

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

**A Report on the Quality of Education in**

**Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen  
Bethel Road  
Caernarfon  
Gwynedd  
LL55 1HW**

**School Number: 6614039**

**Date of Inspection: 20 October 2008**

**by**

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Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen 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 Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen took place between 20/10/08 and 23/10/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by Dr Neil Trevor Jones undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

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

There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a **standard** inspection.

## Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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## Context

### The nature of the provider

1. Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen is a naturally bilingual community comprehensive school for pupils and students between 11 and 18 years of age. It is maintained by Gwynedd Local Education Authority (LEA). Currently, it has 890 pupils on roll, including 158 students in the sixth form (Y12 and Y13). This is a significant decrease in comparison with the number of pupils on the school's register during the previous inspection (1190). The number of pupils in each year group varies, with 163 in Y9 and 131 in Y8. There are 55.5 (full-time equivalent) teachers, which includes the headteacher. There are 52 full-time and five part-time teachers.
2. The school serves the town of Caernarfon and the area that stretches from Llandwrog to Y Felinheli; there are ten primary schools in the catchment area. The majority of pupils come from primary schools in the town and two of those schools serve disadvantaged areas, which receive European funding. According to the school, the vast majority of pupils come from families that are originally from the area or have been living there for some time; migrants to the catchment area are very rare. There are 11.5% of pupils registered as being entitled to free school meals (FSM), which is higher than the average figure for the county (10.2%) but lower than the national percentage (14.2%). This figure of 11.5% is substantially lower than the figure of 20% entitled to FSM during the previous inspection. Ninety-nine per cent of pupils are of white ethnic origin. Five pupils are receiving support in learning English as an additional language.
3. Seventeen pupils (some 2.3% of pupils in Y7-Y11) have a statement of special educational needs (SEN), which is slightly lower than the national figure of 3.4%. In addition, there are 143 pupils on one of the stages of 'school action' or 'school action plus' of the Code of Practice for SEN. The National Curriculum (NC) has been adapted for 17 pupils and disapplied for three pupils. There are six pupils in the care of the local authority.
4. Over 87% of pupils come from homes where Welsh is the predominant language spoken and some 12% from homes where English is the main language of communication. Over 98% of pupils are following the Welsh first language course.
5. The school was amalgamated on to one site in May 2003; at the time of the last inspection, the school was located on two sites, some half a mile apart.
6. The current headteacher was appointed to the school in September 2008. The school was last inspected in January 2003.
7. The school received a 'standard' inspection in October 2008.

<b>The school's priorities and targets</b>
--------------------------------------------

8. The school's main priorities, as identified in its current school development plan (SDP), for 2008-2011 are:

- Main priorities - **Standards:**
  - ◇ Raise standards – every subject, every key stage
  - ◇ Raise standards – develop key skills, basic skills.
- Main priorities – **Quality of teaching and training:**
  - ◇ Teaching and learning policy
  - ◇ Track progress - raise standards
  - ◇ National Curriculum 2008.
  - ◇ Links primary/secondary
  - ◇ Develop learning mentors
  - ◇ Focus on solving - reward systems/discipline
- Main priorities – **Leadership and management**
  - ◇ Develop staff and governors
  - ◇ Monitoring and planning cycle
  - ◇ Budget management
  - ◇ Improve image

<b>Key stage 3 indicators</b>	<b>% at level 5 or more at the school</b>
Welsh	70%
English	73%
Mathematics	77%
Science	75%
Core Subject Indicator (CSI)	66%
CSI - girls	72%
CSI - boys	60%

<b>Key stage 4 indicators</b>	<b>% gaining qualifications</b>
% registered for at least 1 GCSE	-
5 GCSE subjects at grades A*-C	61%
5 GCSE subjects at grades A*-G	92%
CSI	50%
% leaving without qualifications	0%
CSI - girls	57%%
CSI - boys	43%
% unauthorised absences	0.6%

## Summary

9. Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen is a good school. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils very well and the school is a happy and caring community. Pupils' standards of achievement and the standards of teaching are good but outstanding features are few in these standards.

### Table of grades awarded

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

10. Although it agrees with the majority of judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report, the inspection team has awarded a higher grade to key question 1.

### B. Standards

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

Subject	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Sixth Form
English	2	2	2
Science	3	2	2
History	2	1	1
Geography	3	2	2
Information Technology	2	2	2
Design and Technology	3	2	2

12. In the lessons observed in the above subjects, the percentage of lessons that attained the different grades in key stage (KS)3, KS4 and the sixth form are as follows:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
<b>Key stage 3</b>	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%
<b>Key stage 4</b>	0%	82%	18%	0%	0%
<b>Sixth form</b>	5%	90%	5%	0%	0%
<b>Whole-school</b>	1%	69%	30%	0%	0%

13. The percentage of lessons awarded grades 1 and 2 are similar to the picture nationally, as reported in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's (HMCI) annual report. The 1% of lessons awarded a grade 1 is substantially lower than the national picture.

14. Overall, pupils standards of achievement in the lessons observed have improved since the last inspection.

### **The quality of test and external examination results**

15. Over the four years, between 2005 and 2008, there was a general improvement in the performance of pupils in tests and assessments at the end of KS3. However, results of assessments in English, mathematics and science place the school in the lowest 50% of similar schools in respect of FSM in 2007 and 2008, whilst the CSI and Welsh were above the median.
16. During the three years 2005-2007, there was no increase in the main performance indicators at the end of KS4, when comparing the school's results with those of similar schools across Wales, in respect of FSM levels.
17. In 2007, in comparison with similar schools with regard to FSM levels, the school was below the median for the CSI and in the lowest quartile for the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE, the percentage gaining five or more grades A\*-G, and the average score.
18. In 2008, the percentage that gained the level 1 threshold was higher than Wales but slightly lower than the county. The percentage that gained the level 2 threshold was similar to Wales but lower than the county.
19. Generally, girls' results were better than those of the boys in 2007, but in 2006 the percentage of boys that gained five A\*-C, the CSI and the average score, was higher than the girls' percentages.
20. In the 'A' level examinations, students' performance was consistently lower than the county and national averages, during the period 2005-2007.
21. However, in 2008, the percentage of students who gained two or more grades at A-C was higher than the county but slightly lower than Wales. The percentage of students who gained the level 3 threshold is slightly lower than the county and Welsh percentages, with the wider points' score significantly higher than Wales but lower than the county.

### **Standards in the key skills**

22. Pupils achieve good standards in their key skills and students achieve good standards with outstanding features.
23. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are good. Pupils' information and communications' technology (ICT) skills are good in KS3, but there are some shortcomings in KS4. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are good, with some outstanding features and their ICT skills are good. The standard of pupils' and students' bilingualism is good with outstanding features.

### **The progress learners make in their learning**

24. Good features outweigh shortcomings in the progress pupils in KS3 make in their learning but pupils make good progress during KS4 and in the sixth form.
25. In some lessons in KS3, a minority of pupils do not work to the best level of their ability and their progress is not as good as it could be. In KS4, they make good progress and complete unfamiliar tasks through effort and concentration.
26. Students show a high level of commitment to their work. Students of all abilities gain new information and skills. The Welsh Baccalaureate gives students a good

range of experiences and skills and the additional requirements of the course force them to manage their time well.

27. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make good progress and attain standards appropriate to their ability.

### **Standards in personal, social and learning skills**

28. The development of pupils' personal, social and learning skills is good and the development of students' skills is good with outstanding features.
29. Pupils and students have positive attitudes towards learning and respond well to their teachers' expectations.
30. Pupils' standards of behaviour are good, in lessons and around the school, and they are courteous and naturally friendly. Students set an outstanding example to the younger pupils.
31. The average attendance percentage for pupils over the last three terms was 91.6%, which is slightly higher than the average attendance in similar schools (91.4%). The school's rigorous systems for monitoring and encouraging attendance have led to an improvement in the attendance rates since the last inspection.
32. In KS3, not all pupils are aware of how to improve their own learning. Problem solving standards are good but with some shortcomings. In KS4 and the sixth form, pupils are prepared well for their future roles in work, education and the community.

### **C. The quality of teaching and training**

33. The table below shows the quality of teaching in the 112 lessons observed throughout the school:

<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
All Subjects	9%	65%	26%	0%	0%

34. The percentage of lessons awarded a Grade 1 or 2, namely 74%, is similar to the picture nationally as described by HMCI in his annual report for 2006-2007. The percentage of lessons awarded a Grade 1 at 9% is lower than the national figure of 19%.
35. In the good lessons, teachers:
- set clear objectives and plan lessons carefully;
  - use appropriate resources and a range of activities to motivate the pupils;
  - have a very good working relationship with the pupils and students, and
  - have good subject knowledge.
36. The shortcomings in the teaching are more obvious in KS3 and include:
- not setting specific timescales for tasks and this impairs on the pace of the lesson and a lack of challenge for the more able pupils;
  - lessons not planned effectively, and
  - lessons that are too teacher-centred.

37. There are several good features to be found in the monitoring and assessment of pupils' work. In most departments, teachers:
- assess pupils' and students' work carefully and regularly;
  - provide appropriate response, both verbally and in writing, and
  - make good use of peer assessment.
38. The comments made about pupils' progress in the annual reports to parents are insufficient. They are not sufficiently subject-specific and not a rigorous enough tool to help pupils to improve

**Ch. The degree to which teaching satisfies the needs of the range of pupils**

39. The curriculum meets the learning needs and interests of the pupils and students very well, and provides opportunities for them to gain appropriate qualifications through a number of learning pathways.
40. Overall, the curriculum offers balance, breadth, flexibility, continuity and progression. The school has responded very effectively to the requirements of the Learning Pathways 14-19 programme, by:
- offering a number of vocational courses with appropriate accreditation in KS4, either on the school site or in partnership with other institutions;
  - offering a very wide range of 'A' level courses, in the school or through the 14-19 partnership, and
  - ensuring that Y12 and Y13 students study the Welsh Baccalaureate, which is an additional and valuable element of the curriculum and makes a strong contribution to the Learning Core of each student.
41. The school has established good links with its feeder primary schools, which ensures continuity and progression in the curriculum across KS2 and KS3.
42. The curriculum is enriched through offering a range of extra-curricular activities. These often contribute well to pupils' personal and cultural development. The programme includes:
- cultural experiences through a variety of competitions and performances. Pupils receive extensive, memorable and Welsh experiences through these activities;
  - a wide range of sporting clubs and teams, with many pupils representing the county and their country;
  - provision of other clubs and activities to promote pupils' learning outside normal school hours, and
  - visits locally and abroad that allow pupils and students to expand their horizons and gain an understanding of other people's lives.
43. The school promotes pupils' and students' spiritual, moral cultural and social development well. The school's ethos conveys an awareness of common values and the close and welcoming atmosphere motivates pupils to attain their potential.

44. The school's partnership with parents, other schools and institutions, reinforces pupils' and students' learning experiences substantially and includes the following outstanding features:
- links with other secondary schools and colleges, in order to promote the Learning Pathways 14-19 programme;
  - numerous and beneficial links with the local community and employers, which offers pupils worthwhile experiences of the outside world;
  - outstanding links with an initial teacher training institution, and
  - well-established transfer links with primary schools in the catchment, to plan progression with regard to lesson content and assessment.
45. The school has an innovative language policy, which promotes complete bilingualism in the teaching and learning.
46. The school has planned a curriculum that pays very good consideration to national priorities. The school is a part of its community and operates accordingly. It provides a very broad range of experiences and sets sound foundations for lifelong learning.

#### **D. The quality of the care and guidance pupils and students receive**

47. The school manages and plans its arrangements for pupils' care outstandingly. A very effective pastoral team, which includes the SMT, heads of year, deputy heads of year and class tutors ensure that the school is a happy and caring community.
48. Parents are supportive of the school and work well with it.
49. The school is an important and integral part of the local community and has close links with employers, institutions and other schools and colleges.
50. The school has outstanding procedures for monitoring pupils' punctuality, attendance, behaviour and performance.
51. The school's procedures for pupils' healthy development and well-being are good.
52. There is good provision at the school for pupils with ALN. Pupils with SEN make good progress. The caring ethos in the SEN unit contributes substantially to ensuring that pupils develop and attain their potential.
53. The school deals effectively with pupils whose behaviour and attitudes are likely to impair their progress and the progress of others.
54. The school offers equal opportunities to each individual whatever their social, educational, ethnic or linguistic background.

#### **Dd. Leadership and management**

55. The school's strategic leadership and management is good with no important shortcomings.
56. The headteacher has a vision that is based on raising standards and expectations in every area, together with respect and care for the whole school community.

57. The SMT is an effective team with each member showing different and complementary strengths. The team make staff and pupils feel that they are appreciated. The team's focus is soundly on teaching and learning.
58. The vast majority of middle managers lead subject departments and other teams well. Through working with the SMT, they ensure that the school's policies are operational.
59. The school pays full attention to national and local priorities and to local partnerships.
60. There are effective procedures for identifying the developmental needs of staff and the performance management system matches the provision well.
61. Managers have a good knowledge of their areas of responsibility and use the information effectively to prepare plans for improvement.
62. Self-evaluation is a natural part of the school's daily work and of strategic planning. The school's self-evaluation report is detailed and analyses the school's performance well. The inspection team's findings closely match the findings of the school's self-evaluation report. However, the team has awarded a higher grade to one of the seven key questions.
63. The School Development Plan (SDP) is an effective management tool and gives a broad overview of the areas that the school considers to be important in order to raise and maintain standards, and identifies areas for improvement.
64. The departmental development plans (DDP) are generally of a good standard and identify priorities that match the SDP. The school aims to provide sufficient resources in order to ensure that priorities are implemented. This is not always possible, due to the school's current financial situation.
65. The school's work on self-evaluation and planning for improvement has ensured that it has responded effectively to the key issues identified in the previous inspection.
66. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. Even though there are several new members on the body, members understand their roles and act effectively as 'critical friends'.
67. Governors ensure that the school meets course and other statutory requirements.

#### **E. Effective and efficient use of the school's resources and value for money**

68. The school has sufficient experienced and specialist teaching staff, even though it has had to reduce the number of teachers due to the recent decrease in pupil numbers. The curriculum is taught effectively.
69. There are sufficient skilful support and administrative staff to support the teaching.
70. Overall, there is a good range of resources to present the curriculum throughout the school.
71. There is sufficient room for all pupils and students on an extensive site and classrooms are of a sufficient size. All the buildings, both old and new, have been colourfully and interestingly decorated with pupils' work and photographs.

72. Although a good effort has been made to improve some toilets since the previous inspection, the condition of some toilets, mainly boys' toilets, is unacceptable. According to current benchmarks, the old canteen building is no longer suitable.
73. The administrative officer works very effectively with the headteacher to manage and monitor the school's budget from day-to-day, preparing very detailed and regular financial reports. Appropriate financial reports are presented to the governors every term.
74. During the current financial year, the governing body decided, after consultation with the Unitary Authority (UA), to adopt a budget with a planned deficit. This is not considered to be good financial practice by the Audit Commission. However, the school is working closely with the UA to solve its overspend situation and has come to an agreement on the most appropriate steps for action.
75. Considering the overall situation, with regard to the pupils' and students' good standards of achievement, the good quality of teaching, the good curricular provision, the good quality of the support and guidance for pupils and staff, the school provides good value for money.

#### **F. How well the school has addressed issues identified in the previous inspection**

76. The school has responded well to the key issues identified in the report on the previous inspection.

### **Recommendations**

The school needs to:

- R1: \*raise pupils' standards in those subjects where there are shortcomings, especially in KS3, and challenge the pupils to excel;
- R2: \*disseminate the outstanding teaching practices observed in a number of lessons, ensuring that they are implemented throughout the school;
- R3: \*ensure that reports to parents, in KS3 and KS4, are subject specific, report on pupils' progress and help them to improve;
- R4: \*continue to work with UA officers in order to establish a school budget that follows the Audit Commission's recommendations, and
- R5: work with the appropriate authorities to improve some facilities for pupils, including the boys' toilets and the old canteen.

\* The SDP for 2008-2011 includes steps to deal with this recommendation.

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

## Standards

### Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

#### Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

77. This grade is higher than the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report. In the judgement of the inspection team, the overall standards achieved by pupils and students in the subjects inspected and in the key skills are good.

#### Pupils' success in attaining agreed learning goals

78. The following are grades awarded for standards in the six subjects inspected:

Subject	Key stage 3	Key Stage 4	Sixth form
English	2	2	2
Science	3	2	2
History	2	1	1
Geography	3	2	2
Information technology	2	2	2
Design and technology	3	2	2

79. In the lessons observed in the above subjects (80 lessons), the percentage of lessons awarded each grade in KS3, KS4 and the sixth form are as follows:

Standards	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	0%	50%	50%	0%	0%
KS4	0%	82%	18%	0%	0%
Sixth form	5%	90%	5%	0%	0%
Total	1%	69%	30%	0%	0%

80. The percentage of lessons awarded grades 1 and 2 is similar to the national picture, as reported in HMCI's annual report. The 1% of lessons awarded a grade 1 is substantially lower than the national picture.

#### Key stages 3 and 4

81. The grades awarded to the 60 lessons observed in KS3 and KS4 within the six subjects were as follows:

Standards	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3 and KS4	0%	62%	38%	0%	0%

82. Whilst standards in 62% of lessons are good with no important shortcomings, no lesson had outstanding features. Neither were there any important shortcomings in any lessons.

83. Overall, pupils standards of achievement in the lessons observed have improved since the last inspection from 'satisfactory' to 'good' in English in both key stages; from 'satisfactory' to 'good' in science and design and technology in KS4 and from 'good' to 'very good' in history.

#### The quality of test and external examination results

##### Key stage 3

84. Over the four years, between 2005 and 2008, there was an overall improvement in pupils' performance in tests and assessments at the end of KS3.

85. In 2005, results of tests place the school below the median for English, mathematics and the CSI and in the lowest quartile for science, in comparison with similar schools across Wales, with regard to FSM levels.
86. In 2006, assessment results placed the school above the median for Welsh, below the median for the CSI and in the lowest quartile for English, mathematics and science.
87. In 2007 and 2008, the school's results, in comparison with similar schools, were above the median for the CSI and Welsh, and below the median for English and mathematics. Results in science placed the school below the median in 2007 and in the lowest quartile of similar schools in 2008.
88. Value added statistics prepared by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) for 2006/2007 show that the school is above the median of similar schools for adding value to the percentage of pupils who achieve the CSI, during KS3.

#### **Key stage 4**

89. During the three years 2005-2007, there was no improvement in the main performance indicators at the end of KS4, when comparing the school's results with those of similar schools across Wales, in respect of FSM levels.
90. In 2005, in comparison with similar schools in respect of FSM levels, the school was below the median in respect of the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE, the percentage gaining five or more grades A\*-G, and the average score.
91. In 2006, the school was in the lowest quartile for the percentage gaining five or more A\*-C grades, and below the median for the other three indicators.
92. In 2007, in comparison with similar schools in respect of FSM levels, the school was below the median in respect of the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE, the percentage gaining five or more grades A\*-G, and the average score.
93. These statistics are not yet available for 2008.
94. In 2005, 2006 and 2007, the percentage of pupils who gained five A\*-C grades at GCSE, and the GCSE average points score was lower than the county and Wales averages. The CSI was lower than the county average in 2005, 2006 and 2007 and lower than the national average in two of the three years. In 2008, the percentage that gained five A\*-C grades and the CSI was higher than Wales but lower than the county.
95. In 2007, the percentage that gained the level 1 threshold was lower than the county but higher than Wales. The percentage that gained the level 2 threshold was lower than the county and Wales.
96. In 2008, the percentage that gained the level 1 threshold was higher than Wales but slightly lower than the county. The percentage that gained the level 2 threshold was similar to Wales but lower than the county.
97. The percentage of pupils gaining grade C or better in the core subjects at GCSE is consistently lower than the county average. However, in 2008, the percentage who gained grade C or higher in science is higher than the county.

98. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Overall girls' results were better than those of the boys in 2007, but in 2006 the percentage of boys that gained five A\*-C, the CSI and the average score, was higher than the girls' percentages. In 2008, the percentage of boys who gained the CSI was higher than the girls, but lower than the percentage of girls who gained the level 2 threshold.
99. Welsh Assembly Government value added statistics for 2006/2007 show that the school is in the highest quartile of similar schools for adding value to the percentage of pupils who achieve the CSI, during KS4, and above the median for the other three indicators.

### **Standards in the key skills**

100. Pupils' standards in the key skills are good.
101. Pupils' speaking skills are outstanding in Welsh with good features outweighing shortcomings in English. Pupils speak Welsh richly and with natural ease both in the classroom and on the school yard. Pupils do not speak with the same confidence in English.
102. Pupils' listening skills are good. Pupils listen courteously and carefully to their teachers and to the contributions of their fellow pupils and as a result respond appropriately.
103. Reading skills are good in both languages. Pupils read fluently, conveying meaning and sentiment. They have a clear understanding of what they read.
104. Writing skills are good in both languages and pupils can write for a range of purposes, showing an awareness of audience and purpose. They use technical and subject vocabulary appropriately.
105. Pupils' numeracy skills are good. Across the subjects, they estimate, measure, calculate and apply number well.
106. Pupils' ICT skills are good in KS3, but in KS4 good features outweigh shortcomings. Pupils use their ICT skills effectively to glean, prepare, process and present information and convey ideas. However, in KS4, the skills of a minority of pupils do not improve sufficiently.
107. Pupils' bilingual competence is outstanding. Although Welsh is the main medium of lessons, pupils can move easily from one language to another, verbally and in writing and they are familiar with specialist terms in both languages.

### **The progress learners make in their learning**

108. Good features outweigh shortcomings in the progress pupils make in their learning in KS3 but pupils make good progress during KS4.
109. In some lessons in KS3, a minority of pupils underachieve. In KS4, they make good progress and complete unfamiliar tasks through effort and concentration.
110. Pupils with ALN make good progress and attain standards appropriate to their ability.
111. Pupils are aware of their strengths and weaknesses in each subject and as a result know what is necessary in order to improve the standard of their work. In KS4, progress and achievement are promoted through the school's procedures of setting targets with the appropriate challenge.

112. Analysis of value added shows that pupils have performed slightly lower than expected, in comparison with similar schools across Wales in KS3 but make good progress in KS4.

### **Standards in personal, social and learning skills**

113. The development of pupils' personal, social and learning skills is good.
114. Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning and respond well to their teachers' expectations. They display an interest in their work and concentrate and persevere with the tasks set.
115. Pupils' standards of behaviour are good, in lessons and around the school. Pupils are courteous and naturally friendly. Although a very small cohort does not respond to the school's expectations, the school is a civilised and disciplined community.
116. The average attendance percentage for pupils over the last three terms was 91.6%, which is slightly higher than the average attendance in similar schools (91.4%). The school's rigorous systems for monitoring and encouraging attendance have led to an improvement in the attendance rates since the last inspection.
117. Pupils are punctual at the beginning of the school day and to lessons during the day.
118. In KS3, not all pupils are aware of how to improve their own learning. Problem solving standards are good but with some shortcomings.
119. In KS4, pupils are prepared well for their future roles in work, education and the community.
120. Pupils make good progress in their personal, social and moral development. They work well together and show respect to and care and concern for others. They develop their own personal values and learn to appreciate the values of others.
121. Pupils display a good understanding of issues relating to equal opportunities and are sensitive to a variety of faiths and traditions within society.
122. Pupils are developing a good understanding of their local community and of the world of work. This is preparing them well for achieving their future aspirations and to take an effective role in the workplace and the community.

### **Standards in the sixth form**

123. Students' standards of achievement are good with no important shortcomings.
124. The grades awarded to the 20 lessons observed in the sixth form within the six subjects were as follows:

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
Sixth form	5%	90%	5%	0%	0%

125. In 95% of lessons, the standards seen were good with no important shortcomings. Only one lesson had outstanding features.

### **The quality of results of external examinations**

126. In the 'A' level examinations, students' performance was consistently lower than the county and national averages, during the period 2005-2007.

127. In 2005, 2006 and 2007, the percentage of students who succeeded in gaining two or more passes at A-C in the 'A' level examinations was lower than the county and Welsh averages. The average score of students at the school was lower than the county in each of the three years and lower than Wales in two of the years.
128. In 2007, the average wider points score of students was considerably lower than the county and national averages.
129. However, in 2008, the percentage of students who gained two or more grades at A-C was higher than the county but slightly lower than Wales. The percentage of students who gained the level 3 threshold is slightly lower than the county and Welsh percentages, with the wider points' score significantly higher than Wales but lower than the county.

### **Standards of key skills in the sixth form**

130. Standards of students' key skills are good with outstanding features.
131. Students' literacy skills are good with outstanding features in English and Welsh. Standards of speaking are very good and students use a broad vocabulary confidently when presenting information and expressing an opinion. Students listen attentively to each other and to their teachers, responding appropriately. Reading standards are good in both languages. Their written work in Welsh is very mature and in English it is good.
132. Students' numeracy skills are good with outstanding features. Students are very confident when handling numbers and apply their numeracy skills very well in relevant subjects across the curriculum.
133. Students' ICT skills are good. They use skills to enrich and raise the standard of their work, using the Internet and computer programs effectively.
134. Their ability to work and think bilingually is outstanding.

### **Students' progress in learning**

135. Students make good progress in their learning.
136. Students show a high level of commitment to their work. Students of all abilities gain new information and skills. The Welsh Baccalaureate provides students with a good range of experiences and skills and the additional requirements of the course force them to manage their time well.
137. Students are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and understand what they need to do in order to improve and raise the standard of their work. They are aware of assessment criteria and of external examination requirements.
138. Students make good progress in the courses they are following and as a result are in a strong position to move forward to the next stage of learning, whether that be in work or higher education.

### **Standards in personal, social and learning skills**

139. Standards of students' personal, social and learning skills are good with outstanding features.
140. Students display positive attitudes towards their work and contribute very well in lessons. They are eager to take as much advantage as possible of what is available at the school.

141. Their behaviour is outstanding and they are developing into mature and confident young people. They set an outstanding example to the younger pupils.
142. Students' attendance and punctuality at lessons is good.
143. Students plan and arrange their own work without supervision and cope very well and confidently with the pressure and opportunities of school life.
144. The very good progress that students make in their personal, social and learning development, including problem solving and improving their own learning, prepares them well for becoming lifelong learners.
145. Students work together well, helping each other and showing a sensitive appreciation of the opinions of others. They make an outstanding contribution to school life and support and help the younger pupils in several ways.
146. Overall, students are prepared well for their future roles; they have sound values in relation to equal opportunities and diversity, and a good understanding of the world of work and of their community.

## The quality of education and training

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

#### Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

147. The grade awarded by the team confirms the grade the school awarded itself in its self-evaluation report.

#### Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

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

148. The following table shows the quality of teaching and assessment in the 60 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected and 28 lessons in other subjects, in KS3 and KS4.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
<b>6 Subjects</b>	10%	63%	27%	0%	0%
<b>Other subjects</b>	7%	68%	25%	0%	0%
<b>All subjects</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>

149. Teaching was better in KS4 where 83% of lessons were graded 1 or 2. In KS3 the comparable figure was 67%.
150. When compared with the national profile for Wales for 2006-7 as reported in HMCI's annual report, the percentage of lessons graded 1 (9%) falls below the national average of 19%. The percentage of lessons graded 1 and 2 (74%) is near the national average of 76%.
151. In lessons where teaching contains outstanding features:
- the enthusiasm with which teachers explain the work and ask pupils perceptive questions is particularly effective;
  - teachers have high expectations and prepare work that challenges and supports pupils of different abilities, allowing them all to reach their full potential;

- the working relationships within the classroom stimulates and motivates pupils to give of their best;
  - teachers make very effective use of ICT resources, and
  - teachers make special efforts to develop pupils' bilingual skills by alternating the medium of instruction for different parts of the course. They provide the technical vocabulary pupils need to work effectively in both languages.
152. In lessons where there were good features the above were often present, but they were not developed to such a high degree.
153. Most teachers have clear objectives for each session and plan their lessons carefully. Nearly all begin with a well thought-out introduction. They choose appropriate resources and a range of activities to keep pupils motivated. They match activities well to the pupils' ability.
154. Almost without exception relationships in the classroom are very good. Most teachers exercise their authority well so that pupils behave appropriately and apply themselves to their work.
155. In many lessons, homework is used effectively to extend pupils' understanding.
156. Teachers' knowledge of their specialist subjects is good and they are familiar with recent developments in their field.
157. When they are present, learning support assistants are well used and make a positive contribution to pupils learning.
158. Shortcomings in the quality of teaching were more evident in KS3. In lessons where there were shortcomings:
- lessons lack pace; often the time limits set for the completion of tasks are too long, and able and talented pupils are not sufficiently challenged;
  - lessons are not planned effectively. There are no shared objectives and especially at KS3, pupils are not always clear about what is expected of them. In these lessons pupils are often allowed to drift off task and so do not make effective use of their time;
  - there is too much direction by the teacher. In these cases pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their own understanding and skills, and
  - teachers make insufficient provision for pupils of different abilities.

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

#### **Good features**

159. The school has a good policy for assessment, recording, reporting and target setting. The policy is clear, comprehensive and up-to-date, offering good guidance to departments and teachers.
160. There are many elements of good practice in the monitoring and assessment of pupils' work. In most departments, teachers:
- assess pupils' work carefully and regularly;
  - provide useful oral and written feedback to pupils; and
  - make effective use of peer assessment

161. Most pupils are aware of their own targets and understand some of the things they need to do to improve.
162. The school assesses pupils' attainment and reports progress to parents three times per year.
163. The school meets all statutory requirements for assessment and reporting and satisfies examination board requirements. It has successfully participated in standardisation and moderation activities at the end of KS3 and so is making good progress in improving the rigour of teacher assessments.

### Shortcomings

164. The quality of the assessment of pupils' work varies across the school. A few teachers do not mark their pupils' work with sufficient rigour and others fail to give pupils worthwhile guidance on how to improve.
165. The comments made on the annual reports about pupils' progress are inadequate and insufficiently subject specific. The comment bank used produces poorly worded reports. Furthermore pupils' targets for improvement are too general and insufficiently subject specific. The school does not give parents the opportunity to comment on the reports.

### The Sixth Form

166. In the 20 lessons observed in the six subjects being inspected and the four lessons observed in the other subjects, the grades awarded for teaching and assessment were:

	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
<b>6 Subjects</b>	5%	85%	10%	0%	0%
<b>Other subjects</b>	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Total %</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>

167. Teaching had good or outstanding features and no important shortcomings in 92% of lessons and good features outweighed shortcomings in 8% of lessons. No lessons had important shortcomings.

### Good features

168. Many of the outstanding and good features identified at KS3 and KS4 are also present in the sixth form. These include:
- very careful planning of lessons, which include clear objectives. Teachers ensure that each lesson builds on previous work and has a high degree of challenge;
  - the use of a variety of suitable tasks and good quality resources, including ICT;
  - very effective teacher explanations, coupled with good questioning to challenge and extend learners' understanding, and
  - an excellent rapport between teacher and student.

### Shortcomings

169. There were few shortcomings in the quality of teaching in the sixth form. However in the weaker lessons there was excessive direction by the teacher and the pace of the lesson was slower.

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

### **Good features**

170. In the sixth form, the assessment, recording and reporting of students' work is generally good.
171. In nearly all lessons, teachers mark and assess students' work well. In the day-to-day assessment of work, they make students aware of the criteria for success and the requirements of examination boards.
172. Reports for sixth form students are comprehensive and provide a useful overview of progress.

### **Shortcomings**

173. The school does not give students or parents the opportunity to comment on the reports.

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

<b>Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
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174. The findings of the inspection team agree with the school's self-evaluation.

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

175. The curriculum:
- fulfils the learning needs and interests of the pupils and reflects the objectives for pupils of statutory school age as identified in the 1996 and 2005 Education Acts;
  - meets statutory requirements;
  - is broad and balanced for each pupil, including pupils with SEN and ALN;
  - provides equal opportunity and access for each pupil and student, and
  - provides PSE, work-related education and careers education and guidance in accordance with WAG guidelines.
176. The curriculum meets pupils' learning needs and interests very well, and provides opportunities for them to gain appropriate qualifications through a number of learning pathways.
177. Overall, the curriculum offers balance, breadth, flexibility, continuity and progression. The school has responded very effectively to the requirements of Learning Pathways 14-19, by:
- offering a number of vocational courses with appropriate accreditation in KS4, either on the school site or in partnership with other institutions;
  - offering a very wide range of 'A' level courses, in the school or through the 14-19 partnership, and
  - ensuring that Y12 and Y13 students study the Welsh Baccalaureate, which is an additional and valuable element of the curriculum and makes a strong contribution to the Learning Core of each student.

178. The school has established good links with its feeder primary schools, which ensures continuity and progression in the curriculum across KS2 and KS3.
179. Each subject within the key stages has the appropriate time allocation. The school responds appropriately to any clashes in the sixth form timetable, ensuring that it does not affect students' standards of achievement.
180. Learning experiences are developing pupils' basic and key skills well, and the school has obtained accreditation from the Basic Skills Agency for the third time.
181. Key skills are identified in the departmental schemes of work and key skills' coordinators have specific responsibility for standards of the skills in the sixth form. There is increasing emphasis on developing skills across the curriculum. In the sixth form, there are very good features in the way the Welsh Baccalaureate presents and standardises the key skills. Students benefit from these skills, which are used effectively to reinforce their subject work.
182. The curriculum is enriched through offering a range of extra-curricular activities. These contribute well to pupils' personal and cultural development. The programme includes:
- cultural experiences through a variety of competitions and performances. A substantial number of pupils are members of the Urdd; dramatic or musical productions are held every other year. Pupils receive extensive, memorable and Welsh experiences through these activities;
  - a wide range of sporting clubs and teams, with many pupils representing the county and their country;
  - provision of other clubs and activities to promote pupils' learning outside normal school hours, and
  - visits locally and abroad that allow pupils and students to expand their horizons and gain an understanding of other people's lives.
183. The school promotes pupils' and students' spiritual, moral cultural and social development well. The school's ethos conveys an awareness of common values and the close and welcoming atmosphere motivates pupils to attain their potential. A comprehensive PSE programme is arranged to ensure that pupils and students:
- show respect towards each other, staff and visitors to the school;
  - can differentiate between right and wrong;
  - accept responsibility and display self-discipline, and
  - show care and concern for others.
184. The school conforms to the requirements in relation to collective worship. The morning assemblies, in year groups in the hall, the tutorial sessions that include acts of worship and contributions from subjects such as music, art and religious education promote pupils' spiritual development well.
185. The school's partnership with parents, other schools and institutions, reinforces pupils' and students' learning experiences substantially and includes the following outstanding features:
- links with other secondary schools and colleges, in order to promote the Learning Pathways 14-19 programme;
  - numerous and very beneficial links with the local community and employers, which offers pupils worthwhile experiences of the outside world;

- outstanding links with an initial teacher training institution, and
- well-established transfer links with primary schools in the catchment, to plan progression with regard to lesson content and assessment.

186. Parents are very supportive of the school and there are numerous links with them. The school has established a good partnership with parents, as individuals, governors and members of the Parent Teacher Association.

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

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

188. The good features include:

- appropriate links with industry and employers, in order to develop pupils' understanding of the world of work;
- work experience for Y10 and Y12, that is carefully arranged and monitored;
- vocational courses, that are enriched through very close collaboration with local businesses to offer relevant and practical experiences, and
- regular visits to the school by speakers from the business world.

189. The school has an innovative language policy, which promotes complete bilingualism in the teaching and learning. Each subject in KS3 is taught on a bilingual modular basis, with a stronger emphasis on Welsh. In KS4 and the sixth form, the vast majority of subjects are presented and taught on a similar bilingual modular basis. The Cwricwlwm Cymreig has been effectively integrated into the schemes of work of each subject.

190. The school is taking positive action to ensure equal opportunities for each pupil and to prevent any stereotyping. All pupils have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum, both formal and informal. The school gives high priority to social inclusion.

191. The school is giving increasing attention to aspects of sustainable development and global citizenship, in the curriculum and as part of the school's routine. Caring for the environment and sustainability receive appropriate attention in lessons and this is complemented by good practices within the school itself, such as recycling paper and energy conservation measures.

192. Pupils' awareness of global citizenship is particularly promoted through the school's links with a school in Zambia.

193. The school pays good attention to the needs of employers. The effective partnership with Careers Wales and the governors' up-to-date knowledge of local needs reinforces this and provides reliable information for pupils and students.

194. The experiences offered to pupils and students to improve their entrepreneurial skills are continually developing.

195. The school has planned a curriculum that pays very good consideration to national priorities. The school is a part of its community and operates accordingly. It provides a

very broad range of experiences and sets sound foundations for lifelong learning.

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

**Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

196. This grade agrees with the school's self-evaluation.

**The quality of care, support and guidance to learners**

197. The school manages and plans its arrangements for pupils' care outstandingly. A very effective pastoral team, which includes the SMT, heads of year, deputy heads of year and class tutors ensure that the school is a happy and caring community. Their knowledge of the pupils is very good and they mentor and monitor academic progress as well as offering pastoral care and support. The school places a high priority on listening to the views of pupils and students and this has a significant effect on the general quality of the daily life of the school. Pupils in Y7 receive particular care from students in Y12 and Y13 through the 'buddy' system and the 'Sorting Squad'.
198. Parents are supportive of the school and work well with it. A very active Parent Teacher Association raises money for the benefit of the school. A number of parents make good use of the contact book to contact the school. In 2005, parents' opinions were sought through a questionnaire and a number of changes were made as a result of their comments. The school is an important and integral part of the local community and has close links with local employers, institutions, schools and colleges. Through the school council, pupils have a voice in the decision making process. Pupils feel that the school considers their views and responds to their opinion.
199. Pupils in Y9 and Y11 receive impartial advice that enables them to make appropriate choices for their learning pathways in KS4 and in their post-16 education. A useful handbook is provided that outlines all the options available. Each pupil from Y10 and above has an interview with the careers advisor to ensure that they can plan their learning pathways to meet their personal aspirations. Each pupil has access to personal support through an effective Learning Mentor.
200. There are very good links with the primary schools in the school's catchment. The headteacher, SEN coordinator (SENCo) and the head of Y7 visit the primary schools in order to ensure that pupils get to know them and receive information about the school. Arrangements are made for the pupils to visit the secondary school for lessons and other activities on several occasions and this is appreciated by the pupils and parents. During the first week in their new school, pupils receive a two day induction course that enables them to form good relationships with new friends and teachers. The induction courses for pupils moving from KS4 to post-16 education are effective.
201. The school's PSE programme has been carefully planned and soundly based on the statutory framework. There are opportunities in these lessons for pupils to discuss current issues and to develop their personal and social skills.
202. The school has outstanding procedures for monitoring pupils' punctuality, attendance, behaviour and performance. The attendance officer's response to absences is quick and effective. There is very good collaboration between the

attendance officer, a member of the SMT and the welfare officer to deal with pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern. This has led to an improvement in the attendance figures since the previous inspection. A member of the SMT is responsible for a strategy to promote good behaviour and effective use is made of a computerised program to monitor pupils' behaviour. There is a reward system to acknowledge good attendance, punctuality, behaviour and effort.

203. Careers education and advice is good and there is effective collaboration between the school and Careers Wales. Students are supported well as they prepare applications for higher education. The school makes good use of a range of external speakers to enhance the support for pupils. Pupils in Y10 and students in Y12 receive work experience that enhances their understanding of the world of work.
204. The school's procedures for pupils' healthy development and well-being are good. The school is part of the LEA's Healthy Schools and Green Schools schemes. To date, the school has succeeded in completing stage 1 of the Healthy Schools scheme and the Green Schools' bronze award. There are clear procedures to ensure pupils' and students' health and well-being, which includes encouragement for pupils to adopt healthy habits and incorporates physical activity, fitness and healthy eating.
205. The school works very closely with other agencies to ensure pupil's well-being. The school has a clear policy and specific guidelines for child protection. A member of the SMT has responsibility for this aspect and all teachers have received training for child protection. The school has a procedure and policy for dealing with complaints together with an appeals procedure.

### **The quality of provision for additional learning needs**

206. There is good provision at the school for pupils with ALN. The close link and collaboration with the primary schools enables the school to identify at an early stage those pupils who need additional support with their learning.
207. The coordinator visits the primary schools and gets to know the pupils and to discuss their needs.
208. Pupils with SEN make good progress. The caring ethos in the SEN unit contributes substantially to ensuring that pupils are developing and attaining their potential. The SENCo is experienced and enthusiastic and her knowledge, together with the knowledge of her team of dedicated teachers, of the pupils in their care is outstanding. There is a good relationship between the SENCo and the parents and there is regular consultation between them.
209. The school operates a clear policy for SEN that meets the statutory requirements in the Code of Practice for Wales. The SENCo prepares a detailed annual report for the governing body.
210. There are detailed individual educational plans (IEPs) for each pupil and these are reviewed regularly. Appropriate targets are set that reflect pupils' needs and the school ensures that each teacher is aware of these targets.
211. Suitable arrangements are made for pupils who have statements of SEN or who have been disapplied from elements of the NC.

212. The school has a team of enthusiastic assistants who know the pupils well. There is very good collaboration between them and the SENCo and their work is coordinated well. They provide appropriate support and educational guidance for individuals and groups of pupils. Their support in the classroom is effective without being forceful. The majority of the subject teachers plan appropriately to make the best possible use of the assistants in their lessons.
213. The SEN department makes good use of external agencies who visit the school regularly. This ensures that all pupils receive the necessary professional support.
214. The school deals effectively with pupils whose behaviour and attitudes are likely to impair their progress and the progress of others, and who, as a result of this are in danger of being excluded from the school. Emphasis is placed on promoting good behaviour and avoiding confrontation, concentrating on solution. This has led to an improvement in behaviour and a reduction in the number of exclusions.

### **The quality of provision for equal opportunities**

215. The quality of the provision for equal opportunities is good throughout the school. The school offers equal opportunities to each individual whatever their social, educational, ethnic or linguistic background.
216. There are appropriate arrangements and policies in place to promote gender equality and to challenge stereotyping. A number of activities and opportunities are provided to develop an understanding of diversity and to appreciate the contributions of others. These activities include PSE lessons and community projects, locally and in other countries. The school has a close relationship with a school in Zambia and a number of pupils have visited that school.
217. The procedures for promoting equal opportunities are good. The school is successful in ensuring equal treatment of all pupils and in ensuring that pupils' and students' subject choices are free from any tendencies relating to gender.
218. The school has an appropriate policy for encouraging racial equality and the school actively promotes good race relationships in its daily life.
219. There are outstanding procedures for dealing with any cases of bullying or oppressive behaviour in the school. Instances of bullying are very few, but when cases arise pupils and parents say that the problem is dealt with quickly and effectively.
220. The school has a Disability Equality Scheme and a clear access strategy. A disabled person can easily gain access to any room in the school through using a lift or ramps. The school is the designated centre for disabled pupils in the Arfon area.

## **Leadership and management**

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

#### **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

221. The grade awarded by the inspection team agrees with the grade awarded by the school in its self-evaluation report.

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

222. Since his appointment in April 2008, the headteacher has given a clear direction to the work of the school. He has a vision that is based on raising standards and expectations in every area, together with respect and care for all members of the school community. He has created a sense of mutual purpose amongst the staff in moving the school forward as a community.
223. The headteacher's vision is shared by members of the SMT. They form an effective team with each member showing different but complementary strengths. The team make staff and pupils feel that they are appreciated and consider their opinions. The team's focus is soundly on teaching and learning.
224. The school succeeds in promoting equality for all. There is a broad and appropriate curriculum for pupils of all abilities. There are appropriate procedures for support and guidance and good provision to meet the needs of pupils with ALN. No pupil is disadvantaged due to their linguistic or cultural background.
225. There is close collaboration between the SMT and the departmental and pastoral teams. These links promote communication and consultation and ensure that the performance of staff and pupils is monitored well.
226. The vast majority of middle managers lead subject departments and other teams well. Through working with the SMT, they ensure that the school's policies are operational.
227. The school pays full attention to national and local priorities and to local partnerships. It pays outstanding attention to WAG priorities, such as inclusion, bilingualism and Learning Pathways 14-19. The school works very effectively with an increasing number of educational and training partnerships, to offer a broad curricular provision in KS4 and the sixth form.
228. Currently, the school is refining its methods of setting quantitative targets. In KS4, the process is very thorough, using a broad range of information on pupils' previous achievement as a basis for meaningful and challenging targets for individual pupils and departments. The targets are an effective means of monitoring progress and motivating improvement. As yet, these rigorous processes have not been implemented in KS3.
229. There are effective procedures for identifying the developmental needs of staff and the performance management system matches the provision well.
230. A very good number of staff has taken advantage of General Teaching Council for Wales bursaries in order to support their professional development and, at the same time, promote teaching and learning developments. The school is placing increasing emphasis on arranging staff development activities internally, disseminating good practice across the school, by means of observations and working groups.
231. Four members of staff have completed a course that leads to the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH).
232. Through restructuring the ancillary and administrative staff, the school succeeded in meeting the requirements of the national workload agreement for teachers.

## **How well the governors meet their responsibilities**

233. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well.
234. Although there are several new members on the governing body, members understand their roles and act effectively as 'critical friends'. The body receives relevant information on the school's performance from the headteacher and SMT and is ready to question and challenge, when appropriate. This, together with the work undertaken in the committees, ensures that the body actively contributes to the strategic planning of the school.
235. Members of the governing body have been linked with departments at the school and this gives them a detailed understanding of the quality of the teaching, the standards that pupils are achieving and increases their understanding of the school's needs and priorities. However, this good practice has not as yet spread to all departments.
236. Governors ensure that the school meets the course requirements and other statutory requirements. However, it does not ensure that the school follows the Audit Commission guidelines in adopting the school's current budget.

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

**Grade 2 : Good features and no important shortcomings**

237. The inspection team has awarded the same grade for this key question as that the school awarded itself in its self-evaluation report.

**How effectively is the school's performance monitored and evaluated**

238. Leaders and managers are well informed about the areas for which they have responsibility and use this information well to develop plans for improvement.
239. Self-evaluation is an integral part of the day-to-day working and strategic planning of the school. The school's self-evaluation report is detailed and provides a good analysis of the school's performance. The inspection team's findings correspond very closely to the school's findings in its self-evaluation report, but the inspection team has awarded one of the seven key questions a higher grade, namely key question 1.
240. The school has a clearly defined system for self-evaluation. The system is cohesive, well-planned and involves all members of the SMT, heads of department and heads of year in the process. The school uses the Estyn Framework effectively to evaluate standards and identify areas for improvement.
241. Leaders and managers are well informed about performance in their areas of responsibility. They draw upon good quality first-hand evidence of pupils' standards in a variety of ways. SMT and subject leaders work closely together to evaluate examination results for individual pupils and departments. Further information is collected through regular classroom observations and pupils' book reviews by SMT and subject leaders. Whole -school reviews in areas such as the quality of homework, assessment for learning, standards of work in different years also inform the self-evaluation process.
242. The analysis of data and performance has given leaders and managers a clear direction for the future. Strengths and areas for development have been

identified for each key question. In key question 1 there are in-depth evaluations of the progress made by the school; the overall judgements in the other six questions are detailed, but do not have the same sharpness in their conclusions.

243. The views of staff, parents and the school council have been effective in identifying areas for development and influencing the SDP. A number of recommendations have been implemented during the last three years. However, no formal evaluations of parents, staff and employers' views have been canvassed since 2005. This is identified as an area for action in the SDP for the next cycle.
244. The quality of self-evaluation was judged to have good features and no important shortcomings in the six subjects inspected in depth during the inspection. In other subject areas, processes of self-evaluation are well established and are becoming more consistent in their application.
245. Pastoral leaders have been absorbed into the review cycle in a meaningful way. The close link between members of the SMT and subject and pastoral leaders and members of their teams, has successfully involved all members of staff in these processes.

### **The effectiveness of planning for improvement**

246. The SDP is an effective management tool, which gives a broad overview of the areas the school considers important in sustaining standards, and identifying areas for improvement. Three main priorities have been identified for the school and subject departments to focus on during the next three years. The overall plan identifies, in the seven key questions, intended outcomes, time-scales and responsibility for implementation and evaluation.
247. Departmental development plans are generally of good quality and identify priorities in line with the SDP. Pastoral development plans have now been generated with a focus on key questions 1 and 4. A strength of the system is the termly review of progress at all levels, identifying areas of refinement in strategies and informing the planning cycle of the school.
248. The school aims to provide adequate resources to ensure that priorities are supported. To this end it has been successful in maintaining the same allowance per pupil in its formula for funding subject areas. However, in view of the school's current budget deficit, extra support for some initiatives and the accurate costing of the SDP has not been possible.
249. The school's work on self-evaluation and improvement planning has been effective in addressing most of the key issues from the last inspection. These include:
- standards now having good features and no important shortcomings in English at KS3 and KS4, science and design technology at KS4, and biology and design technology in the sixth form;
  - an unified approach for all subject areas to ensure progression in curricular provision and have high expectations for all pupils and students;
  - improved attendance levels and a more focused attitude to work and behaviour for almost all pupils;

- a programme of religious education for Y13 students which meets statutory requirements, and
- all health and safety issues noted in the report have been addressed.

250. Standards of achievement in design technology and science at KS3 continue to show good features which outweigh shortcomings (the equivalent to satisfactory standards at the time of the last inspection). It was not possible to report on standards in business and motor vehicle studies in this inspection, as they were not identified as one of the six subjects.

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

#### **Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

251. This grade agrees with the grade the school awarded itself in its self-evaluation report.

252. This grade does not agree with the grade the team awarded to key questions 1 and 5. In the inspection team's judgement, the school has not considered the recommendations of the Audit Commission sufficiently in determining the school's current budget.

#### **The adequacy, suitability and use made of staffing, learning resources and accommodation**

253. The school has sufficient experienced and specialist teaching staff, even though it has had to reduce the number of teachers due to the recent decrease in pupil numbers. The curriculum is taught effectively. In those rare cases where teachers are teaching outside their specialism, they receive good support. Teachers who are new to the profession receive every support in accordance with the requirements.

254. There are sufficient skilful support and administrative staff to support the teaching. The assistants, who mainly work in the SEN unit, the technicians and the librarian provide a good service and promote the learning. The school's senior assistant provides good service in covering when teachers are absent.

255. The school succeeded in remodelling the workforce effectively, in line with current guidelines. A management structure was drawn up that offers developmental opportunities for a very good number of staff. The school has ensured that each of the teachers receives the appropriate planning, preparation and assessment time, and this is contributing towards raising standards and more effective assessment.

256. Overall, there is a good range of resources to present the curriculum throughout the school. They include good quality materials in the majority of subject departments and the school has a fair method for allocating money to them. Currently there is insufficient money for new developments, which is acknowledged by the school. There is a digital projector or interactive whiteboard in a good number of classrooms. Although there are some old computers in the classrooms, the school's ICT equipment is good and everybody knows how to access them by arrangement. The sports department benefits greatly from the nearby leisure centre.

257. There is a sufficient stock of books and computers in the library and pupils and students make good use of it.
258. There is sufficient room for all pupils and students on an extensive site and classrooms are of a sufficient size. Although some of the school buildings are over a hundred years old, overall, they are still in a good condition. Other areas are new or fairly recent and in a very good condition. The design and technology department has had to be rehoused in a temporary building, fit for purpose, following significant problems last year with the original building.
259. Many areas of the school have a bright and airy atmosphere. All the buildings, both old and new, have been colourfully and interestingly decorated with pupils' work and photographs and art displays give a gallery feel of some standing to some parts of the school.
260. The school has completed its Disability Access Plan in accordance with requirements. People confined to wheelchairs can access almost every area of the school by means of any one of three lifts in different buildings. This is the designated school in the area for pupils with disabilities.
261. Although a good effort has been made to improve some toilets since the previous inspection, the condition of some of them, mainly boys' toilets, is unacceptable. According to current benchmarks, the old canteen building is no longer suitable. The hall is large enough for one year group at a time, or two in small years, but it is not a modern, attractive area for pupils or the public.

#### **How efficiently resources are managed to achieve value for money**

262. The headteacher is responsible for the school's budget at a strategic level. He has ensured that there is a close link between the current SDP and the school's budget. The DDPs are closely linked to the SDP.
263. The administrative officer works very effectively with the headteacher to manage and monitor the school's budget from day-to-day, preparing very detailed and regular financial reports. Appropriate financial reports are presented to the governing body each term.
264. The school has responded fully to each issue raised during the UA's last financial audit in 2006.
265. During the current financial year, the governing body decided, after consultation with the UA, to adopt a budget with a planned deficit. This is not considered to be good financial practice by the Audit Commission. However, the school is working closely with the UA to solve its overspend situation and has come to an agreement on the most appropriate steps for action.
266. The school has effective procedures to identify and meet the professional development needs of staff. It makes effective use of the teachers and the support staff through using their time and experience well.
267. Overall, the school has sufficient resources to support the teaching and learning. Currently, the school's budget does not allow some departmental priorities to be realised.
268. Considering the overall situation, with regard to the pupils' and students' good standards of achievement, the good quality of teaching, the good curricular

provision, the good quality of the support and guidance for pupils and staff, the school provides good value for money.

## Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

### English

**Key stage 3: Grade 2: Good features and no significant shortcomings**

**Key stage 4: Grade 2: Good features and no significant shortcomings**

**Sixth form: Grade 2: Good features and no significant shortcomings**

269. All pupils gain a GCSE and/or an Entry Level qualification in English apart from in instances of prolonged absence. It is a strength that 95% of pupils gain a GCSE qualification in English language.

270. GCSE results have shown improvement and moved up from the lowest quartile in 2005 and 2006 to the third quartile of similar schools in 2007. When compared with 2005 results, results for 2008 show significant improvement (around 20%) in those gaining grades A\*-C.

271. Results at AS and A levels have been consistently good over the years.

### **Key stages 3 and 4**

#### **Good features**

272. Pupils across the ability range listen very well to their teachers and respond appropriately and confidently when they complete their work.

273. Almost all the pupils enjoy participating in oral group work and express views or undertake role play well. Many pupils are able to expand on their ideas and able pupils are able to justify their views well. Pupils are willing to ask relevant questions and eager to further their understanding.

274. The majority of pupils at both key stages have a clear recollection of prior work and boys, in particular, are willing to make confident contributions in the question and answer sessions at the beginning and end of lessons.

275. All the pupils, across both key stages, read a wide range of challenging texts in line with their ability, on a regular basis. In KS3, in particular, pupils read for pleasure.

276. Most pupils at both key stages read aloud in groups well.

277. All pupils, including those with ALN, read texts that suit their age groups with a good level of understanding. The most able pupils, particularly in KS4, read and respond in writing to a very good range of literary texts in a sensitive and eloquent manner.

278. The work of the most able pupils at KS3 displays their increasing ability to analyse the texts that they have read. The most able pupils at KS4 produce perceptive analyses which reveal the ability to probe layers of meaning.

279. All pupils across both key stages write in a variety of forms for different purposes and audiences. Almost all the pupils in the mainstream sets display good drafting skills and a willingness to respond to teachers' advice.

280. All pupils can analyse character and plot, supporting their points of view in line with their ability. The less able pupils use writing guidelines to produce good pieces. Between Y9 and Y11, the most able pupils increasingly display a good understanding of the author's craft and an appreciation of the stylistic features of complex texts.
281. By the end of KS3, there is very clear progression in the written work of many pupils. The most able possess a wide vocabulary and they structure their sentences in a variety of ways, producing very effective written pieces. Many pupils at this key stage produce extended pieces of personal writing and interesting stories, in line with their ability. Some pupils produce extremely effective and touching work.
282. Many pupils at KS3, and the majority at KS4, are able to express their points of view well, often through letter writing. Others produce very effective speeches.
283. Pupils across the ability range show that they are able to assess their own oral and written work and that of peers to a good standard. They are familiar with the assessment criteria and know how to improve their own work.
284. Pupils with SEN make good progress in all aspects of their work at the special unit.

### **Shortcomings**

285. A minority, usually less able pupils, at both key stages, encounter problems with spelling and sentence structure.
286. A few pupils of mid range ability do not contribute sufficiently in oral group work without teacher intervention.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Good features**

287. The vast majority of Y12 and Y13 students make good progress in line with expectations.
288. Almost all students become independent learners and read a range of literary criticism. The students offer interesting interpretations orally and in writing and several have original ideas and make incisive comments. Y12 students, in particular, express points of view thoughtfully and at length in pair and class discussions.
289. In their written work, the most able students show clearly how authors create different layers of meaning and respond to complex characters and tension in drama. In their written work, they all discuss how literary works display the author's thoughts, the historical background and the ideas of the relevant period to a good standard.
290. Students use terms appertaining to literary criticism correctly and many of them possess a wide and rich vocabulary. They are able to recognise and appreciate a range of technical and stylistic features effectively and can support their views very well using relevant quotation.
291. At their best, students write impressive critical essays and deal with very complex subjects confidently and maturely.

### **Shortcomings**

292. Some students in Y13 do not contribute sufficiently to oral group and class sessions in order to promote their understanding of set texts.

## Science

**Key Stage 3: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

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

**Sixth form:**

**Biology: Grade 2 Good features and no important shortcomings**

**Chemistry: Grade 2 Good features and no important shortcomings**

**Physics: Grade 2 Good features and no important shortcomings**

293. GCSE results continue to improve. The percentage of pupils who gained GCSE grades A\* - C in science in 2008 was significantly higher than both local and national norms. For the two years prior to that, the school's results represented good achievement when compared with similar schools in Wales.

294. At 'A' level, results continue to improve. Performance at Grades A\*-C and A\*-E in biology, chemistry and physics in 2008 compares favourably with local and national norms. For the two years prior to that, the results represented good achievement when compared with similar schools in Wales.

### **Good features**

#### **Key Stage 3**

295. Many pupils show good recall and understanding of previous work. They are learning to apply their knowledge of science from one context to another.

296. Their practical skills are good. Pupils work safely and responsibly and know how to collect, use and clear away apparatus.

297. Pupils can observe and measure correctly, put data into tables and calculate averages to obtain reliable results. They draw graphs of their results and can interpret their findings, occasionally using ICT techniques to do so. They also use ICT to enhance their knowledge and develop their research skills.

298. Pupils listen well, and can follow instructions. They are confident orally and collaborate well to carry out practical work. These factors contribute to their standards of achievement.

#### **Key Stage 4**

299. Most pupils achieve standards at least commensurate with their ability. They show confident recall of previous learning and good standards of knowledge and understanding in a wide range of scientific topics.

300. Most pupils are able to apply their understanding from previous knowledge into new and different situations. Many pupils are aware of the practical applications of science and how these impact upon our lives. They understand the contribution science makes to society.

301. They use scientific terms correctly and appropriately, both orally and in writing.

- 302. Practical work is carried out safely. Pupils work carefully and are systematic in observation, measuring and recording. They understand the need for reliable results and for accuracy in their work.
- 303. Graphical skills are very good and pupils use their ICT skills in order to collect and record data. They analyse and interpret their results and draw appropriate conclusions from them.
- 304. Many pupils can evaluate the quality of their results. They are competent in solving problems and co-operate well in groups to do so.
- 305. Pupils' listening ability and oral competence in class contributes to their learning and their extended writing skills contribute to their high achievement.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **Key Stage 3**

- 306. A minority of pupils have difficulty in recalling knowledge and in showing understanding of key scientific concepts.
- 307. A minority of pupils in some lessons do not make adequate progress in the time available.
- 308. A few pupils are uncertain about the idea of variables and do not use scientific terminology correctly.

#### **Key Stage 4**

- 309. A few pupils do not complete the work required of them.
- 310. A few pupils have difficulty in recalling knowledge and in showing understanding of key scientific concepts.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Good features**

- 311. Students across biology, chemistry and physics have confident recall of knowledge and sound understanding of scientific principles and complex abstract concepts. They are able to use and apply previously learnt experiences.
- 312. They can formulate hypotheses, plan experimental work systematically and record data in a wide variety of appropriate formats. They understand the importance of reliability, accuracy and precision when measuring and recording data.
- 313. They understand the importance of health and safety issues and work safely.
- 314. They are able to analyse and explain patterns and can review and evaluate the quality of their work.
- 315. Standards of achievement in the three subjects are supported by students' competence in oral communication and extended written prose. Standards, particularly in physics, are supported by good numeracy skills and all students co-operate well together to solve problems.

### **Shortcomings**

- 316. The ICT skills of some students are under developed in certain areas.
- 317. A few students are uncertain in recall and understanding of previous work and are unable to explain their findings during experimental work.

318. A very few experience difficulty with recalling key reactions and working out equations.

## Design technology

**Key Stage 3: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

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

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

319. The percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*- C in GCSE resistant materials in 2006 was below the average percentages for the county and for Wales. In 2007 they were much higher than the average percentages. During this period all pupils gained grades A\*-G in the subject. This represents good progress and achievement for these pupils.

320. At A(S) and A level in 2006 and 2007, the percentage of students gaining an A-C or an A-E grade was below the county and Wales average. However the number of students involved is too small to make any meaningful comparison with the local and national averages.

### Good features

#### Key Stage 3

321. Across all the design areas, the majority of pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the design process and principles.

322. Investigative skills, the development of design ideas and the presentation of ideas are good and often very good in the project files of the most able pupils.

323. In the work of the more able pupils, practical outcomes reflect good levels of creativity, flair and imagination as seen in the cushion, pizza and wind chime projects.

324. Almost all pupils use a good level of accurate technical terminology when writing about their ideas and when describing their work to others.

325. Pupils with SEN produce good design work and product outcomes of a good standard, in relation to their abilities.

### Shortcomings

326. A small number of pupils do not fully understand the design process and principles and are unable to confidently explain and practice the design cycle.

327. Too many pupils do not make sufficient use of computers to research, design and present their ideas.

328. Pupils do not readily use computer aided design and manufacturing equipment (CAD/CAM) to design, develop and produce work.

329. The graphical communication skills of a small number of pupils are the weakest element of their design work.

330. The design-workbooks of a minority of pupils reflect weak presentational skills, which detract from the quality of the design work.

## **Key Stage 4**

### **Good features**

- 331. In resistant materials, a majority of the pupils carry out good investigative work and use a variety of sources to gather information relevant to their design task.
- 332. In the design folios of about a third of the group pupils produce good design drawings. They annotate their developmental design work well, clearly explaining their thoughts and ideas as their work progresses.
- 333. Most pupils use computer aided design and manufacturing equipment well to produce design outcomes of a good standard, as seen in their desk fan project.
- 334. Almost all pupils have good practical skills which they use successfully to produce well crafted outcomes in a range of materials.
- 335. Almost all pupils use a good level of accurate Welsh technical terminology when writing about their ideas and when describing their work to others.
- 336. Pupils with special educational needs understand the design process and apply the principles well in their designs. They produce good product outcomes that are often comparable to those of their more able peers.

### **Shortcomings**

- 337. A small number of pupils do not fully understand the design process and do not research their design work to a sufficient depth.
- 338. The graphical communication skill of a small number of pupils is the weakest element of their design work.

## **Sixth form**

### **Good features**

- 339. Most students have a good understanding of the principles of design work. They produce original, creative and innovative design solutions which meet the set criteria. In so doing they carry out thorough research work using a range of sources.
- 340. All students make varied and effective use of ICT, including the use of computer aided design software to produce good design drawings. They present and develop their ideas well.
- 341. All students deal with contemporary design concepts well. They develop a sound understanding of the work of both modern and established designers which they use well to formulate their design ideas.
- 342. Students' practical work is of a high standard. They combine a range of materials, fittings and fixings in their ideas as seen for example in the dressing table and horse drawn cart projects.

### **Shortcomings**

- 343. Students' quick developmental drawing skill is the weakest area of their work. There is insufficient use made of developmental and creative sketching books to portray annotated drawings of preliminary ideas.
- 344. Students' use of CAM equipment is underdeveloped.

## Information technology

**Key stage 3: Grade 2: Good features and no significant shortcomings**

**Key stage 4: Grade 2: Good features and no significant shortcomings**

**Sixth form: Grade 2: Good features and no significant shortcomings**

345. The percentage of pupils who gained A\*-C grades in information technology at GCSE level over the last two years was higher than the county and national averages.

346. Results at 'A' level have risen gradually over the last three years, with results in 2008 being higher than those nationally and close to what was expected.

### **Key stage 3**

#### **Good features**

347. Pupils use a variety of software very effectively and confidently, showing an awareness of audience and purpose.

348. Good standards are achieved in the information communication, data handling and modelling elements. Pupils can create presentations by using presentation software, word processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets and database, as well as using e-mail and resources from the internet.

349. Pupils save their work methodically, naming their files appropriately and are able to find their work quickly and easily.

#### **Shortcomings**

350. The higher skills of the more able pupils have not been developed and refined sufficiently in data handling and modelling elements.

### **Key stage 4**

#### **Good features**

351. Pupils show a good understanding of the basic concepts of the subject. They know and explain the particular qualities of the various software packages well.

352. Coursework is of a good standard. Pupils of all abilities plan, design solutions logically and choose appropriate software.

#### **Shortcomings**

353. There are no significant shortcomings.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Good features**

354. Coursework is of a good standard, with students benefiting from constructive and consistent feedback to develop their skills and raise the standard of work.

355. Students show a good understanding of the principles and concepts of the subject. They know a variety of ICT applications and understand their main effects on organisations, companies and society.

356. Students display the ability to design and produce solutions to substantial design problems. They can implement the appropriate test strategies and convey problem solutions clearly.

## Shortcomings

357. There are no significant shortcomings.

### History

**Key stage 3: Grade 2: Good features and no significant shortcomings**

**Key stage 4: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

**Sixth form: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

358. In KS4, results are consistently better than the county with a high percentage gaining the higher grades. Every pupil who has sat an exam in the subject over the last three years has succeeded in gaining a GCSE qualification and a high percentage of pupils choose the subject each year. The performance of boys and girls is close and higher than the performance of pupils in the county. These results are excellent.

359. Over the last three years, every pupil at 'A' level gained grades A-C with a high percentage obtaining the highest grade and in 2008, 75% gaining grades A-B. The average score in history has been consistently higher than other subjects in the school and the county.

### Key stage 4

#### Outstanding features

360. Pupils' standards of achievement in external results are consistently higher than the national and county figure.

361. Pupils make very good progress in line with their ability. There are several examples of historical skills of a high standard being attained. This includes:

- making knowledgeable decisions based on historical evidence and communicating evaluations and comments in a variety of ways, clearly and efficiently;
- very effective questioning by pupils and evaluating based on detailed historical information and sophisticated skills, and
- applying information very effectively to develop historical arguments and come to balanced and well thought out judgements. Examples of this were seen at several levels of ability.

### Key stage 3 and Key stage 4

#### Good features

362. Pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the past and of the history of their local area and the history of Wales.

363. They make sensible decisions, based on historical evidence and select, recall and arrange information well.

364. Pupils can present historical opinion effectively and use a variety of methods to do so. They can appreciate that the opinions of people from the past on their era can be different to the way in which they have been depicted and interpreted since then. They are also aware that several pictures or interpretations of people, issues and events from the past are possible.

365. Pupils can make increasingly good links and comparisons between aspects of the periods, themes and topics being studied.

366. Methods of teaching skills and assessment for learning are having a constructive effect on standards of work and pupils' responses in each key stage. As a result, pupils can evaluate their own learning and plan the next stage well.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **Key Stage 3**

367. A minority of pupils, especially boys, make less progress than they could, due to the lack of challenge in some lessons.

368. Pupils of all abilities do not work at the highest level of their ability in each lesson, because tasks have not been sufficiently differentiated.

#### **Key stages 3 and 4**

369. Standards of achievement fall in those lessons where the pace of the lesson does not maintain the challenge for the pupils.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Outstanding features**

370. Students combine and evaluate interpretations very well and show their understanding of the past very effectively.

371. Students can analyse a range of historical evidence from primary and secondary sources, concisely and with penetration and discernment.

372. Students succeed in developing sophisticated and independent historical arguments, offering reasons and using historical evidence and interpretations to come to balanced, carefully considered judgements.

#### **Good features**

373. Students discuss and analyse effectively in lessons in the period available to them.

374. They communicate clearly and fluently using the appropriate language and structure.

375. They have detailed information of the historical periods, issues and personalities they are studying.

## **Geography**

**Key stage 3: Grade 3: Good features outweighing shortcomings**

**Key stage 4: Grade 2: Good features and no significant shortcomings**

**Sixth form: Grade 2: Good features and no significant shortcomings**

376. The percentage of pupils gaining A\*-C grades at GCSE has increased consistently since 2005 and was higher than the county figure in 2007.

377. The percentage of students who received A-C grades was lower than the county percentage in AS and A2 examinations in 2006 and 2007. Results for 2008 are good and higher than the county percentage.

### **Key stage 3**

#### **Good features**

378. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of the location and features of places. They have a good knowledge of the location of tectonic plates and the St Helens volcano.
379. The majority of pupils have a sound grasp of a wide range of geographical terms. Key words are used correctly in their studies of the local area, earthquakes and population.
380. Pupils with SEN produce work of a good standard. They have a good knowledge and understanding of weather elements and the main features of volcanoes.
381. The majority of pupils display a good understanding of the 'one child' policy in China. They show confidence in their use of the terms 'pull' and 'push' using examples of both correctly.
382. A majority of pupils have a good understanding of the relationship between people and the natural environment. They understand the causes and effects of earthquakes, and how people respond to that type of disaster.

### **Shortcomings**

383. A few pupils are uncertain of the relationships between tectonic plates and earthquakes and the terminology associated with the process.
384. A minority of pupils' books contain unfinished work. This has a negative effect on the standard of their work.
385. The more able pupils do not always complete work that reflects their ability.
386. A very few pupils are uncertain in their use of basic geographical skills.

### **Key stage 4**

#### **Good features**

387. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of geographical terminology. Subject vocabulary is used confidently to complete tasks in a variety of aspects of their studies to a good standard.
388. On the whole, pupils with SEN present work of a good standard. They have a sound knowledge of compass references and a good knowledge of tectonic plates and volcanoes.
389. Fieldwork contributes substantially to the good standards as pupils gather data, analyse, interpret and record it in extended course work. Their work in designing a questionnaire to gather information on three estates in Caernarfon is good.
390. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the features of tropical rain forests. They show a good knowledge of animals and plants that live in the forests and how they have adapted to live in a difficult environment.
391. Pupils show a sound grasp of the good features and shortcomings of different types of graphs. They are completely confident in their use of a wide range of graphs to present their course work.

### **Shortcomings**

392. The standard of some pupils' work is limited by their inability to complete tasks in sufficient depth and detail.

### **Sixth form**

### **Good features**

393. Students are confident in their interpretation of patterns and processes in the majority of aspects of physical and human geography. Their research and interrogation skills have developed to a good standard through their fieldwork activities.
394. Most students apply geographical terminology appropriately when completing particular units of work.
395. Students use a good range of statistical techniques, mapping skills, graphs and ICT very effectively when analysing and recording data on all aspects of their course.
396. Most students display good standards in all aspects of their work.
397. They complete their work neatly and methodically, including the relevant notes and units of work.
398. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the conflict that arises between the conservationist and the developer in some parts of the world such as the tropical rain forests in Brazil. They understand the effect that the destruction of the forests has on the environment and on the lives of the indigenous population and society.
399. Students have a sound grasp of the causes and effects of the earthquake in Kobe. They understand the multilateral argument that follows natural disasters, such as earthquakes, on society and the general economic situation of the country.

### **Shortcomings**

400. Some aspects of students' written and oral work reflects a lack of detail and the depth expected at AS and A2 levels.

## **School's response to the inspection**

The findings of the inspection acknowledge that standards at Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen are good with no important shortcomings, indeed are higher than we awarded ourselves in the school self-evaluation. Since our last inspection we have improved standards in subjects such as history, English, design and technology and science, and maintained the standards in others. We were glad that the inspectors found our pupils to be naturally friendly, courteous with a good standard of behaviour. It was also confirmed that our students had outstanding features. Even so, we recognise the need to increase the outstanding features in respect of standards of achievement and teaching.

Equally, our arrangements and regulations in caring for pupils are outstanding, which again is a reflection of the time and work by staff in these particular aspects.

The report on the inspection is a fair reflection of Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen as it is currently, namely that it is a caring school, a happy community with a curriculum that meets the needs of pupils very well.

An action plan will be drawn up to address the recommendations in the report and the school has already identified the main areas in the recommendations for development.

Emphasis will be placed on raising pupils' standards of achievement further in all subjects in KS3 and we expect aspects such as 4 step lessons and assessment for learning to embed even further over the next year and to see the outcomes. Further attention will be paid to the Skills Framework to enable pupils to nurture skills in order to make further progress.

Where it is possible to do so, staff and governors will address the recommendations before the end of the school year. We also hope to work with the UA with regard to the recommendations concerning the school's buildings and environment.

Positively, inspectors identified several aspects and procedures in the school that will help us to address some of the shortcomings by sharing good practice further.

The school would like to acknowledge and thank the inspection team for their thoroughness, professionalism and courtesy throughout the process.

A copy of the school's action plan in response to the inspection's recommendations will be sent to all parents. The governors' annual report to parents will report on the progress we are making in respect of the inspection's recommendations.

## Appendix 1

### Basic information about the school

Name of school	Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen
School type	Naturally bilingual, community comprehensive
Age range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Ffordd Bethel Caernarfon Gwynedd
Postcode	LL55 1HW
Telephone number	01286 673076
Headteacher	Mr Vaughan Williams
Date of appointment	April 2008
Chair of governors	Mr Geraint Clwyd Jones
Reporting inspector	Dr Neil Trevor Jones
Dates of inspection	20-23 September 2008

## Appendix 2

### School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	155	131	163	131	154	80	76	890

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	52	5	55.5

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16.0 :1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	-
Average teaching group size	19.6
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	76%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	93.5	92.5	90.9	89.9	90.2	91.6	89.1	91.2
Term 2	94.7	93.6	92.0	90.6	91.6	91.3	90.8	92.2
Term 3	92.2	91.1	86.7	89.7	95.2	91.2	97.8	91.5

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	11.5%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	20 temporary 1 permanent 0 from ethnic minorities

## Appendix 3

### National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 3:

National Curriculum KS3 Assessment Results 2008																
Total number of pupils in Y9: 132																
Percentage of pupils at each level																
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP	
English	Teacher	School	0	0	0	0	0	3.0	7.6	20.5	35.6	19.7	12.9	0.8		
	assessment	National	0.6	0	0.1	0.5	0.4	1.5	6.1	21.3	37.1	24.2	7.9	0.3		
Welsh	Teacher	School	0	0	0	0	0	2.4	11.0	17.3	29.1	25.2	14.2	0.8		
	assessment	National	0.3	0	0	0.1	0.1	0.6	5.7	20.9	37.2	26.2	8.7	0.2		
Mathematics	Teacher	School	0	0	0	0	0	1.5	11.4	11.4	40.2	18.9	16.7	0		
	assessment	National	0.5	0	0.1	0.5	0.4	1.3	6.7	18.1	28.9	27.5	1.2	0.1		
Science	Teacher	School	0.8	0	0	0	0	2.3	6.8	17.4	30.3	19.7	22.7	0		
	assessment	National	0.6	0	0.1	0.5	0.2	0.7	5.1	19.0	35.6	27.2	10.8	0.1		

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

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language) by teacher assessment			
In the school	65%	In Wales	60%

### Public Examination Results:

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ			
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2008			161
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil			370
The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2008:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent			
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	57	62	56
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	83	89	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	44	46	41
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	100	99	98
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	77	85	
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	95	97	
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	0	2	3
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	4	2	3
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1			
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2			

<b>For pupils aged 17, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs</b>	
Number of pupils aged 17 in January 2008	73
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2008	72
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2008	1

	<b>School</b>	<b>UA</b>	<b>Wales</b>
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	68	66	69
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E			
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	691	708	621
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2			
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3			

## **Appendix 4**

### **Evidence base of the inspection**

Twelve inspectors spent the equivalent of 43 inspection days at the school and met as a team prior to the inspection.

Inspectors visited:

- 112 lessons; 80 in the six subjects inspected and 32 in other subjects;
- registrations, assemblies and acts of collective worship, and
- a variety of extra-curricular activities.

The inspection team held meetings with:

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

The team also considered the following:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- 80 responses to the parents' questionnaire, 7 letters from parents and eight comments on the questionnaires
- documentation provided by the school both before and during the inspection;
- a wide range of pupils previous and current work, and
- samples of pupils reports.

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

## Appendix 5

### Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team Member	Responsibilities and Contributions to the Key Questions
Dr. Neil Trevor Jones Registered Inspector	Summary, recommendations Responsibility for key question 1 Responsibility for key question 5
Gwilym Williams	Responsibility for key question 4 Contributions to science
Dylan Jones Lay Inspector	Contributions to key question 11,3,4 and 7
Peredur W. Francis	Responsibility for key question 3
David Hughes	Responsibility for key question 2
Glyn Davies	Responsibility for key question 6 Contributions to science
Anna Roberts	Responsibility for key question 7 English
Delyth Williams	Science
Dr. David Charles	Information technology
Dr. Dylan Jones	History
Keith Hopkins	Design technology
Huw Llewelyn	Geography

Mr. Gwyn Tudur, deputy head at the school was the school's nominee.  
There was no peer assessor.

### ***Acknowledgement***

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

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