life. Procedures to deal with oppressive behaviour are outstanding. They are reinforced by an effective 'keeping safe' policy, developed and reviewed by the school council. An understanding of cultural diversity and racial harmony is promoted effectively in schemes of work, assemblies and form periods.

Leadership and management

31. The leadership of the recently appointed headteacher has outstanding features. She is highly respected by pupils, colleagues, and governors. She has a clear vision for the school to be recognised as a centre of excellence. Her vision, and the school's aims and values are reflected in the new school motto, 'Inspire, Succeed, Excel'.

32. The leadership team has extensive experience and a good balance of expertise. Its members give strong leadership in the areas for which they are responsible. They get on well with pupils and colleagues and have good links with middle managers. Together they promote the school's aims and values very successfully. They manage and improve the performance of pastoral teams and subject departments effectively.
33. The governing body (GB) contributes well to the school's leadership. Governors are well informed about the school's work through a suitable variety of processes. They consider reports prepared for them by senior leaders and managers, attend presentations from staff members and participate in discussions about the school's strategic development. They support the school well but also hold it to account for its performance.
34. In most important respects, governors ensure that legal and regulatory requirements are met. They have not, however, fulfilled the requirement to produce an annual report to parents for the academic year 2006-2007.
35. The procedures for self-evaluation are embedded well across the school. Leaders and most middle managers are well informed about their areas of responsibility. They make good use of first-hand evidence to monitor and evaluate their performance. Teachers understand and welcome arrangements for self-evaluation. These arrangements seek, and respond appropriately to, the views of pupils, staff members and other interested parties.
36. All subject departments produced very detailed self-evaluation documents for this inspection. They addressed all key questions of the Estyn Common Inspection Framework (CIF). In many subjects, however, self-evaluations are too descriptive and do not indicate clearly enough the strengths and aspects for improvement.
37. Procedures for planning for improvement are good. The three-year school development plan identifies clear and challenging targets that are matched well to improvements in learning and teaching. Most departmental development plans also identify appropriate targets for improvement that link well to those of the whole school. In a few subjects, however, targets are less precise and are not expressed in ways that are easily measurable.
38. Progress since the last inspection has been good. There have been significant improvements in the standards achieved by pupils and in the quality of teaching. Almost all of the key issues from the last inspection report have been addressed successfully.
39. Members of teaching staff are well qualified and many are very experienced. Very good technical support is provided in science, design and technology, ICT and art. The LSAs are deployed well and valued by the school.
40. Members of the administrative staff have designated roles which they perform very well. Their responsibilities, however, are not developed enough to support fully all teaching staff. The school has implemented a good policy for workload

and remodelling issues, although a few staff members continue to undertake some routine administrative tasks.

41. The professional development needs of teachers and senior managers are matched closely to the school's priorities for development. External and in-house training is of a high quality. However, members of support staff are not involved in the performance management process.
42. All learners have access to sufficient learning resources of good quality. Provision for ICT is outstanding. Work booklets produced by many departments are of a very high quality.
43. The librarians manage the well-stocked library very efficiently. Pupils use it well and this has a very good impact on their research skills and their general learning.
44. The accommodation provides a suitable setting for good teaching. Learning is enhanced by outstanding displays. The buildings are very well maintained, mostly free of litter and cleaned to a high standard. The school makes very good use of the adjoining leisure centre. A few health and safety concerns were brought to the attention of the school.
45. The school manages its funds well. All spending is effectively monitored by the business manager and overseen by the headteacher. Financial decisions are rightly focused on the priorities identified in the school development plan.
46. The governing body plays a full and responsible role in deciding how funds should be spent or what cuts should be made. There is, however, no system for evaluating expenditure to ensure that best value for money is achieved.
47. Overall, the finances and resources are used very competently. Taking into the account its limited financial resources, the school provides very good value for money by:
 - providing an outstanding quality of education;
 - ensuring resources are well matched to requirements; and
 - providing a pleasant and well-kept environment.

Recommendations

To build on the progress made, the school should implement the following recommendations.

- R1 Improve further the rigour of self-evaluation across the school in order to prioritise aspects for improvement.*
- R2 Continue to devise and implement strategies to improve attendance.*
- R3 Share existing good practice in marking to improve its quality and consistency.*
- R4 Improve reports to parents so that they focus more clearly on subject-specific comments and set more precise targets for improvement.*
- R5 Develop further the roles of administrative staff and ensure that all members of support staff are part of the performance management process.
- R6 Ensure that the governing body's responsibilities for producing annual reports for parents are met.

* These recommendations are addressed in the current SDP (2008-2011)

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 1: Good with outstanding features

48. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
49. At KS3 in the last two years, attainment in English, mathematics and science, was above local and national averages in almost all cases. The proportion of pupils gaining National Curriculum (NC) level five or above in all three core subjects was also higher than local and national averages. KS3 results in 2008 were significantly higher than in 2007. Results in mathematics and science were a little higher than results in English.
50. In comparison with schools where a similar proportion of pupils is entitled to have free school meals, attainment in 2008 in each core subject, and in the three combined, was on or above the average. Performance in the previous three years was more variable by comparison with similar schools. The most recent results indicate that performance is in line with, or above, expectations based on pupils' backgrounds.
51. At KS4 in the last two years, attainment in GCSE examinations was above local and national averages in most key indicators of performance. In 2007 girls' results were significantly better than boys'. In 2008, boys' results showed a marked improvement. In most cases in 2008, the gap between boys' and girls' performance is lower than it is locally or nationally.
52. Overall, GCSE results in 2008 are outstanding. The percentage of pupils who gained five or more passes at grade C or above was 19 points higher than the local average and 14 points higher than the national average. The percentage who gained passes at C grade or above in all three core subjects was 18 points above the local average and 13 points above the national average.
53. Standards in all six subjects inspected in detail have good features and no important shortcomings. In ICT and history at both key stages and in design and technology, music and physical education at KS4 there are outstanding features. The following table shows the grades awarded for standards that pupils achieve at KS3 and KS4 in these subjects.

Standards in six subjects at each key stage		
	KS3	KS4
English	2	2
Design and technology	2	1
Information and communications technology	1	1
History	1	1
Music	2	1
Physical education	2	1

54. Overall, there are more outstanding features at KS4 than at KS3. The percentages of grades awarded for standards in 62 lessons observed in the six subjects combined are set out in the following table.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	41%	59%	0%	0%	0%
KS4	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Whole school	45%	55%	0%	0%	0%

55. These figures are considerably higher than those for all secondary schools inspected in Wales in 2006-2007 as recorded in the most recent annual report of the Chief Inspector. The percentage of KS3 lessons where grades one or two were awarded is 33 percentage points higher than the corresponding national figure. At KS4 it is 29 percentage points higher. The percentage of lessons where grade one was awarded is 32 percentage points higher than the national figure at KS3 and 36 percentage points higher at KS4. This represents outstanding achievement.
56. These figures also show that significant progress has been made since the last inspection. There is a marked increase in the number of lessons in which the highest grade was awarded. In the previous inspection, standards were judged to be grade three in 28% of lessons. In no lesson in this inspection was grade three awarded for standards.
57. Pupils demonstrate standards which have good features and no important shortcomings in thinking, communication and mathematical skills. They apply these skills well in lessons across the curriculum. Pupils' listening and ICT skills have outstanding features. In lessons they listen attentively to teachers and fellow pupils and show very good levels of understanding about what they have heard. They make very good use of a good range of ICT skills to research and present work in many subjects.
58. Pupils' bilingual competence has some strong features and is developing well. Almost all pupils make frequent use of the Welsh language to greet each other and visitors to the school. Pupils show appropriate levels of understanding when they respond to teachers' incidental use of spoken and written Welsh.
59. All pupils, including those with ALN, make very good progress in learning. Their attainment at the end of KS4 shows very good progression by comparison with their attainment and abilities on entry. Almost all pupils have good levels of understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to make progress. They know their own strengths and weaknesses and most pupils can relate them to NC levels of attainment at KS3 and GCSE grades at KS4.
60. Pupils have outstanding personal and social skills. They show respect for their teachers and each other. They are welcoming and courteous to visitors. These factors contribute to the creation of an orderly and purposeful learning

environment. Behaviour, in lessons and around the school, is very good. This is an outstanding feature.

61. Pupils work together extremely well in lessons, collaborating successfully to learn more effectively. They show good levels of interest and engagement in their work. They show positive attitudes to learning, sustain good levels of concentration and persevere with their studies. Towards the end of KS4 they develop their capacity to work more independently. Overall, pupils make very good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
62. Attendance is close to, but slightly below the level reported at the last inspection. Despite the school's efforts to improve attendance it is lower than the national average and below the average in similar schools. This is a cause for concern. Punctuality, at the start of lessons and the school day is generally good.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

63. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
64. The following table shows the quality of teaching and assessment in the 62 lessons observed in the six subjects.

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
66%	34%	0%	0%	0%

65. There were outstanding features in the teaching of history and ICT at both KS3 and KS4. In three other subjects there were outstanding features in one of the two key stages and in the fourth the quality of teaching and assessment had good features and no important shortcomings in both key stages. The quality of teaching and assessment in the 88 lessons observed across the curriculum is set out in the following table.

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
56%	43%	1%	0%	0%

66. The proportion of all lessons that were awarded grade one represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. The percentage of lessons where the highest grade was awarded is unusually high. It is well above the corresponding figure for all schools in Wales inspected in 2006-2007, as reported in the Annual Report of the Chief Inspector. This is outstanding.
67. The school provides a stimulating setting for learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils and between groups of pupils are outstanding. Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise are particularly strong features. A significant

- number of teachers are recognised in the county and nationally as leading practitioners in their subject. Their expertise greatly benefits the school and its pupils.
68. The school's teaching and learning policy is a very useful working document. It helpfully sets out learning strategies that teachers might use. Departments have additional subject-specific teaching and learning summaries in their handbooks, which recognise their subject's contribution to excellence in learning.
 69. In all subjects, teachers' planning is of consistently high quality. All teachers take into account the different ways that pupils learn and plan well to support those with ALN appropriately. They mentor a significant number of pupils as well as providing revision programmes and coursework surgeries at important and relevant points in the year. They also plan well to stimulate, challenge and motivate the more able and talented. Some very able pupils enter Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level in ICT in Year (Y) 11.
 70. In all cases teachers share learning objectives with pupils. They refer to them during lessons and revisit them in a well-planned final summary. Teachers often explain how the lesson links with previous work and give details of where it will lead. They make pupils aware of the key skills they are developing during the lesson. At the end of the lesson they encourage pupils to evaluate whether or not they have done so.
 71. All teachers sustain a brisk pace by providing a good range of well-timed, interesting tasks and activities, including individual, pair and group work. Teachers explain information clearly and make sure that pupils understand the requirements of the task that they have to complete. They use questioning very effectively. In many cases, teachers' questioning encourages pupils to think critically and thus develop important skills for lifelong learning.
 72. Teachers assess pupils' progress regularly and accurately. Feedback in lessons is invariably helpful and teachers often involve pupils well in self and peer-assessment. Marking is generally good. Many teachers identify the NC or GCSE examination level that the work has met. Nearly all pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve. However, there are inconsistencies within and between departments in the quality and consistency of teachers' comments.
 73. The school has good, well-established links with partner primary schools. As a result, pupils undertake units of work which bridge the gap between KS2 and KS3 in the core subjects and ICT. The assessment of these units, together with the school's review of pupils' attainment at the end of KS2 has enabled suitable arrangements for standardisation and moderation to be developed.
 74. Reports to parents are written in a way that is clear to parents and others. Many reports are helpful and informative. They focus well on the different subject skills and identify precise areas for improvement. Where subject reports are not as helpful, they are too general and do not clearly state what

pupils know, understand and can do. In these cases, targets are also often too general.

75. The school meets all statutory and regulatory requirements for recording and accrediting learners' achievements.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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76. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
77. Overall at KS3, learning experiences meet individual pupils' needs well and enable them to make very good progress. The curriculum at KS3 is broad and balanced and generally meets statutory requirements. The study of drama, in addition to NC subjects and religious education, enhances pupils' speaking and listening skills and increases their self-confidence.
78. At KS4, a wide range of optional courses supplements very well the core provision of English, mathematics, Welsh second language, physical education, ICT and religious education. The option menu presents pupils with very good opportunities to choose individual learning pathways that meet their needs and aspirations and lead to appropriate qualifications.
79. The school obtains pupils' views on the courses they would like to study at KS4 prior to grouping subjects for option choices. This helps to maximise the extent to which the school can meet pupils' choices.
80. The option menu of courses for KS4 pupils includes subjects from each of the domains of learning¹. There is a good number of vocational courses, which are distributed among four of the domains. The outstanding commitment to developing the curriculum to meet the needs of KS4 pupils, which the school has shown over a number of years, makes it well placed to meet its 2009 and 2010 targets for providing increased choice and flexibility.
81. There are very close links with Coleg Gwent, Cross Keys. A number of courses provided at the college extend the choices available to KS4 pupils. Appropriately, during KS3 the college introduces pupils to its campus, and the kinds of post-16 courses that it provides. Very effective post-16 transition arrangements during KS4 build successfully on this and enable learners to continue their learning pathways in suitable ways at the college.
82. Learning experiences at both key stages develop pupils' key skills well. Key skills feature in schemes of work and teachers give good attention to developing core skills in their lessons. The school is implementing strategies to

¹ There are five learning domains: mathematics, science and all aspects of technology; business and management; services to people; creative arts and culture; and humanities and languages.

strengthen further the coherent development and application of key skills across the curriculum.

83. The range of extra-curricular provision is outstanding. Many pupils take part in a good range of music, sporting and drama activities. The quality of pupils' performance is often very high. There are numerous educational visits, in Wales and abroad, and many guest speakers visit the school. Many pupils take part in a wide range of clubs that enhance their experiences in lessons.
84. A very good range of revision courses, including sessions at weekends and during school holidays, is provided for KS4 pupils. Pupils' extra-curricular experiences overall, and particularly the revision sessions, educational visits, and guest speakers, make an outstanding contribution to the standards that pupils achieve in many subjects.
85. The school promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. It complies with statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship. Pupils often make valuable contributions to leading morning assemblies in year groups and registration periods. The PSE programme is comprehensive and very well planned.
86. The school is making good progress in developing a well-planned programme of careers and work-related education. The PSE programme in Y7 to Y11 addresses relevant aspects and includes activities to help pupils to develop entrepreneurial and enterprise skills. All pupils in Y10 undertake work experience. The school takes appropriate account of employers' needs by developing a wide range of optional courses at KS4 and promoting key skills across the curriculum at both key stages.
87. Teachers have developed a number of very successful transition links with partner primary schools. Pupils in Y7 are able to settle quickly into the school. Several departments have established links with the primary schools to help to ensure continuity in the curriculum and to foster pupils' progress. The link in ICT is outstanding and contributes significantly to the very good progress that pupils make.
88. Teachers are very committed to promoting pupils' bilingual skills. The very frequent use of incidental Welsh by pupils, teachers and other staff, within and outside lessons, is a notable characteristic of the school. Aspects of *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* feature prominently in lessons.
89. Aspects of sustainable development and global citizenship are promoted well in lessons. In addition to work in PSE, several subjects, including geography, science and religious education, make a particular contribution. Pupils and teachers show good and increasing awareness of sustainability issues. The recently formed eco-council enables pupils to make an important contribution to the school's planning for sustainability.

90. The school has developed productive links with many local businesses and with a number of external agencies. These links are used well to enhance the curriculum and enable it to address the needs of the wider community.
91. The curriculum reflects national priorities well. Through the attention given to core skills and teaching strategies that help to develop independent learning skills, the school prepares pupils well for lifelong learning.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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92. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
93. The quality of care, guidance and support that pupils receive has outstanding features. A strong emphasis on teaching and learning as well as pastoral support ensures that all staff members have a positive impact on pupils' welfare. This is reinforced by an established and coherent pastoral structure. Good links between well-motivated heads of year and form tutors provide a firm basis for the pastoral arrangements. This fosters excellent relationships within the school community.
94. There are good relationships with parents and carers. They are actively encouraged to be involved in their child's education through the "open-door" policy and frequent contacts with the school. Information booklets for parents and regular bulletins are valuable sources of information. The school provides important information about learning pathways and transition arrangements to parents in the KS4 'expectations evening'.
95. The school council is an effective forum for pupils to voice their opinions on important issues. They were actively involved in formulating the anti-bullying policy and producing a detailed audit in order to enhance the school environment. They also discuss teaching and learning issues in their regular meetings.
96. Links with partner primary schools are very good. They enable pupils to settle in very quickly and happily in their new school environment. Supportive relationships between pupils are developed further through the help of Y10 mentors linked to Y7 classes.
97. The school provides impartial guidance for pupils to make appropriate choices at the end of KS3 and KS4. The Learning Coach provides support for pupils and his role in partnership with the pastoral support system is being developed.
98. Personalised support initiatives ensure that, where necessary, every pupil has access to confidential advice and guidance of good quality. The school shows outstanding commitment to pupils' personal and social development. This is reinforced by a well-planned and co-ordinated PSE programme which includes

contributions from outside speakers. Pupils are made fully aware of the PSE timetable for the year in their personal planners. The programme is reinforced by cross-curricular days such as Green Day and D 'n' A Day. An outstanding feature of the programme is the evaluation by pupils of the skills they learn.

99. The use of systems to monitor and improve attendance is not fully developed. Recent initiatives have improved attendance in Y8 and Y11 but have not been extended across the whole school. However, the mentoring of identified pupils in Y11 is a good feature.
100. The early input of Careers Wales in PSE sessions enables pupils to receive impartial advice and plan for future courses. The Careers and World of Work programme ensures that effective guidance is given to every pupil. This is achieved by the use of Careers Wales Online, Dynamo and options advice.
101. The safety and well-being of every pupil is a priority in the school. This is reinforced by a range of strategies including healthy-eating options and initiatives to encourage physical activity. Child protection arrangements are effectively managed by a trained senior member of staff. Both the GB and members of staff have received updated training and are made fully aware of the correct procedures. Links with the LEA safeguarding team and social services are strong. A few health and safety concerns were brought to the attention of the school during the inspection.
102. The provision for ALN has outstanding features. The school provides a range of very effective strategies to meet the needs of individual pupils. Established assessment procedures allow for early identification of needs. Informative partnership booklets are provided for parents of pupils with ALN. Useful parental evaluations are made at the end of Y7 to assess the success of provision and identify issues.
103. There are strong links between the learning support department and subject departments. The head of learning support has regular meetings with link teachers. She is also a member of the Development and Management team which helps reinforce awareness of ALN across the whole school. Pupils with ALN are taught by ALN and subject specialists in discrete classes. Good arrangements allow for movement into mainstream classes so that individual strengths can be recognised. Schemes of work followed by mainstream classes are adapted to meet the individual needs of pupils so that they can integrate smoothly if transferred into the mainstream.
104. Literacy and numeracy support is carefully planned and delivered to meet the needs of individual pupils. Identified pupils receive intensive support from a dedicated team of LSAs. They make steady progress as a result of these sessions. Identified KS3 pupils receive valuable support in literacy in paired reading sessions with senior pupils during morning registration. Both KS3 pupils and senior pupils benefit from these sessions in terms of improving reading skills and developing social skills.

105. School-designed Individual Education Plans (IEP) of good quality are shared with pupils and parents. Targets are appropriate and measurable. Teachers use IEPs well to inform future planning. They are easily accessible on the school intranet and a paper copy is provided for each department. Effective departmental IEPs have been developed for pupils with statements of SEN. The management of IEPs and annual review meetings are significant strengths. LSAs and heads of year attend annual review meetings as well as LEA support services as required.
106. The Newbridge Inclusion Centre for KS3 pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties provides outstanding support. The centre is successful in managing both the behaviour and learning of these pupils from throughout the county. The experienced staff members promote pupils' self esteem expertly as well as develop their potential. Relationships within the centre are positive and supportive. They are reinforced during less structured social skills sessions during the afternoon.
107. Close links are maintained with staff in the partner schools and regular meetings are held. Members of staff from the partner schools are very supportive of the centre's work.
108. Careful and detailed risk and care assessments are made on each individual pupil and these are regularly monitored. The recording systems in the centre are a significant strength. The centre is managed very well and the head of centre provides outstanding leadership. The quality of teaching and support staff is a strong element in the success of the centre. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the pupils and provide sensitive but firm and appropriate support. The social development of these pupils is enhanced significantly by a range of outdoor activities held on one day each week.
109. The head of learning support provides very good leadership and guidance. She is well supported by the designated SEN governor, departmental staff and senior leaders. The management of assessment, recording and the use made of this information are outstanding. There is a positive and purposeful ethos throughout the department, including the Inclusion Centre that embraces the needs of individual pupils.
110. The friendly and caring ethos of the school promotes very good behaviour both in and outside classrooms. Pupils' opinions about their behaviour and social development are valued and their views influence behaviour policy. Pupils feel they are treated both fairly and equally. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are encouraged to take part in all aspects of school life. Pupils identified as being the most able and talented are appropriately challenged. Guidance from Careers Wales actively discourages gender stereotyping. This is reinforced in the PSE programme.
111. The school has a very clear and effective anti-bullying policy and procedures are understood by pupils, parents and members of staff. These are regularly discussed and reviewed. Procedures to deal with oppressive behaviour are

reinforced by an effective" keeping-safe" policy developed and reviewed by the school council. This is an outstanding feature.

112. Following a detailed audit the school has taken reasonable action to ensure that disabled pupils do not suffer from less favourable treatment. Access for wheelchair users continues to be limited to the ground floor. The school has promoted disability equality actively by inviting a gold medal para-Olympian as guest speaker at a Prize evening. Pupils with disabilities take part in all aspects of school life including foreign travel. The schools' Disability Equality Scheme is comprehensive and the Access Plan is detailed.
113. The limited incidents of racial discrimination are investigated, recorded and monitored carefully. The racial equality policy is being reviewed. An understanding of cultural diversity and racial harmony is effectively promoted in schemes of work as well as whole-school and class assemblies. Pupils' awareness and understanding of diversity are further extended by a range of appropriate visits, such as the religious education trip to Auschwitz, school trips to the USA and the significant amount of support given to local and national charities.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

114. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
115. The leadership of the recently appointed headteacher has outstanding features. She is highly respected by pupils, colleagues and governors. She has a clear vision for the school to be recognised as a centre of excellence. Her vision, and the school's aims and values are reflected in the school motto, 'Inspire, Succeed, Excel'. She provides strong leadership and direction. The school's aims and values are shared and understood by the members of the school community.
116. The leadership team has extensive experience and a good balance of expertise. Its members provide outstanding support for the headteacher and strong leadership within their areas of responsibility. They get on well with pupils and colleagues and have good links with middle managers. They promote the school's aims and values very successfully. They strive to ensure that all members of the school community are treated equally and fairly.
117. Leaders and managers take appropriate account of the priorities of the Welsh Assembly Government. They are making good progress in addressing these priorities and, in some cases, very good progress. For example, bilingual competence is being promoted actively and positively and very good progress is being made in the development of Learning Pathways for pupils at KS4.

118. Leaders and managers are generally successful in setting and meeting challenging targets and goals. Much of the good progress made in raising attainment in recent months is due to effective target setting. At middle management level, however, there is a little inconsistency in the way in which targets are set. In a few cases, the targets are not precise enough and it is difficult to measure progress made in addressing these goals.
119. The good links between senior leaders and middle managers help facilitate improvement in standards and provision. Leaders and managers supervise and improve the performance of pastoral and subject department teams very successfully. They monitor the progress made and track improvements very effectively.
120. The work of teachers is appraised effectively and their professional development is promoted well. This has contributed towards improvements in the quality of provision. Members of staff who provide technical, learning and administrative support receive fewer opportunities for professional development.
121. The governing body contributes well to the school's leadership. Governors are well informed about the school's work through a suitable variety of processes. They consider reports prepared for them by senior leaders and managers, attend presentations from staff members and participate in discussions about the school's strategic development.
122. These procedures enable governors to monitor the quality of provision effectively. They support the school well and are justifiably proud of its achievements. They also act as critical friends and hold the school to account for its performance.
123. In most important respects, governors ensure that legal and regulatory requirements are met. They have not, however, fulfilled the requirement to produce an annual report to parents for the academic year 2006-2007.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

124. This grade is one grade lower than the grade in the school's self-evaluation report. This is because not enough of the good features of self-evaluation and planning for improvement are outstanding.
125. The inspection team agreed with the findings in the school's SER in six out of the seven key questions.
126. The procedures for self-evaluation are well embedded across the school. The recently appointed headteacher has played a significant role in this respect,

raising awareness of the importance of the processes of self-evaluation and planning further developments.

127. Senior leaders and most middle managers are well informed about their areas of responsibility. There is good professional dialogue amongst members of staff which enables subject and pastoral teams to reflect on their work and to plan for improvement. Senior leaders and most middle managers work closely together to ensure that issues are shared and prioritised for improvement.
128. The school's self-evaluation report, produced for the inspection, covers all aspects of the inspection framework in detail. It identifies many good features in the school's work and judges a significant number of these to be outstanding. All subject and pastoral teams also produced self-evaluation reports that reflected on the quality of the performance in their areas. Many of these reports are too descriptive and do not indicate clearly the outstanding features or shortcomings.
129. Self-evaluation arrangements make appropriate use of a range of first-hand evidence to evaluate and monitor performance across the school. Data is used well in most subjects to analyse pupils' attainments at the end of each key stage in relation to their expected targets. The outcomes from external reviews and internal performance management reviews are also used constructively in many subjects.
130. The school welcomes and responds well to the views of pupils. Most pupils speak very positively about the opportunities given to them to express their views. The active school council continues to play a part in improving the quality of school life for pupils. It has contributed to changes in school uniform and also improvements in accommodation.
131. Pupils' views are also taken into account through the eco-committee. A very good example of this is illustrated through a recent presentation its members gave in a full staff meeting based on their observations of the school's energy consumption. Pupils from several year groups spoke extremely well to highlight how the school could improve its energy efficiency and members of staff were asked to reflect on what the pupils had found.
132. The headteacher and senior leaders have been very successful in enabling all members of staff to feel that their views are important. As a consequence of this there is a sense of shared ownership amongst most staff and a clear understanding of their role in moving the school forward in all aspects.
133. The school works well with parents and responds appropriately to any issues they raise. They are given opportunities to contribute their views through frequent dialogue with teaching staff and through annual parents' meetings.
134. The school also works very well with other interested parties. A strong feature of this is the work of various well-established subject teams with local partner primary schools. These have led to significant continuing improvements in ensuring continuity of experience for pupils when they arrive at the school.

135. The three-year SDP is detailed and of good quality. It sets clear and appropriately challenging targets for improvement that focus clearly on pupils' standards of attainment, learning and teaching. The SDP prioritises aspects for improvement and identifies appropriate success criteria, resource costs and timescales for each. There are good procedures to ensure that resources are allocated appropriately to the school's priorities for improvement.
136. Departmental development plans usually reflect well the objectives in the SDP. The format of them is good and most indicate aspects for improvement that match appropriately the subject priorities and those of the school. Most indicate resource costs and appropriate time scales for completion. In many cases, however, the links between the subject self-evaluation reports and the priorities for improvement are not explicit enough. Also, in a few subjects targets are less precise and are not expressed in ways that are easily measurable.
137. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The school has addressed fully three of the six key issues that relate to continuing improvement in standards, sharing good practice in monitoring and meeting statutory requirements in respect of a daily act of collective worship.
138. A particularly strong feature is the continuing improvement in standards of achievement. This is reflected in the grades awarded in the six subjects inspected in this report, many of which show outstanding features.
139. The school has also made good progress in relation to promoting literacy and numeracy. The key issue relating to extending the accommodation, is no longer relevant.
140. In spite of the school's efforts to improve attendance this remains an issue for further development.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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141. This grade matches the grade in the school's self- evaluation report.
142. Teachers are well qualified and many are experienced. Almost all teachers teach only their specialist subject. A few teachers are on short-term contracts. Very good technical support is provided in certain subjects including ICT, art, design and technology and science.
143. There are 13 LSAs who are well deployed and valued by the school. They work well with teachers and ably support pupils in mainstream classes. There are good links with external health agencies, particularly so in the Newbridge Inclusion Centre. The peripatetic music team provides very good support which enables many pupils to learn to play a musical instrument.

144. Members of administrative staff have designated roles, which they perform very well. The school has implemented a good policy for workload and remodelling issues. However, a few teachers continue to undertake some routine administrative tasks. Time allocated for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment is used well.
145. The professional development needs of teachers and senior leaders are matched closely to the school's priorities for development. Not all support staff members are fully involved in this process. External and in-house training is of a high quality and is well attended.
146. The induction programme and mentoring system to support newly-qualified teachers is very good, and the arrangements for supporting initial teacher training students are detailed and comprehensive. Criminal Records Bureau checks are completed for all staff and volunteers.
147. All learners have access to sufficient, learning resources of good quality. The quality and quantity of learning resources at KS3 and KS4 in the six subjects inspected are consistently good.
148. Provision for ICT is outstanding. There are computers in every classroom and a further four designated computer rooms. These are networked and a very wide range of appropriate and up-to-date software is available. All classrooms have an interactive whiteboard. These are very well used by the teachers and impact positively on pupils' learning. Work booklets produced by many departments are of a very high quality.
149. The librarians manage the well-stocked library very efficiently. Pupils use it well and this has a very good impact on their research skills and their general learning.
150. The accommodation provides a suitable setting for good teaching. The buildings are very well maintained, mostly free of litter and cleaned to a high standard. Nearly all classrooms are a good size and are well decorated. Most subject departments are situated in departmental bases.
151. Facilities for drama are good. The studio is well laid out and is now fully accessible through a wheelchair lift for disabled pupils. Accommodation for music is good. The catering area has been upgraded but the dining room, although opened up, is still relatively small.
152. Learning is enhanced by outstanding displays, in the classrooms and in the main corridors. There are many signs in Welsh which support well pupils' use of the language.
153. The school makes very good use of the adjoining leisure centre including the large sports hall, swimming pool and changing facilities. There are adequate netball courts with good surfaces and the all-weather games facility is well utilised. Pupils make good use of the sports fields.

154. The school manages its funds well. All spending is effectively monitored by the business manager and overseen by the headteacher. Financial decisions are rightly focused on needs identified in the SDP. One major issue and a few minor problems were identified in the last audit report. These have now been addressed.
155. The governing body plays a full and responsible role in deciding how funds should be spent or what cuts should be made. There is, however, no system for evaluating expenditure to ensure that best value for money is achieved.
156. Overall, the finances and resources are used very competently. Taking into account its limited financial resources, the school provides very good value for money by:
- providing an outstanding quality of education;
 - ensuring resources are well matched to requirements; and
 - providing a pleasant and well-kept environment.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS3

Good features

157. Pupils' speaking abilities are good across a wide range of tasks. Pupils display confidence and make good use of the many well-conceived opportunities provided in which talk is frequently used as a productive learning tool. They listen attentively and respond to instructions well; many are keen to participate orally in whole-class, group and pair situations.
158. The majority of pupils speak clearly and confidently in connection with a range of appropriate topics and the majority are able to use Standard English correctly. Pupils interact positively with each other and with teachers so that their learning in relation to literacy can be clarified and improved.
159. The majority of pupils demonstrate good standards in their reading and engage well with a range of texts that include, for example, Shakespeare's plays and Robert Swindell's *'Stone Cold'*. In connection with reading, the majority of pupils are able to employ higher-order reading skills and show that they can ably skim and scan written and electronic texts for key information.

160. The majority of pupils produce a good deal of written work that is technically accurate and well organised in terms of presentation and ideas. Others produce good work in relation to a unit of work centred on Charles Dickens and respond well to challenging work in well-matched schemes of work.
161. Most pupils write enthusiastically and purposefully. They engage in well-conceived tasks that include letter and diary writing, creative work and poetry. They also carry out non-fiction tasks with a range of audiences and formats in mind.
162. Many pupils also make good use of the 'passport for learning' initiative whilst others respond well to open-ended tasks that encourage independent learning. Pupils also show that they are able to word-process proficiently in homework particularly where extended writing has been undertaken.
163. Pupils with SEN generally demonstrate good listening skills and make appropriate progress at KS3.

Shortcomings

164. A few pupils in most classes are less productive in whole-class and group situations in terms of both written and oral work.
165. A few pupils are less competent in their reading and display some hesitation and lack of understanding.
166. A small minority of pupils produce work that is sketchy and brief. Their work displays a range of technical errors and a general lack of accuracy and control in relation to sentence construction, spelling and punctuation.

KS4

167. Examination results for GCSE in English and English Literature in the last two years have been above local and national averages for passes at A*-C grades. These results represent good achievement for these pupils. In English Literature, results have been particularly good.

Good features

168. Most pupils respond positively and work well in lessons; consequently, they make good progress in all three of the attainment targets and achieve well in their public examinations.
169. Many pupils speak confidently and fluently in whole-class and group contexts in Standard English. They also listen attentively. They take turns appropriately when interacting with fellow pupils and teachers.
170. Standards of reading are good and pupils display enthusiasm towards literary texts studied, for instance, in relation to Shakespeare's *'Macbeth'*. They make good use of prior learning, for example, in their good recall of literary devices such as metaphor and other poetic devices in their analyses of poetry.

171. Most pupils produce writing of good quality in response to a range of tasks that often includes extended writing. This prepares them well for the demands of external examinations in English. Much good writing is sustained and the product of considered drafting and careful planning.
172. In response to literature, the majority of pupils show that they can use evidence from texts well, for example, in relation to Steinbeck's '*Of Mice and Men*', and they are able to offer critical viewpoints that confirm their capacity to argue analytically.
173. Less able pupils achieve standards which are good in relation to their abilities. Many of these pupils make the most of the alternative but parallel curriculum designed for them. In many cases they proceed to take external examinations at appropriate levels.

Shortcomings

174. A small minority of pupils' writing displays technical flaws, particularly in connection with formal skills, for example, with regard to presentation, the use of capital letters, sentence divisions, spelling and punctuation. A few do not finish written work they have started.

Design and technology

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

KS3

Good features

175. Nearly all pupils understand the design process and follow it to design and make a range of products. Pupils' research skills are developed through all areas in design and technology. This research leads to the collection and good presentation of a range of information. Pupils use the knowledge gained from their research to write their own outline specifications for a given problem. It is from their specification that pupils design a solution.
176. Nearly all pupils develop their skills in using computer software from an early stage in the school and the work produced is presented within their design ideas. In the best examples, pupils demonstrate very good skills.
177. Most pupils demonstrate a good range of knowledge about manufacturing skills and processes. They use these to make products of a very good standard. In one project, based on the '*Dr. Who*' television series, pupils use electronic components competently to produce a product which can generate its own movement.
178. Many pupils are able to use their knowledge of computer-aided manufacture (CAM) software to support the manufacture of their product on a range of computer-aided machines. The quality of this work and range of products designed are good.

179. When evaluating their work, most pupils are able to explain how well they performed and how their work could be improved.
180. Pupils with ALN make very good progress and often produce products of a good standard in all areas of design and technology, exceeding expectations.

Shortcomings

181. The work of a few pupils in their booklets shows less development of their designing skills. This work shows insufficient originality and flair. Pupils' notes on their ideas do not fully express their thoughts about their ideas or their knowledge of construction and processes.
182. When pupils evaluate their own products a few do not make sufficient reference to their specification when measuring the performance of what they have made.

KS4

183. Examination results in design and technology at GCSE in the last two years have been above local and national averages for passes at A* to C grades. These results represent very good achievement for these pupils.

Outstanding features

184. Many pupils exceed their predicted performance by designing and producing very good products for examination coursework.
185. Many pupils display outstanding knowledge in the use of ICT and computer-aided design (CAD), using their skills to:
 - collect research material to help them make decisions in forming their specification and developing solutions to their problem;
 - produce plans from which they manufacture their products;
 - operate CAM machines to assist in the manufacture of their products: and
 - write programmes which operate the circuits they build to solve their problem.

Good features

186. Pupils identify their own problems to which they produce solutions using their designing and making skills. They are very good at explaining their design intentions orally. Before pupils produce their own specifications they collect a good range of information to help them make their decisions.
187. Many pupils, when working in a variety of materials, show a range of skills which are well developed through the use of hand and machine tools.
188. Pupils with ALN make very good progress, often exceeding their potential and producing products of a good standard.

Shortcomings

189. A small minority of pupils have not developed skills for independent learning enough for them to plan and organise all their work. This leads to slower progress when working independently on their examination coursework.
190. A few pupils do not always develop their chosen ideas sufficiently to include more information about alternative construction details.

Information and communications technology

KS3 Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

KS4 Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

KS3

Outstanding features

191. Nearly all pupils display outstanding standards in their use of ICT to communicate and handle information. They use equipment and a range of software competently in appropriate contexts to produce work of a very high standard.
192. More able pupils have an outstanding knowledge and understanding of databases. They apply this confidently in relevant contexts. They also have very good knowledge and understanding of spreadsheets and use these well in appropriate modelling activities.
193. Many pupils demonstrate very high levels of understanding in their use of ICT. They reflect critically on their work and are very confident in exploring more advanced features of software to improve the overall quality of its presentation. This is apparent across the ability and age range throughout the key stage.
194. In Y7 many pupils achieve passes or distinctions in examinations in initial text processing. In Y8 a majority of pupils achieve passes in electronic presentation. By the end of the key stage many pupils achieve at least level 5 in NC teacher assessments. Overall many pupils demonstrate exceptionally high standards of attainment.

Good features

195. Most pupils of middle to lower ability have good ICT skills. They are confident in using hardware and work very well in lessons both independently and with others. Many display good levels of understanding and explore features of relevant software competently.
196. Most pupils have a secure knowledge of the important features of spreadsheets and databases. Many show good understanding in using them in a range of appropriately challenging tasks.

Shortcomings

197. A very few pupils of middle to lower ability follow instructions but have less secure understanding of the overall purpose of the task they are undertaking.

KS4

198. Examination results in this subject in the last two years have been well above national and LEA averages for passes at A* to C grades. The proportion of pupils who achieved grades A* to A is also well above both national and LEA figures. These results represent outstanding achievement for these pupils.

Outstanding features

199. Nearly all pupils have outstanding ICT skills and a very secure knowledge of ICT theory. They apply these very well in a range of tasks relevant to the course they are undertaking. They reflect critically on the outcomes of their work and make extremely good progress by the end of the key stage.
200. Most pupils in Y10 following the GCSE course have a very good knowledge of validation and verification procedures and apply these competently in appropriate contexts. For many pupils this is outstanding in terms of their depth of understanding.
201. Many pupils in Y11 who are following the GCSE course display outstanding use of ICT in undertaking highly appropriate and challenging projects for their coursework. They show very high levels of understanding in designing and evaluating ICT systems that are highly relevant to the contexts they have chosen.
202. Nearly all pupils who are undertaking the GCSE course at Entry level are very confident and competent in their use of ICT to communicate information. Many of them reflect continually on their work and use this process very well to improve the overall quality of their work.
203. A very small number of pupils follow the AS course and are entered for the examination at the end of Y11. Their achievements are outstanding.

Shortcomings

204. A very few pupils follow instructions given to them but lack confidence and understanding in explaining aspects of their work

History

KS3 Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

KS4 Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

KS3

Outstanding features

205. Pupils, including those with ALN, use a wide range of historical evidence confidently to investigate the past, including documents, visual evidence, ICT, databases and maps. They ask relevant questions, extract information from sources and explain and analyse it competently.
206. Pupils in all classes, including those with ALN, work outstandingly well in pairs and groups and produce a range of alternative explanations for historical events.

Good features

207. All pupils, including those with ALN, make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of events and people in the past. Their recall of previous work is very good.
208. Most pupils use historical terms confidently to identify and describe features of past events and ways of life. They explain changes and consequences, and can give multiple reasons for events.
209. More able pupils have a very good understanding of how historical evidence should be used. They extract information from a wide range of visual and documentary sources analytically, make pertinent comparisons and discuss their origin and reliability. They organise and communicate purposefully historical knowledge gained through independent research.
210. All pupils communicate, according to their ability, in appropriate depth and in a variety of ways, making good use of historical terminology and concepts.
211. In their work on working conditions in Merthyr, all pupils in Y9 display an increasing knowledge and understanding of local history and can draw conclusions from a wide range of sources. They understand the difference between change and progress and can apply this to the local context.

Shortcomings

212. There are no significant shortcomings.

KS4

213. Examination results in history at GCSE in the last two years have been well above local and national averages for passes at grades A*-C and A* -G. These results represent very good achievement in relation to pupils' abilities.

Outstanding features

214. Pupils who follow the GCSE course demonstrate high levels of historical enquiry and conceptual competence through sustained and in-depth analysis of historical sources.

215. Without exception, pupils listen carefully to their teacher and their peers in history lessons. This enables them to produce extended and well-informed responses to tasks and sources with secure confidence.

Good features

216. All pupils including those with ALN, make very good progress in understanding historical terms and concepts and recall previous learning well.

217. In their work on the USA, pupils of all abilities are able to use their knowledge of previous learning to broaden and deepen their understanding of key historical concepts. They can make relevant contemporary comparisons between economic prosperity and depression during the 1920s and in the present decade.

218. All pupils investigate historical questions very effectively by describing, explaining and reaching informed conclusions, based on the evidence they have studied. They recognise and explain multiple causes, prioritise and justify their choice. Most give comprehensive and well-structured written responses to source questions. A mixed ability Y11 group used a variety of sources to discover aspects of life in the sixties and were able to communicate their findings with confidence, displaying their understanding and knowledge of different periods in history.

219. The majority of pupils write very effectively to answer historical questions. They take time to draft written work and revise accordingly using peer and teacher assessment for learning techniques.

Shortcomings

220. There are no significant shortcomings.

Music

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

KS3

Good features

221. A majority of the pupils in Y7 and most in Y8 and Y9 sing with confidence, enthusiasm and conviction, and generally produce a pleasing tone.

222. Almost all pupils perform on a variety of instruments with confidence, accuracy and fluency. They demonstrate technical competence and show a sense of style and awareness of others in class ensemble work. The majority of pupils use ICT effectively to record their performances.

223. Pupils make good progress when composing and in the arranging of a given melody. A minority of the pupils use the melody in an imaginative manner when performing, and, for example, create a striking introduction to the stimuli. A minority of the pupils also use ICT effectively to record their arrangements.
224. When appraising, most pupils are confident in discussing the musical elements. More able pupils offer technical terms such as tempo and dynamics when discussing elements.
225. Pupils with ALN achieve good standards in music.

Shortcomings

226. The quality of the singing of a small minority of Y7 pupils is not adequately refined. Their intonation is insecure at times and they pay insufficient attention to diction. The lack of commitment of very few pupils hinders progress in singing and affects the standards achieved by others.
227. A few of the pupils' responses when appraising are short and superficial, and lack appropriate vocabulary.

KS4

228. Examination results in music at GCSE in the last two years have been well above local and national averages for passes at A* - C grades. These results represent good achievement for these pupils.

Outstanding features

229. Pupils' application of their thinking skills and wider key skills in order to enhance their understanding and learning in music is outstanding.
230. Pupils produce very good compositions, making confident use of ICT and are familiar with several software programmes. They are able to select appropriately for their choice of genre.

Good features

231. Generally, most pupils are competent performers, and perform well in an ensemble situation. A few are able to perform fluently with an excellent sense of style and expression.
232. Most pupils can improvise over a given chord sequence, and appreciate the use of such chord sequences by popular artistes. The progression within their composition work from Y10 to Y11 is logical and effective. The majority of their compositions show a sense of style and structure, and reflect very well developed ideas, often with sophisticated choice of instrumentation.
233. Pupils respond to questions about music they have listened to with good levels of understanding. Their appraisal work is often very good, and they are able to

transfer these skills when refining their own compositions. They make good use of technical language and terminology, and are confident in discussing specific genres such as popular music.

Shortcomings

234. A few pupils lack confidence when performing and their limited capabilities impact on the standards they attain.

Physical education

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

235. Extra-curricular participation and standards are high. Both boys' and girls' teams achieve considerable success in a range of sports and many individuals gain representative honours. The whole school celebrates and shares in their success.
236. In both key stages, many pupils understand the benefits and effects of exercise, and its relevance to fitness and well-being, and can evaluate their own and others' performance accurately and suggest positive and sensible ways to improve.
237. Pupils with ALN make good progress in both key stages.

KS3

Good features

238. In swimming, most Y7 girls can swim front and back crawl showing good style, body position and line, and sustain their technique over more than 50 metres. Almost all Y9 boys know why they should make a shallow entry into the pool when making a rescue. All are able to plan a rescue sequence to suit different scenarios, and perform the rescues efficiently.
239. In rugby, almost all Y8 boys can pass and receive with good style and control. Most can side-step an opponent skilfully, tackle safely and set up the ball for a supporting player in a competitive game.
240. All Y8 girls work together well to devise a group fitness-circuit, and many can suggest ways of making the circuit more challenging. Many perform recognised fitness exercises with good technique and control.
241. Girls in Y9 remember previously learnt step-aerobics exercises and perform them well. The most able create, develop and practise their group routines, using imaginative changes of direction in their performance.

Shortcomings

242. There are no significant shortcomings, although a few pupils across the key stage and the range of activities do not sustain tension and control in their performance, and the quality of their work suffers.

KS4

243. Examination results in physical education in the last two years have been well above local and national averages for passes at grades A*- C and A*- A. These results are in line with pupils' ability.

Outstanding features

244. There was a significant improvement in examination results at GCSE in 2007 and 2008.
245. In fitness training, most Y10 boys show good balance, co-ordination, agility and speed and perform the exercises with good quality. Several boys can lead groups of their peers confidently and coach, support and encourage them positively while they are working.
246. In basketball, despite limited prior experience, most Y11 boys can pass at speed using a variety of passes accurately. Many of them make good decisions in a game, varying the height and direction of the pass to suit the situation. They can switch quickly from attack to defence and understand and operate zone-defence successfully.

Good features

247. Many Y10 girls use the space well to avoid an opponent and get into the best position in the netball shooting circle. They know how to shoot accurately and successfully in netball. Many Y11 girls understand different defensive strategies and sustain their skill level in the pressure and excitement of a game.
248. In GCSE lessons, Y10 girls know and clearly understand the various components of fitness and can make the connection between the types of test and their relevance to different physical activities. Many Y11 girls understand a new topic about information processing and apply the information correctly to a wide range of self-chosen sporting scenarios.
249. Most Y10 GCSE level boys absorb complicated information very well and apply their understanding well to answer written tasks. All Y11 GCSE level boys can devise an appropriate three-part fitness session and show good control when performing sets of upper-body strength exercises.

Shortcomings

250. There are no significant shortcomings, although a very small number of pupils in Y10 and Y11 do not sustain their focus and attention for the whole lesson.

School's response to the inspection

251. The headteacher, staff and governors are delighted that the inspection team found Newbridge School to be a very good school with outstanding features in learners' achievements, the quality of education provided and the leadership and management of the school. We are very pleased that the proportion of lessons where the highest grade was awarded for standards is unusually high and represents outstanding achievement.
252. We are proud that the inspection team confirm standards of achievement are considerably higher than those for all secondary schools in Wales in 2006 – 2007, with the percentage of grade one lessons 32 percentage points higher than the national figure at KS3 and 36 percentage points at KS4.
253. We are pleased that inspectors found the school provides a stimulating setting for learning, that teachers' expertise has been recognised as a strong feature of the school and that the outstanding features in teaching, with 66% grade one lessons in the 6 subjects inspected and 50% grade one lessons across the whole school, have been observed.
254. It is equally pleasing the inspection team have confirmed that relationships between teachers and pupils and between groups of pupils are outstanding, that pupils' behaviour is exceptionally good and pupils have positive attitudes to learning.
255. The inspection was a rigorous yet valuable process for Newbridge School. It has confirmed the outstanding features of our school and our strong emphasis on excellence.
256. We are pleased that the recommendations reflect our own self evaluation and are already incorporated into our school development plan.
257. We wish to thank the inspection team for their highly skilled and professional approach through the inspection week and Mr. Peter Carter in particular for his skilled management of the process, his integrity and care.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Newbridge School
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11 - 16
Address of school	Bridge Street, Newbridge
Postcode	NP11 5FR
Telephone number	01495 243243

Headteacher	Mrs L J Perry
Date of appointment	1 st January 2008
Chair of governors / Appropriate authority	Cllr D M Gray
Reporting inspector	Mr Peter Carter
Dates of inspection	20 th – 24 th October 2008

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	140	173	175	179	210	-	-	877

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	45	7	49.12

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	19.1
Average teaching group size	24.8
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	76.88

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1 (Summer)	89.9	91.1	89.2	89.0	68.3	-	-	85.5
Term 2 (Autumn)	94.7	93.8	92.8	92.4	88.1	-	-	92.4
Term 3 (Spring)	92.3	94.2	91.8	90.7	85.5	-	-	90.9

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	14.12%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	50 temp. 0 perm.

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2008															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 179															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	-	-	0	0	6	5	16	37	28	7	0	0
		National	0	-	-	1	0	1	7	21	36	24	9	0	-
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	-	-	0	0	2	7	15	26	34	16	0	0
		National	0	-	-	0	0	1	8	20	28	27	14	1	-
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	-	-	0	0	1	3	13	32	32	17	2	0
		National	0	-	-	0	0	1	7	21	35	26	10	0	-

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

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by teacher assessment		by test	
In the school	67.6	In the school	-
In Wales	59.6	In Wales	-

Public Examination Results:

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ	
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2008	211
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	354

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2008:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	91		87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	70	51	56
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	89	85	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	54	36	41
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	99		97
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	91		77
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	97		93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	3		7
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	1		3
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	-		0
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	-		0

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

A team of 11 inspectors, including the school's nominee, spent the equivalent of 43 days in the school. The team held a meeting before the inspection.

During the inspection, inspectors visited:

- 88 lessons or part lessons;
- assemblies and registration periods; and
- some extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team met with:

- staff, parents and carers and governors before the inspection;
- senior leaders, middle managers, teachers, support assistants and administrative staff;
- representatives of the LEA; and
- groups of pupils from each year group and representatives of the school council.

The inspection team considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- 52 responses from parents and carers to a questionnaire;
- comprehensive documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection;
- samples of reports to parents and carers; and
- samples of pupils' work across the curriculum.

After the inspection, inspectors held meetings with six subject departments, senior leaders and governors.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Peter Carter (Registered Inspector)	Context, Summary, Recommendations, KQ1, KQ5, Appendix
Prudence Davis-James	KQ2, Physical Education
Alan Lowndes	KQ3
Gwyn Griffiths	KQ4
David Williams	KQ6, Information and Communications Technology
Rhiannon Boardman (Lay Inspector)	KQ7
Charles Harris	English
Hywel Buckland	Design and Technology
Susan Gwyer-Roberts	History
Meinir Richards	Music
Judith Roberts	School's Nominee

Acknowledgement

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

The inspection contractor

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