

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Newtown High School
Dolfor Road
Newtown
Powys
SY16 1JE**

School Number: 6664011

Date of Inspection: 01/12/08

by

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78673**

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Newtown 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 Newtown High School took place between 01/12/08 and 05/12/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by Edward Aneurin Peter Harris 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 **Full** 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. Newtown High School is an 11-18 mixed, comprehensive school situated in Powys. The school serves the town itself as well as a large rural surrounding area. There are 816 pupils on roll, of whom 109 are in the sixth form. In 2003, when the school was last inspected, there were 950 pupils on roll, 120 of whom were in the sixth form.
2. The school occupies a large site which includes a leisure centre.
3. The school's catchment is comprehensive in nature. Just under 17% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This figure is significantly above the average for the Unitary Authority (UA) but in line with the national average. While employment opportunities in the town are generally good, there is, nevertheless, a significant minority of pupils who comes from homes of relative economic and social disadvantage.
4. The attainment of pupils on entry reflects the full range of ability. A very small minority of pupils comes from different ethnic backgrounds. The vast majority of pupils comes from homes where English is the first language.
5. When the school was last inspected, it was judged to have serious weaknesses because of a number of significant shortcomings in standards, provision, leadership and management.
6. Since that time there have been several changes to the composition and roles of members of the senior leadership team (SLT). The present headteacher has been in post since January 2004. All other members of the SLT, other than the deputy headteacher, were appointed to their present posts since the last inspection.

The school's priorities and targets

7. On taking up her appointment, the present headteacher revised the school's statement of aims, summing them up under the Welsh word "CYFLE", which, being translated into English, means "Opportunity". The word also acts as a mnemonic for "Caring Yields a Flourishing Learning Environment".
8. The school's main aims are to:
 - create a learning environment where pupils and staff enjoy a positive experience;
 - provide all pupils with the opportunity to reach their potential;
 - provide a broad and balanced curriculum that prepares young people for a bilingual and multicultural society;
 - aim for excellence by setting high expectations for all; and
 - foster a school ethos that encourages self-evaluation.
9. The school's self-evaluation report is based on the seven key questions of the Common Inspection Framework (CIF).
10. Numerical targets are set, that in 2009:

- 57% of pupils should reach at least level 5 in all three subjects combined in national curriculum (NC) assessments at the end of key stage (KS) 3; and
- 56% of pupils should achieve at least 5 grades A*-C, and 91% at least 5 grades A*-G in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination.

Summary

11. The improvement in standards and provision since the time the school was last inspected is outstanding.
12. Newtown High School is now a good school with several outstanding, features. These outstanding features are seen in the:
 - improving trend in performance in examination results;
 - way in which teachers and learning assistants promote equality of opportunity in the classroom;
 - way in which the curriculum promotes key skills and sustainable development; and,
 - way in which the school cares for and guides pupils and students.
13. This improvement has come about because of outstanding leadership and management, school self-evaluation, and professional development.

Table of grades awarded

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

14. The school awarded itself grade 2 for all seven key questions. The grades awarded by inspectors for key questions 1, 2, 3 and 7 match those of the school in its self-evaluation report. However, inspectors identified sufficient outstanding features in the good practice in key questions 4, 5, and 6 to award grade 1.

Standards achieved

15. The following table shows the grades awarded at KS3, KS4 and in the sixth form in standards in the following subjects.

Subject	KS3	KS4	Sixth Form
English	2	2	2
Welsh Second language	2	2	2
Mathematics	2	2	2
Science	2	3	2
Information technology	2	2	2
Design technology	2	2	3
Modern foreign languages	2	2	2
History	2	2	2
Geography	2	3	2
Art	2	2	2
Music and performing arts	1	2	2
Physical education	2	2	2
Religious education	2	1	1
Business studies	-	2	-
Psychology	-	-	2

16. This table shows that standards in nearly every subject have risen considerably since the previous inspection. Improvement of particular note is seen in English, mathematics, and physical education at KS3, in art at KS4, and in religious education at both KS3, KS4, and in the sixth form.
17. The following table shows the percentages of grades awarded at each stage.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	6%	70%	20%	4%	0%
KS4	10%	58%	30%	2%	0%
Sixth form	10%	80%	10%	0%	0%
Whole school	8%	69%	21%	2%	0%
These grades are based on observations of 188 lessons					

18. The figures for lessons which had good and outstanding features are slightly above the average for Wales in 2006-2007, as recorded by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI).
19. While the size and nature of the sample are different from the time when the school was last inspected, these figures indicate a significant increase in standards from that time.
20. Over seven out of ten lessons had good features with no important shortcomings, and, in a few cases, good features were outstanding. Over one in five lessons had good features that outweighed shortcomings. In only a very small minority of lessons were there important shortcomings.
21. At KS3, in the NC teachers' assessments in 2007 and 2008, results were above local and national averages. When compared to similar schools, results were in the top 25% in both years. Results in English, mathematics and science, and, in all three subjects combined, were higher than what was expected, based on prior attainment.

22. These results represent a significant increase in standards since the last inspection when results were below average when compared to similar schools.
23. At KS4, the percentage of pupils the school enters for GCSE exceeds the average for Wales as a whole as well as that for the UA. While pass rates at five or more grades A*-C in 2007 were below local and national averages, by 2008, the 54% pass rate almost met the national average. Since 2007, pass rates at five or more grades A*-G have been in excess of both local and national averages.
24. While pass rates in English, mathematics and science, and the three core subjects combined remain broadly in line with local and national averages, evidence of gradual improvement is seen by year-on-year increases when compared to the school's own previous performance and when compared to the performance of similar schools.
25. On the whole, at both KS3 and KS4, girls outperform boys.
26. Results at Advanced (A) level are improving. While results remain below national and local averages, the gap is narrowing. In 2008 64% of the cohort passed at grades A-C and 94% with grades A-E.
27. In the key skills of numeracy, communication and information and communication technology (ICT) pupils' achievement has good features and no important shortcomings. Pupils with additional learning needs make very good progress towards the targets set for them.
28. Most pupils and students have a good understanding of how well they are progressing and what they have to do in order to improve their work.
29. Bilingual skills are developed through Welsh lessons, and, increasingly through other subjects in the curriculum. Pupils' and students' bilingual skills have good features that outweigh shortcomings.
30. Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Most pupils are well behaved. The way they work with one another in creative and problem-solving tasks is outstanding. However, in a very small minority of classes pupils underachieve because they pay poor attention and fail to focus on the task in hand.
31. Levels of attendance are in line with UA and national averages.
32. Pupils get on well with each other and with their teachers. They show good levels of respect for other cultures and beliefs. The quality of working relationships between students and teachers in the sixth form is outstanding.
33. Work-related education and careers education and guidance prepare pupils well for opportunities in education, training and the world of work.

The quality of education and training

34. The following grades were awarded for teaching and assessment in the lessons observed:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	14%	62%	20%	4%	0%
KS4	17%	63%	17%	3%	0%
6th form	15%	78%	7%	0%	0%
Whole school	15%	66%	16%	3%	0%
These grades are based on observations of 188 lessons					

35. The quality of teaching is above the current average for Wales as reported by HMCI. Eighty-one percent of lessons were graded 1 and 2 compared to 76% in all inspections in Wales 2006-2007.
36. Although the size and nature of the sample are different from those of the last inspection, these grades represent a significant increase in the quality of teaching since that time.
37. In the many lessons where good and outstanding features and no important shortcomings were observed, lessons were characterised by high teacher expectations of work and behaviour. In these classes, pupils were clear about their targets. There were high levels of challenge and pace together with a very good match of work to pupils' ability. Where teaching was outstanding, teachers' questions enabled pupils and students to explore their understanding in depth.
38. Where shortcomings were observed there was an imbalance between teacher presentation and activity aimed at engaging learners' attention.
39. The school meets statutory requirements for the assessment of pupils' work. Where practice is good, work is marked in detail and assessment criteria are used consistently. Leaders and managers make effective use of data on pupils' progress to set and monitor pupils' targets and teachers exploit opportunities to involve pupils in assessing their own progress.
40. The curriculum meets the requirements of the NC together with religious education. The wide range of options at KS4, the vocational provision at KS4 and the way in which the curriculum promotes the development of key skills and education for sustainable development are outstanding features.
41. Links with primary schools are good and make for a smooth transition and continuity in the curriculum. There are many opportunities for extra-curricular activity. Work-related education is effective and worthwhile.
42. The culture of Wales is promoted well through lessons and by eisteddfodau. The proportion of pupils who sit the full course Welsh second language GCSE is increasing. Though there is a policy on bilingualism which is implemented across all departments, the school recognises that it is in an early stage of development.
43. The support and guidance of pupils are outstanding. Features of the provision worthy of particular note are the way in which the school:
- manages its care, guidance and support;
 - uses induction programmes to help pupils and students settle in quickly;

- monitors learners' progress;
- supports pupils whose behaviour impedes their progress; and
- has put in place effective measures to deal with bullying.

44. Guidance and advice on vocational and academic choices are of high quality and are impartial. The school takes appropriate steps to safe-guard pupils' welfare and to promote gender equality. Pupils from ethnic minority groups receive good support. Attendance is monitored very effectively and child protection procedures are robust.
45. There is a good provision for Personal and Social Education (PSE) which takes account of health education and careers education and guidance. It is well co-ordinated and makes effective use of outside providers.
46. Very effective strategies are in place to identify pupils with additional learning needs and the provision to meet their needs is carefully managed.
47. The school makes good provision for equal opportunities and has taken reasonable action to avoid putting disabled pupils at a disadvantage.

Leadership and management

48. Leadership and management at the school are outstanding.
49. The headteacher communicates a vision clearly focussed on school improvement. The aims and values of CYFLE are shared by all members of the school community and are reflected in their work.
50. Since her appointment to the school, the headteacher has drawn up a suitable range of policies which reflect these aims. These policies have had a significant impact on practice and have been major contributory factors to the improvement of standards at the school.
51. At a senior level, the leadership team is very effective in setting the strategic direction for the school and in implementing, monitoring and evaluating school policy. The areas of responsibility of senior leaders are clearly defined and they are held accountable for the quality of their work.
52. The school improvement plan is clearly focussed on improving standards of provision and achievement. The clarity of targets contained in the plan has contributed to the consistent implementation of school policy and supports the school's capacity for critical self-review.
53. As with senior leaders and managers, so with middle managers, areas of responsibility are clearly defined. This has led to increasing levels of consistency of practice between departments.
54. The capacity of the school to review provision and outcomes critically is enhanced by a target-setting process that is clear. This has a beneficial effect on the school's capacity to identify its strengths and shortcomings and set the direction for future development.
55. Good account is taken of local and national priorities. Working relationships with local providers at primary, secondary and further education levels are very good. Officers of the UA are effective critical friends of the school.

56. The contribution of the governing body to the school's strategic direction has been outstanding. Governors' contribution is informed by a clear understanding of their role. They are committed to developing local partnerships and to national priorities. They meet all regulatory and legal requirements.
57. Governors' arrangements to monitor and evaluate the school's performance are robust.
58. All staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Performance management arrangements meet national requirements and are effective ways of identifying professional development needs of teaching and non-teaching staff.
59. The quality and range of training of both teaching and support staff are outstanding. All training needs are closely linked to planning priorities. Training is monitored for its impact on standards and good practice is shared readily.
60. Pupils and students have access to an appropriate range of learning resources, and the way in which they are used and reviewed are good.
61. The quality of display in the classrooms and around the school is good and makes for a stimulating working environment for pupils and staff. However, there are shortcomings in the accommodation for physical education.
62. The school monitors its budget very well and provides good value for money.
63. The school has made outstanding progress in addressing the key issues arising from the previous inspection. In particular it has:
- developed a vision which is shared and owned by all stakeholders;
 - clarified roles and responsibilities;
 - established a culture of effective self-evaluation; and
 - raised standards of attainment across the school.

Recommendations

In order to sustain current achievement and develop it further, the school should focus on the following priorities:

- R1. continue to improve standards of attainment, particularly at KS4;
- R2. identify and share the good and outstanding practice in:
- teaching and assessment; and
 - leadership and management;
- R3. develop bilingualism further across all areas of the curriculum;
- R4. continue to work with the UA to improve the accommodation for physical education.

All these recommendations are identified in the school's current development plan.

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

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

64. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade.

KS3 and KS4

Pupils' success in attaining agreed learning goals

65. The following table shows the grades awarded for standards at KS3 and KS4.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	6%	70%	20%	4%	0%
KS4	10%	58%	30%	2%	0%
KS3 & KS4	7%	66%	24%	3%	0%
These grades are based on observations of 147 lessons					

66. The figures for lessons which had good and outstanding features are slightly above the average for Wales in 2006-2007, as recorded by HMCI.

67. While the size and nature of the sample are different from those at the time when the school was last inspected, these figures indicate a significant increase in standards from that time.

68. In 2007 and 2008, results at KS3 fell above local and national averages. In 2008, 67% per cent of pupils reached at least level five in the core subjects combined, compared to 60% nationally. Results in English, mathematics, science, and in the three subjects combined were in the top 25% when compared to similar schools.

69. Achievement at KS3 is above what is expected, based on prior attainment, in the three core subjects combined, and in each of them individually.

70. There is evidence of a gradual improvement at KS4. The school is narrowing the gap in performance relative to local and national averages and in comparison with similar schools.

71. In 2008, at KS4, 54% of pupils gained five or more passes at grades A*-C compared to 65% locally and 56% nationally.

72. Ninety-five percent of pupils gained five or more passes at grades A*-G compared to 91% locally and 86% nationally.

73. In 2007, in comparison to similar schools, passes at five or more grades A*-C were below average, though passes at five or more grades A*-G were above average. In 2008, passes at both ranges of grades were in the top 50%.

74. At both KS3 and KS4, girls outperform boys.

75. Pupils' listening skills are good. They listen well to one another and to their teachers. Speaking is good. Pupils willingly respond to questions and make good contributions to discussion. They use technical vocabulary well and are confident when making presentations.

76. Reading skills are good at both key stages. Pupils read aloud with accuracy and fluency. The most able read with good levels of expression.

77. Pupils write well. They are able to use a variety of forms of expression and write for a variety of audiences. They are able to organise their work well and improve their work through re-drafting.
78. Pupils' numeracy skills and ICT skills have good features with no important shortcomings. Pupils present data in numerical format across a good range of subjects. Pupils word-process their work, and use desk-top publishing and spreadsheets confidently.
79. Pupils work well in creative and problem-solving opportunities. The way in which they work with others, in pairs and in small groups, is very good. They have a good knowledge of how to improve the standards of their work.
80. While all pupils at KS4 follow courses leading to recognised qualifications in Welsh second language, there are shortcomings in the ways in which pupils develop bilingual skills outside Welsh lessons.

Their progress in learning

81. The increase in standards in nearly every subject since the previous inspection is evidence of good progress in pupils' learning. Pupils have responded well to the good teaching that they receive. They are encouraged to take active parts in lessons. They are productive, make good use of their time, and are prepared well to move on to the next stage of learning. Where teaching is outstanding, invariably so is pupils' progress.
82. Pupils are clear about what is expected of them in terms of their work and behaviour. They are aware of their teachers' high expectations of them and value the way in which targets are clearly set so as to help them make good progress.
83. Pupils with additional learning needs make very good progress. They respond well to in-class support and make good progress over both key stages. They respond to challenge and the encouragement to work hard. They are aware of the key skills and exercise them at a level appropriate to their ability.

The development of their personal, social and learning skills

84. The vast majority of pupils behaves well and adopts positive attitudes to school. They are well motivated. They respond well to the good teaching that they receive and make good use of their time.
85. Pupils progress well in their personal, social and moral development. Relationships with other pupils and with teachers are very good. Many pupils take part in sport and in a good range of extra-curricular activities.
86. The overall attendance rate for the three terms prior to the inspection was 93%. This figure compares favourably with national averages and with similar schools.
87. Pupils show good levels of sensitivity to equal opportunities. They have a good understanding of diversity within society, appropriate to their age. They understand the needs of people with disabilities.
88. Careers guidance and work-related education of good quality prepare pupils extremely well for the world of work.

Sixth form

Students' success in attaining agreed learning goals

89. Standards in the sixth form have good features and no important shortcomings.
90. The following table shows the standards achieved by students in the inspection.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Sixth form	10%	80%	10%	0%	0%
These grades are based on observations of 41 lessons					

91. These figures are 19% higher than the averages for Wales for grades 2 and above in 2006-2007, as recorded by HMCI.
92. While the size and nature of the sample are different from those of the last inspection, these figures denote a significant increase in standards since that time.
93. Results at A level have risen since the last inspection. In 2008, 64% of students entered for two or more A levels passed at grades A-C and 94% with grades A-E. In 2005 the equivalent percentages were 46% and 90% respectively. There has been a year-on-year improvement and the school is making good progress in narrowing the gap between its own and local and national averages.
94. There is no overall trend in the relative performance of boys and girls at A level.
95. As at KS3 and KS4, standards in the key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT have good features and no important shortcomings.
96. Students speak and listen well to the teacher and to one another. Many students pose questions that are probing and express their views with confidence and clarity. They read fluently and write at length, using subject-specific vocabulary confidently and accurately.
97. Students collaborate well with one another in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. They show mature attitudes and good analytical, creative and problem-solving skills.
98. Students make good progress in their personal, moral, social and wider development. They respond well to the feedback on their progress and are keen to improve the quality of their work.
99. Students who follow A level courses in Welsh second language have good bilingual skills. However, as at KS3 and KS4, students' bilingual skills across the whole curriculum have good features that outweigh shortcomings.

Their progress in learning

100. Students make good progress in the sixth form. Most subject areas indicate positive value added based on average GCSE scores. A good proportion of students progresses to higher education.
101. Students make good progress in lessons. They acquire new knowledge and skills and make good progress over time.
102. The majority of students have a good understanding of how well they are doing. Their work is marked and commented upon and targets for improvement are set.

The development of their personal, social and learning skills

103. Students enjoy good relationships with staff and develop a sense of maturity and independence. Students adopt good attitudes and work well individually and in groups. The way in which they show respect for one another and for teachers and visitors is outstanding.
104. Many sixth-form students support younger pupils in their work and in their wider social development. They help organise charitable work and are take a leading role in the school council and extra-curricular activities. They are very good role models to younger pupils.
105. Levels of attendance in the sixth form are good.
106. Sixth-form students have an appropriate programme of work-related education that enables them to become mature young people who are aware of, and respond to, the needs of others.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

107. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade.

KS3 and KS4

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

108. The following table shows the grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment in the lessons observed in all the subjects at KS3 and KS4 as percentages.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	14%	62%	20%	4%	0%
KS4	17%	63%	17%	3%	0%
KS3 & 4	16%	63%	18%	3%	0%
These grades are based on observations of 147 lessons					

109. The quality of teaching is above the current average for Wales as reported by HMCI. Seventy-nine percent of lessons were graded 1 and 2 compared to 76% in all inspections in Wales 2006-2007.
110. Although the size and nature of the sample are different from those of the last inspection, these grades represent a significant increase in the quality of teaching since that time.
111. The way in which teachers promote equality of opportunity is outstanding.
112. The strongest, most consistent features of teaching are the quality of planning and the sharing of objectives with pupils that give purpose and direction to each lesson.
113. Teaching in most lessons at KS3 and KS4 is driven by high expectations and by a desire to challenge pupils of all abilities.

114. The level of challenge in both teacher questioning and task-setting in many areas of the curriculum is good.
115. Good teacher-pupil relationships, which engage pupils in their learning, can be observed in a very high proportion of lessons and is evidenced by pupils' interviews with inspectors. Teachers manage behaviour well. They use a range of strategies that ensure that pupils apply themselves to their work.
116. Teachers display good subject knowledge. Highly innovative practice can be found in music, performing arts, religious education, and English. Teachers make very good use of school's ICT facilities in planning and delivering lessons.
117. There is an emerging culture of sharing good practice in the dissemination of innovative practice which has had a positive impact on teaching. Many teachers have contributed to internal in-service training sessions and a directory of good practice has been compiled.
118. A major criticism in the last report concerned the restricted range of teaching methods used in the school. The school has since worked hard to address this issue, so that there is now better pace and variety in teaching that engages learners and raises their levels of achievement.
119. The school's focus on the development of key skills in all facets of teaching has been effective. The use of 'talking partners' has developed pupils' confidence in oral communication and teachers' planning to develop the wider key skills of problem-solving and working with others has promoted more active learning in many lessons.
120. Learning support assistants (LSAs) make a particularly important contribution to successful teaching. There is a close and purposeful relationship between class teachers and support assistants based on mutual respect, joint preparation around pupils' individual learning plans and intensive, well-informed interventions.
121. The school's promotion of bilingualism has good features with no important shortcomings. In classrooms, there are bilingual signs which help the development of key words in English and Welsh. Registers are taken in Welsh and pupils are regularly encouraged to write headings in their notebooks bilingually.

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

122. The practice of assessing what pupils know, understand and can do is well embedded and applied consistently both within and between subjects.
123. With very few exceptions, teachers make clear comments in their marking about what pupils do well and what they need to do to improve. In this way, pupils gain a clear understanding of both the purpose and requirements of assessment tasks. However, pupils' involvement in self and peer assessment is not yet fully developed.
124. Targets are well known by pupils and teachers and there is a clear and straightforward method of monitoring pupils' progress against them. Whilst there is some variation in the validity of criteria used to assess pupils' performance, pupils generally have a clear idea about where they are and what they need to do to improve.
125. The method by which the school reports to parents on the progress being made by their children is clear and helpful. Despite occasional variations, subject

commentaries are consistent with the good quality of assessment information on which they are based.

126. The school meets the statutory requirements for assessment and reporting and satisfies examination board requirements. Standardisation and moderation activities are carried out at the end of KS3 to improve the rigour of teachers' assessment.

Sixth form

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

127. The following table shows the grades for the quality of teaching and assessment in the lessons observed in all the subjects at KS3 and KS4 as percentages.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Sixth form	15%	78%	7%	0%	0%
These grades are based on observations of 41 lessons					

128. The good features described in KS3 and KS4 are also present in sixth-form lessons.
129. For example, teachers demonstrate high levels of subject knowledge across the curriculum and make effective use of explicit strategies for developing students' key skills.
130. They use ICT to good effect to develop oral and problem-solving skills. Their planning is thorough and learning objectives are effectively shared with students.
131. Teachers make effective use of questioning to challenge students and develop their understanding.
132. Relationships in the classroom are strong. They are based on mutual respect and contribute effectively to students' understanding.

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

133. The quality and accuracy of teachers' assessment observed in KS3 and KS4 are sustained in the sixth form. In some areas, for example English and history, teachers' commentary is extensive.
134. Self-assessment continues to be central to the process of raising standards. For example, students criticise their own and other students' 'Powerpoint' presentations or video-ed performance. Students talk about their work with a simple, reflective confidence and a capacity for self-criticism.
135. As elsewhere, students' progress is well monitored and the quality of guidance to students is very good.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

136. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade.

137. While the team awarded grade 2 for this key question as a whole, nevertheless it judged the curricular provision to be outstanding in the following areas, namely the:

- vocational provision at KS 4;
- provision for the development of basic and key skills; and
- work done by the school to promote education for sustainable development.

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

138. The curriculum complies with all statutory and course requirements.

139. At KS3, national curriculum subjects and statutory religious education are taught as required. In addition, all pupils receive timetabled lessons in ICT and PSE which includes health education and careers education and guidance. Pupils have the opportunity of accreditation in key skills at the end of Y9 as well as entering for GCSE in Welsh second language.

140. At KS4 the vocational provision made available through learning pathways is outstanding. The school offers pupils choices from 31 courses. This exceeds the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) guidelines for subjects to be available in 2012. Vocational courses are offered in partnership with Coleg Powys and independent training agencies. More able pupils are given the opportunity to sit examinations in English, science, religious education, engineering and mathematics before the end of the key stage.

141. The curricular provision in the sixth form is good. A good number of courses is available to augment a core curriculum consisting of key skills accreditation, religious education and physical education. In the former, accreditation at level 3 is available for students who wish to attain this.

142. However, the provision of vocational courses at sixth-form level is limited.

143. There are shortcomings in the allocation of time to a small minority of subjects. For example, in Welsh second language, the allocation is made up by the use of key skills days at KS4 and, in design and technology, relatively short lessons restrict the effective delivery of food technology.

144. The development of key skills is an outstanding aspect of the curriculum. Key skills are systematically interwoven into lesson plans and all pupils and students are given the opportunity of accreditation.

145. There is a wide variety of extra-curricular activities that enriches the curriculum. For example, in physical education many opportunities are available for pupils to develop their individual skills as well as participating in team sports. In music and performing arts, there is a school orchestra, choir, jazz group, saxophone group and a string orchestra. Many other opportunities are also available such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, participation in the Urdd and eisteddfodau, and the numerous catch-up opportunities offered in subjects.

146. The spiritual aspects of pupils' experiences are well developed through religious education, the PSE programme, school assemblies and the Christian Union. Legal requirements regarding the daily act of worship are met.

147. The promotion of pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils respond well to planned and informal opportunities to listen to various viewpoints and to accept or debate these sensibly. Links with Nigeria and Uganda give them a

good understanding of various cultures as do events such as the annual activity week.

148. Learning experiences are enriched by effective partnerships with parents and other providers. Links with primary schools, Coleg Powys, the local special school and Aberystwyth University are very good.

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

149. The good links the school has established with local employers enrich the curriculum. Work experience opportunities are well organised and there is effective follow-up via a PSE programme of good quality.
150. There are good features to the school's provision to develop the bilingual competence of pupils and students. For example, at KS3, there are opportunities provided to study history and music bilingually. Members of the Welsh department provide in-house lessons in conversational Welsh to help their colleagues develop more consistency in the use of incidental Welsh in class. The school meets the requirements for 'Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig.'
151. The school does much to tackle social disadvantage and stereotyping and all pupils have equal access to all courses irrespective of their ability.
152. The promotion of opportunities for sustainable development is outstanding. The school has a strong and effective Eco-committee and has gained the green flag award. In addition to work developed through geography and science, pupils are encouraged, through a recent activity day, to consider disasters in developing countries and the use made of international aid. The 'Dolen Ffermio' link enables the school to source food locally for the school catering service and for the eco committee's food co-operative.
153. The school takes good account of the framework of careers education and guidance and does effective work in promoting the entrepreneurial skills of pupils and students. For example, in 2008, a team of sixth-form students was overall winner of the WAG award for the most innovative project in the 'Engineering Education Scheme Wales' competition. The competition required students to work on a real-life design challenge provided by Makefast Engineering, a local company that has strong links with the school.
154. Overall the school takes good account of national priorities for community regeneration and ensures that pupils and students are well prepared for adult life and to become lifelong learners.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

155. The school awarded itself grade 2 for this key question. However, inspectors identified sufficient outstanding features in the good practice to award grade 1.
156. The main outstanding features are in the way in which the school:
- manages its care arrangements;
 - helps learners adapt to the demands of school work;

- monitors attendance, behaviour and performance;
- provides for additional learning needs; and
- promotes good behaviour.

The quality of care, support and guidance to learners

157. There are effective procedures in place for promoting pupils' personal and educational welfare. There is a range of relevant policies that are detailed and provide valuable guidance.
158. The school's pastoral policy emphasises that pastoral care is essential to improving the standards of learning and teaching. The system provides outstanding strategies to monitor academic and pastoral standards and progress.
159. The monitoring of learners' progress across the subjects and the mentoring at KS4 have outstanding features. Heads of learning review learners' behaviour, effort and achievement regularly. They keep very good records and track learners' progress carefully and closely so that underachievement is spotted quickly.
160. At KS4, all pupils receive additional support in subjects. In Y11, pupils who underachieve receive structured and useful support from individual mentors. In addition, a residential weekend is organised to provide study and revision skills courses in most subjects. At present, two members of staff are training to be learning coaches.
161. Since the last inspection, the improvement in behaviour has been outstanding. Staff are successful in sustaining good standards of behaviour throughout school. The vast majority of pupils responds positively so that relationships between adults and learners are good and a spirit of partnership prevails. Suitable courses provided through learning pathways also have a positive effect on behaviour at KS4.
162. Pupils interviewed confirm that the induction programme for new pupils is very good. The extra support provided for the emotional well-being of a small group of pupils is outstanding. They remain within their group until they are ready to integrate into mainstream. This procedure avoids difficulties in future years.
163. Parents receive regular information about the life of the school. They are welcomed to school to discuss any concerns. They are regularly consulted by means of questionnaires to discover their views about different aspects of school life. The vast majority say that they are happy with the information that they receive.
164. The school complies with statutory requirements as regards registration and reporting on attendance requirements. Attendance is thoroughly monitored with the assistance of the administrative officer who provides regular analyses to the senior management team. There has been an improvement in attendance since the last inspection.
165. Pupils and students make effective use of the readily accessible resources for careers education. The programme for careers education is taught as part of the personal and social development. The school operates effectively with Careers Wales and arranges valuable periods of work experience

166. The school has appropriate procedures to provide the pupils who are in the care of the UA with the necessary support and guidance. Very good links have been established with the relevant outside agencies.
167. The school council has played a leading role in relation to healthy eating. Healthier foods have been introduced at lunchtime in the canteen. Most learners know about healthy eating and the importance of diet and exercise. Its good practice has attracted national attention.
168. Procedures for child protection are appropriate and thorough. A senior teacher liaises effectively with outside agencies. Detailed guidance on policy exists for staff and the process follows the guidelines of the UA.
169. The school has good procedures to promote the health, safety and well-being of every pupil. Relevant risk assessments appertaining to the school's site and external visits are held.

The quality of the provision for additional learning needs

170. By using the information from the primary schools, the school identifies successfully pupils who need extra support before they arrive at the school. An effective process of identifying relevant pupils continues through links between the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and the learning co-ordinator in each year.
171. The school's response to the Code of Practice is good. Statements of special educational need are reviewed effectively. Parents and external agencies take a practical role in the process. The school register for additional learning needs is updated regularly and is comprehensive.
172. Individual plans relate well to the educational, behavioural or pastoral needs of pupils. Where relevant, they reflect the requirements of the pupil's statement of special needs. The plans are distributed to all departments. There are very good examples of where the individual plans have influenced the teachers' planning for lessons. Subject teachers are positive in their approach and have a very good working relationship with the SENCO.
173. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress in relation to their ability. They mature into confident learners. It is an outstanding feature that at the end of KS4, all gain some GCSE accreditation, with 75% gaining grades in at least 5 subjects.
174. The three special support centres provide outstanding support for pupils and students with a range of different additional learning needs. The dyslexia centre successfully supports pupils and students with basic skills and organisational difficulties, as well as giving them cross-curricular support. The 'Cyfle Centre' provides effective support for pupils with behaviour or emotional problems. The learning resource centre, as well as being the focus of all the additional learning needs provision, offers practical help and support for pupils at KS3 and KS4 who experience difficulties with basic skills.
175. Learning support assistants provide good levels of support for individuals and small groups of pupils in mainstream and in the additional learning needs centres. Their work is targeted effectively to ensure maximum use is made of their time. They have developed good expertise in teaching basic skills, behaviour management

and general classroom support. Their work is regularly monitored by the SENCO, who provides guidance and expertise when required.

176. 'Catch-up' reading schemes, 'Successmaker' and Y12 students who listen to pupils' reading at KS 3, all make good contributions to pupils gaining the relevant reading and comprehension skills to access the curriculum at KS 4.
177. Since the last inspection, the school has had outstanding success in enabling pupils with emotional or challenging behaviour to come to better terms with their difficulty. When pupils exhibit challenging behaviour, staff reaction is informed by the detailed information provided and the clear guidance by the SLT.
178. As a result of the effective use of the 'Cyfle Centre' to counsel and support these pupils, temporary exclusion rates have decreased significantly. No pupil was excluded permanently last year because of his or her behaviour.
179. The SENCO, together with a member of the SLT, provides outstanding support and guidance to learners and staff. Very good links have been established with a range of outside expertise. 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 towards pupils with additional learning needs and offers them a purposeful and caring environment within which they can reach their potential.

The quality of provision for equal opportunities

180. All courses are open to all pupils. The school recognises the diversity of pupils' backgrounds and provides a wide and flexible curriculum. This includes appropriate support for pupils whose first language is other than English and special arrangements for a minority of learners to spend part of their course off-site.
181. There is good provision for pupils from the whole ability range. The school offers, through learning pathways, more practical and vocational courses for those pupils who are suited to them. The more able and talented have been identified and there are examples of good extension work and activities provided across the curriculum.
182. Procedures for dealing with bullying are outstanding and are implemented efficiently and effectively. Year 10 pupils offer good support through counselling for younger pupils.
183. The school works very hard to promote social inclusion so that awareness permeates through all the activities and the life of the school. It has a comprehensive pastoral system and good support from outside agencies to help any pupil or student experiencing difficulty in school, at home or in the community.
184. The school makes every effort to promote good race relations. The few learners attending the school from ethnic minority groups are making good progress and are well integrated. Within a number of subjects including religious education, English and PSE there are good opportunities for learners to learn about racism and human rights.
185. Pupils who are looked after by the UA have relevant co-ordinated individual plans with Social Services. The school works closely with all outside agencies to secure appropriate support and for the placement to succeed.
186. Although there are no pupils in the school at present with mobility problems the school has carried out a detailed audit of its provision. The school has an effective disability access plan.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

187. The school awarded itself grade 2 for this key question. However, inspectors identified sufficient outstanding features in the good practice to award grade 1.
188. The team were confident to award this key question grade 1, even though they awarded grade 2 to key question 1, because of the impact of the quality of leadership and management on school improvement.
189. The main outstanding features are the:
- sense of purpose and clear direction given by the headteacher;
 - positive leadership given by the SLT;
 - way in which the core values of CYFLE promote equality of opportunity for staff and pupils;
 - impact target-setting has had on raising levels of performance at all levels; and
 - contribution made by the governing body and the UA to school improvement since the last inspection.

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

190. The way in which the headteacher communicates a vision which is clearly focussed on school improvement is outstanding. Her aims and values are shared by all members of the school community and are reflected in their work.
191. Staff share high expectations of themselves and pupils. There are shared norms about learning, behaviour and relationships. There is a clear and focussed understanding of the purposes and priorities needed to sustain continuous improvement in levels of pupils' and students' achievement.
192. The school has drawn up a suitable range of policies which reflect these aims. These policies are having a very positive impact on practice. There is a clear and detailed understanding of how to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
193. At a senior level, the effectiveness of the leadership team in setting the strategic direction for the school, and in implementing, monitoring and evaluating school policy is outstanding. Their areas of responsibility are clearly defined and they are accountable for the quality of their work.
194. Senior leaders and managers have effective links with departmental teams. They monitor their work, identify and support their professional development needs, and monitor the impact of their training on standards.
195. The school improvement plan is clearly focussed on increasing levels of attainment. Its clarity supports sustained and consistent progress in implementing school policy in this area and increases the school's capacity for critical self-review.

196. The ways in which the school reviews provision and outcomes critically and supports the process by target-setting is outstanding. The messages contained in data on pupil and student attainment are clearly spelt out by leaders and managers. This strengthens the school's capacity to identify its strengths and shortcomings and set the direction for future development.
197. As at the senior level, so at middle level, leadership and management have good features, some of them outstanding. Areas of responsibility are clearly defined. This leads to a growing consistency of practice within and between departments. While there is good practice in all departments, in religious education the good practice is outstanding.
198. Good account is taken of UA and national priorities. Working relationships with local providers at primary, secondary and further education levels are very good and the school is seeking to provide learning pathways at KS4 and, increasingly so, in the sixth form. The school works well to promote healthy lifestyles and is developing an understanding of the importance of education for sustainable development and global citizenship.
199. The arrangements to monitor and evaluate the school's performance have outstanding features. The school's self-evaluation report contained an accurate appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses and reflected the views of all stakeholders. Performance management arrangements for teaching and non-teaching staff have had a significant impact on identifying and sharing good practice. The way the process has secured accountability for school improvement has been particularly effective.

How well governors or other supervisory bodies meet their responsibilities

200. The contribution of the governing body to the improvement of the school since the last inspection has been outstanding. Both the former and present chairs of governors have had a significant impact on the school's strategic development.
201. Governors have a clear understanding of their role and work efficiently through a range of appropriate committees. Governors receive regular reports from leaders and managers and act as effective critical friends of the school. They are ably supported by an officer of the UA.
202. Governors fulfil their regulatory and legal requirements.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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203. The school awarded itself grade 2 for this key question. However, inspectors identified sufficient outstanding features in the good practice to award grade 1. The main outstanding features are the:
- thoroughness of the process in all aspects of the school's work;
 - way in which self-evaluation is integral to the work of the school;
 - way in which responsibilities for self-evaluation are made clear, and
 - impact of self-evaluation on improvement since the last inspection.

How effectively the provider's performance is monitored and evaluated

204. The thoroughness of the self-evaluation process in all aspects of the work of the school is outstanding.
205. Procedures for self-evaluation have played a major part in the significant improvements made since the last inspection. Self-evaluation is now an integral part of the school and has a clear focus at all levels of responsibility.
206. The school has a clearly defined system for self-evaluation that is outstanding. It uses the CIF effectively to evaluate standards and identify areas for improvement. In each annual cycle, examination results are analysed closely, and an in-depth subject review is carried out for all subjects. There are half-term SLT link meetings with heads of faculty and regular meetings with learning co-ordinators. Whole-school reviews have been undertaken in areas such as the impact key skills on learning, bilingualism and gender differentials in achievement.
207. Comprehensive first-hand evidence is gained from lesson observations which focus on standards of teaching and learning in the subject reviews and performance management procedures. Members of the SLT and heads of faculty carry out regular book reviews and monitor teachers' planners. The way in which this evidence is used to inform whole-school and faculty development planning is outstanding.
208. The views of staff, parents and the school council have been effective in identifying areas for development within the school. Consultation with parents has resulted in the introduction of academic review days. These have more than doubled the number of parents coming into school to discuss their children's progress. The school council has been successful in promoting different menus in the canteen, discussing changes in the school uniform and organising the Eco-committee which has been instrumental in the school gaining the Eco-schools' green flag status.
209. The ways in which systematic and comprehensive self-evaluation processes ensure that all members of staff are fully involved and aware of developments in academic and pastoral matters are outstanding. Outcomes and areas for development in faculties, pastoral teams and whole -school issues are also closely monitored by the governing body. The school's self-evaluation report was thorough and detailed.

The effectiveness of planning for improvement

210. Faculty improvement plans, the school improvement plan and cross-curricular development plans have had a considerable impact on raising standards since the last inspection. Most faculty improvement plans are very effective management tools, have clear targets and strategies for improvement.
211. All documents give specific costings, time-scales, training needs and identify who is responsible for evaluating progress. Progress with developments is regularly discussed and minuted in SLT link meetings each half-term. There are close links between the faculty improvement plans and the school improvement plan.
212. Evidence from annual subject reviews, self-evaluation reports from faculties, learning areas and cross-curricular development plans also inform the school improvement plan in planning for improvement in the coming year. The school is successful in providing resources to ensure that objectives are met.

213. The way in which the SLT reviews priorities regularly. Is outstanding. However, while there is dialogue with the UA with regard to capital expenditure, some areas of development remain unresolved.
214. The school has made outstanding progress in addressing the key issues arising from the previous inspection. In particular, it has developed a vision which is shared and owned by all stakeholders and clarified roles and responsibilities.

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

Grade: 2 Good features and no important shortcomings

215. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade.
- The adequacy, suitability and use made of staffing, learning resources and accommodation**
216. There are enough teachers who have good subject knowledge to ensure that the curriculum is delivered effectively and efficiently. There is a good balance of experienced teachers and those who are relatively new to the profession.
217. Non-teaching staff make a very effective contribution to all aspects of the school. LSAs work well with teachers and are well trained.
218. There is a clear structure for workforce remodelling which has been met in full. The school has had recently a positive 'Investors in People' report. Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out according to regulations.
219. Across the subject areas, learners have access to appropriate levels of learning resources that enhance their work. Pupils who have additional learning needs are well catered for. Information and Communication Technology facilities are generally good and used well in most areas.
220. The library resource centre is undeveloped in its provision and use, although there are innovative plans to fulfil its potential. A range of activities outside school enriches the pupils' curriculum and achievement.
221. There has been a significant improvement in the state of the accommodation since the last inspection. A rolling programme of refurbishment has had considerable impact in almost all areas. An outstanding feature is the quality of the accommodation for pupils with additional learning needs.
222. The buildings and site are very well managed and maintained to a high standard, providing a clean, pleasant, accessible and litter-free working environment. It is enhanced by displays of pupils' work.
223. Conditions in the gymnasium, changing rooms and the hard surface areas remain unsatisfactory and are unsuitable for both school and community use.
- How efficiently resources are managed to achieve value for money**
224. All costs are known and prioritised. There is a continual questioning and reviewing of cost-effectiveness, using local suppliers where possible, to achieve value for money. Budgeting for staff is appraised annually. Spending of departmental annual capitation allowances follows plans and is scrutinised closely.
225. Although a minority of A level classes is small in number, provision for the sixth form is not made at the expense of resources for KS3 and KS4. The school is

developing links with partners to increase the cost-effectiveness of its sixth-form provision.

226. Continuing professional development is outstanding. It is seen as a priority in the school and is carefully planned. There is a cycle of training that is clearly linked to the school improvement plan. Performance management and school self-evaluation are used to identify needs and provide for the training of all staff. Staff evaluate the training they have received and this information is collated to assess the impact of training on standards.
227. There is good provision for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment, which is monitored carefully and used well.
228. Resource decisions are linked closely to the school improvement plan, which is derived from the self-evaluation report.
229. With respect to the last inspection, financial management is now good and there is total transparency and clarity in the accounting. The recommendations of the last audit report have been implemented fully.
230. The governing body plays an active and responsible role in the review of spending and the budget is reviewed regularly and rigorously to ensure value for money, although there is no contingency fund.
231. There is some comparison of spending with other institutions. The school seeks sponsorships and promotes fund-raising events in order to boost the school fund and is currently seeking charitable status. It is considering accessing grants from other sources.
232. The school provides good value for money.

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

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

233. While the percentage of pupils who have gained GCSE grades over the last three years has been lower than those for the UA and Wales, nevertheless, there is a trend of improvement. At A level, examination results are improving. They are now above national averages for the higher grades.

KS3

Good features

234. Many pupils express their ideas fluently and confidently. They have clear recall and use information well. Boys and girls contribute equally to discussions.
235. Many pupils are developing a firm awareness of the purpose of using language and how they must adapt their own language to suit their audiences.
236. Pupils, including those with additional learning needs, make discernible progress in reading.

- 237. Pupils read fluently in relation to their ability. They analyse plot and character with sensitivity and understanding.
- 238. Most pupils can skim text to find information.
- 239. By the end of the key stage, pupils are able to work in a variety of forms for different purposes and audiences.
- 240. Pupils routinely produce extended work. Many draft their work effectively. This in turn brings about considerable improvements in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- 241. More able pupils reflect and comment on what they have written.
- 242. All pupils are involved in self and peer-assessment using the given success criteria to comment sensibly on written work.
- 243. Higher-attaining pupils compose imaginative and extended pieces and write with a high standard of accuracy. There are many examples of engaging and original writing.
- 244. Pupils use ICT creatively to improve their writing and its presentation.

Shortcomings

- 245. In a minority of lessons, a small number of pupils do not listen attentively or respectfully to the teacher and to each other. This has a detrimental impact on their standards.

KS4

Good features

- 246. Most pupils listen purposefully to one another and to the teacher.
- 247. Pupils are able to respond effectively to texts of increasing complexity and collaborate well in pair and group work.
- 248. Pupils of all abilities read a range of challenging texts. They make good progress in developing their understanding of what they read and develop good analytical and interpretative skills. They make good use of quotation and reference to support their opinion.
- 249. More able pupils write convincingly in an increasing range of styles, adapting to a range of audiences and purposes.
- 250. Most pupils redraft work conscientiously and routinely. They are able to produce written work which is usually well organised and structured.
- 251. Most pupils improve writing through their knowledge of success criteria and the requirements of examination boards.

Shortcomings

- 252. A small minority of pupils lacks confidence and hesitates in putting forward a point of view in whole-class and group discussions.

Sixth form

Good features

253. Students respond to questions and put forward opinions with a growing confidence. The most able students counter-argue with close reference to the text to support opinions. There is very good use and understanding of subject terms.
254. They communicate very good knowledge and understanding of characters, plots, themes, concepts and language. Most are developing well their understanding of the ways in which writers use language to communicate ideas and meaning.
255. Written work is usually well structured and coherent. Most students include detail and in-depth analysis of language.
256. Students improve the standards of their work through a good knowledge of the criteria for success, examination board requirements and by responding to teachers' comments for improvement.

Shortcomings

257. There are no significant shortcomings.

Welsh second language

KS3: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

258. GCSE results have improved over the last two years and the latest results in both the full and the short course are above the national averages.

KS3

Good features

259. Pupils have a positive attitude to the language and its culture. They listen well to each other and their teachers and respond to instructions and requests appropriately. Pupils understand short passages based on familiar vocabulary and they complete a variety of tasks which require information such as completing grids and questionnaires correctly.
260. On the whole, across the key stage, standards in speaking are good. Pupils respond to questions with a good degree of accuracy. They work effectively in pairs and groups to exchange views and information and report back to the class effectively using the third person of the verb correctly. More able pupils are able to expand on set answers and show initiative in moving the discussion forward.
261. Most pupils read aloud accurately using appropriate intonation. They make good use of reading passages to initiate written and oral work. They understand short passages containing familiar vocabulary and syntax and complete successfully tasks based on the work they have read.
262. Sentence patterns learnt during the lesson are written accurately and pupils produce a variety of work, expressing opinions, presenting information, writing letters and e-mails to friends. Structured work is completed accurately on the

whole. By Y9, the highest achievers make good use of a wide vocabulary and show a sound grasp of sentence constructions and tenses.

Shortcomings

- 263. A minority of pupils lacks confidence when answering oral questions and refers constantly to their books and work sheets before answering questions.
- 264. The written work of lower and middle ability pupils contains basic grammatical errors and a limited range of vocabulary and expression.

KS4

Good features

- 265. Pupils' attitude to learning the language is positive in this key stage and most pupils make good progress.
- 266. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and to each other using the Welsh language. They work well in pairs and groups and the more able pupils use familiar patterns accurately and confidently. They complete a range of GCSE type tasks and show good understanding of a variety of topics .They build on progress made in KS3 to achieve quite good standards.
- 267. Pupils following the full course are able to cope with more complex scenarios and expand on set answers; while the short course pupils are more limited in their presentations. Across the key stage pupils support each other well in interesting group discussions.
- 268. Pupils make good progress in reading and respond to the interesting material provided by completing written examination-type tasks accurately. They read aloud with a good level of accuracy, fluency and expression.
- 269. Pupils complete a good variety of written tasks based on coursework criteria. More able pupils following the full course complete well-planned extended written essays with a good degree of accuracy. They use a range of sentence structures, vocabulary and phrases well.

Shortcomings

- 270. As at KS3, a minority of pupils lacks confidence when answering oral questions and refers constantly to their books and work sheets before answering questions
- 271. The written work of lower and middle ability pupils contains basic grammatical errors and a limited range of vocabulary and expression.

Sixth form

Good features

- 272. Students follow grammatical explanations well. They use the information effectively to complete linguistic tasks. Year 12 students are gradually bridging the gap between GCSE work and the far more demanding Advanced Supplementary (AS) course.
- 273. They have a thorough understanding of their set books and the film they study. Their skills in analysing and responding to them orally and in writing are developing well.

274. Students use a range of language structures effectively to communicate with their teachers and each other and they convey viewpoints and ideas intelligently to visitors.
275. Writing standards vary within each year group. However all students can write extended pieces of work, using a good range of constructions to a good standard. Year 13 students are progressing well and their skill to use technical terms to analyse prose and poetry is developing well.

Shortcomings

276. A minority of students encounters difficulties when expressing opinions and talking to visitors.
277. A small number of students does not write with sufficient care and makes elementary mistakes which spoil otherwise good work.

Mathematics

KS3: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

278. GCSE results show a general upward trend. They are above average when compared to those of similar schools. At A level, comparisons are difficult to make because of the low numbers entered.

KS3

Good features

279. All pupils deal effectively with numbers and can classify and apply the four rules. They deal effectively with fractions, decimals and percentages as appropriate.
280. Pupils are able to deal correctly with symmetry and to transform shapes according to given criteria. They explain the methods used to obtain their solutions. They are equally competent in dealing with work that involves determining symmetry in given shapes.
281. Pupils understand the concept of probability and appreciate that the values lie between 0 and 1. Their work is further enriched by the opportunities to do investigative work on this topic.
282. They understand algebra and can determine numerical values for a given expression. Pupils can solve linear equations..
283. Pupils are confident in recalling work done previously and in applying this to any new situations they meet.
284. Pupils develop their mathematical and numerical skills in investigations and practical work done at this key stage.

Shortcomings

285. The work of a small minority of pupils is untidy and incomplete.

KS4

Good features

- 286. More able pupils complete a substantial amount of work well over the key stage which has a positive effect on standards.
- 287. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of all types of numbers and can apply this to map work in finding bearings and in applying scales to find actual distances between two points on the given map.
- 288. In statistics, pupils are able to deal effectively with all types of averages such as mean, median and mode and to create frequency tables and use these to construct the relevant graphs. They can create data charts from information gathered.
- 289. The most able pupils can deal with questions about circles that require understanding of arcs, sectors and areas of segments.
- 290. Pupils are able to determine the volumes and surface areas of geometrical shapes at levels appropriate to their ability.

Shortcomings

- 291. As at KS3, there is evidence of incomplete work from a small minority of pupils.

Sixth form

Good features

- 292. Students have a good understanding of pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics.
- 293. Students are able to deal effectively with partial fractions. They are fully aware of the processes involved and are able to determine the correct factors to solve a given question.
- 294. Students can apply the relevant trigonometrical rule to answer given questions and show a sound understanding of what has to be done and know which rule to apply.
- 295. They can apply the correct technique including iteration to solve given equations and can accurately sketch the graph of a given algebraic expression, including trigonometrical expressions.
- 296. Students are able to apply calculus correctly. They can differentiate and integrate expressions and use their answers to determine further information such as gradients to a curve or the area under a graph.

Shortcomings

- 297. The work of a small minority of students is untidy.

Science

KS3: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

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

- 298. The percentage of pupils in 2007 who gained GCSE grades A*-C was well below the figure for the whole of Wales. In 2008, the results were slightly above the

figures for schools in Wales. At A level, comparisons are difficult to make because of the small number of students entered.

KS3

Good features

299. Many pupils across the ability range possess a sound knowledge and understanding of a wide range of topics in science.
300. They are able to recall and use concepts well to solve a range of scientific problems in familiar and unfamiliar situations.
301. The majority of pupils possesses a good understanding of the scientific principles considered in areas such as the transfer of energy, reactivity of metals and aspects of healthy lifestyles.
302. Overall, a majority of pupils uses scientific terms accurately in many problem-solving activities and responses to questions.
303. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress relative to their ability.
304. On the whole, pupils develop good practical skills, recording and analysing results appropriately.
305. The majority of pupils develop good investigative skills.
306. Many pupils in Y7 and Y8 develop good levels of thinking and extended writing skills.

Shortcomings

307. A small minority of average and lower ability pupils has a less secure recall and understanding of current and previous work.
308. A small minority of pupils has difficulty in applying scientific principles to some tasks and applications in both familiar and unfamiliar situations.

KS4

Good features

309. More able pupils have a good understanding of the more complex principles developed over the key stage.
310. Most pupils have a good recall of previous work and can apply prior knowledge to a range of tasks and applications.
311. The majority of pupils develops a sound understanding of the contribution that science makes to the development of industry and its impact on the environment.
312. Pupils undertake practical work confidently and record results with reasonable precision.
313. Many pupils following the Applied Science course achieve good standards in elements completed.
314. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress.

Shortcomings

315. A small minority of pupils fails to complete work.

316. A small minority of pupils find it difficult to recall previous work and apply prior learning in new and unfamiliar situations.
317. A small minority of pupils has an insecure knowledge of the contribution science makes to the development of industry.

Sixth form

Good features

318. The majority of students has a good recall and understanding of previous work and a ready recall of concepts and principles. They are able to apply their theoretical understanding to a number of problems involving the analysis of data and problem-solving.
319. A majority of students communicates their knowledge and understanding well and can explain how certain concepts have an impact on patterns of scientific behaviour.
320. In lessons where practical skills were observed, students demonstrate confidence in undertaking procedures, can analyse their observations accurately and give a valid explanation to certain predictions.

Shortcomings

321. A minority of students do not undertake sufficient independent study to consolidate on work covered in lessons and extend their understanding of the topics being covered.
322. A minority of students in biology does not make enough progress in the time available in lessons, and has an inadequate grasp of knowledge and understanding of the subject.

Design technology

KS3: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Sixth form: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

323. At GCSE, results are broadly in line with UA and national averages. At A level, it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons because of the small number of students entered.

KS3

Good features

324. The majority of pupils makes good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the design process and principles in both compliant and resistant materials.
325. The most able pupils research and investigate existing products well and use their findings effectively to develop their individual design ideas.
326. Pupils' design workbooks contain good presentations of ideas.
327. On the whole, pupils' practical skills are good. Product outcomes reflect good levels of finishing.

328. Most pupils with additional learning needs achieve to their capabilities and produce good design work and product outcomes in line with their abilities.

Shortcomings

329. The presentation and graphical communication skills of a small minority of pupils are weak.

KS4

Good features

330. In all the GCSE design technology courses the majority of pupils carries out good investigative work. They use a variety of sources, including the Internet, to gather information relevant to their design task.

331. A majority of pupils uses their ICT skills well to present their work. The most able pupils use two-dimensional design software well to produce good standards of design outcomes.

332. In the best work, pupils produce good design drawings. They annotate their design drawings well and explain clearly their thoughts and ideas as they develop their work.

333. Pupils with additional learning needs understand the design process and apply the principles well. They produce good product outcomes that are often comparable to those of their more able peers.

Shortcomings

334. In the design folders of a small minority of pupils, evaluations are not specific enough.

Sixth form

Good features

335. Nearly all students have a good understanding of the principles and processes of design work.

336. Most students carry out appropriate research work using a range of sources including the Internet.

337. Most students develop original and creative design ideas which meet the criteria set them. In so doing they draw inspiration from the work of industrial designers and from examples of products on display or for sale in the marketplace.

338. In the best design folios freehand graphical and presentation skills are good and occasionally very good.

339. All students make varied and effective use of ICT to present some aspects of their work.

Shortcomings

340. There are shortcomings in students' drawing skills.

341. Students' ability to produce innovative designs is restricted by working in a limited range of materials.

342. A small minority of students has an insecure understanding of the principles and processes of design work.

Information technology

KS3: Grade 2: Good features with no important shortcomings

KS4: Grade 2: good features with no important shortcomings

Sixth form: Grade 2: good features with no important shortcomings

343. At KS4, results have shown a steady improvement over the last three years. In 2008, results were well above the national average. At A level, it is difficult to make valid comparisons because of the small number of entries.

KS3

Good features

344. Pupils demonstrate good skills in communicating Information. They are able to use word-processing, desk-top publishing, presentation and graphics software to good effect.

345. Pupils make good use of the Internet to research a variety of topics.

346. Pupils are comfortable using the virtual learning environment and have good skills in navigating their way around the facility. As a result they are able to utilise the good quality software available to raise the standard of their work.

347. Pupils know how to improve their work.

Shortcomings

348. Only a small minority of pupils develops higher-level skills in modelling and data handling.

KS4

Good features

349. As at KS3, pupils demonstrate good skills in communicating Information. They are able to use word-processing, desk-top publishing, presentation and graphics software to good effect.

350. Many pupils produce project work to a high standard.

351. Pupils know how to improve their work. They take advantage of regular feedback and advice.

352. Pupils are comfortable using the virtual learning environment and are confident in navigating their way around this. As a result they are able to utilise the good quality software available to raise the standard of their work.

Shortcomings

353. There are no significant shortcomings.

Sixth form

Good features

354. Students display a methodical and analytical approach to problem-solving.

355. They can apply their knowledge and understanding to solve problems.

- 356. They can use a range of software packages and are able to design and produce solutions to problems and clearly communicate these solutions.
- 357. Most of the students are able to work independently, are self motivated and interested, and demonstrate that they understand what is expected by the course.
- 358. Students make good use of directed time and are able to access the virtual learning environment both at home and at school outside of lessons to raise the standard of their work.
- 359. Pupils take advantage of regular feedback with advice on how to improve and as a result raise the standard of their work.

Shortcomings

- 360. The progress of a small minority of students is restricted by an insecure mastery of higher-order skills.

Modern foreign languages

KS3: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

- 361. Examination results at GCSE are broadly in line with local and national averages. At A level, examination entries have been too small to make valid comparisons.

KS3

Good features

- 362. Most pupils understand the French they hear from their teachers or from recordings. They identify important information and key vocabulary well.
- 363. Most pupils make short, accurate spoken responses to questions, and by Y9 many answer well at length, by including useful details or adding a supporting reason for an opinion. By Y9 many pupils talk confidently about things they have done in the past, and what they will or want to do in the future.
- 364. Most pupils read printed or handwritten material well; they use dictionaries and glossaries appropriately from Y7.
- 365. From Y7 also, most pupils write in sentences, often using their skills well in combination by making notes about things they hear or read. By Y9 many pupils write or word-process their work well at length, making use of things they have already learned to create letters to friends or accounts of activities.
- 366. Pupils with additional learning needs and those for whom English is an additional language also speak and write well making short but relevant responses.

Shortcomings

- 367. A minority of pupils has difficulties in making the correct agreements of adjectives and of verbs.
- 368. A few pupils regularly mispronounce words and their accents lack the distinctive sounds of French. These pupils also use more English in lessons than they should.

KS4

Good features

- 369. In both French and Spanish many pupils keep up a conversation or act out a role-play of about half a dozen exchanges without needing repetition or prompts. They often reply to questions in properly-formed sentences. A majority show a good awareness of the rhythm of the languages and pronounce words well.
- 370. Most pupils follow printed or word-processed text with good understanding, applying earlier learning well and using dictionaries or glossaries competently.
- 371. Many pupils write well at length. They give plausible reasons for an opinion. Many pupils use a good vocabulary and they both form and use different tenses of verbs well. Many pupils use a good variety of connectives to link their paragraphs so that they read well.

Shortcomings

- 372. In speech the accents of a few pupils are not well developed. These pupils lack confidence and are reluctant to start a conversation or ask a question.
- 373. In their writing a few students make consistent errors in elementary spellings and grammar, and do not link their paragraphs well together.

Sixth form

Good features

- 374. In both languages most students listen well and understand the main points of conversations spoken at a normal, that is, a fairly fast speed.
- 375. They also read printed texts such as press articles with good understanding, and navigate competently through Internet sites.
- 376. Many students make good efforts to work out the meaning of unfamiliar language so they are not over-reliant on dictionaries.
- 377. In discussions, most students make brief but accurate responses to questions, demonstrating a knowledge of pertinent vocabulary with good pronunciation.
- 378. Many students write well because they redraft their work carefully. They use grammatical structures appropriate to the tasks, in particular choosing verb forms and tenses to good effect.
- 379. In their essays, they support their opinions with good reasons.

Shortcomings

- 380. A small minority of students does not apply their earlier learning well to improve their vocabulary.
- 381. A small minority of students lacks confidence in speaking and is reluctant to take the initiative.

History

KS3: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

382. Results in GCSE and A level examinations have shown a gradual upward trend since 2004.

KS3

Good features

383. Pupils show good knowledge of the slave trade and apply this to written work which requires that they identify with the predicament of captured slaves.

384. More able pupils make good critical use of primary sources in work on the trial of Dic Penderyn and of working conditions for children in factories during the Industrial Revolution. Pupils' empathy is further developed as they take on the role of a factory inspector in Merthyr and make critical responses to 'The Coal House' television series.

385. Pupils at all levels know how to sort and sift information into mind maps that help them to plan and structure extended pieces of writing.

386. Pupils with additional learning needs make very good progress.

387. The standard of presentation of all pupils' work is high.

Shortcomings

388. The investigative skills of a small minority of pupils are poor.

KS4

Good features

389. In Y10, pupils studying the impact of religious fundamentalism in the United States at the time of Prohibition show a good understanding of the usefulness of sources for an enquiry.

390. Those studying aspects of the role of women in Nazi Germany use their detailed knowledge to draw sharp inferences from contemporary visual images and can select and organize information to produce complex mind maps.

391. Most pupils produce well-structured extended writing. They re-draft their work to good effect.

392. Pupils use oral skills very well, particularly when making 'Powerpoint' presentations.

393. All pupils can give reasoned evaluations of the relative importance of factors that led to final victory in the First World War.

394. In Y11, many pupils develop good critical skills when using original source material, for example in appraising Field Marshal Haig as a military commander.

395. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress.

Shortcomings

396. A small minority of pupils shows limited awareness of the skills of problem-solving.

Sixth form

Good features

397. Students make good use of 'Powerpoint' presentations to consolidate their subject knowledge. They evaluate each other's presentations effectively, showing sharp insights about presentation, style and delivery.
398. Students in Y12 produce well-organized essays in which they focus on the structure of their argument and on criteria for the selection of thematic sections and supporting evidence.
399. In Y13, students continue to produce written work of high quality. They show an ability to sustain and extend argument supported by evidence from primary sources. The ablest students can reconcile competing sides of an argument by means of a well-reasoned synthesis.

Shortcomings

400. A very small minority of students encounters difficulty in communicating their understanding orally.

Geography

KS3: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

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

401. Examination results at GCSE fall below local and national averages. At A level, examination results show evidence of added value.

KS 3

Good features

402. The majority of pupils acquires and confidently uses a good range of geographical skills and techniques when constructing, recording and interpreting information of increasing depth and complexity.
403. Most develop precision in their use of geographical vocabulary. This is seen most successfully when considering geographical processes, issues and interrelationships, such as those associated with coastal erosion and accompanying landforms.
404. Pupils portray physical and human geographical features accurately and understand how they are formed.
405. Many pupils demonstrate good research and enquiry skills when investigating weather characteristics within selected locations, presenting well reasoned conclusions.
406. Pupils understand how people affect the environment and hold different views and attitudes. They demonstrate good understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship through studying drainage basins, climate change and tropical rainforest deforestation.

407. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress, achieving good standards in their knowledge and understanding of a suitable range of topics.

Shortcomings

408. A small minority of pupils have an insecure knowledge of how to plan and carry out fieldwork.

KS4

Good features

409. Many pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of physical and human features and systems within well-constructed case studies such as glaciated river and coastal environments.
410. Pupils' understanding of key geographical ideas is good. They accurately identify the relationships between varieties of geographical factors for example, in their understanding of the factors influencing the formation of tropical hurricanes.
411. Most pupils have good analytical and interpretive skills. They use geography vocabulary confidently and correctly when explaining their reasoning, applying prior learning appropriately to unfamiliar situations.
412. They have good interpretive skills, as illustrated in well-planned fieldwork on the sustainable development of a local tourist attraction.
413. Most pupils apply their ICT skills competently to enhance graphical and cartographical presentation and accuracy.

Shortcomings

414. A significant number of pupils of average ability has difficulty maintaining a complete, well presented record of work. They have inadequate enquiry skills, which restrict their capacity to produce coursework assignments commensurate with their ability.
415. A minority of pupils do not use geographical terms with confidence and accuracy.
416. A minority of pupils do not develop their answers fully enough, demonstrating weaknesses in their knowledge and understanding of place.

Sixth form

Good features

417. The majority of students has a good level of understanding of the physical, human and economic elements of their courses, successfully applying and evaluating models and theories within a variety of case studies.
418. Students make good progress in the development of their enquiry and research skills. The majority displays good standards when extracting, analysing and presenting geographical information, as demonstrated in their work on demographic and tectonic processes.
419. Most students have a good grasp of terms and concepts, which they apply effectively when considering geographical issues and evaluating evidence.

Shortcomings

420. In a number of instances students' oral contributions do not sufficiently draw on and synthesise prior knowledge to inform their reasoning.

Art

KS3: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Sixth form: Grade2: Good features and no important shortcomings

421. Results at GCSE are broadly in line with local and national averages. At A level, low entry levels make national comparison difficult.

KS3

Good features

422. By the end of Y9 the majority of pupils works at the expected national level. This indicates good progress and achievement.
423. Pupils' knowledge of a wider range of art is improving. They are able to work imaginatively in the style of different artists developing their creative and problem-solving skills.
424. They learn how to explore new media and develop new three-dimensional skills.
425. In their drawing they demonstrate a good use of line, tone, shape, and pattern. They show a joy of colour and texture in their experimental felt work.
426. When studying Kandinsky they learn how to link music to shape and colour. They are then able to use computers to develop their designs creatively.
427. Pupils develop an awareness of artists associated with Wales and an appreciation of the art of other cultures.
428. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress and respond well to the demanding tasks they encounter.

Shortcomings

429. A small minority of pupils does not know how to improve their work.

KS4

Good features

430. Pupils are developing as individual artists who demonstrate growing skill and understanding.
431. Through research and practice of technique, pupils they are improving their knowledge of artists associated with Wales.
432. They are able to identify the differences in style of different artists and apply the individual techniques of particular artists to their own work.
433. They appreciate colour and use it with some verve. They exploit collage effects very well.
434. The majority of pupils is achieving to the expected national level. Their work consistently shows creativity, imagination and skill.
435. Pupils with additional learning needs frequently achieve the higher examination grades.

Shortcomings

436. Where pupils' use of the self-assessment process is not yet fully effective a small minority remains unsure how to improve their work.

Sixth form

Good features

437. Students are developing very well as individual creative artists. Overall, current students are achieving to the expected national level.
438. They know how to develop formal orthodox observational drawing into personal creative responses.
439. They are learning how to explore and exploit a range of new media and print processes.
440. Their sketchbook work is creative and imaginative. Their use of colour, shape and texture is consistently a strong feature.
441. They are developing their observational figurative drawing and painting skills.
442. The majority uses purposeful annotation to support their artwork.
443. Students have a good understanding of examination requirements and how to improve their work.

Shortcomings

444. Most of their knowledge of art is based too much on secondary sources.
445. When writing about art, some students do not express critical judgement.

<h3>Music and performing arts</h3>

KS3: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

KS4: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

446. At GCSE, examination results are in line with local and national averages. At A level, comparisons are difficult to make because of the low numbers of students entered.

KS3

Outstanding features

447. Performance standards are very good. Pupils use keyboards very well to compose melodies and short compositions.
448. Pupils have a very sound knowledge of musical elements, instruments and devices and appraise music effectively by using appropriate terminology.
449. Pupils perform confidently, with expression and sensitivity. They have a very good knowledge of how to improve their work and show a very good sense of style and occasion. They have very good skills that enable them to appraise one another's work.

Good features

- 450. Pupils perform a good range of rhythms on percussion instruments with attention to accuracy and timbre.
- 451. Pupils produce good work which displays imagination and achieves good technical standards.
- 452. The majority of pupils are able to appraise music from a variety of styles and cultures.

Shortcomings

- 453. There are no significant shortcomings.

KS4

Good features

- 454. In musical theatre, pupils' chorus-singing is of a high standard.
- 455. In drama, pupils collaborate well in groups and make good use of thematic techniques and vocabulary. They demonstrate skills of accent and dialect.
- 456. In music, a very good knowledge of musical elements, instrumentation, styles and devices is demonstrated by most pupils to appraise music effectively using a wide range of appropriate terminology.
- 457. Pupils perform well in ensembles. They have good levels of evaluation skills.

Shortcomings

- 458. The singing skills of a small minority of pupils are not effective when performing individually.

Sixth form

Good features

- 459. In music, students demonstrate a good understanding and knowledge of musical structures relating to music of different styles.
- 460. Students appraise music effectively by applying in-depth knowledge of musical theory, instrumentation and devices and comparing the characteristics of compositions from different musical periods.
- 461. Students demonstrate well-developed ICT and communication skills by making individual classroom presentations and applying a variety of analytical musical skills effectively to a specific aspect of their course of study.

Shortcomings

- 462. A small minority of students has an insecure knowledge of orchestral instrumentation.

Physical education

KS3: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

KS3

Good features

- 463. Pupils of all abilities make progress across the activities.
- 464. Most pupils demonstrate a growing understanding of the effects of exercise and engage in practical tests and training.
- 465. In games, pupils show control and some fluency in their play. They apply rules fairly and the most able show good positional play both on and off the ball.
- 466. In dance, girls work together effectively to devise routines. The most able are very creative in their interpretations.
- 467. A majority of pupils responds well to the opportunities to work in groups. They plan, evaluate, adapt and refine their work independently of the teachers. As a consequence they show a developing understanding of the principles of activities, which encourages their progress and interest.

Shortcomings

- 468. A small minority of pupils encounters difficulty in sharing their ideas and is reluctant to contribute to discussion.

KS4

Good features

- 469. Good progress in the core and examination programmes is evidenced by pupils' attendance, participation and interest in a range of physical activities and in improved examination results.
- 470. There is good progress in aerobics. Girls engage in high and low impact steps with enthusiasm and stamina. They enjoy the challenge of devising their own routines and most understand the benefits of such exercises.
- 471. Those studying for GCSE use and extend the knowledge learned from KS3. Most can discuss topics such as training methodology and motivational theory using appropriate vocabulary.
- 472. Written work is generally well presented. Pupils identify key points, make notes and some provide extended written responses.

Shortcomings

- 473. Pupils lack variety of style in their creative work.
- 474. Although most engage in small group discussions, many lack confidence when asked to contribute orally in larger, whole-class situations.

Sixth form

Good features

- 475. Students are able to judge performance across a wide variety of areas of physical activity and use this information well to improve the efficiency, quality and variety of their work. They engage in some lively, well-considered discussions.
- 476. Although groups are small, students are confident in raising issues, expressing views and opinions and in working co-operatively to achieve positive outcomes in planning tasks.
- 477. Skills of presentation are developing as students are encouraged to discuss their research with the whole group. Knowledge is evident in the quality of responses to detailed questioning.

Shortcomings

- 478. There are no significant shortcomings.

Religious education (including religious studies)
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KS3: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Sixth form: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

- 479. At GCSE, the improvement in examination results since the last inspection has been outstanding. At A level, results are in line with national trends.

KS3

Good features

- 480. Pupils across the ability range have a good factual knowledge and understanding of the units of work studied, which reflect the requirements of the agreed syllabus.
- 481. Pupils know how Christian, Muslim and Jewish believers worship and celebrate their faith, and how their lives are shaped by their beliefs.
- 482. Throughout the key stage, pupils' knowledge and understanding are extended by skillfully researching topics. Pupils select information and produce good quality project work.
- 483. Pupils with additional learning needs are well integrated and are achieving well, showing good knowledge of the topics taught.
- 484. In all lessons pupils ask probing questions to extend their knowledge and understanding of the aspects of religions taught.

Shortcomings

- 485. In a minority of lessons the more able pupils do not make progress in relation to their ability.

KS4

Outstanding features

- 486. Pupils acquire a range of skills that enable them to explore religion for themselves and to express their own responses to the questions and issues that are raised in the process.
- 487. They have a very good understanding of belonging to a Christian community and recognise the contribution that religion makes to personal and local life.
- 488. Pupils can describe some of the differing viewpoints of believers within Christianity. In responding to fundamental questions, they draw successfully on their own experiences and on a variety of informed sources.

Good features

- 489. Pupils have a good understanding of how relationships between other people's beliefs, teachings and actions influence their lifestyles. They are able to discuss attitudes towards sensitive topics and make mature conclusions.
- 490. Pupils are interested in and become aware of the questions about meaning and purpose of life arising from different religious pilgrimages.
- 491. The less able pupils have good factual knowledge and are developing the ability to understand religious guidance on moral and social issues within their community.

Shortcomings

- 492. There are no significant shortcomings.

Sixth form

Outstanding features

- 493. Students have outstanding knowledge and understanding of specific aspects of ethical theory.
- 494. In their presentations using the interactive whiteboard, students show outstanding analytic skills. They draw sound conclusions when they compare and contrast with strengths and weaknesses of aspects of situation ethics.

Good features

- 495. Students demonstrate good understanding of religious language, terminology and concepts, and can compare and evaluate scholarly approaches to aspects of the ethical theory studied.
- 496. In the statutory religious education course most students are able to sustain a critical argument and justify a point of view when they discuss issues such as "Why do people celebrate religious festivals?"

Shortcomings

- 497. There are no significant shortcomings.

Business studies

KS4: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

498. Examination results in Business studies at GCSE are above national averages.

KS4

Good features

499. Most pupils have a good understanding of business terminology and can apply a range of business principles to a variety of tasks.

500. In Y10, most pupils have a secure understanding of the business profile of a range of major British and international companies. They have a good knowledge of the importance of business vision, values and development planning.

501. In Y11, most pupils have a good understanding of the relationship between business and politics, as well as the organisational structure of business. The more able have good skills that enable them to compare and contrast effectively.

Shortcomings

502. A minority of pupils has an insecure knowledge of key words and concepts. They are unable to apply these concepts in unfamiliar situations.

Psychology

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

503. On the whole, students' achievement is in line with local and national averages..

Good features

504. In Y12 most students have a good knowledge and understanding of a variety of approaches to the study of human psychology, together with the assumptions that underlie them.

505. The majority of students has a growing understanding of the main authors in the study of psychology and the findings of classical psychological experiments.

506. In Y13 many students have a good knowledge of developmental psychology and of the contribution made by the main authors in the field. They are able to evaluate the contribution of a variety of schools of thought and relate them to their direct experience of life.

Shortcomings

507. A small minority of students has an insecure knowledge of key terminology.

School's response to the inspection

It is with delight that the governors, headteacher and staff of Newtown High School welcome a report describing the school as “a good school with several outstanding features”. It is testament to the dedication and commitment of governors, staff, parents and pupils as well as the support of our community that the improvement since the school was last inspected is deemed outstanding.

“Cyfle” underpins every aspect of school life and the inspection team confirmed this, giving credit to how the school has made outstanding progress in addressing the key issues arising from the previous inspection. The inspectors identified sufficient outstanding features in the good practice in key questions 4, 5 and 6 to award grade one while all other questions were awarded a two in recognition of their good features. The school acknowledges and is indebted to the support and generosity of the many schools visited over the past few years in their quest for excellent practice.

The curriculum is seen to have outstanding features with particular praise for the vocational provision at Key Stage 4 and the way it promotes the development of key skills and education for sustainable development.

The support and guidance of pupils are described as outstanding with particular praise of our induction programme, the way in which we monitor learners’ progress, our support of pupils whose behaviour impedes their progress and the measures we have in place to deal with bullying.

When compared to other similar schools results in Key Stage 3 are in the top 25%, with results in the combined core subjects higher than expected based on prior attainment. These represent a significant increase since the last inspection. Since 2007 pass rates of five or more grades A*-G have been in excess of local and national averages.

It is very pleasing that the team described most pupils as well behaved and the way they work with one another in creative and problem solving tasks as outstanding as is the quality of the working relationship between students and teachers in the sixth form.

Well deserved is the description of our Governing Body’s contribution to the strategic direction as outstanding as is the leadership and management. Recognition is also given to the quality and range of professional development of both teaching and support staff, again outstanding and already resulting in the school winning the Welsh Secondary School Award last year.

The inspection team credit the improvements made to outstanding leadership and management, self evaluation and the aforementioned professional development.

They have commented on the outstanding nature of the way in which teachers promote equality of opportunity, provide for additional learning needs and promote good behaviour.

It is fitting that the team recognise the huge journey made since the last inspection and now describe the behaviour of our pupils as outstanding. It gives us great pleasure that our pupils gain the recognition they deserve for the way they conduct themselves.

Our year 10 pupils, from whom “Cyfeillion” our peer mediation team are selected, is recognised as one of the features which results in our procedures for dealing with bullying being described as outstanding.

The school thanks the inspection team for the professional and helpful manner in which they conducted the process. We recognise and acknowledge the improvements we still need to make and these are already a feature of our self evaluation/improvement plan for the year ahead. We look forward to further developments to continue our commitment to our core aim of “Cyfle”; Caring Yields a Flourishing Learning Environment which permeates the school and in no small part has led to so many outstanding features being identified by the team.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Newtown High School
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-19
Address of school	Dolfor Road Newtown Powys
Postcode	SY16 1JE
Telephone number	01686 626304

Headteacher	Mrs Judith Pryce
Date of appointment	January 1 st 2004
Chair of governors / Appropriate authority	Mr David Lush
Reporting inspector	Mr Peter Harris
Dates of inspection	December 1 st – 5 th 2008

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	139	138	155	130	144	55	54	816

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	48	3	49.4

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	9.8:1
Average teaching group size	20
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	78%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	93.5	92.1	90.3	90	88.7	96.9	96	92.5
Term 2	93.3	93.6	91.4	91.6	90	97.9	95.9	93.5
Term 3	91.8	90.1	91.2	90.1	96.3	95	98.9	93.3

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	17%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	7

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results

End of key stage 3:

2008

No of pupils in Y9: 155

			N	D	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	1.3	2.6	17.5	47.4	29.2	1.9	0
		National	0.6	0.1	0.5	0.4	1.5	6.1	21.3	37.1	24.2	7.9	0.3
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	1.3	15.6	31.2	37.7	13.6	0.6
		National	0.5	0.1	0.5	0.4	1.3	6.7	18.1	28.9	27.5	14.8	1.2
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0.6	20.8	44.2	30.5	3.9	0
		National	0.6	0.1	0.5	0.2	0.7	5.1	19.0	35.6	27.2	10.8	0.1

N Pupils not awarded a level for reasons other than disapplication

D Disapplied under Section 364-367 of the Education Act 1996

W Pupils who are working towards level 1

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

In the school:66.9%

In Wales: 59.6%

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	142
Average wider points score per pupil	379

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2008:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	100	97	98
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	54	65	56
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	95	91	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	46	55	44
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	100	97	98
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	95	92	87
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	N/A	N/A	N/A
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	N/A	N/A	N/A

For pupils aged 17, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs	
Number of pupils aged 17 in January 2008	99
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2008	50
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2008	

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	64	75	69
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	94	97	94
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	N/A	N/A	N/A

UA Unitary Authority

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Inspectors spent a total of 57 days in the school and were joined by a member of the school's senior leadership team as nominee. They held a meeting before the inspection.

During the inspection, inspectors visited:

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

Members of the inspection team met with:

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

The team also considered:

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

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

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Peter Harris	Rgl, KQ1, KQ5, business studies, psychology
Janet Warr	Lay inspector
Alan Kelly	KQ2 & history
Peredur Francis	KQ3 & mathematics
Heddwyn Evans	KQ4, SEN & religious education
Glyn Davies	KQ6 & science
Delyth Williams	KQ7 & science
Trefor Lewis	Welsh second language
Julie Griffiths	English
Keith Hopkins	Design technology
David Charles	Information technology
Eric Foster	Art
Hywel Lewis	Music & performing arts
Martyn S Williams	Modern foreign languages
Debra Makin	Physical education
Andrew Herdman	Geography
Peter Agnew	Peer assessor
Steve Waldron	Nominee

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.

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