

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Risca Community Comprehensive School
Pontymason Lane, Risca,
Caerphilly NP11 6YY**

School Number: 6764068

Date of Inspection: 10/03/08

by

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

The inspection of Risca Community Comprehensive School took place between 10/03/08 and 14/03/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by Peter Guy Carter undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

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

There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a **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. Risca Community Comprehensive is an 11-16 school of 525 pupils maintained by the local education authority (LEA), Caerphilly County Borough Council. It was last inspected in March 2002. The school shares the same site with, and has joint use of, Risca Leisure Centre. Overall, the building is in good condition.
2. The school houses the LEA Specialist Resource Base (SRB) for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and also runs a support group for pupils with speech and language disorders. All are educated in mainstream classes.
3. The area which the school serves is a mixture of suburban, rural and urban communities but a significant proportion of pupils comes from a large housing estate, built originally to accommodate employees of the steel industry. There are relatively high levels of unemployment in parts of the catchment area. The majority of pupils are white European with three percent from ethnic minority backgrounds. On entry, many pupils have low levels of attainment.
4. There are 43 pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and a further 64 on the SEN register. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language and 16 pupils do not speak English as their first language. Approximately 17% of pupils are entitled to have free school meals. This is very close to the figure in the last inspection report and is a little lower than the national average. The school considers this figure to be unrepresentative of the social and economic deprivation in the area.
5. The school has one main partner primary school which is located in, and serves the large housing estate. It shares another partner primary school with a neighbouring secondary school. It also has strong links with Coleg Gwent. Around three-quarters of pupils continue their education there when they leave the school at the end of Year (Y) 11.
6. The headteacher was appointed to the post in 2003 having previously served as deputy headteacher in the school. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) consists of the headteacher, one deputy and one assistant headteacher.

The school's priorities and targets

7. The School Development Plan (SDP) for 2007-2009 lists five strategic priorities:
 - improving the quality of teaching and learning;
 - improving standards in literacy and numeracy;
 - improving pupil awareness and tracking of progression in key skills;
 - improving the monitoring of progression at all levels; and
 - improving the use of data in helping pupils to progress.

Summary

8. Risca Community Comprehensive is a good school. Effective teaching and learning enable pupils to make good progress. There are outstanding features in the care, support and guidance which the school provides for them through the work of teachers and other members of staff. Leadership and management are efficient and successful in moving the school forward. Significant progress has been made since the last inspection.
9. In the seven key questions the following grades were awarded.

Key Question		Grade
1	How well do learners achieve?	3
2	How effective are teaching, training and assessment	2
3	How well do 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?	2
6	How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve qualities and standards?	2
7	How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	2

Standards

10. The inspection team inspected the standards that pupils achieve across the curriculum. The following table shows the grades awarded for standards in each subject at both key stages (KS).

Subject	KS3	KS4
English	2	2
Welsh second language	2	2
Mathematics	3	3
Science	3	2
Information technology	3	3
Design and technology	2	2
Modern foreign languages	3	3
History	2	2
Geography	3	3
Art	2	3
Music	2	4
Physical education	2	2
Religious education	3	3
Drama	2	2
Geology	-	2
Media studies	-	2
Child development	-	2

11. The following table shows the percentages of grades awarded at each stage and in both stages combined in 128 lessons observed during the inspection.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	3%	60%	37%	0%	0%
KS4	3%	58%	37%	2%	0%
Whole school	3%	59%	37%	1%	0%

12. In the majority of lessons pupils achieve standards which have good features and no important shortcomings. In a few lessons there are outstanding features. In around two-fifths of lessons standards have good features which outweigh shortcomings. In a very few lessons standards have good features but shortcomings in important areas. There is no significant difference in the standards achieved at each stage.
13. Most pupils, including those with SEN, achieve standards that are in line with learning targets agreed between teachers and pupils and good in relation to their abilities. All pupils achieve some success, regardless of their backgrounds.
14. Pupils achieve good standards in the key skills of communication, use of number and Information Technology (IT). Particularly good progress has been made in the development of pupils' numeracy and IT skills since the last inspection.
15. In most cases during the last three years, assessment results at the end of KS3 were significantly lower than the averages for schools where a similar percentage of pupils is entitled to have free school meals. Results have also been below local and national averages. There have been significant improvements in attainment in the most recent assessments at KS3.
16. At KS4 during the last three years, the percentage of pupils who achieved five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades A*-C has been well below the averages for similar schools. However, the percentage who achieved five or more GCSE grades A*-G has been above local and national averages and the averages for similar schools.
17. Although pupils' abilities on entry are relatively low, they make good progress across the key stages in many subjects. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make very good progress. All pupils acquire new knowledge and skill, and develop their understanding. Most pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve their performance. In most cases they make good progress towards achieving their potential and moving on to the next stage of learning.
18. Most pupils develop their personal and social skills well. Many show good levels of motivation and use their time in lessons productively. In a few cases, however, a small minority of pupils demonstrates off-task behaviour and this constrains the standards they achieve.
19. In most lessons and around the school, pupils behave responsibly. They get on well with each other and enjoy good relationships with teachers and other staff. Pupils are rarely late for lessons. Levels of attendance are good. They have

improved significantly since the last inspection and are now broadly in line with the national average.

20. Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many older pupils are developing more independent approaches to learning. All pupils know the importance of equality of opportunity. They respect diversity, both within the school and in society in general. Most pupils are prepared well to participate in the workplace and the community.

The quality of education and training

21. Overall, teaching and assessment have good features and no important shortcomings. In most cases, at both stages, teaching is good but there is too much variation in the quality of teaching in different subjects. In many lessons, learning activities are set at suitable levels and are successful in engaging pupils' interests.
22. The very good working relationships that teachers have with pupils in most classes contribute to the high quality of lessons. Teachers generate a good learning atmosphere in lessons in the great majority of subjects. This has a positive impact on pupils' ability to learn effectively.
23. In the most successful examples, teachers plan their lessons carefully. They make the learning outcomes clear at the start, conduct lessons at a good pace, vary the learning activities and hold pupils' attention. In these lessons, teachers monitor pupils' performance well and advise them about how to improve.
24. In many lessons teachers use a suitable range of teaching strategies. They make good use of collaborative learning activities as well as whole-class teaching. Teaching styles are matched very well to the individual needs of pupils, often with very good support from learning support assistants (LSA).
25. In the minority of lessons where there are significant shortcomings there is often too much direction by teachers and over-reliance on lengthy explanations. Teachers do not interact enough with pupils to help them improve the quality of their work and there is insufficient pace and challenge. This makes it difficult for pupils to maintain interest and concentration.
26. Assessment procedures meet statutory requirements and those of awarding bodies for recording and accrediting pupils' achievements. National Curriculum (NC) levels of attainment at KS3 and predicted GCSE grades at KS4 are used to monitor pupils' progress. In almost all subjects, these are used effectively.
27. The school makes good use of annual reports to inform parents and carers of pupils' progress and achievements. In most cases reports contain useful information about work covered and individual performance and attainment. However, advice about how to improve further is less clear.
28. There are good examples in a few subjects of effective peer and self-assessment procedures. In most subjects pupils know the criteria for achieving

different NC attainment levels or GCSE grades and what they need to do to achieve more highly. In a minority of subjects, assessments are used less effectively as a basis for informing planning to improve learning.

29. The curriculum is effective in meeting the learning needs of pupils at both key stages. It is accessible to all. At KS3 the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets NC requirements. The school provides a good range of subject options at KS4, enabling all learners to achieve accreditation at appropriate levels.
30. The school has developed close curricular links with Coleg Gwent, Crosskeys Campus. Identified learners at KS4 attend the college for a number of vocational courses. This provision gives these pupils a good experience of the workplace and an awareness of health and safety issues.
31. The school has very close links with Careers Wales and uses these well to support pupils. Transitional arrangements at post-16 are effective in enabling pupils to continue their education at appropriate levels at the college.
32. Key skills are a high priority in the school. Overall, learning experiences at both key stages are effective in developing pupils' basic and key skills. The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark. Pupils, however, are provided with too few opportunities to develop their bilingual competence across the curriculum.
33. Pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. There are several outstanding features of this provision, which add considerable enrichment to pupils' learning experiences.
34. The curriculum complies with all statutory requirements, including that for a daily act of collective worship.
35. Work-related education (WRE) is of good quality. In Y10 all pupils follow a comprehensive programme which emphasises the development of learners' practical skills for the world of work. The school has good links with local employers. They help to provide very good advice about interview techniques. Pupils in Y10 also undertake a wide range of work-experience placements which are monitored carefully.
36. The quality of care and support has outstanding features. The school contributes significantly to the well-being of pupils. A very effective support structure managed by the assistant headteacher, progress co-ordinators and form tutors promotes positive relationships with clear lines of communication. The effectiveness of co-operation at all levels is outstanding. The work of the progress co-ordinators is a particular strength.
37. Transition is outstanding at all levels. Arrangements for transition from KS2 to KS3 are organised and managed very well. Pupils of all abilities settle in quickly in their new environment. Early links in Y5, transition action plans, active curricular links and extra visits to the secondary school for primary school pupils with low self-esteem reinforce these arrangements.

38. The monitoring of attendance, punctuality and performance is outstanding. There is a highly effective system for recording attendance and contacting parents immediately when a pupil is absent. Punctuality is recorded carefully by form tutors. Progress co-ordinators and form tutors work well together to identify any emerging patterns of achievement and behaviour. Groups of pupils who require support are identified and mentored well.
39. The personal and social education (PSE) programme is designed and organised well and includes careers education. External speakers and PSE themed days make valuable contributions to this programme.
40. The quality of provision for pupils with a range of ALN is outstanding. The commitment to inclusion is embedded in the school and pupils with ALN are taught alongside their peers in mainstream classes. The management of inclusion is outstanding. The faculty of learning support is forward-looking and innovative in its methods of supporting pupils. These methods are very effective. Pupils at both key stages make very good progress.
41. Another outstanding feature of provision for ALN is the SRB for pupils with ASD. These pupils, mainly from outside the catchment area, are fully integrated into the life of the school. Staff members in the SRB have very good relationships with subject teachers. They give clear guidance to facilitate good practice in the teaching of pupils with ASD. Pupils' social and learning needs are met, enabling them to fulfil their potential.
42. The inclusive nature of the school creates a climate where all pupils and groups of pupils are treated fairly. Each pupil is given sensitive support if difficulties or problems occur. The school has excellent relationships with a range of external support agencies.
43. Pupils respond sympathetically and positively to diversity. They respect racial harmony. Pupils develop an understanding of diversity through organised activities such as European Language Day, African drumming, Cariad Kenya and a German exchange. The content and impact of these activities are outstanding. Respect for racial and cultural diversity is reinforced through the religious education curriculum.

Leadership and management

44. Leaders and managers at all levels have created an atmosphere which has a clear focus on enabling pupils to grow both personally and academically. Everyone is committed to providing a school which is valued by the community.
45. The headteacher provides strong leadership. She leads by example and has high expectations of staff and pupils. She has been the main driving force behind improvements since the last inspection. She has a vibrant management style and is respected highly by pupils, staff and governors.
46. The headteacher is supported ably by a small senior leadership team. The members of this team use their range of complementary skills to provide

effective leadership. Their roles and responsibilities are defined clearly and they work very well together.

47. A strong team of five progress co-ordinators monitor carefully the progress of all pupils in their year group. They work closely with form tutors to manage the support for a significantly large number of pupils.
48. The leadership and management of faculties are more variable. There is inconsistency in the way heads of faculties manage and improve the performance of their teams. As a result, a few subject leaders are not rigorous enough in leading their subject within the faculty.
49. Procedures are in place to enable managers to monitor performance across the school. A rolling programme of faculty reviews is planned well. Despite this, the outcomes of these reviews are not critically reflective enough to enable leaders and managers at all levels to set targets for raising standards in subjects and the school as a whole.
50. National priorities have been addressed although promoting healthy lifestyles and developing bilingual competence across the school remain aspects for further improvement.
51. Governors have a very good knowledge of the running of the school. They monitor standards and provision well through regular updates, focused discussions and, in some cases, observation of lessons. Governors have a very good relationship with staff and pupils. They perform an extremely valuable role as critical friends of the school. They ensure that all legal and regulatory requirements are met.
52. Leaders and managers have good self-evaluation procedures in place, based on first-hand evidence. Effective systems to provide regular information on the performance of staff and pupils have been developed. They have made valuable contributions to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and school attendance figures.
53. Self-evaluation is successful in seeking the views of governors, pupils and, to a lesser extent, parents and carers. Whole-school evaluation, driven by the headteacher and senior leaders is becoming well-established within an annual cycle. The process has become increasingly effective and underpins some major changes since the last inspection.
54. Some aspects of self-evaluation, however, lack depth and rigour in evaluating outcomes and identifying shortcomings. There are inconsistencies in the way middle managers use self-evaluation processes. As a consequence, the quality of target setting to improve standards varies too much between subjects.
55. Where priorities for development are identified clearly they are supported well by the allocation of funding and resources. There is a growing understanding of the importance of self-evaluation in planning for improvement. The resulting

targets and priorities for improvement are however, insufficiently robust in a few subject areas

56. The self-evaluation process is reviewed and refined annually. The issues identified in the previous inspection have been addressed. Substantial improvements in many aspects of the school's work have been made. Very good progress has been made in improving attendance, pupils' behaviour and the whole-school ethos. An emphasis on leadership is having a positive impact on teaching, learning and standards.
57. There are enough qualified specialist teachers with the expertise necessary to deliver the curriculum. There is a good number of learning support assistants and cover supervisors and sufficient administrative and support staff.
58. In most subjects there is a good range of learning resources. There has been a substantial increase in resources for IT since the last inspection, to meet a growing demand. There is scope for further developing the library as a resource for independent learning.
59. Accommodation for most subjects is good and provides a good learning environment. Displays in corridors and classrooms are attractive and support learning. There is an effective programme of refurbishment and improvement.
60. The school has implemented the workload agreement successfully. Performance management arrangements for all staff members meet statutory requirements. On the whole, continuing professional development is of good quality. However, most staff members do not take full advantage of sources of external funding available to meet professional development needs.
61. The SEN Co-ordinator (SENCO), in association with teachers, manages the LSAs effectively. LSAs play an important part in planning, supporting teaching and recording pupils' progress.
62. Through careful management, the school has kept its expenditure on staffing within recommended limits and has a prudent contingency fund. Overall, the use of the budget reflects the priorities of the school development plan and the school gives good value for money.

Recommendations

In order to build on the progress made the school should implement the following recommendations.

- R1 Continue to raise standards by addressing the shortcomings in subjects identified in this report. *
- R2 Continue to develop and implement teaching strategies to stimulate and challenge learners. *
- R3 Improve the leadership and management of faculties and subjects.
- R4 Make more effective and consistent use of self-evaluation to identify clear targets designed to improve standards.
- R5 Continue to develop consistency in the use of assessment across the curriculum to improve learning. *

*Aspects of these recommendations are addressed in the current SDP.

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 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

63. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation.
64. The following table shows the percentages of grades awarded at each key stage and in both key stages combined. The grades were awarded for standards of achievement in 128 lessons observed during the inspection.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	3%	60%	37%	0%	0%
KS4	3%	58%	37%	2%	0%
Whole school	3%	59%	37%	1%	0%

65. In the majority of lessons, pupils achieve standards that have good features and no important shortcomings. There are outstanding features in a few lessons. In almost two-fifths of lessons, standards have good features which outweigh shortcomings. In a very few lessons standards have good features but shortcomings in important areas. There is no significant difference in the standards achieved at each stage.
66. The figures in this table show significant improvement since the last inspection. Then, the two top grades were awarded for standards in 37% of lessons. Now, the two top grades have been awarded for standards in 62% of lessons.
67. The percentage of lessons where standards were judged to be grade one or grade two at KS3 is four percentage points lower than the corresponding figure for KS3 for all schools inspected in Wales in 2006-2007. At KS4, the percentage of lessons where standards were judged to be grade one or grade two is ten points lower than the corresponding national figure.
68. The percentage of lessons where standards were judged to be grades one, two or three is higher than the corresponding national figures for 2006-2007 by five percentage points at KS3 and three percentage points at KS4. Overall, the school's figures are higher than the national target for 2010 which is for standards to be awarded grade three or better in 98% of classes.
69. Since the last inspection, standards of achievement have improved by one grade in eight subjects at KS3 and six subjects at KS4. They have stayed the same in five subjects at KS3 and six subjects at KS4. Standards are one grade lower in one subject at KS3 and in another subject at KS4. They are two grades lower in one subject only at KS4. In the great majority of cases, therefore, standards have been maintained or improved in the last six years.
70. Most pupils, including those with SEN, achieve standards that are in line with learning targets agreed between teachers and pupils and good in relation to

their abilities. In most cases, pupils meet their agreed learning targets. All pupils achieve some success, regardless of their backgrounds.

71. In most cases in the last three years, assessment results at the end of KS3 were significantly lower than the averages for schools where a similar percentage of pupils is entitled to free school meals. In 2005 and 2006, the percentages of pupils who achieved level five in English, mathematics and science and in all three subjects combined compared unfavourably to attainment in similar schools.
72. In 2007, however, attainment at the end of KS3 was higher in English and science and in the core subject indicator (CSI). Results in English and science were above the average for similar schools. Although the CSI improved by ten percentage points it remained below the average for similar schools.
73. At KS4, in the last three years, the percentages of pupils who achieved five or more GCSE grades A*-C, and who achieved grade C or above in each of the core subjects, have been well below the averages for similar schools. The percentage of pupils who achieved five or more GCSE grades A*-G has been consistently higher than the average for similar schools in the same period and, in two years out of three, substantially higher.
74. Attainment at both stages in the last three years has tended to be lower than local and national averages. Analyses of pupils' performance, however, in relation to their prior attainment, indicate that their performance generally meets, and often exceeds expectations.
75. Value-added analyses of achievement, which take into account prior attainment, age, gender and social background, show that pupils' progress is good in most key indicators of performance. Recently, particularly good progress has been made in improving boys' performance. At present, there is no significant difference between the relative achievements of boys and girls.
76. Although pupils' abilities on entry are relatively low, they make good progress across the key stages in many subjects. Pupils with ALN make very good progress. All pupils acquire new knowledge and skills and develop their understanding. Most pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve their performance. In most cases they make good progress towards achieving their potential and moving on to the next stage of learning.
77. The progress made by a minority of pupils, mainly of average and below average ability, is more limited. In a few lessons at both stages, they find it difficult to recall previous work and sustain appropriate levels of interest and concentration.
78. Pupils achieve good standards in the key skills of communication using the English language, use of number and IT. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in the development of all key skills. Particularly good progress has been made in the development of pupils' skills in numeracy and using and applying IT.

79. Pupils have made good progress in developing their bilingual competence. In lessons in Welsh second language most pupils show good levels of knowledge and understanding. They respond appropriately to many teachers' incidental use of the Welsh language but are less confident in using the Welsh language for communication in other contexts.
80. Most pupils develop their personal and social skills well. Many show good levels of motivation and use their time in lessons productively, showing positive attitudes to learning. In a few cases, however, a small minority of pupils demonstrates off-task behaviour. This constrains the standards they achieve.
81. In most lessons, and around the school, pupils behave well and act responsibly. They get on well with each other and enjoy good relationships with teachers and other members of staff. Since the last inspection there has been a significant decrease in the number of permanent exclusions. Overall, behaviour is good and this helps create a suitable environment for learning.
82. Levels of attendance are good. Pupils are rarely late at the start of the school day or for lessons. Attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection. At present it is very close to the national average and to average attendance in similar schools. At 90.6% it is a little lower than the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) target of 93%.
83. Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They make good use of opportunities in assemblies, PSE and other lessons, and extra-curricular activities to develop their understanding of diversity within society. They show respect for other people from different backgrounds both in school and in the wider community. All pupils know the importance of equality of opportunity.
84. Pupils of all abilities work well together and, in many lessons, collaborate successfully in learning activities. Older pupils are developing more independent approaches to learning. All pupils are developing the skills they will need for participating effectively in the workplace and the community.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

85. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation.
86. The following table shows the percentages of grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment at each stage and in the two stages combined in 128 lessons observed during the inspection.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	9%	57%	32%	1%	0%
KS4	7%	65%	27%	2%	0%
Whole school	8%	61%	30%	2%	0%

87. The figures in this table show a significant improvement in teaching and assessment since the last inspection. The proportion of lessons where grades one or two were awarded has increased by 23 percentage points. The proportion where grades one, two or three were awarded has increased by 11 percentage points. There has been a corresponding fall in the percentage of lessons where important shortcomings in teaching and assessment were identified.
88. The school has made good progress in working towards the national target for 2010, for teaching to be judged to be grade two or better in 80% of classes.
89. The percentage of lessons where teaching and assessment were awarded grades one or two is seven points lower than the figure of 76% for all inspections of secondary schools in Wales in 2006-2007. The national percentage, however, includes schools with sixth forms and figures, therefore, are not directly comparable. The percentage of lessons where teaching was awarded grades one, two or three is two points higher than the corresponding national figure.
90. In most cases, at both stages, teaching is good but there is too much variation in the quality of teaching in different subjects. Overall, the quality of teaching and assessment is a little higher at KS4 than KS3. In many lessons, across the curriculum, teachers set learning activities at suitable levels and are successful in engaging pupils' interests.
91. Teaching has good features and no important shortcomings in most subjects. In a small minority of subjects good features outweigh shortcomings. In the great majority of subjects, teaching is equally good at both stages.
92. The very good working relationships that teachers have with pupils in most classes contribute to the quality of lessons. Teachers generate a good learning

atmosphere in lessons at both stages in the great majority of subjects. This has a positive impact on pupils' ability to learn effectively.

93. In the most successful lessons, teachers plan their lessons carefully. These lessons have appropriate learning outcomes which are made clear to pupils at the start. They are conducted at a good pace and include a very good variety of learning activities so that pupils are engaged and their interest held. In these lessons, teachers monitor pupils' performance very well in order to provide support and advice about how to improve.
94. In many lessons, teachers use a good range of teaching strategies and resources for learning. They make good use of collaborative learning activities as well as whole-class teaching. They match their teaching styles to the individual needs of pupils very effectively. In these lessons, teachers adapt the learning materials to suit the range of different needs very successfully, often with good support from LSAs.
95. In the minority of lessons where there are significant shortcomings, teachers often provide too much instruction and direction. They tend to rely on lengthy explanations so that pupils have little opportunity for active participation in their learning. There is not enough interaction with pupils to help them improve the quality of their work. The pace of these lessons is not varied enough and pupils are not challenged to fulfil their potential. As a consequence, pupils find it difficult to maintain interest and concentration.
96. There is more variation in the rigour of assessment across the curriculum than there is in the quality of teaching. In most subjects, learners' achievements are assessed fairly, regularly and accurately and there is particularly good practice in physical education. In a minority of subjects, teachers do not assess pupils' work with enough rigour. There are important shortcomings in assessments in music.
97. Assessment procedures meet statutory requirements and those of awarding bodies for rewarding and accrediting pupils' achievements. NC levels of attainment at KS3 and predicted GCSE grades at KS4 are used to monitor and record pupils' progress and to set targets for improvement. In almost all subjects, these systems are used effectively.
98. Good systems are in use in some subjects and faculties to moderate and standardise teacher assessments, for example at the end of KS3. These systems are at a relatively early stage of development across the curriculum.
99. The school makes good use of annual reports to inform parents and carers of pupils' progress and achievements. In most cases reports contain useful information about work covered in each subject as well as about individual performance and attainment. Advice about how pupils could improve further is less clear. It tends to be more concerned with general issues, such as effort, than with specific aspects of knowledge, understanding or skills in the subject.
100. There are good examples in a few subjects of effective peer and self-assessment although there is some inconsistency in the use of these

procedures across the curriculum. In most subjects pupils know the criteria for achieving different NC levels of attainment at KS3 or GCSE grades at KS4. This helps them understand what they need to do to achieve more highly.

101. In a minority of subjects, teachers do not use assessments effectively enough as a basis for informing planning in order to improve pupils' learning. They do not use assessment records rigorously enough to identify individual strengths and weaknesses and devise strategies to address areas of difficulty.

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

102. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation.
103. The curriculum meets effectively the learning needs of all individuals across both key stages. It is accessible to all. The KS3 curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The school provides a good range of subject options at KS4 enabling all learners to achieve accreditation at appropriate levels.
104. Entry level, Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and Prince's Trust qualifications offered to targeted pupils illustrate the inclusive nature of the curriculum.
105. The school has developed close curricular links with Coleg Gwent, Cross Keys. Post-16 transition arrangements enable learners to continue their education at appropriate levels at the college. Identified KS4 learners attend the college to follow a number of vocational courses. Good use is made of Learning Pathways (14-19) to provide an appropriate option menu for these learners. This provision gives pupils a good experience of the work place and an awareness of health and safety issues.
106. Key skills are a high priority in the school and feature clearly in schemes of work. They are well integrated in lessons. The school holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark. Overall the learning experiences in both key stages are effective in developing pupils' basic and key skills.
107. Pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities which enrich their learning and personal development. Pupils speak very enthusiastically about their involvement in a number of activities.
108. There are several outstanding features in the extra-curricular provision. Music and drama productions, sports events, clubs and a variety of educational visits are included in an impressive range of activities. At KS4, pupils are actively involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and in First Campus events.
109. The diverse range of activities provided by the Challenging Minds and Summer Courses enable pupils to experience a very wide range of out-of-class learning

experiences. The school sports day is an inclusive event providing all pupils with the opportunity to participate in a wide range of events.

110. The school promotes personal development effectively. The comprehensive PSE programme, class-tutor periods and assemblies make a very positive contribution to pupils' moral, social and spiritual development. Pupils support enthusiastically a number of charities and display concern for others' well-being. The Cariad Kenya project is a very impressive initiative. It enables pupils to develop understanding and respect for people from different cultures.
111. The school has good links with parents, the community and other providers. Parents are kept fully informed of activities and events by means of a termly newsletter. The school has developed effective curricular links with primary schools. Businesses and agencies in the locality support the school and are involved in various activities to help support pupils..
112. The curriculum complies with all statutory requirements, including that for a daily act of collective worship.
113. WRE is of good quality. All pupils in Y10 follow a comprehensive and well structured programme with emphasis on developing learners' practical skills for the world of work. They also undertake a range of two-week work experience placements which teachers monitor very carefully. Provision for careers education features prominently in the curriculum. The careers co-ordinator works closely with *Gyrfa Cymru* Careers.
114. Aspects of *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* are included in schemes of work. Pupils study Welsh as a second language in KS3 and KS4 and most achieve good standards. However, overall learners are provided with too few opportunities to develop bilingual skills across the curriculum.
115. The school tackles social disadvantage and stereotyping in a very successful manner and ensures equality of access and opportunity to all pupils. The curriculum and all school activities are available to everyone.
116. Pupils' awareness and understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship are developed well in several subjects and during various events in school. The school has begun an eco schools project and has an enthusiastic eco club and a recycling club. Pupils appreciate the importance of recycling and the school came first in the local authority table for recycling paper. Learners are made aware of the importance of healthy eating.
117. The school has good links with local employers. They visit the school and provide helpful advice on interview techniques. The school recognises employers' needs by developing pupils' key skills in literacy, numeracy and IT.
118. Pupils are involved in numerous activities to develop their entrepreneurial skills. They promote Fairtrade. Involvement in the 'Dynamo' project and visits by a number of industrialists promote successfully pupils' entrepreneurial skills.

119. The inclusive nature of the curriculum enables pupils to acquire the appropriate knowledge, understanding and skills for lifelong learning.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

120. This grade is one grade above the grade awarded in the school's self-evaluation. This is because the inspection team judged there to be outstanding features in the school's provision.
121. The quality of care and support has outstanding features. A very effective support structure consisting of assistant head, progress co-ordinators and form tutors promotes positive relationships with clear lines of communication. At all levels, co-operation is outstanding and the work of the progress co-ordinators is a significant strength. Good use is made of the Student Assistance Programme.
122. The constructive use made of external services is a significant factor in this support. Pupils benefit greatly from the help and support they are given from a wide range of agencies who work very well with the school.
123. Links with parents are good. They are encouraged to take an active part in their children's learning. The colourful and regular newsletter is a valuable source of information. Planners are used well by many pupils and teachers as a means of maintaining weekly contact between home and school.
124. Pupils are fully informed about the opportunities and support available in KS4 and post-16. An informative options booklet detailing course content and assessments, pupil interviews by Careers Wales and information evenings enable pupils to make informed choices. A strong partnership with Coleg Gwent Crosskeys Campus, provides KS4 pupils with good advice on subject choices and career paths.
125. New pupils of all abilities settle in quickly. Early transitional links through a design and technology day in Y5, the core project "How Green is my Valley" and extra visits for pupils with low esteem make this an outstanding feature. Pupils entering the SRB are provided with detailed transition action plans outlining the provision to be made. Peer mentoring in Y7 and the buddy system in the SRB help pupils to settle in quickly.
126. The PSE programme is designed and organised well and includes careers education. A wide range of relevant topics is delivered effectively on a weekly basis by the form tutors. External speakers and regular PSE themed days make valuable contributions to the programme.
127. The monitoring of attendance, punctuality and performance is outstanding. Attendance recording systems and methods of contacting parents promptly are highly effective. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) supports pupils with

welfare or attendance concerns sensitively. Punctuality is carefully recorded by form tutors. Progress co-ordinators and form tutors identify emerging patterns of achievement and behaviour. Individual pupils are identified and regularly mentored at appropriate levels. This leads to improved standards.

128. The PSE programme promotes healthy eating and exercise. Good use is made of the excellent sporting facilities. Healthy eating options are prominent in the school canteen. However, the school has not fully responded to the proposals in "Appetite for Life" for example, in the contents of some vending machines in the school canteen. Health and safety issues were discussed with the school during the inspection.
129. Pupil representatives from each year group meet regularly as members of the school council. They raise and discuss issues which matter to them. Members of the school council are confident that their views are listened to, taken seriously, and, in a number of cases, acted upon. The school council is effective in enabling pupils' views to be expressed and taken into account.
130. The designated Child Protection Officer (CPO) works closely and effectively with external agencies to ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils. The CPO has received updated training and all staff members are aware of procedures.
131. The quality of provision for ALN is outstanding. The commitment to inclusion is embedded in the school. Pupils with ALN are identified early following established transitional links with the primary schools. Pupils' needs are assessed systematically. Teachers have a very clear perception of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
132. Pupils with ALN are taught alongside their peers in mainstream. They make very good progress at both key stages. Improvements in standardised scores, NC levels, GCSE and Entry Level results are measurable evidence of this progress. Most lessons are planned well to meet pupils' needs. Work is not matched well to pupils' needs in a few lessons.
133. Literacy and numeracy support is planned very carefully to meet the needs of individual pupils. Identified pupils are withdrawn to receive intensive reading and spelling support. There is also suitable provision for pupils at KS3 not on the SEN register to receive support with Basic Skills.
134. A particular strength is the arrangement made for a few pupils in KS4 who show disaffection and are underperforming. They are supported constructively and receive additional help with course work and other difficulties they may encounter. This has led to improved attendance rates, improved attitudes to school and successes at both Entry Level and GCSE. All pupils on the SEN register gain an accredited qualification at the end of KS4.
135. There is considerable expertise within the faculty of learning support and all members work well as a team. The work of the faculty is well supported by a committed team of LSAs. They actively promote inclusion in the classroom by

supporting pupils with ALN to cope with the demands of the mainstream curriculum and enabling them to achieve success.

136. Every pupil on the SEN register has a Pupil Profile/Individual Education Plan (IEP) which relates well to the needs of the individual. IEP targets are shared with pupils and parents. IEPs are reviewed very carefully twice a year and include subject specific reports from subject teachers. This is also an appropriate monitoring tool. Some literacy objectives are not precise enough.
137. The management of SEN inclusion is outstanding. The Head of Learning Support who is also the SENCO provides very good guidance. She is very experienced, organised and enthusiastic. She works hard to raise and maintain awareness of SEN within the school. She is well supported by faculty staff, including LSAs, senior management and the designated SEN governor.
138. Provision for pupils with ASD in the SRB is outstanding. These pupils, mainly from outside the catchment area, are fully included in the life of the school. Members of SRB staff have very good relationships with subject teachers and give clear instructions to facilitate good practice in the teaching of ASD pupils. Both social and learning needs are met, enabling pupils to reach their potential. The work is expertly supported by a team of qualified teachers and LSAs. They provide pupils with ASD the necessary skills to work independently with their mainstream peers.
139. KS4 pupils in the SRB have valuable experiences in outdoor, character building activities at the Ynys Hywel Centre, which provides them with enhanced opportunities to improve their self-confidence and self-esteem.
140. The inclusive nature of the school creates a climate where all pupils are treated fairly. Inclusion has a high priority within the school and forms an integral part of the equal opportunities policy. All pupils, including pupils with ASD, Looked After Children (LAC) and Most Able and Talented (MAT) pupils receive a relevant and challenging curriculum. Each pupil is given sensitive support if difficulties or problems arise.
141. All pupils are offered the same opportunities regardless of gender. Pupils are encouraged to select activities, work experience placements and options that are suitable to their needs. The PSE programme actively stimulates discussion of gender stereotyping. Racial equality and harmony are promoted effectively in PSE and assemblies across year groups. The school is very sensitive to the needs of religious minorities.
142. The school has effective measures to deal with oppressive behaviour, including racial discrimination, bullying, and all forms of harassment. Incidents are dealt with sensitively. There are very clear policies on bullying which are communicated effectively to all members of the school community. Pupils consider these measures to be effective.
143. Access for disabled pupils and visitors is restricted to the ground floor. An Action Plan and a Disability Equality Scheme have been prepared. The Action

Plan has appropriate strategy outcomes and timescales, although outcomes have not been costed. Provision for pupils with sensory impairment is appropriate.

144. Pupils respond sympathetically and positively to diversity. There is an emphasis on respecting and celebrating a variety of cultures. Both the religious education programme and well planned assemblies highlight these issues. Additional activities such as European Language Day, a German Exchange, Cariad Kenya, Indian dancing, African drumming and good support for local and national charities reinforce this respect significantly. The content and impact of these activities are outstanding.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

145. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation. It is one grade higher than the grade awarded for key question one. This is because inspectors identified good features in leadership and strategic management that have been instrumental in improving the quality of learning and beginning to raise the standards pupils achieve.
146. Leaders and managers at all levels have created an atmosphere in the school which has a clear focus on ensuring that all pupils grow both personally and academically. Their aim is to enable all pupils to access learning fully and to enjoy and understand equality of opportunity. They are committed to providing a school that is valued by the community.
147. The headteacher provides strong leadership. She leads by example and has high expectations of staff and pupils. She has been the main driving force behind improvements since the last inspection. She has a vibrant management style and is highly respected by pupils, staff and governors.
148. The headteacher is ably supported by a small SLT which includes one deputy and an assistant headteacher. Together they implement effectively school policies and procedures that are focused on the needs of pupils. They have high expectations of each other. Together they use their range of complementary skills to provide effective leadership. They are a very good team whose roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.
149. Senior and middle managers have clear roles and responsibilities. Senior managers work closely with middle managers and provide strong encouragement and support to help improve standards. They meet regularly both formally and informally to monitor progress. Communication at all levels is good. As a result staff members feel valued and well supported in their work. Overall this creates a real sense of team work and a sharing of responsibility.

150. A strong team of five progress coordinators monitor carefully the progress of all pupils in their year group. They work closely as a team with form tutors to manage the support for a significantly large number of pupils across the school.
151. The leadership and management of faculties are more variable. There is too much inconsistency in the way heads of faculties manage and improve the performance of their teams. As a result, a few subject leaders are not rigorous enough in leading their subject within the faculty.
152. Leaders and managers have established very good links with other providers of education. A very good partnership with a local further education college has extended the vocational courses offered to KS4 pupils and enhanced transition arrangements at this key stage.
153. Leaders and managers take appropriate account of Welsh Assembly Government priorities. Very good progress has been made in enabling all pupils to have equal access to a learning pathway that meets their individual needs. Work related education is a high priority as is the importance of preparing pupils for lifelong learning. Much good work has been done to help pupils develop their understanding of the importance of education for sustainable development and global citizenship. The promotion of healthy lifestyles and bilingualism across the school is less well developed.
154. There are effective procedures in place to enable managers to monitor the quality of work across the school. External specialists are used effectively on a regular basis to provide specific support to subject departments and faculties. A rolling programme of faculty reviews is planned well by senior managers. These include, for example, observation of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and interviews with pupils. Overall, the outcomes of internal reviews are not critically reflective enough to enable leaders and managers at all levels to set targets for improvement to raise standards.
155. Governors have very good relationships with staff and pupils. They have a clear overview of the strategic management of the school. They work closely with the SLT to initiate change. The culture of trust and respect between managers, teachers and the Governing Body (GB) is a strength. Effective communication at all levels enables governors to have a good knowledge and understanding of the work of the school.
156. Governors are very aware of the standards that pupils achieve and the quality of education provided by the school. They monitor standards and provision through, regular updates, focused discussions and observation of lessons. Regular reports and review days allow governors to monitor progress carefully and thoroughly. Through this process they contribute to the identification of priorities for development. There is, however, inconsistency in the way in which governors monitor progress within faculties.

157. The GB ensures that all legal and regulatory requirements are met. They perform an extremely valuable role as 'critical friends' of the school and provide good support to help the school improve.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

158. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation.
159. The findings of the inspection team match well those of the school. The grades awarded by the team are the same as the school awarded itself in six of the key questions. The inspection team awarded a higher grade in key question four in recognition of outstanding features. The quality of the school's self-evaluation report is good.
160. Leaders and managers are well informed about the performance of teachers and pupils. There is a continuous dialogue to refine the roles and duties of all staff. Effective systems to provide information on a regular basis are in place. Leaders and managers have adopted good self-evaluation procedures which are based on first hand experience. The process of self-evaluation is good.
161. Arrangements for tracking the standards, progress, attendance and general well-being of pupils have been greatly enhanced in recent years. They inform staff well about each pupil so that they can help them to reach their potential. Self-evaluation has made valuable contributions to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and school attendance figures.
162. Subject leaders evaluate their work using the Common Inspection Framework. Most subject leaders monitor their teams' work well through focused lesson observations and continuous dialogue. These are used to inform faculty self-evaluations. However, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of evaluation reports, many of which are largely descriptive in nature. Some reports lack depth and rigour in identifying strengths and shortcomings, and in evaluating outcomes.
163. Self-evaluation is successful in seeking the views of governors, pupils and, to a lesser extent, parents and carers. Whole school evaluation, driven by the headteacher and senior leaders, is becoming well established within an annual cycle. The process slowed down while new key personnel were adapting to their roles. Nevertheless, self-evaluation has become increasingly effective and underpins some major advances since the last inspection.
164. The SLT have identified clear priorities for improvement and appropriate actions have been put in place. These priorities have been well supported by an adequate allocation of funding and resources. There is a growing understanding of the value of self-evaluation to plan for improvement. However, a minority of ensuing priorities and targets are insufficiently robust.

165. The self-evaluation process is reviewed and refined annually. Substantial improvements in many areas of school work have been made since the last inspection.
166. All the key issues from the report of the last inspection have been addressed successfully. In particular:
- standards in teaching and learning for all pupils have improved greatly;
 - leadership and management have improved and include detailed monitoring of pupils' progress with a view to improving standards and the quality of behaviour;
 - investment in computers and ICT equipment has helped raise the standard of pupils' work;
 - the curriculum offered, the daily act of collective worship and aspects of the school prospectus are now in line with WAG guidelines; and
 - a robust system for monitoring pupils' attendance has resulted in a substantial improvement.
167. The school has moved forward in a wide range of areas since the last inspection. Further work in assessment and the use of clear targets designed to improve standards remain to be addressed.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

168. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation.
169. There are sufficient qualified specialist teachers with the expertise to deliver the curriculum. They are supported in their work by a good number of LSAs, cover supervisors and administrative staff. They all make a good contribution to the advancement of pupils' learning and development. Very few lessons are not taught by subject specialist teachers.
170. Teachers and pupils are well supported by LSAs, administrative staff and cover supervisors. There is an appropriate level of technical support. LSAs play an important part in planning, teaching and recording pupils' progress.
171. In the majority of faculties there is a good range of learning resources. There has been a substantial increase in IT resources to meet a growing demand. Many classrooms are equipped with an interactive whiteboard and all teachers have a computer.
172. Facilities for physical education are good. There are, however, shortcomings in the resources and accommodation for art.
173. Displays, both in the corridors and classrooms are of good quality. They are attractive and support pupils' learning.
174. The library is an attractive area and has a good range of fiction and non-fiction books. However, it is not used enough in lesson times as a teaching resource

to develop independent study by subjects other than the English. Good use is made of the library by the extra-curricular homework club.

175. The school buildings and grounds are well maintained. There is an effective programme of refurbishment and improvement. There is very little graffiti and the site is free of litter.
176. The school has managed successfully to implement the workload agreement. It provides time for management, planning, preparation and assessment. The school has, by careful management, kept its expenditure on staffing within recommended limits and has a prudent contingency fund.
177. The budget is carefully set, tracked and evaluated and school finances are well managed. The headteacher and the governors, through the finance committee, oversee financial management very effectively. They are well aware of the school's financial situation and review all spending decisions. Financial audit report recommendations are acted upon effectively.
178. Performance management arrangements for teaching staff are in line with statutory requirements. The school has been recently awarded 'Investors in People' status for the third time.
179. The school places importance upon continuing professional development and the performance management arrangements for all staff. Teachers and other members of staff benefit from positive encouragement, in-house training, coaching and mentoring. However, while newly-qualified teachers and those needing early professional development are carefully mentored and supported, most staff members do not take full advantage of the sources of external funding available to meet their professional development needs.
180. The use of the budget reflects the priorities of the school development plan and the school gives 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

181. Examination results at GCSE in the last two years have been close to the LEA average but below the national average for A*-C grades. Results at A*-G are close to national and LEA averages. These results are in line with pupils' ability.

KS3

Good features

182. Most pupils listen attentively and with respect to the teacher and to one another. They recall previous learning and demonstrate good understanding. For example, they define similes, metaphors and personification and understand features of different genres such as ghost stories and travel writing.
183. Many pupils collaborate effectively in small group and pairs for a variety of purposes. These include the analysis of text and to support each other in their learning through peer-assessment. Able pupils pose questions, predict outcomes in film and text and justify opinions.
184. Nearly all pupils read an appropriate range of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and drama including that from different cultures. The majority reads aloud with accuracy. A minority reads with fluency and expression.

185. Pupils write in a range of forms and for a variety of purposes. Presentation skills are variable but usually the work of girls is better than that of boys. Many pupils improve their writing by careful planning and drafting. Most pupils produce work of a good standard and around half structure their writing well.
186. The majority of the pupils with ALN makes good progress

Shortcomings

187. In a few cases, errors in spelling and punctuation affect written work adversely.
188. The written work of a few more-able pupils is brief and does not reflect their ability.

KS4

Good features

189. The majority of pupils listens attentively to their teachers and to each other. Most are keen to speak in class and to express their views. Many respond well to questions and speak clearly and with confidence.
190. Pupils generally work well together in pairs and in groups for a range of purposes, including the close analysis of language used in fiction and other texts, in order to develop their inferential and deductive skills.
191. Standards of reading are generally sound. Pupils are able to read in class with reasonable expression and understanding. More able pupils demonstrate good knowledge of plot, character and the effect of literary devices used in an appropriate range of texts.
192. When given the opportunity many pupils write at length and for a range of purposes. Around half adapt vocabulary and structure as required. Following a process of drafting, nearly all pupils produce final copies of coursework which represent progress in line with their ability. All evaluate their own work and the majority does so to good effect.
193. Pupils with ALN make good progress and succeed in external examinations.

Shortcomings

194. A very small number of pupils does not draft and proof read work with sufficient rigour so that errors persist.

Welsh second language

- KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**
KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

195. Examination results at GCSE in 2007 were well above the national and LEA averages for A*-C grades in the full course and for C-G grades in the short course. In the previous year the percentages of A*-C and A*-G grades in the full course were well below national and LEA averages and the numbers entered for the short course were very low. Pupils' results in 2007 represent very good achievement.

KS3

Good features

196. Pupils offer accurate responses in oral exchanges when using familiar sentence patterns, providing personal information about themselves and about their friends. They use adjectives correctly when describing someone. In pair and group work, pupils co-operate well, asking and answering basic questions with confidence and accuracy.
197. Pupils are beginning to vary and expand their responses when prompted. When discussing films, they express likes and dislikes and give basic reasons for their choice.
198. The majority of pupils pronounces words well, especially familiar vocabulary which they have been practising during the lesson. They listen well to the teacher and to each other.
199. Pupils understand short reading passages based on vocabulary already acquired and complete a number of tasks which require information.
200. Written tasks such as simple paragraphs, questionnaires, questions and answers help pupils to consolidate the oral work and are generally completed accurately. Pupils produce a variety of written work such as short paragraphs, dialogues, letters, extended paragraphs using different sentence patterns correctly and appropriate vocabulary.
201. Pupils with ALN are making steady progress in developing their knowledge of Welsh.

Shortcomings

202. A small minority of pupils is uncertain in their oral responses and lacks fluency, especially when using new language items. They rely heavily on written notes when responding orally.
203. The less able pupils have difficulty with written work. In a few cases their work is inaccurate and incomplete. They have difficulty recalling language learnt previously and are confined to language structures currently being introduced.
204. A few pupils fail to complete written tasks within the allocated time and as a result there is unfinished work in their exercise books.

KS4

Good features

205. On the full course, pupils continue to make good progress in all language skills. They speak with increasing fluency during class discussions. The majority of these pupils presents information and expresses opinions on a number of topics. Their pair and group conversations about fashion are accurate and lively.
206. Pupils on the short course conduct brief conversations on familiar topics. They respond accurately to questions about films expressing likes and dislikes. A minority extends their responses giving pertinent reasons.
207. Many pupils grasp the main points of what they hear. The more able pupils show a good understanding of a selection of reading material and respond to the contents.
208. Pupils complete a good range of written material based on the need of the external examination, such as letters and extended dialogues. The written coursework is structured effectively and they redraft their tasks purposefully to produce accurate final copies. Pupils following the short course complete short pieces of written work. Many of them write well-constructed sentences within a structured situation.

Shortcomings

209. A few pupils, mainly short course candidates, provide oral responses which are brief and their ability to move the discussion forward is limited. They lack the confidence to speak independently without a script.
210. A small minority of pupils does not read with sufficient clarity and meaning. These pupils mispronounce words when reading.
211. A few pupils produce written work which contains basic grammatical and spelling errors.

Mathematics

KS3 Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

KS4 Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

212. Examination results at GCSE in the last three years have been below national and LEA averages for A*-C grades. Examination results at A*-G have been broadly in line with national and LEA averages. These results are lower than those expected for pupils of similar ability for A*-C grades but are in line with pupils' ability for A*-G grades.

KS3

Good features

213. Many pupils display good standards of work in number, algebra, shape, measures and handling data. They work with interest and enthusiasm in lessons and show good knowledge and understanding of current work. Their recall of previous key mathematical concepts and facts is usually secure.
214. The majority of pupils has a sound knowledge of basic number facts and applies this to solve problems competently at an appropriate level. They calculate mentally with reasonable accuracy and speed and use calculators proficiently where appropriate.
215. Most pupils make good progress in lessons. They complete tasks and organise their work well. They share ideas well with one another and many have a sound knowledge and understanding of underlying concepts and techniques. The majority displays good levels of mathematical reasoning in recognising patterns and making generalisations.
216. In Y7 most pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages. They match equivalent fractions, decimals and percentages competently and are secure in explaining their reasoning.
217. Many pupils in Y8 draw straight line graphs accurately from plotting points and more able pupils interpret key features from their graphs. They also have a good knowledge of concepts in shape and space and draw images of shapes correctly after reflecting, rotating or translating them.
218. In Y9 many pupils write and interpret a number expressed in standard form. They also calculate the areas and perimeters of various shapes and apply their results competently to solve appropriate problems.
219. Pupils with ALN show a good knowledge and understanding of current work. Nearly all make very good progress both in lessons and across the key stage.

Shortcomings

220. A significant minority of pupils displays some fundamental errors and misconceptions, often because of insufficient understanding.
221. A minority of pupils is hesitant in explaining their reasoning. They do not always contribute enough in group activities and produce work which displays inaccuracies.
222. A few pupils make errors in calculating mentally and do not reflect enough on the reasonableness of their answers.

KS4

Good features

223. The majority of pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of underlying concepts and facts across the attainment targets. They make good progress in lessons and show interest and enthusiasm in their work.
224. Many pupils work very well with others in lessons. They discuss appropriate techniques to solve problems and share these effectively to enhance their knowledge and understanding of them.
225. Many pupils display good levels of mathematical reasoning both in writing and in speaking about their work. They apply mathematical notation correctly and use diagrams and graphs appropriately to interpret and present information.
226. In Y10 many pupils have a good knowledge of statistical averages and use these appropriately in problem solving tasks. They have a sound awareness of the angle properties of triangles and quadrilaterals and use this competently to find missing angles in related problems.
227. Many lower ability pupils in Y10 have a very good knowledge of ratio. They recognise equivalent ratios and apply this well to solve appropriate problems with a good level of confidence and understanding.
228. In Y11 many pupils use calculators proficiently to solve equations by trial and improvement.
229. They apply their knowledge of number well to find estimates in more complex number calculations and provide answers to appropriate degrees of accuracy

Shortcomings

230. A significant minority of pupils has insecure understanding of the mathematical techniques given to them to use. They display some fundamental errors and misconceptions and do not think sufficiently about the appropriateness of their answers.
231. A minority of pupils lacks confidence in their ability to reason mathematically. They are hesitant in talking about their work and make limited contributions in group activities.
232. A few pupils show uncertainty in applying their mathematical techniques in a problem-solving context.

Science

KS3 Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

233. Examination results for the last two years have been below national and LEA averages for A*-C grades. Examination results for A*-G grades have been

above national and LEA averages for the same period. These results are broadly in line with pupils' ability and with results from similar schools in Wales.

KS3

Good features

234. Many pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge of scientific facts and an understanding of scientific concepts and processes encountered within the KS3 Programme of Study. The majority is able to apply their acquired knowledge and understanding within novel situations.
235. Most pupils use correct scientific terms when discussing their work. They carry out practical work in a safe and competent manner. They make and record appropriate observations and accurate measurements.
236. Most pupils draw accurate diagrams, complete data tables and construct graphs correctly. They are able to describe the trends and patterns shown by the graphs.
237. Most pupils are able to draw appropriate conclusions from the results of their activities and investigations. They sometimes offer explanations for variations in the outcomes.
238. When required, nearly all pupils successfully work together in a co-operative and helpful manner in order to investigate problems and research scientific information.
239. Pupils with ALN take full part in lessons and progress well in science.

Shortcomings

240. A few pupils are insecure in their knowledge and understanding of science. A minority of pupils fails to complete and correct their work. A few pupils disrupt lessons and impact negatively on the progress of others.

KS4

Good features

241. Most pupils continue to build successfully their knowledge and understanding of science and its applications within the KS4 Programmes of Study. They are adept at recalling previous work and information.
242. The majority of pupils demonstrates an understanding of increasingly complex concepts and processes for example, molecular structure, chemical equations and the structure of the Earth.

- 243. Most pupils of all abilities, continue to develop their practical skills for example in constructing models, planning and conducting investigations, and presenting their results. GCSE coursework is generally of a good standard.
- 244. Most pupils demonstrate a wide range of skills. They are articulate when describing and explaining their work, collaborate effectively as pairs and within groups when tackling problems, and are able to evaluate their progress.
- 245. Most pupils maintain their work well. Diagrams, tables and graphs are drawn correctly and individual work presented in a clear and coherent manner.
- 246. Nearly all pupils enjoy science lessons, are enthusiastic in their approach and demonstrate generally high levels of engagement within class.

Shortcomings

- 247. A few pupils fail to complete and correct their work.
- 248. A few pupils disrupt lessons and impact negatively on the progress of others.

Design and technology

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

- 249. Examination results in design and technology at GCSE for 2006 are above the LEA averages in food, but below the LEA averages in graphics, systems and control and textiles for A* - C grades. Examination results in 2007 are above the LEA averages in graphics, food and textiles but below the LEA averages in systems and control for A* - C grades. Examination results at A*- G have been in line with both local and national averages for both 2006 and 2007. The results are in line with pupils' ability.

KS3

Good features

- 250. Pupils make good progress in a range of focus areas and use a variety of materials and processes well. Their practical skills vary but are mainly good. Their knowledge and understanding of these focus areas are good. They use the correct technical terms when describing what they have done or plan to do.
- 251. A common approach to designing is used to ensure a thorough understanding by pupils throughout the key stage. The specially prepared workbooks which have a common approach help reinforce pupils' understanding.
- 252. Research is often good leading to ideas which have been thought out well. Pupils have a good understanding of the links between a design brief and evaluation.

- 253. Pupils make extensive use of a wide range of IT skills to improve the quality of learning and presentation skills. In textiles, Y7 pupils design and make good quality Pypped Draig Cymreig after thoroughly analysing the problem. Pupils show competence in their use of Computer Aided Design (CAD) and Computer Aided Manufacture (CAM) as part of this design and make activity.
- 254. Pupils in Y8 make a simple fuse tester involving the effective use of a wide range of skills such as Printed Circuit Board (PCB) design, soldering and vacuum forming.
- 255. Pupils of lower ability and pupils with ALN achieve to their potential and make good progress.

Shortcomings

- 256. The percentage of pupils achieving level five or higher at the end of KS3 is below the national average.
- 257. A few pupils have an insecure understanding of the uses and applications of CAM in some aspects of the subject. A few pupils' developmental drawing skills are weaker than other elements of design.

KS4

Good features

- 258. Pupils research and explore their ideas in a variety of ways and understand the relationship between design specification and evaluation. Their knowledge and understanding of materials, processes and techniques are well developed.
- 259. Pupils use a wide range of equipment and manufacturing processes safely and confidently. Their making skills are good. Their work often has a high quality of finish and close attention to detail. Their ideas are frequently imaginative.
- 260. IT skills are used effectively in all focus areas for research. Pupils use the internet and use IT to enhance the designing and presentation of their work as well as for word processing. Pupils in Y10, for example, use Speed Step software effectively to design the fabric for their waistcoats.
- 261. In most material areas, pupils show good understanding of the needs of users, and the purpose and function of products, in their design developments.
- 262. Pupils of lower ability and pupils with ALN achieve to their potential and make good progress.

Shortcomings

- 263. A few pupils do not use developmental drawing skills effectively in all material areas. Portfolio work has insufficient attention to detail in all focus areas.

Information technology

KS3 Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

KS4 Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

264. Pupils currently are entered for various levels for the Diploma in Digital Applications (DiDA). Results in 2007 are good with all pupils achieving accreditation at various levels. Nearly all pupils who were entered for these examinations (96.4%) achieved at least a level 2 at the certificate level. A good proportion of them (just over 39%) achieved an award at the diploma level. These results reflect a continuing improvement in standards.

KS3

Good features

265. Most pupils use IT equipment and software competently and confidently. They work with a good degree of independence and also share ideas well with others. Many make good progress in lessons and show a willingness to explore features of various software to enhance the presentation their work.

266. Most display good standards in using IT to communicate information in various contexts. They search the internet proficiently to find relevant information and images and use these constructively in appropriate tasks.

267. Pupils' portfolios of work show a good coverage in all aspects of IT. The majority of pupils completes a range of tasks successfully to demonstrate sound competence in using IT to handle and process information. They also use spreadsheets appropriately in simple modelling activities.

268. Pupils with ALN are confident in using IT in a range of contexts. They use IT well to communicate information and explore features of software competently. They work with a good degree of independence and make good progress.

Shortcomings

269. A significant minority of pupils tends to follow set routines in tasks given to them but lacks understanding of the overall purpose of them. Pupils do not always reflect critically enough on what they are doing.

270. Although many pupils have good basic IT skills they do not always apply them well enough in relevant worthwhile contexts. This is particularly apparent in modelling where tasks do not always provide sufficient challenge for all pupils.

KS4

Good features

271. The majority of pupils has good IT skills and applies them purposefully in various contexts. These pupils show particularly good standards in using IT to communicate information using a good range of appropriate software.
272. Most pupils select data from a range of suitable sources and use various IT applications competently. They refine their work constructively to make improvements in its presentation and effectiveness.
273. Many pupils demonstrate good standards in the coursework units in their portfolios. They use IT well to process and analyse data and the majority of them reflect thoughtfully on their work and its suitability for the audience.
274. Pupils with ALN are competent in using IT in a good range of contexts. They work with a good degree of independence in lessons and achieve good standards in the various units of work.

Shortcomings

275. A significant minority of pupils does not make sufficient progress in lessons. These pupils often rely on others and do not contribute enough in group tasks.
276. A minority of pupils does not evaluate their work critically enough. These pupils do not pay enough attention to its suitability for the selected audience.

Modern foreign languages

KS3 Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

KS4 Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

277. Examination results at GCSE in the last two years have been below national and LEA averages for A*-C grades. In both years, GCSE results at A*-G have been similar to national and LEA averages. These results are broadly in line with pupils' ability.

KS3

Good features

278. By Y9 most pupils listen well enough to grasp the main points of authentic recordings. When speaking in prepared role plays and other closely-structured tasks, these pupils are able to keep up appropriate oral exchanges. A few of them pronounce words with good accents and intonation.
279. Many pupils in Y8 pronounce words well when reading aloud, and in Y7 many pupils speak clearly and confidently in short and simple responses.
280. Most pupils recognise the spoken French alphabet and use it well to spell out simple words and many pupils use bilingual dictionaries confidently from Y7.

281. Most pupils read and understand simple sentences, and can adapt them in order to write or word-process sentences of their own. By Y8 most pupils understand printed or word-processed sentences including past and future time. By Y9 most of them can also change written sentences competently from the present tense into the past or future.
282. Most pupils with ALN achieve as well as their classmates thanks to good support from class teachers and teaching assistants.

Shortcomings

283. The majority of pupils does not speak with confidence. They usually need visual clues or prompts from the teacher, but still have difficulty in speaking at length. Most pupils do not speak well independently.
284. Most pupils do not write well at length. They do not link sentences into longer pieces. They also make errors in word order and agreements of verbs and adjectives, and frequently make spelling mistakes.
285. Most pupils do not use more than one tense apart from the present in the same task.

KS4

Good features

286. By Y11, the majority of pupils reads a variety of different types of text, identifying main points and some specific details. They follow clearly-spoken French, recognising both facts and opinions.
287. Most pupils write letters in formal or informal styles as appropriate to their purpose. They use a good vocabulary and range of language structures and tenses, and arrange their work appropriately into paragraphs. They usually apply their knowledge of grammar well, redrafting work to improve spellings.
288. Most pupils' coursework is constructed and presented well.
289. Pupils with ALN write short pieces well using simple but properly-formed sentences.

KS4

Shortcomings

290. Most pupils do not speak confidently. They rarely move beyond pre-learnt phrases and do not sustain exchanges with accuracy. Their accents and intonation are strongly affected by their home language, which adversely affects their clarity.
291. Many pupils in Y10 do not link sentences and develop ideas to write at length.

292. A small minority of pupils in Y11 uses a narrow range of language in their writing, and makes slips in basic grammar and spellings.
293. Most pupils do not write with the creativity and scope that is consistent with the highest grades.

History

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

294. Examination results at GCSE in the last two years have been below national and LEA averages for A*-C and A*-G grades. These results are lower than those expected of pupils with similar ability. These results do not reflect the standards observed during this inspection.

KS3

Good features

295. Pupils discuss well historical representations and interpretations in small groups. They collaborate well, sharing facts and opinions and make well informed judgements on the basis of the historical evidence they have considered.
296. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in developing their knowledge of historical events, personalities and issues. In Y7, for example, pupils learn about the Domesday Book by extracting information about it from a range of different sources.
297. Pupils make good use of complex timelines to develop their chronological awareness. They show good levels of interest and understanding of local and Welsh history. In Y9, for example, pupils learn about the impact of the industrial revolution through their study of the topic 'What was life like in Merthyr Tydfil?'

Shortcomings

298. There is incomplete work in the history exercise books of a small minority of pupils.
299. A few pupils experience difficulty in expressing their knowledge of history in writing.

KS4

Good features

300. Pupils in Y10 demonstrate good levels of knowledge and understanding of Wales during the second world war. With help from their teacher they interpret a good range of historical accounts about, for example, how people coped with the rationing of food and clothing.
301. Pupils make informed judgements about the causes and effects of events in the past on the basis of their study of historical evidence. They develop well their understanding about the reliability of different forms of evidence.
302. In Y11, pupils show good levels of interest and motivation in their study of the history of the USA in the twentieth century. They use a range of resources to learn about President F D Roosevelt and the 'New Deal' and write well-composed, extended responses to questions raised.

Shortcomings

303. A few pupils work at a slower rate and have difficulty completing tasks.
304. A few pupils participate less actively in history lessons and are reluctant to contribute to discussions.

Geography

KS3 **Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**
KS4 **Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

305. The percentage of pupils who gained A*-C grades was above LEA and national averages in 2006 and below them in 2007. The percentage of pupils who gained A*-G grades was above local and national averages in both years. These results are generally in line with expectations for pupils of similar ability.

KS3

Good features

306. The majority of pupils develops appropriate mapmaking skills along with a variety of other essential geographical skills.
307. Almost all pupils empathise with issues relating to environmental hazards, environmental change and sustainable development. They display a sound understanding of the inter-relationship between man and environment and awareness of alternatives and the challenges facing those living in particular environments, for example, the Brazilian rainforest.
308. The majority of pupils has developed a secure knowledge of the factors affecting industrial location and the distribution of economic activity.
309. The majority of pupils shows interest in the subject and approaches their work with enthusiasm and good levels of motivation. Pupils' knowledge and

understanding have improved as a result of visits to alternative locations and from participating in geographical enquiries.

310. Pupils are well motivated by case study approaches where these are used.

Shortcomings

311. A significant minority of pupils displays an underdeveloped knowledge and understanding of the geography of Wales and finds difficulty in locating key places and land forms.

312. A significant minority of pupils makes insufficient progress in the development of mapmaking and other geographical skills as they progress through this stage.

313. Pupils do not develop independent research and learning skills well enough. They make insufficient use of resources such as textbooks, atlases and maps as sources of information to enhance personal learning.

KS4

Good features

314. The majority of pupils displays a clear understanding of the urban structure of Cardiff and demonstrates a good awareness of the urban regeneration of Cardiff Bay over the past 20 years.

315. The majority of pupils has a secure knowledge and understanding of issues relating to wind farming, environmental change and the impact of man on the environment in both positive and negative ways. All pupils display a keen sense of environmental responsibility and are well aware of issues relating to sustainable development and global citizenship.

316. Pupils' examination coursework shows that their enquiry skills develop effectively through their engagement in fieldwork.

Shortcomings

317. A minority of pupils has an insecure knowledge and understanding of place and of processes in both physical and human geography. These pupils describe both in only basic terms.

318. A minority of pupils makes insufficient progress in developing the ability to work independently and develop personal ideas. These pupils are overly dependent on teachers as sources of information and this hinders their learning. They do not make enough use of key geographic resources such as books, atlases and maps in lessons.

Art

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

319. Examination results at GCSE in the last two years have been below national and LEA averages for A*-C grades. Examination results at A*-G have been below national and LEA averages. These results are lower than those to be expected for pupils of similar ability.

KS3

Good features

320. Almost all pupils of all abilities show good levels of motivation. They progressively develop the skills, knowledge and understanding to carry out their own research, develop ideas and reach appropriate, creative individual outcomes.

321. Most pupils use their sketchbooks enthusiastically and effectively to show the sequential development of their work and to experiment with a range of materials and techniques. They discuss their work confidently and know what steps should be taken to lead to further improvement and progress.

322. Most pupils show a good understanding of how to use the visual elements of line, tone, pattern, form and space. This is evident in their sketchbooks and in displays of their work in the art room.

323. Pupils learn about different artists. In Y7, they draw shoes from observation in the style of Vincent Van Gogh and make spontaneous, quirky prints in the style of Andy Warhol using a range of relevant techniques. In Y8 they study the work of Jason Vincent Scarpace. They make good, experimental, observational drawings of fish using a variety of materials such as pen, pencil, chalk, charcoal and collage. In Y9, pupils explore African art and use their investigations well to design individual items of body adornment.

Shortcomings

324. Many pupils do not have enough knowledge of local and Welsh artists, craftworkers and designers. They do not visit galleries or work with visiting artists.

325. Pupils do not make enough use of IT to gather information, carry out research into the work of other artists or to create images.

KS4

Good features

326. Most pupils use their sketchbooks purposefully to research themes and investigate new processes. Their work is annotated well to record their response to these techniques, personal opinions and factual information about artists.
327. Most pupils in Y10 make very good progress. They work from direct observation in a well-selected range of media to create compositions in the style of Cezanne. They have also developed lively, colourful designs for wall panels and experimented with felt-making processes to produce creative outcomes inspired by the work of Matisse.
328. Most pupils use a range of helpful strategies to stimulate responses and develop ideas. They are beginning to develop individual responses through research and enquiry into briefs and tasks set. They produce increasingly personal interpretations.
329. Pupils experiment with materials confidently and work on tactile, textured surfaces to add interest to their observational drawings. Most pupils recognise how they can improve their work through modification and further development to achieve negotiated targets.
330. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve appropriately high standards in their practical work. They express personal responses and work with imagination and enjoyment.

Shortcomings

331. Many pupils are not familiar enough with local and national artists, craftspeople or designers.
332. They do not make enough use of visits to museums or art galleries or have enough experience of working with practising artists, craftworkers or designers.
333. Pupils do not provide evidence of creating art work on computers or of any digital manipulation of existing imagery.

Music

- KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**
KS4 Grade 4: Some good features, but shortcomings in important areas

334. Examination results at GCSE in the last two years have been below national and LEA averages for A*- C and A*- G grades. These results are lower than those to be expected for pupils of similar ability.

KS3

Good features

335. Singing is good in Y7 with boys achieving better than expected for their age. All pupils use physical and voice warm up exercises correctly and sing with enthusiasm from the outset. They progress from singing in unison to singing in two parts. Nearly all sing in tune and with good tone quality.
336. Performing standards meet expectations right across KS3 and Y9 boys exceed this standard. Pupils in Y7 acquire technical competence on a range of classroom instruments. During Y9 their performing skills develop so that most play confidently and accurately.
337. Nearly all pupils compose well in response to a variety of stimuli including those from other countries. They create simple pentatonic tunes early in Y7 and produce more complex blues arrangements and improvisations in Y9. They combine a range of sounds to produce musically interesting outcomes.
338. All pupils listen attentively to their own work and to music from a range of cultures. They appraise the styles well, focussing on specific elements and quantifying their effectiveness.

Shortcomings

339. The most able pupils do not achieve their full potential when composing because there is no provision to store their work in progress. They cannot assess or rework their compositions effectively.
340. Many pupils in Y8 and Y9 generally sing with little expression and poor tone. Their limited repertoire of Welsh songs does not build on KS2 experiences.

KS4

Good features

341. There are no significant variations in musical achievement between boys and girls.
342. Pupils with ALN achieve good standards across the music syllabus.
343. Most Y10 pupils can create simple but well-planned compositions which are musically appealing.
344. The most able pupils in Y11 apply their understanding of harmony and structure to produce imaginative compositions by using Sibelius software.

Shortcomings

345. The more able pupils in Y10 do not achieve their potential when composing. They do not use folders to plan and improve their work. They neither revisit nor refine their course work to produce outcomes that reflect their abilities.

346. About a half of Y10 pupils perform with technical inaccuracies when playing in groups. They fail to play in time to a common pulse when performing more challenging pieces.
347. Many Y11 pupils demonstrate a limited knowledge of the development of the classical symphony orchestra. Their recall of former learning is insecure.
348. Nearly all of the pupils in Y11 have only a superficial understanding of the history of 18th century European music.

Physical education

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

349. GCSE results compare very well with both local and national averages. Overall, they have been in line with or above national averages in recent years. Boys have attained better grades than girls and in 2007 a third of boys attained an A*/A grade. A good proportion of pupils attain A*-C grades and all pupils attained an A*-G grade in the past two years. These results are higher than expectations of pupils of similar ability.

KS3

Good features

350. In Y7 and Y8 dance most girls choreograph short phrases of movement that include original step patterns. Most add gestures to their dance to enhance the quality of their performance. The majority of pupils reflects critically on each others' work and a few suggest ways that the dance could be improved.
351. In Y7 basketball, many boys dribble and pass the ball accurately. In the game situation, the most able use their decision making skills effectively to outwit an opponent in attack and intercept the ball when defending.
352. Most Y7 girls and Y9 boys are confident swimmers. Most pupils maintain a good body position in the water when swimming different strokes. Y9 boys use this skill well when towing a casualty. Most pupils use correct terminology confidently to analyse technique and apply this well refined knowledge to improve the quality of their performance in the water.
353. In Y9, girls across the ability range engage enthusiastically in a health related activity circuit. They use very good resource cards to analyse and correct each others' technique. They get good height when jumping over small hurdles and demonstrate good core stability. The overall quality of performance is good.

Shortcomings

354. A small number of Y7 and Y8 girls do not show enough body tension and control in their dances and have difficulty moving in time to the music. A small

minority of pupils finds it difficult to identify ways of refining the quality of their choreography.

355. In basketball, a few less able Y7 boys do not use the space well enough in the game and lose control of the ball when defending. Overall most boys have difficulty scoring goals. They rarely reflect on their performance in order to make adjustments and improve.

KS4

Good features

356. The majority of boys in Y10 following the GCSE course understands the purpose of practising and refining their skills in football. These pupils use the space effectively to control the ball and pass it accurately over short distances.
357. Most girls in Y10 following the GCSE course understand well the different types of movement around specific joints. The majority applies this knowledge well in a practical context when performing a circuit.
358. Overall pupils' written work is good. Y11 pupils across the ability range produce good quality exercise activity logs. The most able reflect critically on the targets they set by monitoring the impact of their programme on performance in their chosen sport.
359. Most girls in core lessons enjoy the challenge of working in the fitness suite. In these lessons, pupils across the ability range make very good progress. Most understand their personal programmes and a majority performs set exercises accurately and confidently. Overall, pupils understand the benefits of regular exercise and quite a few do additional sessions in their own time.
360. In dance a few Y11 girls perform confidently a complex choreography with rhythm and control. They use video analysis very effectively to refine and improve their dance.
361. In badminton, Y10 boys can perform a variety of shots accurately with power and control. Most understand the game well enough to select the correct position to play a winning shot. In basketball, the majority of Y10 boys has good spatial awareness and selects the right option when passing the ball for a team mate to score. The shooting technique of these pupils is good overall.
362. Boys in Y11 core football lessons use either foot to pass the ball successfully. More able pupils control the ball with different parts of the body. In the game situation, most pupils use the space effectively and understand how to draw the defender in order to pass the ball successfully to a member of their team.

Shortcomings

363. Girls in Y10 and Y11 do not always perform set exercises correctly or with high enough intensity to enable them to improve their level of fitness. Written

evaluation of their fitness sessions are too general for them to set specific and measurable targets for improvement.

364. A few Y10 boys lose some control and accuracy when passing the ball in football. Their movement skills in the game situation lack precision and timing. In badminton a minority of boys cannot maintain a short rally of different shots.
365. Although many pupils assess and analyse their own and others performance, overall pupils do not engage well enough in this process.

Religious education (including religious studies)

KS3 Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

KS4 Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

366. Examination results at GCSE in the last two years have been broadly in line with national and LEA averages for A*-C and A*-G grades. These results are in line with pupils' ability.

KS3

Good features

367. The majority of pupils across the ability range has good factual knowledge and understanding of the units of work studied, which reflects the local agreed syllabus.
368. Pupils have a good knowledge of some of the major Hindu stories and a good understanding of the authority attributed to religious texts. They show an awareness of how religious belief influences human behaviour. They are aware of how Martin Luther King was influenced by Jesus and Ghandi in his non-violent struggle against racial segregation in America.
369. Pupils explore the way contemporary religious practice is based on religious history and tradition. They are able to give their own responses, the more able supporting their views with reasons.
370. Pupils with ALN have appropriately secure factual knowledge and conceptual understanding of different religions. They work effectively with one another and respond well to support.

Shortcomings

371. A significant minority of pupils lacks a secure understanding of religious ideas. With some their recollection is uncertain; with others their understanding is superficial.
372. A significant minority of pupils shows limited skills of exploring their understanding of religious ideas and responding to new knowledge. Their ability to speak at length giving extended answers is limited.

KS4

Good features

373. The majority of pupils across the ability range has good factual knowledge and understanding of the units of work studied, which reflect the local agreed syllabus.
374. Pupils are aware of the major differences between secular and religious approaches to how the world came into being. They understand well the authority Christians give to the Biblical account of creation. The more able can distinguish between literal and non-literal interpretations of religious text.
375. Pupils have a good understanding of the community dimension to religious celebration. For example, they know how and why the Islamic community prepares for Id-ul-Fitr during the month of Ramadan.
376. Pupils listen well to one another and display an open mindedness when they encounter religious belief and practice that is beyond their personal experience. The more able listen well, write accurately and at length. They are able to describe, analyse and apply their knowledge.
377. Pupils with ALN have appropriately secure factual knowledge and conceptual understanding of different religions. They work effectively with one another and respond well to support.

Shortcomings

378. A significant minority of pupils shows limited skills of exploring their understanding and responding to new knowledge about religion. Their ability to give extended answers is limited.
379. A significant minority of pupils finds difficulty in managing their own learning in religious education. Their ability to judge their own performance and identify targets for improvement is limited.

Drama

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

380. Examination results at GCSE in the last two years have been below national and LEA averages for A*-C grades. Examination results at A*-G are in line with national and LEA averages. These results are in line with pupils' ability.

KS3

Good features

- 381. Most pupils listen attentively and respond to a variety of stimuli purposefully and enthusiastically.
- 382. A majority of the pupils collaborates well to plan and rehearse a very good range of presentations including a monologue based upon the 'After Liverpool' scripts and a media broadcast for a teenage audience.
- 383. Most pupils portray character using movement and action. The more able use voice, facial expression, body language and gesture to convey emotions.
- 384. Pupils engage effectively in peer assessment. Many are able to identify techniques used by other groups. Around half use subject specific vocabulary appropriately and offer constructive comments for improving performances.
- 385. Nearly all pupils, including those with additional learning needs, achieve well in practical work.

Shortcomings

- 386. A small minority of pupils, mostly boys, does not always focus on tasks.

KS4

Good features

- 387. About three-quarters of pupils listen attentively and respond to instructions with purpose. They demonstrate an enthusiastic commitment to their work.
- 388. Nearly all pupils collaborate well in groups, putting forward creative ideas and negotiating plans for a range of challenging activities including an improvisation based upon images presented in the paintings of Salvador Dali.
- 389. Most pupils use the subject language with a reasonable level of precision particularly when they constructively evaluate the work of others.
- 390. Most pupils, including those with ALN, benefit from and achieve well in the practical element of the course.

Shortcomings

- 391. In a minority of cases standards in writing about drama are weak. The writing of a minority of pupils is often undeveloped.

Geology

KS4

Grade 2: Good features with no important shortcomings.

392. Examination results at GCSE in the last two years have been below LEA and national averages for A*-C and A*-G grades. Results in 2007 were significantly higher than in 2006. Results in 2007 were in line with pupils' ability.

Good features

393. Most pupils have developed a sound understanding of the principles relating to plate tectonics and can describe the main processes at work in different plate margin situations.

394. Project work, produced in Y10, is of a good quality and has resulted in secure knowledge and understanding of a range of sophisticated physical processes. Pupils are confident in their descriptions of physical processes and participate effectively in class discussions about them.

395. Pupils' written work contains evidence of good subject knowledge of a wide range of geological studies.

Shortcomings

396. A minority of pupils is less proficient in maintaining written records and writing about geological processes than they are in describing them orally.

Media Studies

KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

397. This subject has only recently been introduced into the KS4 curriculum. There have, therefore, been no candidates entered for the GCSE examination in previous years.

Good features

398. Pupils of all abilities, including those with ALN, develop good levels of knowledge and understanding of the way media is used to appeal to different audiences. In Y10, for example, pupils study how lighting, music, camera angles and lettering are selected to interest specific groups such as young children.

399. Pupils show interest and enthusiasm. This helps them to achieve good standards in media studies through, for example, their willingness to contribute to group learning activities.

400. Pupils understand relevant terminology. Most pupils use technical terms with confidence and accuracy when working together in small groups.

Shortcomings

401. A few pupils lack confidence and are hesitant in sharing ideas with other pupils, especially during whole-class discussions. They also tend to be a little slow in recording their ideas.

Home economics: Child development

KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

402. Examination results in the last two years at GCSE have been below LEA and national averages for A*-C grades but above both averages for A*-G grades. Results are in line with expectations for pupils with similar ability.

Good features

403. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate good levels of relevant knowledge and skills. For example, pupils in Y10 use initiative to identify the location of service providers such as doctors, schools and pharmacies using maps of the local area.
404. Pupils consider which services might be needed by parents with young children and can discuss the circumstance which might cause parents to seek particular services. Pupils show good levels of understanding when they discuss these issues.

Shortcomings

405. In a few instances, pupils' understanding of the range of relevant services lacks breadth and depth.

School's response to the inspection

406. The headteacher, staff, pupils and governors of Risca Community Comprehensive School are delighted that the inspection team recognise that we are a good school and significant progress has been made since the last Inspection.
407. We have placed a strong emphasis on teaching and learning. We are pleased to see that the team judged us as having effective teaching and learning which enables our pupils to make good progress. There has been a significant improvement in teaching since the last inspection and the school has made good progress in working towards the national targets for teaching to be Grade two or better in 80% of classes. The strength of working relationships between pupils and teachers contributes to the high quality of lessons, the result being that pupils learn effectively at Risca Community Comprehensive School.
408. Equally important to the school is the recognition that there are outstanding features in the care, support and guidance we provide for all pupils. The school also has outstanding features in its monitoring of attendance, punctuality and pupil performance.
409. The inspection team upheld all but one of the school's self-evaluation grades for the seven key questions. The many outstanding features in the care, support and guidance provision resulted in the team moving this from Grade two to Grade one.
410. The inspection team recognise that all pupils develop the skills needed for effective participation in the workplace and community. The learning experiences in both key stages are effective in developing pupils' basic and key skills. The range of activities we provide for all learners is also seen as outstanding. The team recognised that our school creates a climate where all pupils and groups are treated fairly. Our quality of provision for pupils with additional learning needs is also recognised as outstanding and our commitment to inclusion is embedded across the school. There is recognition of the fact that all pupils respond positively to diversity and respect racial harmony. Transition is outstanding at all levels.
411. The report recognises the hard work and commitment of our leaders and managers who have created an ethos that enables pupils to grow personally and academically. The inspection team confirmed that our governors have a good relationship with many aspects of the educational process and play an extremely valuable role as critical friends of the school.
412. The inspection was a valuable and useful process for Risca Community Comprehensive School as all aspects of our school were reviewed. The inspection was a thorough process that recognised the progress made to date. The whole school would like to thank the Inspection Team for their thoroughly professional manner which allowed for open and professional dialogue at all levels.

413. The report's findings and recommendations support the school's long-term development plans and will enable us to move forward with confidence and build on the significant progress already made.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Risca Community Comprehensive School
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-16
Address of school	Pontymason Lane, Risca Caerphilly
Postcode	NP11 6YY
Telephone number	01633 612425

Headteacher	Mrs Janet Kingston
Date of appointment	1 st September 2003
Chair of governors / Appropriate authority	Mr Dennis Toomer
Reporting inspector	Mr Peter Carter
Dates of inspection	10 th – 14 th March 2008

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	92	100	117	115	101	-	-	525

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	29	8	33.4

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	17 : 1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	
Average teaching group size	24
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	65%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	93.9	93.1	93.6	91.1	91.5	-	-	92.6
Term 2	91.4	92.4	90.9	90.6	90.3	-	-	90.9
Term 3	93.3	92.4	89.9	93.5	81.9	-	-	90.0

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	16.8%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	88 (temporary) 0 (permanent)

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2007															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 115															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	2	0	0	0	0	1	8	21	42	22	5	0	0
		National	0	1	0	0	0	2	7	22	36	24	8	0	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	3	12	28	28	21	9	0	0
		National	0	1	1	0	0	1	7	18	25	30	16	1	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	21	45	25	5	0	0
		National	0	1	0	0	0	1	6	19	34	28	12	0	0

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

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by teacher assessment		by test	
In the school	52	In the school	n/a
In Wales	58	In Wales	n/a

Public Examination Results:

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ	
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2007	118
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	340

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2007:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	93	86	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	42	47	54
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	90	84	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	30	33	40
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	100	97	97
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	69	72	77
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	99	93	93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	0	4	7
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	3	2	3
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	-	-	-
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	-	-	-

UA Unitary Authority

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Seventeen inspectors spent a total of 55.5 days in the school and were joined by the deputy headteacher as the school's nominee on the inspection team and a peer assessor. The team held a meeting before the inspection.

During the inspection, inspectors visited:

- 128 lessons or part lessons;
- assemblies and form tutor periods; and
- some extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team met with:

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

The inspection team considered:

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

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

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Peter Carter (Registered Inspector)	Context, Summary, Recommendations, KQ1, KQ2, Media Studies, Home Economics: Child Development, Appendix
Clive Rowlands	KQ3, Welsh second language
Gwyn Griffiths	KQ4, Physical education
Julia Longville	KQ5, Physical education
Ronald Graham	KQ6, Science
Peter Harris	KQ7, Religious education
Edward Tipper (Lay Inspector)	Contributing to KQ1, KQ4, KQ7
Tony Sparks	English and Drama
Heulwen Jones	Welsh second language
David Williams	Mathematics and Information technology
Jeffrey Loxton	Science
Paul King	Design and technology
Martyn S Williams	Modern foreign languages
Carolyn Meade	History
Alan Pritchard	Geography and Geology
Shan Samuel-Thomas	Art
Brendan Barry	Music
David Parker	School's nominee
Kenneth Phillips	Peer Assessor

Acknowledgement

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

The Contractor

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