

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**St Albans R.C. High School
The Park, Pontypool NP4 6XG**

School Number: 6784603

Date of Inspection: 29/09/08

by

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

The inspection of St Albans R.C. High School took place between 29/09/08 and 03/10/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by Peter Guy Carter, undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

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

There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a **standard** inspection.

Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

Contents	Page
Context	1
Summary	2
Recommendations	9
Standards	9
Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?	9
The quality of education and training	13
Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	13
Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	16
Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	18
Leadership and management	22
Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?	22
Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	23
Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	25
Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning	26
English	26
Welsh second language	30
Mathematics	31
History	33
Physical education	36
Business studies	39
School's response to the inspection	40
Appendices	41
1 Basic information about the school	41
2 School data and indicators	41
3 National Curriculum assessments results	42
4 Evidence base of the inspection	44
5 Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team	45

Context

The nature of the provider

1. St Alban's Roman Catholic High School is an 11-18 voluntary-aided foundation comprehensive school. It serves an area in and around Pontypool and Cwmbran although a few pupils come from further away. Around three-quarters come from small towns and the rest come from rural communities. The area ranges from economically disadvantaged to neither particularly prosperous nor disadvantaged. Around 12% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, a figure below the national average.
2. The number of pupils and students has increased slightly since the last inspection in October 2002. There are now 1,086 on roll compared to 988 then. The number of sixth-form students has increased from 270 to 325 in the same period. A significant minority of sixth-form students come from nearby schools.
3. The intake covers the full range of ability. Overall, the abilities vary from below average to above average with an upward trend in recent years. Very few pupils come from ethnic minorities and all pupils have English as their first language.
4. The number of pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN) has increased since the last inspection from 16 to 20 although the number registered as requiring some support has decreased from 100 to 64. Many pupils with SEN are taught in separate classes. These classes are known as the Focus Group at Key Stage (KS) 3 and the Youth Access Group at KS4.
5. Most pupils come from Roman Catholic families though a significant minority comes from other Christian denominations. The school aims to assist pupils in their faith journey as well as in their academic and social development.
6. Sixth-form students are offered courses which are provided in partnership with other schools and colleges in the Torfaen 14-19 Network. No students at present have taken up these opportunities. Other opportunities are provided through partnerships with employers who are accredited to deliver National Vocational Qualification competences.
7. The headteacher, the two deputy headteachers, the head of sixth form and the bursar have been in post since before the previous inspection. The senior management team (SMT) also includes two assistant headteachers, appointed to these posts more recently.

The school's priorities and targets

8. The school's motto is '*Miles Christi Sum*' which is translated as 'I am a soldier of Christ'. It aims for high ambition, high challenge and high achievement in a caring Christian community. Its expectation for all members of the school community is to 'be the best you can be'.

9. In order to achieve its aims the school has set priorities in six areas in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) 2007 – 2010. These are:
- commitment to a distinct Christian ethos;
 - raising achievement;
 - developing teaching and learning and curriculum development;
 - developing the whole person;
 - creating a centre of excellence for professional development; and
 - acquiring accommodation fit for purpose.

Summary

10. St Alban's Roman Catholic High School is a very successful school with many outstanding features. Its Christian values pervade its work and are important to all members of the school community. The inspection team agrees with all but one of the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report (SER).

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

11. Grades awarded for standards in the six subjects inspected are set out below.

Subject	KS3	KS4	6 th form
English	2	1	1
Welsh second language	3	3	-
Mathematics	1	2	2
History	2	1	2
Physical education	2	2	1
Business studies	-	2	2

12. The following table shows the percentages of grades awarded for standards at each stage, and in stages combined, in 74 lessons inspected in the six subjects.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	12%	62%	27%	0%	0%
KS4	16%	68%	16%	0%	0%
KS3 and KS4	14%	64%	22%	0%	0%
6th form	43%	50%	7%	0%	0%
Whole school	19%	62%	19%	0%	0%

Standards

KS3 and KS4

13. At KS3, the percentage of lessons where standards are grade one or two is three percentage points higher than the corresponding figure for all secondary schools in Wales inspected in 2006 - 2007 as shown in the most recent annual report of the Chief Inspector. At KS4, it is 17 points higher. This is outstanding.
14. Results in statutory assessments and external examinations are also outstanding. At KS4, results in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations have been particularly good for a number of years and compare very well with similar schools.
15. Standards have good features and no important shortcomings in all key skills. Listening skills and the way in which learners work together are outstanding. Bilingual competence is less well developed. Pupils' progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good with outstanding features.
16. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEN, make very good progress in learning. Their attainment at the end of KS4 shows very good progression when compared to their abilities on entry.
17. Pupils' personal, social and learning skills are very good. They work together effectively and show respect for the views and beliefs of others. Their attendance is very good. Punctuality is good. Pupils behave exceptionally well, both in lessons and around the school.

The quality of education and training

18. In nearly all lessons teachers foster good atmospheres for learning. Pupils have a high degree of respect for their teachers and value the support they get. In just over a quarter of lessons this promotes teaching of the highest quality where pupils are engaged actively in their learning. This is particularly apparent in many lessons in physical education and also in a few in English and mathematics. Teachers make good use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support learning in many subjects.
19. The quality of teaching, in 60 lessons in the six subjects inspected in detail, and also in a further 22 lessons visited by inspectors, is set out in the following table.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	35%	43%	22%	0%	0%
KS4	18%	55%	27%	0%	0%
KS3 and KS4	28%	48%	24%	0%	0%

20. The percentage of lessons where teaching was judged to be grade one or grade two is the same as the overall figure for all secondary schools in Wales inspected in 2006-2007, as reported by the Chief Inspector. The national figure, however, includes teaching in the sixth form as well as KS3 and KS4.

21. There is variation in the quality of teaching both within and across subjects. In around a quarter of lessons pupils have a more passive role and this constrains the quality of their learning. These lessons are less well structured and learning activities are not matched closely enough to the range of pupils' needs.
22. Pupils' achievements are recorded systematically and used extremely well to monitor progress. Marking is nearly always thorough and pupils' work is assessed regularly. Pupils value highly the feedback they receive from teachers. This gives them a clear understanding of how well they are doing and how to improve. There is very good overall consistency in the quality of assessment. This plays a significant part in enabling pupils to attain high standards.
23. Reports to parents and carers are good. There is, however, a significant difference between the quality of comments in reports at KS3 and KS4. At KS4, most comments give clear information about progress in subjects and include appropriate targets for improvement. At KS3, subject teachers' comments are often too general and targets for improvement are not identified clearly.
24. The curriculum is outstanding in meeting the aspirations of learners. The development of option menus with wide choice and flexibility within the provision for Learning Pathways 14-19 is good at KS4. Planning for the development of pupils' basic and key skills in a wide range of contexts is effective and coherent. The Year (Y) 7 special projects programme and the provision for pupils with SEN in Focus Group lessons have outstanding features.
25. The school provides an extensive range of extra-curricular activities in which drama, music and sport feature prominently. The impact of the school's Christian values on provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Links with parents, businesses and the local community result in outstanding examples of partnership.
26. In almost all respects the curriculum offers breadth and balance and ensures continuity and progression. Learners have many opportunities to gain appropriate qualifications. There is scope, however, for further developing collaboration with other secondary schools in the Torfaen Learning Pathways Network to enhance provision at KS4.
27. Lessons in Welsh second language are provided for all pupils at KS3 and KS4. However, not enough time is allocated to Welsh to cover the content of the National Curriculum (NC) subject orders at KS3, or the GCSE short course at KS4, effectively. The school provides pupils with many experiences of the culture of Wales, but there is scope for further development of opportunities to improve pupils' bilingual competence.
28. Pupils receive careers advice of high quality and benefit from well-organised work-experience placements in Y10. There is good preparation and follow-up. Sustainable development and global citizenship are promoted well through a very good range of activities. In addition, the school acts sustainably in recycling activities and through a woodland project.

29. The quality of care, guidance and support that learners receive is good with outstanding features. Communication and co-operation between members of the pastoral team are outstanding. Their knowledge of pupils is strengthened by positive relationships. The high quality of care is reinforced by good peer support arrangements and the valuable contributions of the school counsellor.
30. The quality of impartial guidance, particularly at the end of KS4, is outstanding. The school has embraced fully the principle of the Learning Coach to ensure that pupils are fully aware of appropriate learning pathways. The advice and guidance are strengthened by the Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme. This helps promote the well-being of pupils very effectively.
31. The school's monitoring procedures are a particular strength. Individual learning support interviews by the pastoral team have a significant impact on improving standards of achievement and behaviour. The 'Raise a Grade' procedures reinforce pastoral and curricular links and operate within a good atmosphere of mutual trust. Individual performance is tracked carefully and progress is encouraged through grades awarded following half-termly assessments.
32. Aspects of the quality of provision for additional learning needs have outstanding features. The emphasis on improving self-esteem and confidence in the Focus Groups and Youth Access Groups is outstanding. Well-planned learning experiences with relevant methods and themes ensure pupils achieve success through practical and challenging activities. Pupils make good progress and achieve the learning targets as set out in their Individual Education Plans (IEP).
33. The support provided for students from different backgrounds is outstanding. Developing and promoting equality in all aspects of life have high profiles. Daily collective worship which emphasises respect and tolerance significantly reinforces this aspect. Although much of the accommodation is not easily accessible to the disabled, the school has undertaken detailed work in producing an Accessibility Plan and a Disabled Equality Scheme.
34. The school expects behaviour to be very good and pupils respond appropriately. This helps promote a positive attitude to racial harmony which is celebrated in many aspects of school life. Recognition and respect for diversity are outstanding. They are promoted actively through international exchanges with Zambia and China, substantial fundraising for the Catholic Aid For Overseas Development (CAFOD) and close links with a special school.

Leadership and management

35. The leadership provided by the headteacher and SMT is outstanding. The headteacher provides vision and clear direction for the work of the school and promotes high standards very successfully. He receives excellent support from the SMT. They work together very well as a cohesive team.
36. Senior and middle managers collaborate very well to ensure the smooth running of the school. The management of teams and departments is very effective with a good level of overall consistency.

37. Governors work very well with the school and take an active role in contributing to its leadership and management. They support leaders and managers very effectively to monitor standards of achievement and the quality of education. They act as critical friends of the school, giving good support but also holding the school to account for its performance.
38. Leaders and managers are extremely well informed about performance within the areas for which they are responsible. They draw upon first-hand evidence of standards in a variety of ways. Self-evaluation systems are embedded well in school routines. Staff members and pupils are deeply involved in processes to improve performance. Outcomes are striking, especially at the end of KS4.
39. The arrangements for evaluating teaching and learning are comprehensive and systematic. A variety of appropriate strategies is used well and understood clearly by all leaders and managers. Quality assurance procedures have been introduced and are increasingly effective in bringing about improvements. Good account is taken of the views of learners, parents and governors.
40. Planning for, and achieving improvement are particular strengths of the school. Leaders and managers use information extremely well to set suitable targets for pupils of all ages and abilities. The whole process has produced a belief within the school community that all pupils can and will achieve to their maximum potential. Actions have led to improved standards at all levels. Resources are provided in accordance with agreed objectives and priorities.
41. Progress in addressing the key issues from the report of the previous inspection has been good, particularly in improving standards and management at all levels.
42. The school employs suitably qualified and experienced teachers, some of whom teach effectively outside their main specialist subjects. Teachers are supported very well by technicians in science, design and technology and ICT. An outstanding feature of the school is the team of learning support assistants (LSA) with specialised training who are deployed very effectively both in class and to support individual pupils.
43. Very good use is made of a wide range of external specialists to support the school's provision. Administrative staff, the caretaker and lunchtime supervisors all contribute very well to the smooth, day-to-day running of the school.
44. The quality and quantity of learning resources are good. The provision of a good number of up-to-date computer suites with a wide range of suitable software is particularly impressive. The Focus Group classes have good access to modern wireless laptop computers. Most classrooms have interactive whiteboards or data projectors. The subject departments inspected in detail are resourced well with a good range and supply of text books and specialist equipment.
45. The library is used well for research although a minority of pupils borrow books. There is a good range of fiction and reference books and the librarians manage the library very proficiently.

46. The accommodation is sufficient for the number of learners on roll. Good use is made of the space available in all buildings to meet the needs of learners. The new covered area with furniture produced from recycled materials is an outstanding resource. The good and, in some subject departments, very good displays help generate a suitable environment for learning.
47. The financial management of the school is outstanding. The budget is managed and monitored very prudently by the bursar. Particular care is taken to ensure best value when purchasing supplies and awarding contracts. All spending is reviewed to determine whether the best value for money has been achieved. The system for allocating money to departments, in line with their development plans and the school's priorities, operates very well.
48. Overall, the school manages its finances and resources very wisely. It gives outstanding value for money at all stages.

Sixth form

Standards

49. The percentage of lessons where standards were grade one or two is ten points higher than the corresponding national figure from the Chief Inspector's most recent report. This reflects outstanding achievement in the sixth form generally.
50. Students gain good and, in certain subjects, very good examination results. In the subjects inspected they achieved standards which have good features and no important shortcomings. In English and physical education the standards achieved by students have outstanding features.
51. Students make good progress in building on their achievement at KS4. In most cases they adjust well to the increased demands of study at this level. Almost all students go on to university to continue their education. By the time they leave, all students are prepared well to move on to the next stage of learning.
52. Students have very good personal and social skills. They make important contributions to the school community. Almost all show high levels of engagement and motivation and use their time productively. They are good role models for younger pupils. They take a leading role in many school activities demonstrating the progress they have made in spiritual, moral and cultural development.

The quality of education and training

53. The percentages of grades awarded for the quality of teaching in 14 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected in detail, and in a further six lessons visited by inspectors, are set out in the following table. These figures should be viewed with caution because their reliability is affected by the relatively small sample of lessons.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6th form	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%

54. Students have a very high regard for their teachers and value greatly the support they receive. In around two-fifths of lessons teachers present their subjects in stimulating and challenging contexts. This succeeds in enriching students' knowledge and understanding.
55. In around a fifth of lessons, teaching does not enable students to participate actively enough in their learning. As a consequence of this, opportunities to develop students' understanding are missed.
56. Teachers assess students' progress thoroughly and systematically. Students are very appreciative of the detailed feedback they receive regularly from their teachers. The process ensures students have a clear understanding of their strengths and aspects for improvement in each subject.
57. The range of learning experiences provided for students is extensive. Courses are generally of very good quality. In almost all cases, individual needs are catered for. The range of options provided through arrangements for Learning Pathways 14-19 is outstanding. The diverse range of accredited courses prepares students well for further or higher education, or the world of work.
58. The quality of care, support and guidance for students is very good with outstanding features. All students receive appropriate careers advice. Their progress is monitored carefully and regularly. There is a good balance between the provision of academic and personal support.

Leadership and management

59. The good features of leadership and management evident at KS3 and KS4 are also evident in the sixth form. The sixth form is led and managed very well. Its leadership reflects the school's aims and values but also recognises students' increased maturity. Successful management of the sixth form has helped attract relatively high numbers of students who enter it from within the school and from further afield.
60. The sixth form has sufficient well-qualified teachers to teach both academic and vocational courses. The range of provision is enhanced by successful partnerships with other providers of education in the area. Facilities for the sixth form have improved since the last inspection. Students have better access to computers. The new sixth-form cafe is an outstanding feature. It provides an excellent resource where students can relax and socialise.

Recommendations

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

- R1 Continue to maintain high standards of achievement.*
- R2 Develop further pupils' bilingual competence.
- R3 Increase the amount of time allocated to Welsh second language at KS3 and KS4.
- R4 Improve consistency in the quality of comments in subject reports at KS3.

*This recommendation is addressed in the SIP 2007 – 2010.

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

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

- 61. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
- 62. At KS3, in the most recent assessments where comparative data are available, attainment in English, mathematics and science was above national averages. The core subject indicator (CSI), the percentage of pupils who are level five or above in all three core subjects, has been consistently above local and national averages since 2004. Although comparative data is not available for 2008, performance was higher than in 2007. The CSI was raised by 15 points. Results in English and science are generally higher than in mathematics.
- 63. In comparison with similar schools, where a similar proportion of pupils is entitled to have free school meals, performance has been close to the average in most key indicators of performance in recent years. In the most recent results performance was above average in English and science. The percentage of pupils who achieve the CSI has been consistently in the top quarter of similar schools. Results in science are generally higher than in English or mathematics. These results suggest that performance at KS3 is generally in line with expectations based on pupils' backgrounds.

64. At KS4, attainment in GCSE examinations was well above local and national averages in almost all subjects in the last two years for which comparative data are available. Attainment also compares very favourably to that in similar schools with performance well above average in most cases.
65. The percentages of pupils who attained five or more A*-C GCSE grades in 2006 and 2007 was significantly higher than national or local averages. The results in 2008 maintained the level of attainment from the previous year. Other key indicators of performance at KS4 including the CSI, (grade C or above in each core subject) and the percentage of pupils who gained five or more A*-G grades also show the school to be performing well above local or national averages. High attainment at GCSE is an outstanding feature of the school.
66. There is little significant difference between the standards achieved by boys and girls at both stages. In most cases, the gap between boys' and girls' performance is lower than it is locally or nationally.
67. Standards have good features and no important shortcomings in five out of the six subjects inspected. In Welsh second language, at both stages, good features outweigh shortcomings. There are outstanding features in the standards achieved in mathematics at KS3 and in English and history at KS4. The following table shows the overall standards of achievement at KS3 and KS4 in these subjects.

	KS3	KS4
English	2	1
Welsh second language	3	3
Mathematics	1	2
History	2	1
Physical education	2	2
Business studies	-	2

68. Overall, standards are higher, and there are fewer shortcomings at KS4 than at KS3. The grades awarded for standards in 60 lessons observed at KS3 and KS4 in the six subjects combined are set out in the following table.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	12%	62%	27%	0%	0%
KS4	16%	68%	16%	0%	0%
KS3 and KS4	14%	64%	22%	0%	0%

69. The grades for standards achieved at KS3 are higher than KS3 standards in all secondary schools in Wales inspected in 2006-2007, as reported by the Chief Inspector in his most recent annual report. In the Chief Inspector's report, standards at KS3 are grade one or two in 67% and grade three or four in 33% of lessons. This compares to 74% grade one or two and 27% grade three in this inspection.
70. The grades for standards achieved at KS4 are significantly higher than those in the Chief Inspector's report. In that report, standards are grade one or two in 71% of lessons. The corresponding figure from this inspection is 13 points

higher, at 84%. In the Chief Inspector's report, standards at KS4 are grade three or four in 29% of lessons. The corresponding figure in this inspection is 13 points lower. This represents outstanding achievement at KS4.

71. These figures show that improvements have been made since the last inspection. In particular the proportion of lessons where grade two is awarded shows a marked increase and the proportion awarded grade four has been reduced to zero.
72. Standards have good features and no important shortcomings in all key skills. There are outstanding features in the listening skills demonstrated by pupils. They sustain good levels of concentration when listening to teachers and show sound understanding of instructions and information provided. Many pupils show particular strengths in applying their ICT skills in subjects across the curriculum.
73. Pupils' bilingual competence is less well developed. Pupils show appropriate levels of understanding when listening to teachers' occasional use of incidental Welsh or reading Welsh language signs. However, they rarely use Welsh for speaking or writing except in Welsh lessons.
74. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEN make very good progress in learning. Their attainment at the end of KS4 shows very good progression when compared to their abilities and attainment on entry. Almost all pupils know how well they are doing and how they could improve their learning. They know their strengths and weaknesses and can relate them to NC levels of attainment at KS3 and GCSE grades at KS4.
75. Pupils' personal, social and learning skills are very good. They work together very effectively and show respect for the views and beliefs of others. They get on well with each other and are friendly and welcoming to visitors. This helps generate a good and purposeful environment for learning. Behaviour is exceptionally good and is a particular strength of the school.
76. Pupils' attendance is very good. In the last three terms the average was 92.5% with less than 0.5% unauthorised absence. This compares very favourably with average attendance in similar schools which is 91.2% with 1.3% unauthorised absence. Attendance rates are also higher than both local and national averages. Most pupils arrive punctually to lessons.
77. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Their responsible behaviour and well developed social skills help the school to function effectively, but also prepare pupils very successfully to participate in the wider community.

Sixth form

78. Students gain good and, in some subjects, very good examination results. Examination results are outstanding in English and physical education. In most other subjects, although overall pass rates are good, fewer students achieve the highest grades. This is reflected in comparisons with local and national average

figures. The proportion of students who complete their sixth form courses is in line with the situation locally and nationally.

79. In almost all cases, students make good progress towards achieving their agreed learning targets. Their progress is monitored thoroughly and regularly. As a consequence, they are well aware of the level at which they are performing and how they could make further progress in each subject. These procedures make important contributions to the standards students achieve.
80. Of the six subjects inspected, Welsh second language is not taken in the sixth form. Performance in the other five subjects has good features and no important shortcomings. In English and physical education there are outstanding features.
81. The grades awarded for standards in 14 lessons observed in the subjects inspected are set out in the table below. These figures should be viewed with caution because they are based on a relatively small sample of lessons.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Sixth form	43%	50%	7%	0%	0%

82. In comparison with figures in the most recent annual report of the Chief Inspector, these figures are good. The figure of 93% grade one and grade two combined is ten points higher than the corresponding sixth-form figure in the annual report. The figure for grades three and four combined in this inspection is ten points lower than the national figure.
83. Overall, students achieve standards in key skills which have good features and no important shortcomings. There are particular strengths in their communication skills in the English language, their ICT skills and their ability to work collaboratively with other students. There are no significant shortcomings in students' key skills but their bilingual competence is underdeveloped.
84. The school attracts many students into the sixth form. As well as those who progress from Y11 in St Alban's, students from other schools are also admitted. Students make good progress in building on their achievement at KS4. In most cases they succeed well in adjusting to the demands of study at this level. Almost all students in Y13 go on to university. By the time they leave the school, all students are prepared well to move on to the next stage.
85. Students have very good personal and social skills. They show good levels of confidence and self-esteem. They are at ease when speaking to each other, members of staff and visitors to the school.
86. Students make important contributions to the school community. Almost all show high levels of engagement and motivation and use their time productively. They generally conduct themselves in a responsible manner and act as good role models for younger pupils. They take a leading role in many school activities. In the sixth form, students' attendance and punctuality are generally good.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

87. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.

KS3 and KS4

88. The following table shows the overall grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment in 60 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3 and KS4	29%	46%	25%	0%	0%

89. In addition to these a further 22 lessons were observed in other subjects across the curriculum. The following table shows the overall grades awarded for all 82 lessons observed.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3 and KS4	28%	48%	24%	0%	0%

90. The percentage of lessons where teaching was judged to be grade one or two is the same as the corresponding figure for all secondary schools in Wales inspected in 2006 – 2007 as reported by the Chief Inspector. The proportion with grade one is nine points higher than the comparative national figure. In this inspection all lessons were graded three or better. The percentage of lessons awarded grade three is three points higher than the comparative national figure.

91. In the six subjects inspected teaching has outstanding features in physical education and in English at KS4. There are good features and no important shortcomings in teaching in history, Welsh second language, mathematics and English at KS3, and in business studies at KS4. Good features outweigh shortcomings in teaching in mathematics at KS4.

92. A particularly strong feature of teaching is the consistently high quality of relationships between pupils and teaching staff. Pupils value highly the support they receive from their teachers both within and outside of lessons. This nurtures good atmospheres for learning in nearly all lessons and gives pupils positive attitudes towards their work. In many lessons LSAs work very well with teachers to assist with individual pupils.

93. Nearly all lessons are well planned. Usually learning objectives are communicated clearly to pupils at the start of lessons and in many cases teachers assess pupils' knowledge and understanding of them at the end. Occasionally, however, lesson conclusions are rushed. As a result of this, opportunities to consolidate pupils' understanding of their work are missed.

94. Teachers have good subject knowledge and many use this well to stimulate pupils' interests in lessons. They explain ideas to pupils clearly and many make effective use of questions to gauge pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers make good use of a range of resources to support pupils' learning. This includes the extensive and purposeful use of ICT in nearly all subjects. There is much good use of homework in many subjects to consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding.
95. There are some significant shortcomings in around a quarter of lessons. Often this is because teaching does not involve pupils actively enough in their learning. As a consequence of this there is insufficient pace in these lessons and a lack of challenge in the work set for pupils.
96. Teaching is successful in promoting equality of opportunity for all pupils. Pupils are treated fairly and are supported very well by teachers. Subject teachers monitor the performances of boys and girls closely and deal appropriately with any issues as they arise.
97. There is some use of incidental Welsh in a few subjects and in whole-school assemblies and tutorials. On these occasions pupils have opportunities to enrich their bilingual skills. Overall, however, teaching provides too few opportunities for pupils to apply their bilingual skills across the subjects of the curriculum.
98. There is very good consistency in the quality of assessment of pupils' learning across the school. Pupils' work is marked regularly and thoroughly in nearly all subjects. Their achievements are collated onto a whole-school database each half term. The process is very effective in monitoring pupils' progress and in identifying any who are underachieving.
99. Pupils speak positively about the continual feedback they receive from teachers on their work. This helps them have a clear awareness of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. A particularly strong feature at KS4 is the use of targets that are linked closely with examination grades. This is used extremely well to ensure that pupils achieve to their potential in external examinations at the end of KS4.
100. There are good procedures to ensure the accuracy of NC levels of attainment at the end of KS3. This is particularly strong in the core subjects. Moderation procedures with local primary schools are, however, less well developed. Although a few meetings have taken place, moderation procedures with feeder primary schools are at an early stage of development.
101. Assessment for learning is used well in the majority of lessons. A few subjects also make some purposeful use of pupils' self assessment and peer assessment. Overall, however, the use of assessment to promote pupils' learning is not used sufficiently in a minority of subjects.
102. All statutory requirements for assessment and reporting on NC subjects are met and teaching also fulfils the regulations of examining boards.

103. Parents and carers are kept well informed of their child's progress through annual reports and parents' meetings. There is, however, a significant difference between the quality of comments from subject teachers between the two key stages. At KS4 subject reports provide clear information on pupils' strengths in the subject and usually identify clear targets for improvement. This is more variable at KS3 where, in a minority of cases, comments are too general and do not indicate strengths or aspects for improvement that relate to the subject itself.

Sixth form

104. The following table shows the overall grades for the quality of teaching and assessment in the 14 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Sixth form	50%	29%	21%	0%	0%

105. In addition to these, a further six lessons were observed in other subjects across the curriculum. The following table shows the overall grades awarded for all 20 observed lessons.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Sixth form	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%

106. Good features outweigh shortcomings in teaching and assessment in all lessons. In two-fifths of lessons teaching has outstanding features.

107. In the six subjects inspected teaching has outstanding features in physical education and English. There are good features and no important shortcomings in teaching in history, mathematics and business studies.

108. Students have a very high regard for their teachers and value greatly the support they receive from them both within and outside lessons. Teachers treat all students fairly and establish very good working relationships with them to promote their learning.

109. Most teachers use their subject knowledge well to stimulate and challenge students in their learning. Nearly all lessons are prepared and structured well. Teachers make very good use of ICT to present their subjects to capture students' interests. In the best lessons they ensure that students participate actively and this contributes to learning experiences of high quality.

110. In around one-fifth of lessons teaching does not enable students to participate actively enough in their learning. As a consequence of this opportunities to enrich students' knowledge and understanding are missed.

111. Assessment of students' progress is carried out thoroughly and systematically. Students are very appreciative of the detailed feedback on their work which they receive regularly from their teachers. Comparative attainment data are used well to identify targets that relate clearly to examination grades. Overall the process

is very successful in ensuring that students have a clear understanding of their strengths and aspects for improvement in each subject.

112. Parents and carers receive progress reports frequently and regularly throughout the school year. Although subject teachers do not provide written comments on students' progress, the reports give very clear information on both academic and personal development.

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

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

113. This grade is two grades lower than that proposed by the school. Although the inspectors agree with the views of the school in identifying the outstanding features, they have found significant shortcomings in the amount of time allocated to Welsh second language in KS3 and KS4.
114. The school succeeds well in its aim of providing learning experiences which meet the needs of each individual. Learners of all abilities are given a wide range of opportunities to gain qualifications.
115. The development of individual learning pathways and study options is highly successful. At KS4, the choice of traditional subjects and vocational areas provides a balanced foundation for future study or the world of work. In the sixth form the construction of the three possible pathways with their extensive range of courses is an outstanding feature.
116. There is scope for further developing collaboration with other schools in the Torfaen Learning Pathways Network.
117. In virtually all aspects of the curriculum the school provides a broad and balanced approach. Pupils' learning experiences have continuity and progression. The school is successfully implementing the transition plan with its partner primary schools and making good curricular links. However, there is insufficient time allocated to Welsh second language at KS3 and KS4. As a result, NC subject orders at KS3, and the short GCSE course at KS4, are not covered fully.
118. At KS3, the school is taking good advantage of the flexibility and innovation allowed by the new NC by the introduction of six projects in Y7 and by phasing in a more skills-based approach to the curriculum.
119. Pupils' basic and key skills are developed in a well co-ordinated manner and in a wide range of learning contexts. Most subjects have the delivery of skills in their planning and all pupils are entered for a qualification in ICT. The provision for key skills in the Focus Groups and the innovative Y7 projects are outstanding.
120. The quality of learning experiences provided beyond the curriculum is outstanding. There is an extensive variety of extra-curricular activities and these

enrich and complement pupils' experiences in the classroom. They are much appreciated by parents and pupils. Pupils take part in drama, music, sport, debating, theatre visits and subject clubs, and the choir and orchestra have performed in a number of European venues. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme contributes positively to pupils' personal and social development, and the innovative Annual Festival of Learning offers a week of creative learning opportunities.

121. The school's promotion of pupils' personal development has outstanding features. The way in which pupils are given many opportunities, in lessons and in acts of collective worship, to reflect on their beliefs and values is outstanding.
122. The school's approach to helping pupils build a framework of values which reflect Christian principles of love and respect is also outstanding. Pupils' involvement with CAFOD helped raise more funds than in any other school in England and Wales last year.
123. Pupils are given responsibility and encouraged to care for one another. This is a strong theme in the tutorial programme. Their cultural awareness is developed well, particularly by their involvement with CAFOD, in geography and in links with the local museum.
124. Links with parents are outstanding. The school places great emphasis upon partnership with parents and encourages them to take an active part in the life of the school. It provides for parents an excellent insight into the teaching and learning that takes place.
125. Pupils' learning experiences are broadened by involvement in the local youth council, a radio community project and an anti-drugs programme. Collaboration with local colleges enables pupils to have access to additional vocational study.
126. The school provides a comprehensive PSE programme which includes health education, sex education, substance misuse education and careers education and the world of work. There are recent audits of this provision which take into consideration the new guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government.
127. The school provides an effective programme of work-related education. It aims to equip pupils to take their place in a rapidly changing world of work and is delivered through the tutorial programme, visitors to the school, interviews with employers and advice from Careers Wales. The work experience provided for pupils is planned and monitored well. There is good preparation and follow-up and pupils develop many appropriate skills for future employment.
128. The school offers to pupils numerous experiences of the culture of Wales. They participate in the local Eisteddfod, make residential and museum visits and learn about Wales in curriculum themes.
129. Although all pupils study Welsh, and there are examples of the use of incidental Welsh in the classroom, there is scope for further developing opportunities to improve bilingual competence.

130. It is a strength of the school that the attainment of high standards is a goal encouraged for all and that no pupil is disadvantaged. The school challenges stereotyping both in its programme for PSE and in its practice in enabling pupils to choose suitable subjects with equality of access.
131. The school promotes education for sustainable development and global citizenship successfully. Issues of sustainable development are addressed in the active Eco Club, the PSE programme, the work of CAFOD and teaching in geography and religious education. The school takes sustainability seriously with a range of recycling activities and a woodland project in collaboration with the Forestry Commission.
132. The school's commitment to aspects of global citizenship is reflected in the links with China, Zambia and Kenya, the work with CAFOD, teaching in geography and the tutorial programme.
133. There are good links with the business community. Local businesses provide mentors to help prepare pupils for work experience and evaluate their placements. This gives valuable insight into the needs of employers, and the world of work programme develops the attitudes, values and skills required by employers.
134. Skills of problem-solving and decision-making are developed well in a number of subject contexts and in the PSE programme.
135. All pupils have an opportunity to take part in the Enterprise Week. This experience is organised well and successfully enables pupils to consider what is involved in setting up a business. It helps them develop creative and entrepreneurial skills.
136. The learning experiences offered to the pupils generally reflect national priorities. The way in which pupils make progress along the most appropriate learning pathways ensures that they are properly equipped with skills necessary for lifelong learning.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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137. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
138. The quality of care, guidance and support that learners receive is good with outstanding features. The communication and co-operation between members of a coherent pastoral team are outstanding. Their knowledge of pupils is strengthened by positive relationships. This takes place in a Christian, caring school environment. The quality of care and support is further reinforced by trained peer supporters and the sensitive contributions of the school counsellor.
139. Arrangements for the school council ensure that learners are involved in decision-making and given responsibility. The school council has been involved

closely in discussions about refurbishing school toilets, school meals and the provision of an outside shelter. Communication between the school council and the school community, including the Governing Body (GB) is effective.

140. Parental support is valued by the school. Surveys and questionnaires involve parents constructively in the learners' learning. There is an effective and active parents' and teachers' association (PTA).
141. The quality of impartial guidance provided for learners at all stages is outstanding, particularly at the end of KS4. The school has fully embraced the principle of the Learning Coach to ensure that learners are fully aware of appropriate learning pathways. The pastoral team approach being developed by the school ensures that learners have full access to the necessary information and guidance at all stages. The advice and guidance are enhanced by the PSE programme. It is effective in promoting and supporting the personal, social and well-being of learners. The carefully-planned rolling tutorial programme, delivered by form teachers, is an important aspect of this arrangement.
142. Established strategies for the transfer of learners from KS2 to KS3 are effective. Bridging strategies in the Transitional Plan reinforce the smooth transfer from the primary school to the new school environment. These include visits by both Y5 and Y6 pupils and staff, projects and bridging units as well as an induction day at Llantarnam Abbey at the start of Y7.
143. The school has very good procedures for the monitoring of punctuality, attendance and behaviour. Strategies, including early communication with parents and individual support, promote good behaviour, attendance and punctuality. The weekly pastoral team meeting with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) reinforces the quality of the monitoring procedures.
144. The monitoring of learners' performance is outstanding and is a significant strength. Individual learning support interviews by the pastoral team have a significant impact on improving standards. The 'Raise a Grade' procedure has reinforced the pastoral curricular link and operates in an atmosphere of openness and trust. Individual progress is carefully tracked following half-termly assessments and the awarding of encouragement grades.
145. There are effective links with Careers Wales and the local business community. Careers Wales provides important guidance and specialist advice to both learners and parents on a wide range of careers and learning pathways options. Links with the local business community involve mentoring interviews before and after work experience. Comprehensive transition policies from KS3 to KS4 and KS4 to the sixth form reinforce this support. All learners can access a wide range of information from Careers Wales Online using the school's ICT facilities.
146. The school is committed to encouraging pupils to lead active and healthy lifestyles. The whole-school community approach includes '5 X 60' activities to encourage exercise as part of a daily routine, school council negotiations with the catering staff to discuss improvements in provision and healthy living

modules in the PSE programme. Healthy choices are available in vending machines although chocolate and fizzy drinks are available at present.

147. Policies and procedures for child protection are clearly highlighted in staff handbooks. The designated teacher for child protection has received recent training and has further updated all members of staff in whole-school training sessions. The school has good links with other responsible agencies when referrals are made.
148. Aspects of the quality of provision for additional learning needs (ALN) have outstanding features. Good links with primary schools allow for early identification of need and effective planning of provision. Progress of learners with ALN is carefully monitored and assessment procedures, closely linked to appropriate schemes of work, are a significant strength.
149. The quality of provision for pupils with ALN at KS3 in the Focus Groups and at KS4 in the Youth Access Groups is outstanding. The emphasis on improving learners' self-esteem and confidence through an innovative, themed teaching approach is outstanding. Learners achieve success through sensory and physical activities at the appropriate levels, and at the same time are appropriately challenged.
150. Learners with ALN, both in Focus Groups and mainstream, also receive literacy and numeracy support carefully planned to meet the needs of individuals. Appropriate ICT software is used effectively to deliver these programmes. Pupils are withdrawn on a rolling programme which causes minimum disruption to their curriculum. Learners make good progress following these interventions.
151. A few aspects of this arrangement are not wholly inclusive. This, however, has to be balanced against the high quality and, in many cases, outstanding education these pupils are receiving at appropriate levels. Evidence of outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection and teachers have a high awareness of the needs of learners. The use of individual laptops as a tool to encourage independent learning is outstanding. Careful monitoring of progress in the focus groups identifies pupils who are capable of receiving mainstream education and allows for flexibility. The procedures for promoting learners into mainstream are detailed and take full account of the needs and anxieties of learners. They are carefully monitored and supported further by LSAs in mainstream. Parental consultation is an important aspect of this transition.
152. Regular link meetings between departmental SEN co-ordinators and the Head of Learning Support facilitate effective communication with other subject departments. Subject teachers are aware of the needs of individual learners in the planning process. The support provided by a small dedicated team of LSAs is a significant strength of the school. They provide consistently effective in-class support, numeracy and literacy support as well as promoting social skills, particularly for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. LSAs are proactive and have developed specialisms within their roles. There is close collaboration between the Head of Learning Support and the LSAs and they have regular meetings.

153. Individual Education Plans are detailed and relate well to individual needs. Both parents and learners are aware of the learning targets. IEPs are easily accessible on the school intranet and paper copies are provided for subject departments along with other information on individual pupils. Teacher-learner relationships are strong and make positive contributions to the learning process. IEPs are used well in lesson planning to meet individual needs. IEPs are reviewed regularly. Good use is made of Local Education Authority (LEA) support services. Representatives attend annual review meetings as required.
154. The Head of Learning Support provides very good guidance. He works systematically and is enthusiastic. Awareness of SEN within the school is reinforced by the Head of Learning Support being part of the pastoral team. The learning support base is a hive of highly effective teaching and learning.
155. The friendly and caring atmosphere in the school ensures a climate in which there is very little poor behaviour. Expectations of behaviour are high and outstanding support is provided for pupils with behavioural difficulties. Where behaviour is a concern, behavioural support plans are initiated including monitoring of behaviour in individual lessons and the provision of extra in-class support where necessary. Shared involvement in the Torfaen Youth Access initiative provides educational support for disaffected learners.
156. The support and guidance for learners of different social, educational and linguistic backgrounds are outstanding. Learners from all social backgrounds achieve well because individual needs are identified and met. Developing and promoting equality in all aspects of school life are high priorities. The equal opportunities policy emphasises individual learners' right to access all aspects of school life. Daily collective worship of high quality emphasises respect and tolerance and this significantly reinforces this aspect. Learners whose first language is not English receive appropriate external support.
157. Learners are challenged to think about non-traditional option choices at the end of KS3 and KS4. A drama presentation in Y9 by an outside provider has been used to promote gender equality. A few departments have recognised underachievement by boys or girls in their subject areas and are developing strategies to overcome this.
158. The promotion of race equality across all activities is an important aspect of the school's Christian ethos. This ethos, as well as strong values and friendliness, ensures there is no discrimination. Promoting positive race relations is an important part of the rolling tutorial programme and is also addressed and reinforced through the whole-school assembly programme. The school has a detailed and coherent policy on racial harmony.
159. Learners have been actively involved in drawing up the anti-bullying policy through discussions in the rolling tutorial programme. Procedures are in place to enable learners to draw the attention of members of staff to issues that concern them, including bullying. Parents and learners are confident that incidents of harassment are dealt with quickly and efficiently.

160. The school has taken significant steps in recent months to ensure that learners with varied disabilities are not treated less favourably. These steps include a comprehensive Disability Equality Scheme, a detailed Access Plan with short, medium and long-term aims and disability training of high quality for members of staff and the GB. Despite efforts to obtain appropriate improvements to the buildings, set on different levels, access for wheel-chair users is limited to the ground floor. Pupils with sensory difficulties are supported well.
161. Recognition and respect for diversity are outstanding and are celebrated in many aspects of the curriculum. An effective programme of awareness of social and global issues has led to an outstanding response. A range of activities has been developed to reinforce this understanding. Very close international links and visits to Zambia and China, assisting in pilgrimages to Lourdes and Rome as well as an impressive collection for CAFOD, the sixth-form sign language class and links with a special school help make this outstanding.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

162. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
163. There are many good and outstanding features of leadership and management. All members of the school community share a commitment to the Christian ethos and a common purpose. This has produced a learning environment which promotes high standards of achievement and care.
164. The leadership provided by the headteacher and SMT is outstanding. The headteacher provides vision and clear direction for the work of the school. His leadership has succeeded in promoting high attainment which is especially evident in the results gained by pupils at the end of KS4.
165. The headteacher receives excellent support from the members of the SMT. Together they provide a very good range of relevant experience and expertise in educational management. All members of this team work together very effectively in a cohesive manner. Their work is instrumental in maintaining and improving standards and ensuring equality for all.
166. Senior and middle managers collaborate well to ensure the smooth running of the school from day to day. The management of teams and departments is very effective with a good level of overall consistency. Good procedures are used to monitor the performance of individuals and teams. No important shortcomings were identified in the management of any of the subject departments or pastoral teams. Academic and pastoral support are co-ordinated successfully at all levels.
167. Outstanding features have been identified in the management of the English, mathematics and physical education departments. These tend to be associated with strong leadership based on very good subject knowledge. In these

departments, quality assurance procedures are used particularly well to set appropriate goals and targets.

168. Leaders and managers are making good progress in addressing most of the priorities of the Welsh Assembly Government. They are developing Learning Pathways 14-19 very successfully. Managers have worked well with other local providers of education to enable a good range of options to be offered to students in the sixth-form. Similar collaborations at KS4 are at an earlier stage of development.
169. Other priorities which are being tackled effectively include healthy living and education for sustainable development and global citizenship. Less progress has been made in managing the development of learners' bilingual skills.
170. The sixth form is led and managed very well. Its leadership reflects the school's aims and values but also recognises students' increased maturity. Successful management of the sixth form has helped attract relatively high numbers of students who enter it from within the school and from further afield.
171. Governors work very well with the school and take an active role in contributing to its leadership and management. Much of their work is carried out through a good range of sub-committees. This helps governors to participate in such areas as financial management and the appointment of new members of staff. Governors and members of the SMT have an annual 'Away Day' where they discuss and agree issues relating to the management of the school. This has a positive impact on leadership of the school.
172. Governors are provided with information about the school's performance on a regular basis. Much of this information takes the form of documentary reports and presentations from members of staff. As a consequence, governors are enabled to monitor standards and the quality of education provided. Governors use their knowledge well to act as critical friends of the school. They give good support but also hold the school to account for its performance.
173. The work of governors helps the school to meet all regulatory and legal requirements.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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174. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
175. The findings of the inspection team match closely those of the school. The grades awarded by the inspection team are the same in six of the seven key questions. Key question three is downgraded because insufficient time is allocated to the teaching of Welsh second language.

176. Leaders and managers are extremely well informed about performance in their areas of responsibility. They draw upon good quality first-hand evidence of pupils' standards in a variety of outstanding ways. The six-weekly assessments generate information on all learners in all subjects, and are firmly embedded in the culture of the school. They provide a strong base for continuing evaluation of performance, meaningful dialogues and increasingly accurate targets for improvement. Outcomes, in terms of examination results, are striking, particularly at the end of KS4. All staff and learners are deeply involved in the process of performance improvement.
177. Arrangements for the evaluation of teaching and learning are well established, comprehensive and systematic. Subject leaders monitor well the quality of teaching in their subjects. Lesson observations, regular meetings and the scrutiny of pupils' work form the basis of an annual performance review. This is overseen by a member of the SMT and pursued with rigour to correct any lapses. Quality assurance procedures are becoming increasingly effective.
178. The school has produced a self-evaluation report that is sufficiently detailed, evaluative and well used. It identifies strengths and areas for improvement in all key questions of the inspection framework. The processes of self-evaluation are well established and becoming much more consistent in their application. Pastoral leaders have been absorbed into the review cycle in a meaningful way.
179. Leaders are active in seeking the views of parents and carers through regular meetings and questionnaires. The opinions of governors are greatly valued, particularly at the annual 'Away Day' with the SMT. Pupils are actively engaged in reviewing the quality of provision in the school. This is pursued through form, year and whole-school councils with a wide agenda and a reputation for promoting outstanding innovations.
180. Planning for and achieving improvement is a particular strength of the school. Leaders and managers are outstanding in using self-evaluation to set appropriate targets for all pupils and students irrespective of age or ability. The whole process has produced a belief within the school community that each learner can and will achieve to their maximum potential. Actions have led to outstanding standards by the end of KS4, in comparison with performance locally and nationally as well as with pupils' prior attainment and ability.
181. Departmental planning contributes to and reflects the SIP. Good resources are provided in keeping with stated objectives and declared priorities.
182. The school's work on self-evaluation and improvement planning is very effective. There has been a good improvement in addressing the key issues from the last inspection in several areas. Standards in general have improved greatly, particularly in the use of ICT across the curriculum. Teaching has improved through managing, monitoring and sharing good practice. The curriculum is innovative and, in almost all cases, well organised. Accommodation has improved. Statutory requirements for a daily acts of collective worship and religious education in the sixth-form are met.

183. The time allocated to Welsh second language at both key stages remains an issue which affects adversely standards and progression in pupils' learning.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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184. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.

185. The school employs suitably qualified and experienced teachers, some of whom teach effectively outside their main specialist areas. Teachers are supported very well by technicians in the sciences, ICT and design and technology.

186. An outstanding feature of the school is the team of LSAs. Members of this team have had specialised training and are deployed very effectively, both in class and supporting individual pupils.

187. The pupil-teacher ratio is good, and most classes are of a reasonable size. All classroom teachers have appropriate non-contact time. They make very good use of their planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time.

188. All members of teaching and non-teaching staff benefit from good provision for continual professional development. They take part in annual performance management reviews that enable them to identify their particular development needs and aspirations together with any relevant training opportunities.

189. The programmes and support for newly qualified teachers and for initial teacher training students are detailed and comprehensive. The mentoring programme is very robust.

190. The school has fully implemented their strategy for the work-load agreement and work-force re-modelling. The flexibility of the administration staff has significantly contributed to this. All administrative staff, including the caretaker and lunchtime supervisors, contribute very efficiently to the smooth, day-to-day running of the school.

191. Very good use is made of a wide range of external specialists to support the school's provision.

192. The quality and quantity of learning resources are good. Particularly impressive is the number of up-to-date computer suites with a wide range of suitable software. The Focus Group has very good access to modern wireless laptop computers. Many classrooms have interactive white-boards and nearly all have data projectors.

193. The departments inspected are properly resourced with a good range and supply of textbooks and specialist equipment.

194. The library is well used for research, although a minority of pupils borrow reading books. There is a good range of fiction and reference books and the librarians manage the library very proficiently.
195. The accommodation is sufficient for the number of learners on roll. Best use is made of the available rooms in all the buildings and the accommodation successfully meets the pastoral and academic needs of the curriculum.
196. Outstanding features are the new sixth-form café, which makes an excellent resource for the students to relax and socialise, and the outside covered seating area with furniture manufactured from recycled materials.
197. The good and, in some departments, the very good use of display work helps generate a suitable environment for learning.
198. The financial management of the school is outstanding. The budget is very prudently managed and monitored rigorously by the bursar. Particular care is taken to achieve best value for money when purchasing supplies and awarding contracts. The finance sub-committee meets regularly and receives reports which are detailed and up-to-date. The recommendations of the latest auditors' report have been addressed.
199. All expenditure is reviewed to determine whether the school has obtained best value for money. The system for allocating monies to departments, in line with their development plans and the school's priorities, operates very well.
200. Overall, the school manages its finances and resources very wisely. It gives outstanding value for money at all stages.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

6th form Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

KS3

Good features

201. Most pupils speak clearly and confidently. They answer questions and play an active role in lessons, working with others when appropriate in order to generate ideas for class discussion.
202. Nearly all pupils read accurately, confidently and fluently. They understand and respond to a range of texts and their progress is very rarely impeded by serious lack of understanding.

203. Pupils use writing to respond to a range of stimuli, both text and media-based, and many develop a good understanding of the characteristics of various types of text. In the best examples pupils draw explicitly on skills that they have learned in previous lessons.
204. When given the opportunity, pupils respond well to active approaches to learning, including drama-based strategies and debates. Some speeches in the debates draw specifically on persuasive techniques that have been learnt previously.
205. Most of the assessment files produced by pupils in Y9 are of a high quality. They show good evidence of thorough integration of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Writing tasks are taken seriously and self-assessment is honest and pertinent. The work of lower-ability pupils is conscientious and in a majority of cases at least some of their writing is substantial.
206. The content of many assessment files in Y7 and Y8 are also impressive. Pupils write confidently in a range of extended formats, including reports, arguments and in some cases character sketches, which include relevant quotations from texts. These pupils show a clear sense of appropriateness to audiences.
207. Many pupils use ICT routinely and appropriately to enhance the presentation and quality of their written work in English.

Shortcomings

208. Despite the use of the departmental *Progress Booklet*, there is little evidence of reading for pleasure being an important aspect of the experience of most pupils.
209. The quality of written work produced by a few pupils, although often lively and amusing, is adversely affected by poor spelling and sentence structure. Despite the detailed guidance offered by teachers, there is little evidence that these pupils know how to remedy these difficulties.
210. In a small number of cases, the tone of some of the writing produced is clearly inappropriate to the nature of the task. This is particularly true of the work of a few boys.
211. A small number of pupils show a lack of commitment in English lessons and carry out their work in a perfunctory way.

KS4

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

Outstanding features

213. Pupils of all abilities make significant and, in a number of cases, outstanding progress in their GCSE courses and their achievements often exceed expectations.

214. Many GCSE coursework files are of outstanding quality. Pupils explore complex concepts in depth and write about them at length. Pupils of moderate abilities work hard to produce substantial files; there are very few examples of desultory and half-finished written work.

215. Most pupils have a very clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Good features

216. Most pupils contribute significantly to lessons. They understand that speaking and listening are important aspects of learning and they work in groups and with partners in order to deepen their understanding of concepts.

217. Much of the writing that is done in immediate response to classroom activities is fluent and lively, showing wit, imagination and a clear sense of audience and purpose.

218. Reading for meaning is highly developed in many pupils. They have learned how to recognise literary and persuasive strategies and they read and listen intently to texts, including recordings, in order to explore them.

219. Most pupils have learned to reflect on their written work and know how to improve it. They are extremely conscientious and highly motivated. They want to succeed and listen closely to advice offered by their teachers.

220. When suitably engaged, almost all pupils, including many of the lowest ability, show a willingness to focus on tasks and to develop interesting responses to texts and other stimuli.

Shortcomings

221. A small minority of pupils in lower ability groups find it hard to sustain concentration and this has a negative effect on the progress of other pupils in the classes.

Sixth form

222. Examination results in English at Advanced (A) level in the last two years have been well above local and national averages for passes at A to B. These results represent very good achievement for these students.

Outstanding features

223. Examination performance at A level is outstandingly good. Nearly all students obtain A and B grades and none attain below C grade level.

224. Students, even at the beginning of Y12, contribute in extremely mature ways to classroom discussion. Sophisticated and sensitive social, moral and spiritual issues are debated in depth and in their full complexity. Students are adept at linking these discussions to the texts that they are studying and also to the wider world in which they live.
225. Students challenge each other and the teacher in constructive ways. They do not passively accept views that are offered to them but accept the challenge of finding textual evidence to support alternative views. Overall, the quality of thinking displayed in lessons is very high.
226. Many coursework essays are of an extremely high standard. Not only is evidence from texts used flexibly and in a mature way in order to extend arguments but also the written style of many students is very highly developed.

Good features

227. The great majority of students have good factual knowledge of the texts they are studying.
228. Reading skills are extremely well developed in nearly all cases. Not only can students read aloud with appropriate expression, but they can also explore subtleties of tone and nuance. They are sharply observant and pick up on details of texts with real acuteness.
229. Many students are able to make connections between texts from different writers and different periods, and, both orally and in writing, are beginning to place literary works in their cultural context.
230. Students prepare presentations for classmates. This allows them to share their initial thoughts with the rest of the class in a structured way. They accept this challenge willingly and thus show the ability to lead as well as respond to discussion.
231. Nearly all students show evident enjoyment of their study and understand the ways in which sharing ideas with other students can develop and refine their own thinking.

Shortcomings

232. There are no significant shortcomings.

Welsh second language

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

KS3
Good features

233. Pupils are attentive and work well in lessons and respond appropriately in the Welsh language to a broad range of oral and writing tasks.
234. Most pupils understand the target language used by teachers and respond enthusiastically to oral questions at the start of lessons. During these introductory sessions pupils recall previously learnt language patterns. Many pupils use basic and familiar patterns correctly in structured situations in whole class and group tasks. Pupils of higher ability are more confident in their responses.
235. Most pupils collaborate well in pairs and group tasks and support each other. They use the Welsh language to ask one another specific questions and convey information when responding to various class topics.
236. Many pupils read extracts clearly with appropriate intonation. Overall pupils pronounce words correctly when reading collectively in class.
237. Pupils complete a broad variety of language exercises and many use basic language patterns correctly. Pupils record their answers after listening to information contained on audio tapes. More able pupils write extended passages of writing, varying sentences and verbs. These pupils know and use a variety of vocabulary. The content of their work is often interesting.
238. Pupils with SEN work well and achieve standards appropriate to their ability. They respond positively to the teacher and the various tasks.

Shortcomings

239. In oral work a minority of pupils do not have the confidence to give extended responses to questions and to use the language in a wider context.
240. A minority of pupils in most classes are hesitant when reading aloud. These pupils do not always pronounce words correctly.
241. A minority is uncertain of correct use of sentence patterns and misspell words.

KS4

242. Examination results in Welsh second language at GCSE in the last two years were below local and national averages for passes at A* to C. Most pupils were

sitting the foundation tier in the short course in which the target grade is C. The results gained overall are in line with pupils' ability.

Good features

243. Most pupils understand the language used in familiar situations and have good listening skills.
244. A majority of pupils responds positively to structured oral questions. They express opinion when discussing a number of topics using familiar, basic sentence patterns. More able pupils communicate with increasing confidence and use an appropriate range of vocabulary. Their pronunciation and intonation are good.
245. Many pupils read correctly with good expression. They convey meaning of short extracts during whole-class reading tasks.
246. Pupils complete a variety of written exercises and their work is presented well. Able pupils build on previous work and write extended passages of writing. They have good knowledge of a number of language patterns. They vary effectively the use of sentence patterns and verb tenses.

Shortcomings

247. In oral work pupils lack the confidence to give extended responses in formal and informal situations. A minority has difficulty in recalling previously learnt language patterns.
248. A minority of pupils do not always convey meaning when reading passages. They do not always read with sufficient clarity.
249. A minority of pupils use sentence patterns incorrectly in writing tasks. They rely too heavily on support materials.

Mathematics

KS3	Grade 1:	Good with outstanding features
KS4	Grade 2:	Good features and no important shortcomings
6th form	Grade 2:	Good features and no important shortcomings

KS3

Outstanding features

250. Pupils of lower ability are very confident in their use of mathematical language associated with angle and are able to estimate and measure accurately.

251. In Y8, able pupils compare different sets of data taken from real life very effectively and use appropriate statistical terminology to describe and explain any relationship observed.

Good features

252. Pupils in Y7 are confident and accurate in their use of mental arithmetic and more able pupils use words such as prime, square, multiple and factor as a matter of course when describing patterns in sets of numbers.

253. Pupils in Y8 use ICT effectively to present project work. In Y9 pupils can identify and explain patterns when analysing the angles of different polygons in a systematic way. Middle ability pupils use Pythagoras' theorem efficiently to identify right angled triangles and solve problems.

254. Pupils carry out extended investigative work to a good standard. This has a positive impact upon achievement at the end of the key stage.

Shortcomings

255. A few middle and lower ability pupils are too eager to use calculators and this inhibits their confidence in using mental arithmetic processes.

256. A few pupils have not developed sufficient independence in their learning and sometimes seek support at an early stage.

KS4

257. Examination results in mathematics at GCSE in 2006 were above local and broadly in line with national averages for A* to C grades. In 2007 results were well above both local and national averages for A* to C and A* and A grades. These results represent very good achievement for these pupils.

Good features

258. Many pupils are confident in their use of mental arithmetic.

259. Lower ability pupils are able to identify equivalence and simplify proper fractions.

260. Pupils of middle ability are able to identify and explain patterns in tabulated data.

261. Able pupils can select appropriate techniques from a range of statistical strategies to support or disprove assertions or hypotheses. These pupils respond well when challenged with investigative work.

262. High attaining pupils in Y11 build on their success in GCSE in Y10 and are confident in manipulating algebraic expressions including those with fractional coefficients. Able pupils use calculators efficiently to generate a random sample.

Shortcomings

263. In middle and lower ability classes a few pupils do not make as much progress as they could as they do not find the work sufficiently challenging for them.
264. A small minority of lower ability pupils are unsure of multiplication facts and seek to use prompts or calculators at an early stage.
265. The progress of a few lower ability pupils is occasionally limited in lessons. They tend to lose concentration and this has an adverse impact on their progress.

Sixth form

266. Examination results in mathematics at A level in 2006 and 2007 were below local but above national averages for A and B grades. These results are in line with the students' abilities.

Good features

267. In Y13 students studying mechanics show a secure grasp of fundamental laws and are able to apply them to model vertical motion in a range of contexts.
268. Students in Y12 demonstrate a sound understanding of algebraic techniques and are able to develop these to analyse the symmetry of quadratic functions.
269. Students embarking on the study of calculus are able to calculate the gradients of chords to deduce the gradients of the tangents to curves.

Shortcomings

270. A few students of mechanics make errors when attempting to model situations without the aid of a sketch.
271. A few Y12 students have difficulty explaining techniques covered at GCSE level.

History

KS3	Grade 2:	Good features and no important shortcomings
KS4	Grade 1:	Good with outstanding features
6th form	Grade 2:	Good features and no important shortcomings

KS3

Good features

272. Nearly all pupils acquire and successfully develop a range of historical skills. They use subject specific vocabulary accurately, with understanding and in the correct contexts.

273. Nearly all pupils develop research skills and investigative approaches to examining people and events in history. Pupils of average and above average ability are able to plan an historical investigation and conduct interviews with confidence.
274. All pupils present their learning in a good range of styles and formats such as essays, letters, newspaper reports, posters, video clips and computer slide show presentations. They select relevant material and organise their arguments logically.
275. From Y7 pupils develop a good sense of chronology. They use and construct timelines and can place events in the appropriate historical period. Relative to their ability, pupils are secure in their knowledge, understanding and recall of topics, which have been studied.
276. In Y8 pupils of all abilities, learning about both the Gunpowder Plot and the murder of Lord Darnley, understand that there are different interpretations of historical events. More able pupils produce effective arguments to show why one interpretation is stronger than another.
277. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of using evidence. They extract information effectively from pictorial and documentary sources, distinguish between primary and secondary sources and assess these for both reliability and usefulness.
278. In Y9 pupils of all abilities use census returns to find out about living conditions in nineteenth century Merthyr. They are able to identify changes and similarities over periods of time and use their background knowledge to provide reasons for change and continuity.
279. Throughout the key stage, pupils can describe and explain why events happened. In their work on the sinking of the Titanic, Y9 pupils understand that some causes are more important than others and can provide an explanation for their judgement.
280. Pupils make effective use of the local and national environment to extend their knowledge and understanding of the historical and cultural development of Wales.

Shortcomings

281. The work of a few pupils of below average ability is incomplete and contains inaccurate spellings of historical terms.

KS4

282. Examination results in history at GCSE in the last two years have been well above local and national averages for passes at both A* to C and A* and A grades. These results are generally in line with pupils' ability.

Outstanding features

283. Pupils' awareness of the relative value of historical sources is outstanding. For example they understand that unreliable evidence can still be useful to a historian.
284. Independent research is an exceptional feature of pupils' work. When investigating the impact of Hitler's policies on Germany, they select, analyse and evaluate a wide range of historical documents to develop an excellent knowledge base. They use this to produce written work, which is consistently detailed, carefully planned and logically argued.
285. Pupils show higher-order thinking skills when making historical judgements on whether or not contemporaries were correct to blame Hitler for the Reichstag Fire. They respond very well to challenging work.

Good features

286. Pupils build successfully upon the range of skills acquired in KS3 and make good progress. They investigate historical questions effectively, examine issues thoroughly and produce balanced arguments.
287. Note-taking skills are well developed and pupils make good progress in summarising their learning. They use ICT tools effectively to enhance their written work and to develop further their research skills.
288. In their study of the USA in the twentieth century, pupils identify areas of continuity, explain the factors which bring about change and assess the impact of changes on society and the lives of individual men and women.

Shortcomings

289. A few pupils do not write in sufficient depth or detail to fully explain the points they seek to make in their written work.

Sixth form

290. Examination results in history at A level in 2006 and 2007 were below local and national averages for passes at A and B. These results are lower than those to be expected of students of similar ability. Results in 2008 show significant improvement with 81% of candidates achieving grades A or B.

Good features

291. Students produce written work of very good quality in which they develop and sustain arguments. They demonstrate a sound understanding of historical concepts and use their background knowledge and independent reading to make considered and informed judgements.

292. They make good progress in developing their skills of investigation, inference and analysis. They synthesise the views of professional historians, who have expertise in the periods they are studying, showing understanding and can explain the differences in interpretations found in their arguments.
293. Students continue to develop the ability to evaluate the reliability and utility of a range of primary and secondary sources. They demonstrate skill in cross referencing, identify omissions and make inferences. They make confident judgements about the relative importance of evidence to their line of enquiry when considering the extent of Welsh and English influence on the outbreak of the Newport Rising.

Shortcomings

294. A small minority of students make a limited contribution to class discussion and debate.

Physical education

KS3	Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
KS4	Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
6th form	Grade 1: Good with outstanding features.

KS3

Good features

295. In creative activities, most pupils perform a range of gymnastic skills very well. They execute their gymnastic movements with secure body control, tension and accuracy of movement. Their knowledge of key gymnastic shapes is very good. Most pupils react positively to the high expectations of their teachers and produce sequences of good quality. Their work in gymnastics displays creativity and originality.
296. Almost all pupils lead warm-up activities with confidence and display good levels of knowledge and understanding in body preparation and the avoidance of injury. They lift, carry, place and use equipment safely, with good technique. Pupils are able to plan their gymnastic work well, perform complex skills with confidence and evaluate their own work and the work of others accurately.
297. In competitive games, most pupils display good skills in basketball, netball and rugby. They pass, receive and shoot with accuracy and good technique. Tackling skills in rugby are carried out confidently and safely. They show good abilities in dodging defenders and moving into open spaces when attacking.
298. Pupils' understanding of health, fitness and well-being is good. Individuals participate enthusiastically in challenging fitness exercises, monitor physiological changes and discuss the effect of activities on their personal fitness. An example of this is pulse monitoring, where pupils are able to take their own pulse, exercise with intensity and then recalculate their pulse rates to ascertain

the effects of their activity. Pupils discuss dietary needs and the components of fitness with confidence. Through analysis with teachers, pupils are able to agree the requirements for heart health and all-round personal fitness.

Shortcomings

299. A few pupils have lower levels of physical fitness and this constrains the standards they achieve.
300. The acquisition of fine motor skills is underdeveloped in a few pupils.

KS4

301. Examination results in physical education at GCSE in the past two years have been above local and national averages for passes at grades A* to C. These results represent very good achievement for these pupils. After one year of following a new vocational course, results are also very good.

Good features

302. Pupils demonstrate very good standards in planning, performing and evaluating their own work and the work of others. This is particularly evident in basketball, hockey and examination work. The work of a few pupils is outstanding.
303. In basketball, pupils display good standards in the application of techniques, the implementation of tactics and the ability to discuss strategies for improvement. Pupils demonstrate established and original techniques and are able to adapt and refine these in competitive situations. Pupils use space well, have good ball control, pass and shoot accurately and are effective in both defence and attack.
304. Pupils' participation in fitness activities, related to hockey, that develop strength, endurance and flexibility, is very good. Individuals plan, undertake and evaluate fitness programmes, and lead warm-ups and cool-downs. Pupils display a very good understanding of how the components of physical fitness are developed and how these relate to an active and healthy lifestyle. Pupils sustain activities with correct techniques, and they also understand the importance of rest and recovery time.
305. The majority of pupils following the vocational course demonstrate good levels of knowledge and understanding of the requirements. Pupils analyse physical conditions and associated lifestyles. They are confident and knowledgeable when discussing their own lifestyles and the lifestyles of high-profile sports performers. They are able to reason and reach consensus on how their own choices, and the choices of celebrities, affect sporting performance.
306. Pupils are aware of what constitutes safe and approved practice, for their own safety and the safety of others.

Shortcomings

307. A few pupils have lower levels of physical fitness and this constrains the standards they achieve.
308. A few pupils have less well developed fine motor skills.
309. The depth of knowledge displayed by a few pupils is insufficient to achieve a high pass mark in the examination group.

Sixth form

310. Over the past two years, examination results in physical education, in the BTEC National Certificate, have been steadily improving at A to C grades. Results for 2008 examinations have been particularly good. These results represent very good achievement for these students.

Outstanding features

311. Students display excellent standards of knowledge and understanding in the examination course. A good example of this is in the physiology section of the syllabus. Students can easily identify and name the full range of muscle types, locations and functions.
312. Students apply their knowledge extremely well when analysing limb movements and body actions. Students can specify accurately the difficulties for unprepared performers in relation to possible injury and under-performance problems associated with poor conditioning.

Good features

313. Students display very good standards of knowledge and understanding when addressing the concept of the 'sports continuum'. They are confident when analysing existing behaviours, a range of options and participation rates of both young and older performers.
314. Students use their own experiences to frame their understanding of the sports continuum. This knowledge enables them to suggest a very good range of positive actions for improvement and sustainability.
315. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities. There has been a positive impact from the recently introduced, '5 x 60' scheme in the school and many students have participated in a range of new activities. Standards in extra-curricular activities are good, and often very good, for both individual performers and school teams. A number of students and teams reach the highest standards at both County and International level. The school is justifiably proud of these achievements.

Shortcomings

316. There are no significant shortcomings.

Business studies

KS4 **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**
6th form **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

KS4

317. Examination results in the business courses offered at GCSE in 2006 and BTEC First Certificate in 2008 have been above national averages for passes at A* to C with a small percentage gaining A* and A grades. These results represent good achievement for these pupils. No pupils were entered for examinations in business in 2007.

Good features

318. Many pupils are developing a good understanding of business terminology and principles, and can apply their knowledge to a range of business applications.

319. Many pupils are developing a good awareness of the importance of business in local, national and international development.

320. Many pupils are able to compare and contrast the ownership and aims and objectives of selected organisations. They can explain areas of growth and decline in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of business activity.

321. Most pupils are able to complete an application form, curriculum vitae and letter of application to a good standard.

322. Many pupils are able to explain why presentation and interpersonal and communication skills are important in customer service. A good majority appreciates the importance of monitoring and evaluating the quality of customer service.

Shortcomings

323. A few pupils do not have a secure recall of some business terminology and principles.

324. In some assignments, a few pupils do not investigate business topics such as customer service and the effectiveness of organisations in sufficient depth to access higher levels of achievement.

Sixth form

325. Examination results in Applied Business at A level in 2006 and 2007 have been in line with national averages at A to C grades. These results represent good achievement for these students.

Good features

326. Many students continue to develop their understanding of business terminology and principles. They apply this knowledge in a wider range of business applications.

327. Many students make good progress in developing their awareness of the importance of business in local, national and international development.

328. Many students have a good understanding of the role and influence stakeholders have when a business is set up.

329. Many students are able to appreciate the importance of market research, a detailed business plan, thorough risk assessment and an appropriate contingency plan when planning an event.

330. A good majority of students are developing an understanding that different motivational strategies can be used within different organisations.

Shortcomings

331. A few students, particularly in Y12 are insecure in their use of some business terminology and principles.

332. A small minority of students lack confidence in applying evaluative skills, to enable them to access the higher-level criteria in assignments.

School's response to the inspection

333. Governors and staff are delighted with the report and consider it to be a very accurate reflection of what the school aims to achieve. The inspection is a very positive endorsement and recognises many outstanding features of our school.

334. It is a well constructed report; recommendations are clear and helpful and will be acted upon appropriately. The school wishes to acknowledge the fair, professional and comprehensive approach of the inspection team under the leadership of the Registered Inspector.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	St Albans R.C. High School
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	The Park, Pontypool, Torfaen
Postcode	NP4 6XG
Telephone number	01495 765800

Headteacher	Mr Michael Coady
Date of appointment	September 2001
Chair of governors / Appropriate authority	Mr Gregory Hinds
Reporting inspector	Mr Peter Carter
Dates of inspection	29 September – 3 October 2008

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	155	152	158	151	145	162	163	1086

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	57	0	57

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	18.5 : 1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	-
Average teaching group size	23.7
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	78%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	94.5	93.8	93.1	92.0	90.4	93.2	92.3	92.70
Term 2	92.2	93.0	92.3	92.4	91.8	92.4	93.8	92.55
Term 3	91.8	92.6	92.3	91.4	91.8	91.6	90.5	91.71

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	11.8
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	27 temp. 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: 146															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	16	51	16	10	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	4	19	34	23	16	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	3	1	6	27	39	21	2	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	67.1	In the school	-
In Wales	58.2	In Wales	-

Public Examination Results:

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ	
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2007	153
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	420

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2007:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	97	89	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	78	55	55
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	97	87	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	59	37	40
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	98	96	97
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	90	76	77
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	97	93	93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	3	7	7
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	0	2	3
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	0	0	0
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	0	0	0

For pupils aged 17, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs	
Number of pupils aged 17 in January 2007	140
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2007	68
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2007	60

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	79	71	67
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	100	93	94
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	20	20	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	0	0	0
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	0	0	0

(UA Unitary Authority)

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

A team of 14 inspectors, including the school's nominee and a peer assessor, spent the equivalent of 52.5 days in the school. The team held a meeting before the inspection.

During the inspection, inspectors visited:

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

Members of the inspection team met with:

- staff, parents, carers and governors before the inspection;
- senior managers, middle managers, teachers, LSAs and administrative staff;
- a representative of the LEA; and
- groups of learners from each year group and representatives of the school council.

The inspection team considered:

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

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

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Peter Carter (Registered Inspector)	Context, Summary, Recommendations, KQ1, KQ5, Appendix
David Williams	KQ2
Graham Davies	KQ3
Gwyn Griffiths	KQ4 (including ALN)
Ronald Graham	KQ6
Rhiannon Boardman (Lay Inspector)	KQ7
Philip Jackson	English
Clive Rowlands	Welsh second language
Huw Griffiths	Mathematics
Gareth Barker	History
Stephen Lloyd	Physical Education
Glyn Davies	Business Studies
Stuart Jones	School's nominee
Carole Anderson	Peer Assessor

Acknowledgement:

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

Contractor:

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