

Report by Miss Glynis Owen
Barry Comprehensive School, 12/02/07

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Barry Comprehensive School
Port Road West
Barry
CF62 8ZJ**

School Number: 6734061

Date of Inspection: 12 – 15 February 2007

by

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8205**

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- * nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local education authorities (LEAs);
- * primary schools;
- * secondary schools;
- * special schools;
- * pupil referral units;
- * independent schools;
- * further education;
- * adult community-based learning;
- * youth support services;
- * LEAs;
- * teacher education and training;
- * work-based learning;
- * careers companies; and
- * the education, guidance and training elements of Jobcentre Plus.

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

The inspection of Barry Comprehensive School took place between 12/02/07 and 15/02/07. An independent team of inspectors, led by Miss Glynis Owen undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

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

"There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a standard inspection."

Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

Contents	Page
Context	1
Summary	2
Recommendations	8
Standards	9
Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?	9
The quality of education and training	15
Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	15
Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	18
Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	21
Leadership and management	25
Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?	25
Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	27
Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	29
Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning	33
Welsh second language	33
Mathematics	35
Design technology	37
Information technology	39
History	42
Religious education (including religious studies)	44
School's response to the inspection	46
Appendices	47
1 Basic information about the school	47
2 School data and indicators	48
3 National Curriculum assessments results	49
4 Evidence base of the inspection	51
5 Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team	52

Context

The nature of the provider

1. Barry Comprehensive School is a large, 11-18 school for boys, serving the town of Barry and the surrounding area, and maintained by the Vale of Glamorgan Unitary Authority (UA). Currently there are 1365 pupils on roll, an increase of just over a hundred since the time of the last inspection in April 2001. Of these, 156 are in the sixth form, where provision is offered in partnership with Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School.
2. The school serves thirteen partner primary schools. Pupils come predominantly from the town of Barry, but also from Rhws and Wenvoe. Eighteen point nine per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, compared to 16.6% nationally. A very small minority comes from minority ethnic groups, and 99% of pupils come from homes where English is the predominant language. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language. Three pupils receive support teaching in English as an additional language (EAL).
3. Pupils come from the full range of ability, though results in key stage (KS) 2 tests, prior to entry, indicate scores which are below the national average. A significant percentage of pupils has low reading scores. Currently, 22.4% of pupils are on the register of special educational needs (SEN), which is a slightly higher percentage than nationally. Of these, 31 have statements of SEN.
4. The headteacher and two assistant headteachers were in post at the time of the last inspection. The other three members of the senior leadership team - the deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers – joined the team at the start of this academic year.

The school's priorities and targets

5. The school's motto is "Opportunity to Succeed" and its five aims are to:
 - provide a pleasant, safe and attractive learning environment;
 - ensure that children receive a high quality education so that, regardless of ability, they will achieve their full potential;
 - treat children as individuals so that they gain in confidence in themselves and enjoy being part of the school community;
 - provide a caring and respectful community so that students learn to respect individual differences and develop a social conscience; and
 - promote our achievements and hard work so that the community can be proud of its young people.
6. It sets numerical targets, that, in 2007:

- 46% of pupils should reach at least level 5 in all three core subjects combined, in teacher assessments at the end of KS3;
- 65% of pupils should gain at least five grades A*-C in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE);
- 94% should gain at least five grades A*-G; and
- 99% should achieve at least one grade A*-G at GCSE.

Summary

7. Barry Comprehensive School is a good school with a significant number of outstanding features. Through the inspired and inspiring leadership of the headteacher, the school has been transformed in recent years and continues to go from strength to strength. In these efforts, and in the school's current success, he has the strong support of the governors, senior leadership team and staff and the respect of pupils and parents. The school now provides a wealth of curricular and extra-curricular activities and outstanding pastoral care and support, which enable pupils to make the most of these opportunities. The school has received several national awards for the quality of its provision and practice.

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?	1
4. How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1
5. How effective are leadership and strategic management?	1
6. How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	1
7. How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	2

8. These grades match those of the school's self-evaluation report in all seven key questions.

Standards of achievement

9. Among all the indicators of the public examination results, there are two outstanding aspects of the GCSE results. The improvement in the percentage of pupils gaining at least five grades A*-C, at GCSE, has been recognised in the award of 'Most improved school in Wales' for three years running, 2003-2005. Sixty-eight per cent of pupils reached this level in 2006, a significant number through success in vocationally-based courses. Also, all pupils in the last five years have left school with qualifications, denoting very good progress at the school.
10. In the six subjects inspected, the following grades were awarded:

Subject	KS3	KS4	Sixth Form
Welsh second language	3	3	-
Mathematics	1	2	2
Design and Technology	3	2	2
Information Technology	3	2	2
History	2	2	2
Religious Education	2	3	2

11. Standards are adversely affected by limited time in the short courses to GCSE in Welsh second language and religious education, and in information technology at KS3.
12. In the sixth form, there are no courses leading to Advanced Subsidiary (AS) or Advanced (A) level examinations in Welsh second language and religious education. The grade awarded in religious education relates to the statutory provision.
13. In the 81 lessons observed in these six subjects, the following grades were awarded for standards of achievement:

Key Stage	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3 & KS4	13%	52%	29%	6%	0%
Sixth Form	0%	92%	8%	0%	0%
Total	11%	58%	26%	5%	0%

14. The sample of lessons seen in the sixth form was very small and therefore comparisons between key stages are not reliable.
15. Overall, the percentage of lessons graded 1 and 2 exceeds the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) target for this year of 65%. The percentage graded 3 and above does not quite meet the target of 98%. However, both figures exceed those for all inspections in Wales 2005-2006. They are also a significant improvement on the figures of the last inspection, when 43% of lessons were graded 1 and 2, and 89% were graded 3 and above.
16. Results in public examinations have also improved considerably. Apart from the increase in the percentage of grades A*-C at GCSE, the percentage of grades A*-G has improved. In the national curriculum (NC) assessments at the end of KS3, there has also been significant improvement.
17. Results in most indicators at GCSE are above or well above the national average, and that of similar schools. However, the percentage of pupils gaining a grade A*-C in the three core subjects combined is well below the average nationally and that for similar schools.

18. At KS3, the percentage of pupils reaching at least level five, in the three core subjects combined, is also below the national average and that for schools with a similar intake, though standards observed during the inspection indicate an improving trend. In addition, pupils gain accreditation at KS3 in the three key skills of communication, application of number and information and communications technology (ICT).
19. Results at A level reflect appropriately the wide range of ability in the sixth form, and are broadly in line with the national average.
20. Throughout the school, pupils and students have good key skills in communication, numeracy and ICT, and use these effectively in subjects across the curriculum. The exception is that standards in bilingualism are not well developed.
21. Pupils of differing abilities and backgrounds do well at the school, through good teaching, effective learning support, a wide range of courses to meet individual aptitudes and interests, and many opportunities to achieve success in extra-curricular activities.
22. The outstanding feature of pupils' and students' achievement is the progress they make in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is an orderly and respectful community and standards of behaviour overall are very good. This is a particular strength, for the school meets its challenges, in terms of behaviour and attitudes. Challenging behaviour is modified and pupils gain much in their personal development.
23. The annual attendance rate has improved from less than 87% at the last inspection to 91% last year. Pupils and students recognise the importance of regular attendance.

The quality of education and training

24. There are a number of outstanding features in the:
 - relationships between teachers and pupils;
 - curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities;
 - partnerships with parents, employers and other providers in the community;
 - quality of care, support and guidance;
 - provision for additional learning needs; and
 - provision for inclusion and equal opportunities.
25. The following grades were awarded for teaching in the 81 lessons observed in the six subjects, and in the 56 lessons observed in other subjects:

Subjects	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6 subjects	21%	43%	31%	5%	0%
Other subjects	30%	57%	13%	0%	0%
Total	25%	49%	23%	3%	0%

26. Although the size and nature of this sample are different from those of the last inspection, these grades show that teaching has improved considerably. Six years ago, just under half of lessons were graded 1 and 2, and 10% were graded 4 and 5. The percentage of lessons graded 1 and 2 in this inspection (74%) is above the figure of 69% in all inspections in Wales 2005-2006, and there are fewer lessons graded 4 or 5 than nationally.
27. There is a significant amount of outstanding teaching in the school – one in four lessons – where teaching is often innovative. There is also much good teaching. However, there is some inconsistency, between and within subjects, in the pace and challenge in lessons.
28. Teachers and support staff are highly motivated and enthusiastic, have very good relationships with pupils and are very generous in the amount of time they give to them outside lesson time. Lessons are well planned, learning objectives are shared with pupils and a good range of resources is used effectively.
29. The planning, management and co-ordination of pastoral care and support are outstanding. The collaboration, among all staff, leads to consistency in practice, with strong input from the senior learning mentors, pastoral co-ordinators and the full-time behaviour support manager, in particular.
30. The quality of the personal and social education (PSE) programme is outstanding, with effective correlation between content and key skills' development.
31. The monitoring and assessment of pupils' and students' work, progress and achievement are good. Written and verbal feedback are of high quality and the use of self-assessment and peer-assessment is unusually well developed.
32. The range of courses at KS4 is very good, both at school and in collaboration with the local college. The joint sixth-form provision with Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School similarly extends the range of options. The provision for developing pupils' key skills has received a national award and pupils have also gained recognition nationally for success in a range of competitions.
33. Work-related education is prominent in the curriculum and there are very good links with local employers. Pupils are prepared effectively for lifelong learning and for employment opportunities.
34. The extent to which individuals are supported, in order that they will achieve success, is outstanding. There is much innovative practice. The widespread weekly mentoring at KS4 and communication with parents, the study and revision weekends at a local hotel and university, and the evening sessions to help parents support their children's learning are only a few examples. The school's commitment to promoting pupils' achievement is exceptionally generous.

35. Within this, there is emphasis on the individual and on the appropriate provision for differing abilities. Additional learning needs, including those of gifted and talented pupils, are quickly identified and strategies put in place, with effective support from the wider community as well as from the school. The atmosphere is inclusive. Attitudes and values are at the heart of policy and provision, and they are evident in practice.

Leadership and management

36. There are a number of outstanding features in the:
- exceptionally good leadership of the headteacher;
 - high quality of leadership by governors, the senior leadership team and middle managers;
 - shared values with all those associated with the school;
 - self-evaluation and planning procedures and reflective culture;
 - continuing professional development of teaching and support staff; and
 - effectiveness of leadership in practice, in the progress since the last inspection and current levels of success.
37. The vision and influential leadership, by example, of the headteacher have earned him the respect of all those associated with the school. Staff are highly motivated to share his vision and commitment to the school. All pupils are known by name and as individuals, by the headteacher, and valued. Parents are highly supportive of the school.
38. Governors give very good leadership in their involvement in strategic planning, and in monitoring and evaluating performance, so that they act as 'critical friends'.
39. The senior leadership team supports the headteacher very effectively. Roles are clearly defined and there is a strong sense of teamwork. Within the team, there is a very good balance between innovation and supporting current practice, and between emphasis on matters academic and pastoral.
40. The quality of middle management is also generally very good. Enthusiasm is evident at all levels of leadership and there are effective management systems in place.
41. The school is particularly successful at analysing and resolving its problems. Self-evaluation systems are embedded, with contributions from all interested parties and, in practice, a reflective culture is evident. Planning for improvement is comprehensive and has resulted in measurable progress in many areas.
42. Staff are seen as high priority in this process. The staffing level of teaching and support staff, and their calibre are both good. Continuing professional development is an important component of their effectiveness in practice.

43. The accommodation is sufficient for the number on roll, but there are shortcomings in several areas and in the older buildings in particular. There are also some good features, and the school makes best use of the accommodation, using display work to enhance its appearance as a learning environment.
44. There has been substantial investment in ICT facilities recently. In central resource areas, in departments and in the learning resource centre (LRC), these are used effectively to improve pupils' learning and success in examinations.
45. Funding for the school is well below average and, despite a pro-active approach to gaining additional funds, and tight controls on spending, the school marginally overspent its budget 2005-2006. This overspend has been fully underwritten by the UA, providing the school with a short-term loan for an agreed period.

Progress since the last inspection

46. The school has made very good progress, since the last inspection, generally, and in the following key issues from the last report:
 - standards and teaching;
 - standards in those areas judged unsatisfactory in the last report;
 - self-evaluation and planning, which now have outstanding features;
 - attendance and punctuality;
 - the development of key skills;
 - meeting statutory requirements for the provision of religious education in the sixth form and for collective worship; and
 - resolving virtually all the health and safety issues identified.
47. However, the food technology room still has shortcomings and there is still a potential risk to safety in the number of cars driving into and out of the car-park, as pupils enter and leave the site.

Recommendations

In order to build on its current success, the school should focus on the following targets from its school development plan.

R1. Continue to improve standards and examination results.

R2. Increase provision for courses where time is currently limited.

R3. Work with the UA to improve the accommodation.

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

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

Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

Pupils' success in attaining agreed learning goals

49. There are many good features in the standards which pupils achieve.
50. Results in the NC tests and teachers' assessments at the end of KS3 have improved significantly since the last inspection. In 2006, 44% of pupils reached at least level five in all three core subjects combined, compared to 33% six years ago. Results in mathematics have been highest, and have been above average compared to those of similar schools, in the last two years. They have also been in line with or above the national average in these two years.
51. However, results in all other indicators remain below or well below the average nationally and those of similar schools. Nevertheless, from observations in class during the inspection, there is an improving trend, and standards are higher than the tests/assessment results suggest.
52. Among the many indicators in the GCSE results, there is outstanding success in the percentage of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C at GCSE. The school has received the national award, for three years running, 2003-2005, for the most improved school in Wales. In 2006, 68% of pupils reached this level, compared to 54% nationally, and 37% at the time of the last inspection. A significant number of pupils gains success in vocationally-based courses. Compared to similar schools, results placed the school in the top quartile.
53. In the last five years, all pupils have left school with qualifications, which is also an outstanding aspect of the GCSE results.
54. At GCSE, in addition to the improvement at grades A*-C, there has been improvement in the percentage of grades A*-G. In 2006, 90% of pupils gained at least five grades A*-G, compared to 86% nationally. This also placed the school in the top quartile, compared to schools with a similar intake.
55. As at KS3, pupils' performance in the three core subjects combined, at GCSE, is below or well below the average nationally and in similar schools. Nevertheless, there is strong performance in English Language, where results equal those nationally, and also in English Literature. Standards achieved in classes observed in the other two core subjects suggest that performance is improving.

56. Whilst a small minority of pupils achieves the top grades in subjects across the curriculum, there are not enough A* and A grades generally.
57. The strongest performance at GCSE, in terms of adding a measure of progress to pupils' prior attainment, has been in drama, art, music, geography and vocational courses.
58. In the six subjects inspected, standards in mathematics at KS3 are good with outstanding features.
59. Standards are good with no important shortcomings in:
- history and religious education at KS3; and
 - mathematics, design and technology, information technology and history at KS4.
60. Good features outweigh shortcomings in:
- Welsh second language, design and technology and information technology at KS3; and
 - Welsh second language and religious education at KS4.
61. Standards are adversely affected by limited time in:
- the short-course GCSE in religious education;
 - the short-course GCSE in Welsh second language; and
 - information technology at KS3.
62. In the 69 lessons observed in these six subjects at KS3 and KS4, the following grades were awarded:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	15%	46%	31%	8%	0%
KS4	10%	60%	27%	3%	0%
KS3 and KS4	13%	52%	29%	6%	0%

63. Standards are higher at KS4 than at KS3. Overall, across both key stages, these grades are higher than in all inspections in Wales 2005-2006, when 10% of lessons were graded 1 and 51% were graded 2. Nationally, 6% of lessons were graded 4.
64. The strong emphasis on key skills is effective in practice and the standards in each key skill have improved since the last inspection. Pupils mostly listen attentively. They give extended answers when given opportunities, as in the large majority of lessons. Reading skills develop significantly and are generally good. Written work has a good level of technical accuracy in relation to ability, and extended writing is fluent.

65. Standards in numeracy are also good and pupils use number confidently and appropriately in a range of subjects.
66. Standards in ICT across the curriculum are good and represent a significant improvement from the unsatisfactory levels of skill at the time of the last inspection. Pupils use ICT regularly in most subjects, to enhance standards in the subject, and also for independent work in the LRC.
67. There is a strong sense of teamwork within the school and pupils collaborate well. They respond particularly well to the many opportunities for practical work, in creative and problem-solving activities.
68. Bilingual skills are not developed to the full. The percentage gaining a qualification in Welsh second language at GCSE is below average and bilingual skills are not well developed outside Welsh lessons.

Their progress in learning

69. In comparison with attainment on entry, pupils make good progress, particularly the significant proportion of pupils with low reading scores, and the very small minority with EAL.
70. The school is particularly successful in encouraging every aptitude, supporting identified needs and providing courses at GCSE in which pupils of differing abilities will achieve well. The percentage gaining at least five grades A*-C and five grades A*-G, and the fact that all pupils leave with qualifications are testament to the progress made. Pupils succeed regardless of their social, ethnic or linguistic background.
71. Pupils of differing abilities achieve well, though the most able do not gain the A*/A grades at GCSE in all subjects. Pupils of average and lower ability and pupils with SEN achieve particularly well. In particular, accreditation in the three key skills of communication, application of number and ICT at KS3, and the progress made in classes in the core subjects support their achievement across the curriculum. At KS4, strong performance in vocational subjects gives a significant number of pupils the opportunity to succeed, as does the modular approach of the Welsh Baccalaureate.
72. In all these areas, pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Written and verbal feedback is informative; self-assessment and peer-assessment are unusually well developed. Thus pupils have the information by which they know how to improve their performance.
73. Nevertheless, there is a measure of inconsistency across the curriculum in the extent to which pupils are fully challenged. There is some variation evident in the grades awarded in the six subjects inspected. There is similar variation in progress in lessons observed in other subjects. The above variation is not predominantly between subjects, though there is some variation, but between classes within subjects.

74. When pace is brisk and activities are varied, pupils concentrate for longer. When tasks challenge them and give them opportunities for success, particularly tasks of a practical nature, pupils make most progress.

The development of their personal, social and learning skills

75. The effective development of pupils' personal, social and learning skills is an outstanding feature of the school. Standards of behaviour overall are very good. Pupils understand the high expectations which the school has of them, both in terms of work and in terms of their behaviour and attitudes. These expectations are widely fulfilled. The school is an orderly and respectful community. Only one pupil has been permanently excluded since the last inspection, and there are relatively few temporary exclusions.
76. This is particularly creditable, because the school has faced and faces challenges in terms of attitudes and behaviour, and successfully meets them. All pupils gain much from that experience; those whose behaviour is transformed learn considerably more. The outcomes owe much to the quality of teaching, the generous commitment of all staff, including the headteacher, and the effectiveness of behaviour management and pastoral support.
77. Pupils are well motivated to succeed, through this support. They are prepared to work independently and thus gain the skills which will enable them to engage with lifelong learning and employment. They are tolerant, within an inclusive and diverse community.
78. The values at the heart of the school are evident in practice. Pupils gain much, in their spiritual and moral development, from the high quality of assemblies, from the very good relationships, from input in lessons across the curriculum and from the effective follow-up of unacceptable attitudes or behaviour.
79. Pupils' social and cultural development is also very good. The wide range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities, for working together, results in very good collaboration and respect for others. The Welsh dimension is encouraged in classes across the curriculum and the diversity of the school community is celebrated. The arts, drama, film and music are all promoted and opportunities taken up by many pupils of differing abilities.
80. The annual attendance rate has improved from under 87% to 91% since the last inspection. This does not yet meet the WAG target of 93% but pupils are aware of the importance of regular attendance and absences are followed up quickly.
81. Careers guidance and work-related education, including work-experience placements, prepare pupils effectively for future choices. The unusually good feature is the extent to which parents are involved in supporting their children's learning and choices. The evening sessions for parents cover a range of issues and develop their skills in these areas.

Sixth Form

Their success in attaining agreed learning goals

82. Results in the sixth form, in shared provision with Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School, generally reflect the abilities of students. The percentage of grades A-C, A-E and the average points' score are all broadly in line with the national average. However, the retention rate, in courses, during the two years has some shortcomings.
83. Four of the six subjects inspected have AS and A2 level courses. In mathematics, design and technology, information technology and history, standards are good with no important shortcomings.
84. Statutory requirements are met in religious education through a series of focus days. Whilst these were not observed, students' views and written submissions were taken into account. Standards are good with no important shortcomings.
85. In the 12 lessons observed in the four subjects, the following grades were awarded. However, this is a very small sample and reliable comparisons cannot be made with the other key stages or with results nationally.

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
0%	92%	8%	0%	0%

86. Students have good key skills in communication, numeracy and ICT. Those who do not have appropriate qualifications in English, mathematics or ICT at GCSE attend timetabled lessons in the specific key skill and gain accreditation in the sixth form. Students use their key skills effectively in subjects across the curriculum.
87. Speaking skills, in particular, improve from KS4. Students are confident and articulate. They give presentations effectively, sometimes with the use of ICT facilities. They also collaborate well, in creative and problem-solving exercises.

Their progress in learning

88. There is a breadth of AS and A2 level courses to suit all aptitudes and interests, but provision does not include vocationally-based courses in the sixth form. Some students embark on courses which they find difficult, and do not make the required progress. The school is tackling the issue of retention rates in sixth-form courses.
89. Students receive regular feedback, written and verbal, on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Those not fulfilling their potential are identified and counselled. However, the appropriate emphasis in the sixth form on independent learning is, to some extent, a contrast with the vast amount of support which students received as pupils in KS4. This balance is also a focus of evaluation currently, by the school.

90. The large majority of students makes good progress in the sixth form. Many go on to Higher Education institutions of their choice, and there is a tradition of application to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

The development of their personal, social and learning skills

91. As at KS3 and KS4, students make very good progress in their development as young adults. They take a leading role in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and in activities with younger pupils, provision which is being extended currently.
92. Students are articulate and friendly. Many choose to travel between the two schools for one or two of their subjects and are well organised and responsible about those arrangements.
93. Attendance in both years in the sixth form last year, across the three terms, averaged between 90% and 95%. Students recognise the need for regular attendance, to achieve success.
94. Students show good awareness of a range of topical issues. They have many opportunities to reflect, through assemblies and lessons, and they respond personally, for example in raising funds for various causes. They are also aware of and respect diversity.
95. They are effectively prepared for the following stage of education or employment. Students choose to complete a work-experience placement at the end of Y12, careers guidance is valued and there are many opportunities to attend open days at universities and to receive practice in being interviewed.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

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

97. The following table shows the quality of teaching and assessment in the 69 lessons observed in the six subjects and 46 lessons in other subjects, at KS3 and KS4.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6 Subjects	23%	38%	33%	6%	0%
Other subjects	26%	59%	15%	0%	0%
Total	24%	47%	26%	3%	0%

98. In 24% of all lessons observed, there were outstanding features in the quality of teaching, across both key stages and in similar proportions. In 47% of lessons teaching had good features and no important shortcomings. Good features outweighed shortcomings in 26% of lessons, and, in 3%, there were shortcomings in important areas. These figures are just above the national figures for 2005-2006 overall, and in the percentage of lessons graded 1, in particular.

99. An outstanding feature of teaching is the positive working relationship and rapport between teachers, support staff and pupils.

100. In the lessons where teaching is outstanding (24%), this is characterised by:

- lively pace and use of resources to motivate and engage all pupils;
- effective questioning to encourage and probe thinking skills; and
- monitoring and assessment of pupils' understanding and progress.

101. In the majority of lessons seen, the above features are evident but to a lesser extent. Teachers carefully plan a variety of learning activities and use a range of resources which challenge, motivate and engage pupils. Learning objectives are regularly shared with pupils. Work set is appropriately challenging across the ability range. Opportunities for pupils to work independently and co-operatively are regular features of most lessons.

102. Teachers display a good knowledge of their subjects and course and examination requirements. Coupled with this is an understanding of what constitutes effective learning. An initiative (CADRE) to develop thinking skills is successfully enhancing pupils' learning skills.
103. Key skills are identified in planning and opportunities for pupils to develop these are regularly provided in lessons. Good reference is made to Welsh culture. There are, however, few instances of bilingualism used in lessons.
104. Homework is used well to consolidate and extend learning. Teachers promote equality of opportunity, based on an informed knowledge of individual needs and strengths. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.
105. Shortcomings in a small minority of lessons are associated with lack of pace and challenge, too much direction by teachers and insufficient opportunities for pupils, especially the more able, to achieve their potential.

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

106. Overall the monitoring and assessment of pupils' work, progress and achievement are good.
107. The good features of assessment in most subjects are:
 - regular up-to-date and accurate marking;
 - oral and written feedback given to pupils; and
 - positive use of self-assessment and peer-assessment, allowing pupils to reflect on their own and others' achievement and identify targets for improvement.
108. Manageable pupil data sheets for each class effectively inform teachers of pupils' progress and are used to identify underachievement. In KS3, a majority of departments is identifying gifted and talented pupils, who meet regularly with designated tutors. The resulting project work stretches the learning of these pupils.
109. In the best practice, pupils' knowledge of their performance is enhanced by their ability to recognise their level of achievement, linked to NC levels. Their own evaluation is then matched and shared with teachers' evaluations to set targets.
110. In a very few cases, the quality of marking gives insufficient indication of how pupils can improve their work.
111. The school meets the statutory requirements for assessment and reporting and satisfies examination board regulations.
112. Annual reports to parents are mostly of good quality. The current development to improve the consistency and quality of reports has proved to be effective in

the pilot reports for year (Y) 11. These provide a comprehensive and useful overview of the range of aspects which contribute to pupils' progress. Parents are given opportunities to comment on changes and the quality of information they receive. It is planned that the pilot will then be extended across the school. In a very few cases in KS3, there is inconsistency in the extent to which comments relate specifically to achievement in aspects of particular subjects.

Sixth Form

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

113. In the 12 lessons observed in the six subjects and the 10 lessons observed in other subjects, the grades awarded for teaching and assessment were:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6 subjects	8%	75%	17%	0%	0%
Other subjects	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Total	27%	64%	9%	0%	0%

114. In 27% of lessons observed, teaching was good with outstanding features and in 64% of lessons teaching was good with no important shortcomings. This is a high percentage, though it was a small sample and comparisons with other key stages or with national figures are therefore not reliable. In no lessons were there shortcomings in important areas.

115. Many of the outstanding and good features identified in lessons at KS3 and KS4 are present in the sixth form. These include:

- positive and productive relationships;
- detailed subject and course knowledge by teachers;
- pace, challenge and structure of lessons; and
- probing questioning and the encouragement of analytical and critical thinking.

116. A range of teaching strategies and resources is used to good effect in motivating and engaging students. Students are given the opportunity to work both independently and co-operatively and they respond well to the challenges set for them. In a very few instances, discussion is limited by the small number of students in classes.

117. In the small minority of lessons where there are some shortcomings, lessons lack pace and students are passive.

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

118. On the whole, students receive support and feedback of good quality, on their work. They are provided with good guidance on course requirements and examination techniques. Any errors and misconceptions are identified and acted upon. High standards are actively promoted.

119. Good records of students' progress and achievements are kept and regular monitoring is effectively used to identify any student giving cause for concern. Students display a good awareness of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
120. Reports for Y13 students are of good quality and are informative and helpful to students and interested parties.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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121. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade.
122. The outstanding features are the:
- balance, breadth and flexibility of learning experiences;
 - comprehensive strategies used to develop successfully learners' basic and key skills;
 - extensive range of extra-curricular activities to broaden learners' experiences;
 - variety of strategies to promote learners' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
 - very strong partnerships with parents, the community and other interested parties;
 - very effective work-related education;
 - effectiveness of strategies to tackle social disadvantage and stereotyping and ensure equality of access and opportunity for all learners; and
 - successful strategies to take account of the needs of employers.

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

123. The curriculum :
- meets pupils' learning needs and reflects the aims set out for pupils of statutory age in the Education Act of 1996;
 - is broad, balanced, flexible and coherent and provides progression between key stages;
 - gives pupils the opportunity to achieve accreditation at all key stages meeting fully learners' aspirations; and
 - meets legal and course requirements, including a daily act of collective worship.
124. A wide range of options is available at KS4 for pupils of various aptitudes. This includes a number of popular vocational courses, run in conjunction with the

local college. The school is piloting successfully the Welsh Bacalaureate Qualification at Foundation and Intermediate level.

125. However, time is limited in the short courses to GCSE in Welsh second language and religious education, and in information technology at KS3.
126. A good choice of subject options is available to sixth-form students. Provision is extended with some subjects taught in conjunction with Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School. The various courses prepare students effectively for continued studies and employment.
127. The school has developed successfully a number of strategies to develop learners' basic and key skills. Key skills are well planned in schemes of work and very well co-ordinated across the curriculum. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark.
128. During PSE lessons and tutorial time there is a strong focus on developing pupils' key skills. Pupils are given the opportunity to achieve accreditation in the core key skills. The school seeks to increase curricular time for ICT provision.
129. An impressive range of extra-curricular activities broadens learners' experiences. Pupils:
 - represent the school in many sporting teams in local fixtures and on tours abroad;
 - participate in popular and very well-supported musical and dramatic productions;
 - take part in outdoor-pursuit activities; and
 - support and enjoy numerous visits to places of educational and cultural interest.
130. The Activities Week at the end of the school year enables Y7, Y8 and Y9 pupils to participate in a number of out-of-classroom activities and to develop team-building skills.
131. The school promotes, successfully, pupils' and students' personal development. A comprehensive PSE programme, covering a wide range of topics, stimulates discussion and enriches pupils' moral and social development. By a range of innovative activities, including 'Sleepathons' at the school, pupils, students and staff work hard together to raise considerable sums of money for local and national charities.
132. Partnerships with parents, the community and other providers are outstanding. The school has developed close links with parents. They are kept fully informed of pupils' general progress and are involved closely with the highly successful mentoring programme for Y10 and Y11 pupils. The school provides evening sessions to help parents in supporting their children's learning.

133. Newsletters inform parents of school news and of various activities and events. They attend school for parents' meetings and are warmly invited to attend the various functions.
134. The campus is well utilised as a community resource for learning. Links with the local community and with a number of external agencies are very well established.
135. An outstanding feature of community links is the involvement of friends in the community in attending school weekly, to help younger pupils develop their reading skills.
136. The school has developed good curricular and pastoral links with the primary schools. Towards the end of Y6, pupils visit the school to attend lessons and to familiarise themselves with their new environment. An informative and successful induction evening is arranged for all new parents.
137. The school is fully involved in the initial training of teachers and has developed very good links with several initial teacher training (ITT) institutions.

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

138. Work-related education is prominent in the curriculum. Pupils in Y10 and students in Y12 undertake well-monitored work placements which meet fully their individual needs. *Gyrfa Cymru* Careers Wales works very closely with the school and, together, they provide a well co-ordinated work-related education programme. Individual advice and talks by visiting speakers prepare learners well for the world of work.
139. The school tackles social disadvantage and stereotyping very successfully. Emphasis on developing learners' key skills helps in improving pupils' self-esteem and confidence. The school is very successful in ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all learners. The complementary curriculum effectively supports pupils at risk of disaffection.
140. The school has extensive links with the community and with local employers and is very aware of the needs of the local economy. The support given to the school by local industries is a very prominent feature of the provision. Year 8 pupils receive mentoring in numeracy from members of a local industry.
141. Aspects of sustainable development and global citizenship are promoted in several subjects and through the activities of the school's Eco-group. Pupils are aware of the significance of healthy eating and the healthy-eating week initiative proved to be very successful.
142. Learners participate in several entrepreneurial activities both within school and in the community. Pupils' problem-solving skills are developed in subject areas and pupils use these skills effectively in many projects and competitions.

143. All pupils study Welsh. However opportunities for promoting learners' bilingual skills across the curriculum are limited.
144. Aspects of *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* feature in many subjects and schemes of work. Pupils learn about their locality and facets of Welsh life in general. The school is currently expanding this provision.
145. In all other respects, the school's curriculum reflects the WAG priorities. Through a broad range of learning experiences, the curriculum successfully develops pupils' and students' skills for lifelong learning.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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146. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade.
147. There is outstanding practice in the quality of:
 - care, support and guidance for learners;
 - provision for pupils with additional learning needs; and
 - provision for equal opportunities.

The quality of care, support and guidance for learners

148. The planning, management and co-ordination of care and support are outstanding. A key role is taken by senior learning mentors and pastoral support co-ordinators. They work very effectively and:
 - manage learning and behaviour within specific year groups and subject departments and faculties;
 - communicate very effectively with each other and other colleagues, in part through short daily meetings; and
 - make good use of regularly up-dated information about pupils' performance to monitor progress.
149. All learners have access to outstanding PSE. Pupils report that they enjoy PSE lessons, especially at KS3. The comprehensive PSE programme reflects well the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) framework for personal and social education. It includes appropriate health education and careers guidance and makes good use of external agencies and specialist services.
150. Outstanding procedures are used to monitor learners' behaviour. The non-teaching, behaviour manager works very effectively with other staff members and pupils. He provides high quality support for pupils who behave inappropriately. This enables them to stay included within the school community. As a result of the success of this provision, only one pupil has been permanently excluded since the last inspection, and relatively few temporarily.

151. The school takes an unusual degree of responsibility for pupils' behaviour outside school and is actively involved in promoting good standards and following up any incident which may occur. One member of the senior leadership team travels on one of the school buses each day.
152. The school has developed good partnerships and close working relationships with parents, carers and employers. This enhances the care, support and guidance for pupils. Parents' views are sought through questionnaire surveys and meetings. Good account is taken of their views in reviewing policies and planning future developments.
153. The school council is very effective in enabling pupils and students to be involved in making decisions and have a sense of responsibility. Members of the school council believe they play an important part in the life of the school. They are particularly proud of their achievements in:
- discouraging bullying;
 - influencing the healthy-eating initiative; and
 - promoting recycling.
154. Good systems are in place and used well to help learners settle in quickly when they enter the school. Good links with partner primary schools aid this process. This contributes effectively to continuity and progression in pupils' learning and helps them to feel safe and secure.
155. As they progress through the school, within and across the key stages, pupils are provided with good advice and helpful guidance. This enables them to make informed choices about which subjects and courses to follow. Careers education and guidance of good quality, together with good working relationships with support agencies, help address pupils' needs and aspirations.
156. Attendance and punctuality are monitored rigorously. This has resulted in significant improvements in levels of attendance. Parents report that systems for following up pupils' absences work well.
157. There are robust Child Protection (CP) arrangements in place. The CP Co-ordinator has a caring and pragmatic approach to his duties. There are many good features of CP which include:
- efficient referral and record-keeping systems, including a secure database;
 - clear, accessible information and guidance for all staff members;
 - effective planning and provision of training for staff members;
 - good quality relationships with outside agencies; and
 - the promotion of pupils' involvement in regional initiatives such as the 'Childline Young People's Group'.
158. There are clear, well-documented procedures to assure pupils' well-being, health and safety when in the school's care. Very good first-aid arrangements

are provided. Although the school works hard to protect pupils, there are shortcomings which could affect pupils' safety in:

- the layout of the food technology area which does not allow quick evacuation in the event of an accident or emergency; and
- traffic congestion at the beginning and end of the school day, caused by parents and friends driving on to the school site to collect pupils.

The quality of provision for additional learning needs

159. The quality of provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good with outstanding features. Pupils enter a caring, efficient and informed school which enables them to make good, and often very good progress.
160. An outstanding feature of this provision is the induction programme for pupils moving from Y6 to Y7. This does much to enable pupils with additional needs to have positive experiences when they enter the school. It ensures that timely and supportive intervention can be provided.
161. The oversight and management of discrete classes and bridging classes at KS3 are outstanding. Staff relationships are outstanding, as staff work very well together, sharing congruent views on the nature of individual needs and provision for pupils.
162. Other outstanding features are the:
- specialist learning support provided for speech and language;
 - quality of arrangements for individual support and guidance for 'looked after' children;
 - very effective behaviour support programme; and
 - identification and provision for gifted and talented pupils.
163. Good features of the provision for pupils with additional learning needs are the:
- school's response to the SEN Code of Practice and the guidance provided by the SEN Co-ordinator (SENCO);
 - consistently good, informed and caring support provided by learning support assistants (LSAs) in discrete and mainstream classes;
 - good working relationships with other departments in the school, pupils, parents and outside agencies who provide specialist services;
 - range of courses of study leading to accreditation at KS4; and
 - identification of, and effective planning to meet, additional educational and behavioural needs.
164. There are good features in the use made of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and statements of SEN. These are the:
- careful identification and assessment of individual needs;

- use made of IEPs, drafted by staff and supported by the active involvement of pupils in this process;
- full access to the NC for pupils with additional learning needs in mainstream classes, supported by IEPs;
- IEPs produced in English and mathematics which address issues relevant to these subjects; and
- meeting of statutory requirements in respect of the maintenance and review of individual statements of SEN.

165. The recently-appointed SENCO plans to share and extend the outstanding practice. These plans are at an early stage of development. Additionally, although assessments of pupils' needs provide useful data, they do not give a full picture. Extending the scope of assessments is being considered in order to provide more meaningful information for planning.

166. The use of an LSA for administrative duties at key times results in her being temporarily unable to undertake her support role activity. In a few mainstream classes the support provided by LSAs is not focused enough.

The quality of provision for equal opportunities

167. The school has effective policies and outstanding procedures for recognising and taking account of pupils' backgrounds. It promotes social inclusion very successfully. All learners, whatever their background, are valued as individuals and integrated into a cohesive community. All are provided with equal and appropriate opportunities to succeed.

168. The policy and procedures for tackling bullying are outstanding. They are regarded highly by pupils and parents. Although pupils acknowledge that bullying exists, they are confident that effective actions are taken to address it. Outstanding aspects of these procedures are the:

- rigorous approach taken by the anti-bullying co-ordinator and other members of staff;
- involvement of pupil members of the anti-bullying squad, with training for them provided by 'Childline';
- raising of pupils' awareness of issues relating to bullying; and
- account taken of pupils' views through regular anti-bullying survey questionnaires.

169. Equality for all learners, whatever their race, ability or social background is reflected well in the school's aims and values. Gender stereotyping is challenged effectively, for example in guidance about subject option choices as pupils move from KS3 to KS4. The school is very successful in promoting good relationships between people of different racial groups and in recognising and respecting diversity.

170. The school ensures that disabled pupils are treated equally and do not suffer from less favourable provision. It is aware of its disability access profile through an audit of accessibility. All pupils have equal access to the full curriculum.

Appropriate support and resources are provided to support pupils with specific disabilities.

171. Students receive good support and guidance in the sixth form. They are provided with appropriate guidance in Y11 to help them choose suitable subjects and courses. There is a good induction programme at the start of Y12. Effective careers education extends students' understanding of the opportunities available to them on leaving school and helps them make relevant preparations for the next stage of learning or employment.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

172. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade. The outstanding features are the:

- inspired and inspiring leadership of the headteacher;
- strategic planning and evaluation of performance by the governing body;
- strong leadership of the senior leadership team;
- effectiveness and enthusiasm of middle managers;
- shared values, amongst all those associated with the school; and
- measurable progress made through the management and continuing professional development of teaching and support staff.

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

173. Over recent years, the school has been transformed by the leadership of the headteacher. He leads with vision, giving clear educational direction and is very influential in promoting values for the school community, by example. He has earned great respect from staff, who follow his example and are very generous in the commitment they give. Each pupil is known by name and as an individual, by the headteacher, and is valued. Parents are highly supportive of the school.
174. The senior leadership team also gives strong leadership. Each member has clearly defined responsibilities and they work well together, as a team. Much innovative practice has been introduced. They also maintain high standards, by regular presence around the school, as well as by more formal methods of monitoring performance.
175. The quality of middle management, both pastoral and academic, is mostly very good because:
- continuing professional development has been highly effective in practice;
 - staff are up-to-date with developments in their field;

- they create a strong sense of teamwork in their areas of responsibility;
 - they work collaboratively, at middle management level; and
 - practice across the school, for example in behaviour management, has a good degree of consistency.
176. The workforce re-modelling, for the allocation of teaching and learning responsibilities, has been innovative and created some new middle management posts. Though newly implemented, the structure is working well and enabling management systems to work even more effectively.
177. Senior and middle managers, and teaching and support staff, work hard to adapt policies and practice in order to meet pupils' needs. The well-being and success of pupils and students are paramount and morale is high, even though there are challenges to be met.
178. Daily meetings of teams of pastoral staff result in incidents being followed-up quickly. Regular meetings of teams of academic and pastoral staff enable effective communication and consultation. Working groups contribute much to the spreading of good practice and of innovative practice, and to consistent implementation of cross-curricular initiatives.
179. All those associated with the school - pupils, parents, employers and partners in the community - know of its priorities and values and are committed to them. The school is an inclusive community and fulfils its aims in providing opportunities to all.
180. Other WAG priorities are also embedded. Work on sustainable development has been recognised in the silver award of 'Eco-Schools'. Personal, social and work-related education are of high priority and an integral part of practice. Pupils are aware of global issues and celebrate cultural diversity.
181. The only WAG priority which is not fully embedded in practice is bilingualism. Welsh is rarely used outside Welsh lessons, though the Welsh dimension is promoted in subjects across the curriculum.
182. The school is not complacent and strives for continuing improvement, with enthusiasm. It sets itself robust targets and reviews progress regularly. There has been measurable improvement since the last inspection, and the school has a clear focus on those areas which need further improvement.

How well governors or other supervisory bodies meet their responsibilities

183. Governors make a very good contribution to the leadership of the school. They are fully involved in strategic management, to the extent that they have a school improvement group. Members have a range of relevant expertise in the community and are forward-looking in developing partnerships for the '14-19 Learning Pathways' agenda.
184. Governors also have a comprehensive and detailed knowledge of the school's current performance. They seek to gain first-hand evidence, by linking to

departments, attending meetings and observing lessons. They analyse data effectively, and have a very good knowledge of the school's activities.

185. Governors also analyse their own performance and training needs, with a view to continuing improvement.
186. They support school events and the school's leadership, but also ask pertinent questions. In their role as 'critical friends', they act very effectively.
187. All regulatory and legal requirements are met, except for a few minor omissions from the school prospectus.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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188. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade.
189. The outstanding features are the:
 - robust culture of self-evaluation, embedded firmly in the ethos of the school;
 - exceptional way the school seeks out and acts on the views of learners, parents, staff, governors and other interested parties;
 - purposeful way in which these groups are fully involved in the self-evaluation arrangements, which drive the overall school strategic plan;
 - effective evaluation of training and development activities which support school priorities; and
 - outstanding progress made in a number of areas as a result of focused planning and implementation.

How effectively the provider's performance is monitored and evaluated

190. There is a robust culture of self-evaluation which is embedded firmly in the ethos of the school. Senior and middle managers and staff are reflective in practice.
191. The school's self-evaluation report is a working document prepared as part of the on-going self-evaluation process of the school and not produced specifically for the inspection. It addresses the seven key questions and states clearly the progress made in the key issues identified by the school for action and areas still to be addressed. The grades awarded by the inspection team match exactly those awarded by the school, with good correlation between the outstanding and good features identified, and shortcomings.
192. The extent to which the school seeks out the views of all interested parties to reflect on its performance is outstanding. Such procedures include the:
 - extensive and effective use, by pupils, of peer and self-assessment techniques;

- role of the school council in informing decision-making;
 - effective involvement of parents through questionnaires and through seeking out their views on visits to the school;
 - active participation of departments in curricular planning;
 - regular monitoring of provision by governors; and
 - use of external agencies such as Investors in People (IIP) to review the effectiveness of strategies for self-evaluation.
193. Leaders review subject departments on a rolling programme using the Estyn 'Common Inspection Framework' to identify clearly strengths and areas for development. A full evaluation of the department is drawn up, based on the seven key questions. Appropriate and challenging targets for improvement are agreed and established.
194. Subject leaders are well informed about performance in their departments. Good features, which make a positive contribution, are the:
- well-established, supportive and effective performance management system;
 - programme of lesson observations and sharing of good practice;
 - extensive use of self-assessment, by pupils, to assess progress;
 - contribution made by all staff to departmental self-evaluation and curricular development; and
 - rigorous analysis of attainment data which informs staff of learners' performance.
195. In a small minority of departments the process of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is less secure and does not sufficiently inform practice.

The effectiveness of planning for improvement

196. The purposeful way in which the headteacher and senior leadership team utilise the many strands of self-evaluation, to produce the school strategic plan, is outstanding. Contributors feel valued, supported and claim genuine ownership of the plan.
197. The school's strategic plan identifies clear whole-school and faculty priorities, allocates responsibilities, defines success criteria within time-scales and is carefully costed.
198. As a result of actions taken, there has been outstanding progress in many areas. These include the:
- national award by ACCAC for the most improved school in 2003, 2004 and 2005;
 - national award for promoting key skills;
 - significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection; and
 - significant improvement in attendance and behaviour.

199. Leaders and managers use the resources available to them efficiently in order to ensure that objectives are met. Members of staff are deployed well and judicious use is made of continuing professional development through whole-school and individual in-service training (INSET), which is tailored to the school's priorities for improvement. All INSET is evaluated thoroughly and informs future planning.
200. The school has made very good progress in the key issues for action raised in the last inspection. These include the:
- overall improvement in standards and teaching;
 - improvement in those areas judged unsatisfactory in the last report;
 - enhancement of the quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement;
 - improvement in levels of attendance from under 87% to 91%;
 - raising of standards in key skills across the curriculum;
 - provision for religious education in the sixth form; and
 - establishment of a daily act of collective worship.
201. Whilst most of the health and safety issues identified in the last report have been addressed, there are still shortcomings in the food technology room and potential risk from traffic on site.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

203. Teaching staff are suitably qualified, knowledgeable and committed. They are deployed effectively and nearly all teachers teach their specialist subject. The pupil : teacher ratio is better than the national average and there is a good balance between experienced teachers and those new to the profession.
204. The school also has a good number of support staff, who are well trained and provide very good support. These include:
- a full-time behaviour support manager;
 - appropriately qualified LSAs to support pupils with SEN;
 - cover staff to reduce the dependence on external supply staff to cover teachers' absences;
 - technical support and site-maintenance staff;
 - a full-time LRC manager (Librarian);
 - two foreign language assistants; and
 - a full-time, trained member of staff in the first-aid room.

205. Overall, the number and size of classrooms are adequate for the number of pupils on roll. Most classrooms are clustered in subject suites, to maximise use of available learning resources. A few areas of the school have been refurbished recently and those areas now provide a positive teaching and learning environment for staff, pupils and students. The good features in the accommodation include the:
- good facilities provided for pupils with additional learning needs ;
 - colourful displays of pupils' work and achievements which contribute to providing a stimulating environment;
 - spacious cafeteria with modern furniture;
 - large LRC which is well stocked with appropriate texts and ICT equipment;
 - regular, effective cleaning of rooms, halls, corridors and outside areas;
 - very extensive provision for sports and physical education; and
 - easy access to all parts of the main teaching block for pupils and visitors with disabilities.
206. There has been substantial investment to enhance the ICT facilities in some parts of the school. This includes considerably increasing the number of computers for use by pupils and installing interactive whiteboards and data projectors in a number of classrooms. This has enabled the majority of teachers to develop and use innovative teaching and learning techniques.
207. The central ICT resources, the suites of computers within a substantial number of departmental areas and the ICT facilities in the LRC all provide well for pupils' learning. The LRC is a very attractive area, used throughout the day, including break and lunchtime, and after school. It is very well managed as a centre for learning, and is used by members of the community who come in to help individual pupils.
208. However, there are some shortcomings in the provision for learning resources and accommodation.
209. Much of the accommodation in the older parts of the school, including many of the classrooms, science laboratories, boys' toilets, changing rooms, external fabric and narrow corridors, is drab and shabby and does not provide an attractive, stimulating, learning environment.
210. Although the number of computers in use in the school has significantly increased, about half are over five years old and are relatively slow in operation.
211. In the design and technology department, there is not a data projector for graphics, a laser cutter for materials nor a computer-aided router. The food technology room is strangely configured and equipped, and is not conducive to good teaching and learning. This restricts the viewing of practical demonstrations and prevents adequate supervision of pupils undertaking practical work.

212. Excessive on-site traffic at the beginning and end of the school day, when parents and friends bring their vehicles onto the school site, around the car-park area, to collect pupils and students, poses potential danger.

How efficiently resources are managed to achieve value for money

213. The management of resources is linked closely to the school's priorities for development and improvement, and their use is regularly reviewed to ensure best value for money.
214. The well planned, co-ordinated and managed early professional development and continuous professional development of staff are an outstanding feature.
215. There are also many good features in the management, deployment and development of teaching and support staff. These are the:
- successful implementation of arrangements associated with the workload agreement;
 - very good provision in the timetable for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time;
 - effective early implementation of the school's agreed workforce restructuring plans for teaching and learning (TLR) posts, following extensive discussion and consultation;
 - effective appraisal and performance management systems for teaching and non-teaching staff;
 - Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks completed for all staff and volunteers;
 - detailed and comprehensive support and guidance programmes for ITT students and newly-qualified teachers (NQTs); and
 - staff training, which is linked to the school's priorities for improvement, performance management and individuals' professional development requirements.
216. Audit reports are consistently good and the recommendations, all minor, have been fully addressed.
217. The good features in the efficient and effective way the school manages its resources include:
- systematic, methodical and rigorous financial management of the available budget to ensure cost-effectiveness in all aspects of the school's expenditure and investment;
 - regular, detailed reviews, analysing in detail the utilisation of resources;
 - strong, direct links between departmental improvement plans and the agreed departmental budgets, including frequent and detailed monitoring of expenditure; and
 - careful planning and costing of the school improvement plan.
218. Senior managers, governors and administrative staff methodically and effectively monitor expenditure. The school enthusiastically and persistently seeks ways of raising additional funds and has been very successful in

securing numerous grants and sponsorships. This additional funding is used very well to enhance opportunities for all pupils and students.

219. Site-maintenance staff contribute very effectively to day-to-day procedures in the school, and the school rigorously ensures that it obtains best value from suppliers and contractors.
220. Very good use is made of an extensive range of external resources to enrich the curriculum and enhance opportunities for pupils and students, including field trips and visits to places of educational interest.
221. Given the standards pupils achieve, the quality of teaching and the quality of support and guidance provided, the school prudently manages its available resources effectively and efficiently to give very good value for money.
222. However, the school funding per pupil is consistently one of the lowest in Wales and in the last year, or so, the school has been unable to retain adequate contingency reserves for unforeseen expenditure or for future planned projects. The recent budget overspend has been underwritten by the UA with a short-term loan equivalent to about one per cent of the total school budget over the agreed loan period.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Welsh second language

Key Stage 3 : Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key Stage 4 : Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key Stage 3

Good Features

- 223. Most pupils use familiar language patterns fairly confidently in oral exchanges. A minority extends oral contributions when prompted.
- 224. As pupils progress through the key stage, they convey information and talk about some experiences, asking and responding with intelligible pronunciation and intonation. More able pupils use several exchanges to keep up a conversation.
- 225. Many pupils read aloud clearly with correct pronunciation, grasp the meaning of what they read and respond well, by completing related tasks correctly.
- 226. Pupils complete a variety of written tasks such as dialogues, paragraphs and structured language exercises with developing accuracy. They show progress in their ability to write extended pieces, by varying their use of patterns and vocabulary, with the support of specific guidelines.
- 227. Pupils with SEN make good progress.

Shortcomings

- 228. Pupils of average and lower ability lack the confidence to use language in the wider context. They have difficulty expanding short answers and do not practise in pairs and small groups in some classes.
- 229. A minority of pupils mispronounces words when reading and tends to read slowly and without expression.
- 230. Pupils of lower ability complete limited language exercises and make basic grammatical and punctuation errors. They rely heavily on teachers' support.

Key Stage 4

Good Features

- 231. The majority of pupils understands basic language items and is developing good listening skills. Pupils following the GCSE full course present information and express opinions on familiar topics.

- 232. Pupils of lower ability respond quite well in the structured situations in class. They use language presented in the lesson or prepared previously, reasonably accurately.
- 233. Most pupils read short passages out loud and show good understanding of the main points. They express opinions about the content, offering reasons to support a viewpoint.
- 234. Pupils on the GCSE full course and the more able pupils on the GCSE short course write some extended answers, such as letters and individual presentations, with a good degree of accuracy. They use appropriate vocabulary and a good variety of language structures to communicate their ideas.
- 235. Pupils of lower ability used correct forms to gain information in a formal situation and showed some understanding of the responses provided by the guest speaker. With careful preparation, their pronunciation and intonation were good and they listened attentively to the responses.
- 236. Pupils with SEN make good progress. They work confidently and achieve good standards in relation to ability.

Shortcomings

- 237. Pupils of lower ability lack confidence in using the language in oral situations. They have a limited vocabulary and do not have sufficient grasp of sentence structures.
- 238. Recalling sentence patterns and vocabulary previously learnt is a problem for pupils on the GCSE short course. They understand more language than they use.
- 239. A minority of pupils cannot read with clarity and meaning.
- 240. Written work, completed by pupils of lower ability, is generally brief, with a limited range of vocabulary and expression.
- 241. Pupils on the GCSE short course do not make sufficient progress due to insufficient time being allocated to the subject.

Sixth Form

- 242. There is currently no provision.

Mathematics

Key Stage 3: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

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

Key Stage 3

Outstanding Features

243. Many pupils of all abilities display very high levels of mathematical reasoning. They test various examples confidently and accurately and make relevant conjectures and generalisations based on their findings. More able pupils communicate their conclusions with very proficient use of algebra.
244. Pupils with SEN have a very good knowledge and understanding of number and shape. They make very good progress and show great enthusiasm in lessons. Many apply their mathematics well to solve a range of problems, matched appropriately to their needs.

Good Features

245. Most pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of current work and show high levels of motivation in lessons. They display good standards in number, algebra and measures and have a proficient understanding of the properties of shape.
246. Most pupils have a good knowledge of basic number facts and calculate mentally with accuracy and speed.
247. Many pupils recall previous work with understanding. They have a good knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages and apply this well in simple, problem-solving tasks.
248. More able pupils have a good understanding of the graphs of straight lines and quadratic curves. They identify properties of straight lines and simple curves from their equations and show proficient use of algebra in a range of contexts.
249. Pupils of lower ability have a good understanding of probability. They predict the likelihood of an event from simple experiments and many justify their answers with sound reasoning. They construct simple graphs well and can interpret information from them accurately.

Shortcomings

250. A small minority of pupils displays some lack of understanding and is hesitant in calculating mentally. They occasionally make careless errors, often as a result of not giving themselves sufficient time to reflect on questions asked of them.

Key Stage 4

Good Features

251. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in lessons. They show good standards across all attainment targets and are competent in reasoning mathematically.
252. Pupils studying for the higher tier of the GCSE have a good understanding of current work. They deduce circle theorem facts and use them well in solving appropriate questions. They use calculators proficiently to solve problems using Pythagoras' Theorem and make good use of estimates in considering the reasonableness of their answers.
253. Pupils studying for the foundation tier of the GCSE work very well in lessons and most show a competent understanding of a range of topics. They recognise properties of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes and use calculators effectively to find areas, perimeters and volumes of them. Many apply their mathematics well to solve a range of problems. They work out costs of utility bills that involve using percentages and give their answers to appropriate degrees of accuracy.

Shortcomings

254. A small minority of pupils is uncertain in recall and understanding of previous work. They occasionally use incorrect formulae in calculations and show some confusion in the units of their answers.

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

Good Features

255. Students tackle current work with confidence and understanding. They work very well in lessons both independently and with one another. Most explain their ideas with assured understanding of the underlying mathematical concepts.
256. Standards in pure mathematics are good. Students solve problems using co-ordinate geometry well and graph functions in parametric form accurately. Most show competence in their knowledge and understanding of calculus and trigonometry.
257. Students in Y12 solve problems, relating to probability, confidently. Most have a good understanding of independent events and conditional probability.
258. In Y13, students show good knowledge and understanding of concepts in mechanics. They apply these well to solve a range of problems.

Shortcomings

259. A minority of students makes some fundamental errors in algebraic manipulation. They also display some confusion between mutually exclusive and independent events in probability.

Design and Technology

Key Stage 3: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

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

Key Stage 3

Good Features

260. Most of the ablest pupils fully understand how a design situation translates into a design brief. They produce an appropriate design specification and can effectively list the important features of the design process through their “spray diagrams”.
261. All pupils plan well for the making stage of their work and have a good understanding of making processes across a broad range of materials.
262. At least a half of all pupils produce well-crafted and finished products in all material areas. Product outcomes are generally good and occasionally very good as, for example, in textiles.
263. Most pupils develop good skills in using computer-aided design (CAD) software from an early stage in the school.
264. Most of their design outcomes using basic computer-aided manufacturing (CAM) equipment are good and particularly so in textiles.
265. Pupils of lower ability and pupils with SEN make good progress and achieve to their potential.

Shortcomings

266. A significant minority of pupils is over-dependent on teachers, when carrying out a basic design process.
267. A minority does not readily use the technical terminology effectively, when describing their work.
268. Many pupils do not make sufficient use of computers to research and present their ideas.
269. Many pupils are not creative enough in their design solutions and produce work which is very similar to that of their peers.

Key Stage 4

Good Features

- 270. Most pupils make good use of a design process to guide their project work.
- 271. In the best GCSE coursework files, presentation skills are very good with good graphical communications skills. Most pupils use design software well to enhance their presentations.
- 272. Most pupils use the computer well to research their projects and to collect the relevant material that helps them make their design decisions.
- 273. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of materials, processes and techniques are well developed across all design areas.
- 274. The best GCSE project work is often innovative and imaginative, especially so in textiles, systems and control and graphics products.
- 275. In resistant materials, pupils' skills in the use of traditional processes and equipment are good. The most able have very good practical skills. Most pupils combine materials such as wood, plastic, electrical and electronic components well in their projects, as for example in their radio projects.
- 276. Pupils of lower ability and pupils with SEN make good progress and achieve to their potential.

Shortcomings

- 277. The graphical communication skills of a small minority of pupils are the weakest element of their work.
- 278. Quick developmental drawing skills are generally underdeveloped in the design folios of a minority of pupils.

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

Good Features

- 279. Students' knowledge of design work is good overall and they make good use of a design process to guide the development of their chosen projects.
- 280. Students research, analyse and evaluate both commercial products and their own work well.
- 281. They draw well on their previous work in systems and control, when considering solutions to their design problem, as seen in the car park barrier and automated curtain rail projects.
- 282. Theoretical understanding of electronics is good.

- 283. Most students show a good grasp of a variety of media, which are used well to present their ideas within their coursework design folders. In the best work, graphical communication skills are very good.
- 284. Students' designing skills, using CAD/CAM, research and presentation skills are good and enhanced by effective use of ICT.
- 285. Projects are innovative with good planning and methodology seen in the best work.
- 286. Practical skills are very good and students combine a broad range of materials well in their projects.

Shortcomings

- 287. Students' practical work is limited to traditional skills, processes and basic CAM with little evidence of consideration of the use of new technologies, in the production of their projects.
- 288. Quick developmental drawing skills are weaker than other elements of designing. Work in some design folios lacks sufficient attention to testing and evaluating outcomes, against the original design specifications.

Information technology

Key Stage 3: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

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

Key Stage 3

Good Features

- 289. Y8 pupils show a basic understanding of spreadsheet design. They know how to insert and delete data in spreadsheet applications. They know the basic features of spreadsheet applications and insert very simple formulae to total a column of figures. Y9 pupils have a little knowledge of how to develop a spreadsheet with embedded formulae.
- 290. KS3 pupils use word-processing packages well. Pupils in Y9 understand how to insert images into text.
- 291. Most Y9 pupils search accurately for records in a database with specific criteria. They are learning how to validate fields to accept data in numeric, date or text format.

Shortcomings

292. Pupils know their levels of attainment to some degree but are sometimes unsure what they have to do to improve their work further.
293. Because pupils only study IT for one hour every other week, their progress is often slow. A large minority is unsure how to open a spreadsheet program and has not had enough experience of using spreadsheets to be competent.

Key Stage 4

Good Features

294. In the Intermediate General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) in 2006 in IT, about 80% of pupils in the year group achieved at least a pass. Currently, standards in the Diploma in Digital Applications (DiDA) course are also good with no important shortcomings.
295. Pupils achieve good results in word-processing. They save and print their work, justify paragraphs, centre headings, and make print bold. Pupils use frames, borders, fill effects, word art and movement effects well.
296. They combine various electronic components such as scanners and digital cameras with a good degree of competence. Pupils use headers, footers, page numbering, margins, columns and tables well. They have created brochures and pamphlets of good quality, using appropriate software. Pupils in Y11 achieve good standards when using photo-editing software.
297. Pupils achieve good results in database design and implementation. They design and use questionnaires appropriately. They design and use data capture forms to good effect. Their databases are usually fit for the intended purpose.
298. Most pupils progress well in using a broad range of features of a variety of software, competently, to produce coursework. They know, for example, how to apply absolute address references in formulae in a spreadsheet.
299. The very able know that if the raw number in a cell used by a formula in another cell is changed, then the result of applying the formula changes as well. A few know what a text wrap is. They compare different search engines for suitability for purpose with perceptiveness.
300. Pupils have designed some interesting systems for small businesses in the local area, which include headed formal letters, product databases and spreadsheets for calculations. Their reports are increasingly lucid and include screenshots to clarify how to build and use a database systematically. More able Y11 pupils have created "what-if" formulae which use pre-defined criteria to apply to new data.

301. Year 10 pupils are skilled users of PowerPoint. Year 11 pupils have designed and built web pages of good quality, for a range of websites. They respond well to the high challenge set by teachers, in designing web pages within a set time limit. They traverse the sub-directory system of the school's network skilfully.

Shortcomings

302. There are no significant shortcomings.

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

Good Features

303. Overall standards of achievement are good in Y12 and Y13 in A level Computing and also in the new A level Applied IT course.

304. A small minority has well above average technical skills and has experience as commercial programmers.

305. Year 12 students use a wide range of the features and functions of word-processing applications. Students use all the main applications to produce their coursework, which is usually of good quality. Some reports are outstanding in their clarity and logical development.

306. Year 12 students understand and exemplify many input and output devices. In one lesson, they made very good progress in binary coding.

307. Students' spreadsheet and database work is often sophisticated and complex. They use conditional formatting and macro-programming accurately. They have created good relational databases and usually understand the meaning of terms such as entity relationship diagram, primary key and attribute. Students have used Dreamweaver to create web pages and also achieve good results using hypertext mark-up language (HTML).

308. Students produce good, thorough and detailed systems analysis. They show a good awareness of how to address the different needs of a range of learners. Students compare different languages and environments with regard to fitness for purpose and compatibility with different commercial platforms.

309. Students make knowledgeable references to data recovery, forensic computing, file backups, security and validation. They have tackled challenging aspects of database work including the creation of comprehensive testing strategies.

310. They use a range of functions and skills well in assembling presentations, which include the use of Internet images, clipart, self-designed logos, and the

range of facilities offered in software packages, to enhance their work. Students, generally, are adept in accessing and using the resources of the Internet in their work.

Shortcomings

311. There are no significant shortcomings.

History

Key Stage 3: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

Key Stage 3

Good Features

312. From Y7, pupils develop a good sense of chronology. They use and construct timelines with accuracy and place events in the appropriate historical period.

313. Most pupils in KS3 have good levels of background knowledge and understanding and their recall skills are secure. They use subject-specific vocabulary accurately, with understanding and in the correct contexts.

314. Throughout the key stage, pupils describe and explain why events happened. In their work on the defeat of the Spanish Armada, pupils understand that some causes are more important than others and provide an explanation for their judgement.

315. As the key stage progresses, pupils demonstrate a growing awareness of historical interpretations. In their work on both Henry VIII and Mary I, they understand that people in the past viewed events and historical figures in different ways and are able to offer valid explanations for these interpretations.

316. Relative to their ability, pupils produce written work of good quality. They record their learning in a range of styles and formats such as letters, reports, newspaper accounts, posters and essays.

317. In Y9, more able pupils produce very good pieces of extended writing, which are carefully planned, well expressed and demonstrate empathy for those who either benefited or suffered from their participation in the slave trade.

318. Pupils have a good understanding of evidential work. They extract information from visual and documentary sources effectively, distinguish between primary and secondary sources and assess these for both reliability and usefulness.

319. Pupils with SEN make good progress in their learning. In Y8, they understand the changes in religion, which occurred in the Elizabethan period and are able to make historical connections between the support for Catholicism in Wales and the threat posed by Philip II and Spain.

Shortcomings

320. There are no significant shortcomings. However, the work of some pupils of average ability and below is incomplete and contains inaccurate spellings of historical terms.

Key Stage 4

Good Features

321. Pupils build successfully on the range of skills acquired in KS3 and make very good progress. This is reflected in their GCSE results, which are higher than the average achieved by boys in Wales.
322. In their study of the USA's withdrawal from the Vietnam war, pupils understand that events have multiple causes and explain how these are interconnected. They identify the most important cause and justify their choice. Some pupils understand that an incident can constitute a turning point in history.
323. Pupils develop the ability to assess both their own work and the work of their peers. They use mark schemes to highlight their strengths and weaknesses and so develop the ability to improve their own learning.
324. In both Y10 and Y11, pupils make confident use of a range of source materials. They are able to test the reliability of evidence and identify and explain potential sources of bias.
325. Pupils of low ability, following the Entry Level course, also make very good progress in their learning. When examining propaganda posters produced in the second world war, they make valid inferences and show an awareness that further sources of evidence need to be consulted to obtain a more complete picture.

Shortcomings

326. There are no significant shortcomings. However, a minority of pupils does not always include sufficient detail from sources to support their written answers.

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

Good Features

327. Students use acquired skills and techniques with accuracy.
328. They have a well-developed ability to analyse, synthesise and interpret evidence. They demonstrate skill in cross-referencing sources, point out omissions and use their background knowledge to make inferences.

- 329. Students produce well-written essays. They use their knowledge of a historical period, independent reading and information drawn from a range of sources, to arrive at considered and balanced judgements.
- 330. They are able to develop and sustain an argument, demonstrating a sound understanding of historical concepts.
- 331. In their study of O'Connor's role in the failure of the Chartist Movement, students show an understanding that historical interpretations change over time and suggest coherent explanations for these changes.
- 332. When making class presentations, individual students express views with confidence. When challenged, they provide further explanation and substantiate their viewpoint with reference to relevant examples.

Shortcomings

- 333. Although there are no important shortcomings, a significant number of students makes a limited contribution to class discussion and debate.
- 334. In their consideration of the causes of the first world war, some students' knowledge and understanding of the significance of the Moroccan and Balkan crises are insecure.

Religious education (including religious studies)
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Key Stage 3: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key Stage 3

Good Features

- 335. Nearly all pupils have a good vocabulary and use religious terms appropriately.
- 336. Most pupils describe clearly many of the basic beliefs, teachings and practices of the religions they study, usually making appropriate links to show why believers act in the ways they do.
- 337. Most pupils have a simple understanding of the symbols and symbolic language they meet. A few of them suggest pertinent and sometimes profound reasons for their use.
- 338. A majority of pupils offers personal opinions about the issues they study.
- 339. Pupils with SEN achieve well, and involve themselves fully in class and group discussions on a range of issues.

Shortcomings

340. Few pupils explore in great depth how their own values and beliefs develop and how these influence their particular attitudes and standpoints.

Key Stage 4

Good Features

341. All pupils show respect for the range of beliefs and values they meet, and open-mindedness, for example when considering different attitudes to war.
342. In the statutory religious education course, most pupils use appropriate religious language.
343. They generally recall relevant information on the religious beliefs and practices they study, having a sound grasp of the basic concepts.
344. Pupils with SEN describe effectively some of the different ways people respond to difficult situations.
345. In the optional religious studies' full-course GCSE, most pupils demonstrate an accurate knowledge of the beliefs and traditions they study, having a good awareness of the differences between and also within religions.
346. They explore and evaluate different perspectives with objectivity.

Shortcomings

347. In the statutory religious education lessons, which have a limited amount of time, only a minority of pupils structures and develops arguments well enough to show that they recognise the complexity of many of the issues studied.
348. In these lessons, most pupils draw on only a limited body of evidence to support their personal views, or to evaluate the views of others. Their responses often lack range and depth.

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

349. There are no courses leading to AS or A2 examinations. The above grade refers to statutory provision. No sessions were observed, but students' views and written submissions were taken into account.

Good Features

350. Most students offer considered views on many profound questions of faith, values and behaviour.
351. Many pupils research topics and issues well, using ICT regularly.
352. They apply their knowledge of religious and moral teachings well, to support or challenge beliefs and practices that they encounter in contemporary society, whether in Wales, Britain or the wider world.

Shortcomings

353. A small minority of students has a confused recall of details of major religions and of religious terminology.

354. Few students are sufficiently prepared to anticipate an opposing view.

School's response to the inspection

355. The pupils, staff and governors of Barry Comprehensive School welcome this thorough, insightful and positive inspection report. We are pleased that the evaluations of the inspection team match the school's own self-evaluation, and that the reflective and analytical nature of the school is emphasised throughout the report.

356. We are pleased that the commitment of staff at our school is emphasised. Teachers and support staff are seen to be highly motivated and enthusiastic; they have very good relationships with pupils, giving very generously of their time outside of lesson time. This has then led to the recognised strengths and innovations in teaching across the curriculum and the outstanding pastoral care commented on in the report.

357. We are delighted that the inspection report describes the pupils' progress in spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as outstanding. The report comments positively on the real commitment of staff in challenging, and effectively modifying, behaviour. The warm relationship between pupils and staff is viewed as a real strength. It is encouraging that the development pupils make, and are continuing to make, is recognised.

358. The school's attitude towards Assessment for Learning has been recognised in the report: '...pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve....self-assessment and peer-assessment are unusually well developed.' This is especially encouraging when the report also refers to our strengths in 'encouraging every aptitude' and 'supporting all pupils'. This work must contribute to what the report describes as the 'outstanding success' of the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades at GCSE.

359. The strong partnerships the school shares with parents, employers and other providers in the community is seen as outstanding, and reflects the priority the school has always placed on this.

360. The report describes the school as being transformed in recent years, with the very good progress the school has made since the last inspection commented upon. Standards in teaching, self-evaluation and the development of key skills are now viewed as strengths of the school. The report also recognises that we are far from complacent. The school is already addressing the recommendations, through its development plan.

361. As a school, we would like to warmly thank Miss Glynis Owen and her team, for the dedication, integrity and professionalism they demonstrated before, during and after the inspection process. The school feels it is in a position to continue to move forward, building on the many features highlighted in the report, due to the genuine interest the team took in the developments of our school and its pupils.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Barry Comprehensive School
School type	Community
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Port Road Barry Vale of Glamorgan
Post-code	CF62 8ZJ
Telephone number	01446-411411

Headteacher	Mr David Swallow
Date of appointment	1.1.98
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Dr Matthew Griffiths
Reporting inspector	Miss Glynis Owen
Dates of inspection	12 - 15 February 2007

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y 10	Y 11	Y 12	Y13	Y 14	Total
Number of pupils	232	235	243	234	265	104	52		1365

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	86	6	89.1

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	15.3:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	
Average teaching group size	19.1
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	78%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole School
Term 1	93	92	90	90	90	94	95	92
Term 2	91	90	90	89	87	92	93	90
Term 3	92	91	90	93	97	90	91	92

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	18.9
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	41

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 3:

			D	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	2	0	1	3	13	30	32	16	2	0
		National	1	0	0	0	2	8	21	35	24	8	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	3	0	0	0	6	15	49	18	9	0
		National	1	0	0	0	1	6	18	24	32	15	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	2	0	0	0	13	26	36	16	4	0
		National	1	0	0	0	0	6	19	33	27	12	0

- D Pupils excepted under statutory arrangements from part of the
A National Curriculum
F Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence
W Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than
EP absence
Pupils who are working towards level 1
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	44%
In Wales	58%

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 2006:	206
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	49

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2006:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	96	92	88
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	68	65	54
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	90	90	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	25	44	40
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	100	98	98
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	86	84	77
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	98	94	93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	2	6	7
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	80		

For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs			
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2006	157		
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2006	55		
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2006	13		
	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	66	72	68
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	93	96	94
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	19	23	20
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

Fourteen inspectors spent a total of 47 days in the school and were joined by the school's headteacher as nominee. They held a meeting before the inspection.

During the inspection, inspectors visited:

- 137 lessons, 81 in the six subjects inspected and 56 lessons in other subjects;
- registrations and assemblies;
- some extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team met with:

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

The team also considered:

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

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

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Miss Glynis Owen	RgI: Context, Summary, Recommendations, KQ1, KQ5, Appendix
Mr Martin Rawle	Core: KQ2
Mr Clive Rowlands	Core: KQ3;
Mr Peter Carter	Core:KQ4
Mr Philip Taylor	KQ4 (additional learning needs)
Mr Jeffrey Hanney	Core: KQ6
Mr Kerry Jones	Core: KQ7 (Lay Inspector)
Mr David Williams	Mathematics
Mrs Heulwen Jones	Welsh second language
Mr Keith Hopkins	Design and Technology
Mr Hywel Buckland	Design and Technology (s)
Mr Robert Isaac	Information Technology
Mr Gareth Barker	History
Mr Martyn Williams	Religious Education
Mr David Swallow	Nominee

Acknowledgement

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

Contractor

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