

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Pontypridd High School
Albion Community Campus,
Cilfynydd,
Pontypridd
CF37 4SF**

School Number: 6744022

Date of Inspection: 24/11/08

by

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

The inspection of Pontypridd High School took place between 24/11/08 and 28/11/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by Peter Guy Carter undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

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

There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a **standard** inspection.

Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Pontypridd High School was formerly known as The Coedylan Comprehensive School. It changed its name in September 2007. It is a mixed, 11-18, community school maintained by the Local Education Authority (LEA), Rhondda Cynon Taff. It has 936 pupils and students on roll including 140 students in the sixth form. At the last inspection, in November 2002, there were 1175 pupils and students in total of whom 188 were in the sixth form.
2. The school serves several distinctive communities in, and to the north of Pontypridd. These include former coal mining communities as well as Glyncoch, a large local authority housing area established in the 1960s and now designated a 'Communities First' area. Pupils come mainly from seven partner primary schools although a few come from outside the catchment area. The area, as a whole, is economically disadvantaged.
3. The school's intake covers the whole ability range although a relatively high proportion is of lower ability. Around half of the pupils enter the school with reading ages more than one year below their actual ages. Seven pupils have statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and a further 192, approximately one pupil in five, have been identified as needing some support, in most cases for Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). These figures are significantly higher than those reported at the last inspection. Nearly all pupils speak English as their first language. Very few come from ethnic minority backgrounds.
4. There have been a number of significant changes since the last inspection. A new headteacher has been appointed. He took up his post in January 2007. The school changed from split-site to single-site accommodation in November 2005. The Leadership Team (LT) has been remodelled. It now consists of the headteacher, a deputy headteacher, three assistant headteachers and the bursar. Two additional members of staff have been co-opted on temporary secondments.

The school's priorities and targets

5. The school's mission statement is 'Learning and Achieving Together'. Its vision is to become recognised as an outstanding school that demonstrates excellence in all that it does individually and collectively. The three-year School Development Plan (SDP) 2007-2010 identifies strategic objectives in seven areas which correspond to the seven key questions of the Estyn Common Inspection Framework (CIF). These objectives are to:
 - improve performance and provide the best possible outcomes for learners;
 - ensure teaching and assessment are effective and appropriate to improving standards for learners;

- provide learning experiences that acknowledge different learning pathways for the whole school community;
- give the best possible support and guidance for each learner;
- lead, manage and plan for whole-school improvement;
- evaluate progress effectively and provide appropriate professional development for all staff; and
- get best value from funding and ensure the whole-school environment is a safe and exciting place to learn.

Summary

6. Pontypridd High School is a very successful school. It has made very good progress towards achieving the objectives identified in the SDP. It is involved in many exciting and innovative programmes which provide significant benefits for learners. There are outstanding features in all areas of the school's work. The inspection team agreed with the content of the school's self-evaluation report (SER) but raised the grades by one level in every key question.

Key Question		Grade
1	How well do learners achieve?	1
2	How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	1
3	How well do 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?	1

Standards

7. The grades awarded for standards at each stage in the six subjects inspected are set out in the table below.

	KS3	KS4	6 th form
Mathematics	2	1	2
Science	2	2	2
Modern foreign languages	2	2	-
History	3	2	2
Art and design	1	1	1
Music	1	2	3

8. The following table shows the percentages of grades awarded for the standards of learners' achievements at each Key Stage (KS) in the 69 lessons observed in total in the six subjects inspected.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	24%	48%	24%	3%	0%
KS4	33%	67%	0%	0%	0%
KS3 and KS4	28%	56%	15%	2%	0%
6th form	20%	67%	13%	0%	0%
Whole school	26%	58%	14%	1%	0%

KS3 and KS4

9. Overall, results in tests, statutory assessments and examinations are good. At KS4, in many subjects and key indicators of performance, there are outstanding features in pupils' attainment. There is an underlying upward trend in performance.
10. Standards in the six subjects inspected are at least good overall, except in history at KS3 where shortcomings were outweighed by the good features. In art and design at both stages and mathematics at KS4, standards have outstanding features.
11. Standards of achievement at both stages in the 54 lessons observed at KS3 and KS4 are generally good with outstanding features in over a quarter of lessons. Performance is better, and there are fewer shortcomings at KS4. At KS3 there are shortcomings in a very few lessons in science, modern foreign languages, mathematics and history. They occur mainly in lessons in Year (Y) 8 and Y9.
12. Standards are at least good in all key skills. There are outstanding features in pupils' listening and information and communications technology (ICT) skills, and in the way they work together. They make particularly good progress in the development of their English language literacy skills. Pupils' bilingual competence is less well developed. Pupils seldom use their skills in communicating in the Welsh language, except in Welsh lessons.
13. Nearly all pupils, including those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), make good progress in relation to their abilities. They build successfully on previous learning. Although there are variations in the standards that girls and boys achieve in subjects across the curriculum, there is no evidence of significant difference overall.
14. Most pupils make good progress in their spiritual, morals and social development. They display very positive attitudes to learning, concentrate well and persevere with their work. They respect the views and beliefs of others. They behave very well in lessons and around the school, making very good use of their personal and social skills. Attendance and punctuality are good.

The quality of education and training

15. Teaching has outstanding features at both key stages. Overall, teaching is better at KS4 than it is at KS3. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils

and challenge them with demanding activities. Most lessons are well paced and succeed in motivating and engaging pupils. Relationships between teachers and pupils are outstanding. Most teachers are very competent, have outstanding subject knowledge and are familiar with recent developments in education.

16. The consistency of teachers' planning is outstanding. Nearly all teachers organise lessons well. They explain clearly what pupils should learn and provide opportunities to review progress. Most teachers use successfully a suitable range of methods and carefully selected resources to actively engage pupils. There is relatively little use of the Welsh language in many lessons.
17. The assessment of what pupils achieve and the progress they make is outstanding. Pupils know clearly how they are progressing and how to improve. Teachers use data well to identify pupils who under-achieve and to set targets for improvement. Most teachers mark pupils' work regularly and many make detailed and constructive comments. The quality of oral feedback to pupils in class is outstanding. It succeeds in helping them improve their learning.
18. The school meets the statutory requirements for assessing and reporting. Parents are well informed of pupils' progress. The main annual report gives information about achievement in subjects. The reports vary in quality: a few do not give enough information about what pupils have achieved in each subject, and a minority does not indicate what pupils can do to improve their learning.
19. The curriculum has many outstanding features. It provides balance, breadth and progression across key stages. The school has developed an innovative approach to addressing the new skills-based National Curriculum (NC) at KS3. The thematic 'Opening Minds' programme for Y7 pupils, taught by the same teacher for a number of lessons, ensures continuity. It engages all pupils fully, individually and in groups, in a wide range of challenging and relevant tasks.
20. A very impressive range of extra-curricular activities broadens greatly pupils' learning experiences. The comprehensive after-school E3+ programme is outstanding. Its wide range of recreational and educational activities is very popular. A majority of pupils attend at least one activity.
21. Work-related education (WRE) is very prominent in the curriculum. Links with the Education Business Partnership (EBP) and visits by employers add greatly to pupils' perception of the world of work. Successful vocational courses have been introduced to the curriculum to take account of employers' needs. The school has developed a very effective programme of entrepreneurial activities across all key stages.
22. The school uses a range of strategies to tackle social disadvantage and stereotyping very successfully. This is an outstanding feature. The school ensures equality of access and opportunity to everyone. The curriculum is open to all and no pupil is disadvantaged.

23. An established, coherent pastoral structure enables the pastoral team to provide support and guidance of high quality. Its members have positive working relationships with learners and know them well. Regular meetings reinforce communication links between members. Strong links with a good range of external agencies have outstanding features. Support is co-ordinated very effectively by a newly appointed key worker.
24. The school provides good guidance, reinforced by an outstanding careers programme, for pupils making option choices at the end of KS3 and KS4. The school has gained the Careers Wales Quality Mark in both Careers Education Guidance (CEG) and WRE. Careers modules are included in the Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme at all stages. This programme is carefully planned to promote personal and social development and well-being.
25. There are strong links with partner primary schools. They enable learners to settle quickly in their new school. Aspects of the Transition Plan are outstanding. These include consistent teaching strategies and a focus on common skills across the cluster of schools. Pupil mentors involved in the Support, Nurture And Protect (SNAP) programme are trained by 'Childline' to support learners during the transition period.
26. Strategies to encourage pupils to be healthy are outstanding. The school has gained the Phase One Healthy School's Award. Well planned cross-curricular modules on healthy living are reinforced by healthy lunch menus and physical activities in the E3+ programme. Social and emotional well-being is supported sensitively by a range of specialist external agencies.
27. Provision for pupils with a range of ALN is good. Pupils are taught by ALN and subject specialists, mostly in small groups but in mixed-ability classes in Y7. Pupils with ALN are integrated into all aspects of school life. Members of support staff provide sensitive support in both discrete and mixed-ability classes. Strategies to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of pupils with ALN are not developed enough.
28. Pupils' behaviour, both in and out of classrooms is very good and a significant strength of the school. Expectations and consequences are set out clearly in the 'Right to Learn' policy and reinforced by consistent implementation. This is an outstanding feature. Pupils with significant behavioural difficulties receive appropriate support from external agencies.
29. The school has a very strong community ethos. Pupils from varied educational and home backgrounds are easily assimilated into the school. Initiatives and strategies to redress social and educational imbalance have outstanding features. Support for pupils with disabilities and with English as an Additional Language (EAL) is good. Strategies to challenge the most able and talented (MAT) pupils are developing.
30. Activities which help pupils to understand diversity are outstanding. An appreciation of the global community is developed through the highly effective Partnerships – Overseas Networking Trust (PONT) initiative. A range of

voluntary activities, modules in the PSE programme and collective worship reinforce this understanding.

Leadership and management

31. The headteacher provides effective and outstanding leadership. He has a clear vision for the school. Under his leadership, the school is making very good progress. He receives excellent support from the deputy headteacher who shares his vision. Together they give purposeful strategic direction to the work of the whole school.
32. Members of the LT work together very well. The LT ensures that the school's values are embedded in daily routines and that these routines operate smoothly. The members of the LT have very good links with middle managers. Their work enables departments to evaluate performance, analyse data and plan for future development. Managers at all levels are committed to the school's aims and values.
33. The governing body (GB) contributes well to the school's leadership. Governors know the school well. They monitor its performance and provide very good levels of support. They conduct much of their work through a good range of sub-committees to ensure the school is managed effectively. In all major respects, governors fulfil their legal and regulatory duties. There are, however, a few minor omissions from the most recent annual report to parents.
34. Self-evaluation is established well in the work of the school. Arrangements are highly systematic and based upon relevant first-hand evidence. Leaders and managers have very good knowledge of strengths and shortcomings within their areas of responsibility.
35. Evaluations focus well on improving standards, teaching and learning and supporting learners to achieve their potential. Good communication between senior leaders and middle managers is very effective in ensuring that departmental self-evaluations and plans for future development are clearly linked to those of the whole school.
36. The effectiveness of planning for improvement is outstanding. All stakeholders are committed to improve standards and the quality of provision for all learners. Planning is consistently good at all levels. Leaders and managers are very forward thinking and innovative in their approach. They evaluate evidence and ideas to plan for improvement continuously. All staff members understand how continuous review and reflection lead to successful development.
37. Overall, effective self-evaluation and planning for improvement have enabled the school to make outstanding progress in addressing the key issues for action from the report of the last inspection.
38. There are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers to teach all aspects of the curriculum. Teachers are supported well by efficient teams of administrative, classroom support and technical staff. The wide range of learning resources

meets the needs of pupils. In four of the six subjects inspected, resources were judged to be outstanding. The provision of ICT equipment is particularly impressive but the lack of a library at KS4 limits pupils' access to books for reading and research.

39. Accommodation is of exceptional quality in the way it has been maintained and adapted to meet the demands of pupils and the curriculum. Notable examples are the construction annexe, sports hall, 'Bytezone' snack area, design and technology and science ICT suites and the drama studio. All areas are fully accessible to wheelchair users.
40. The school makes very good use of its resources in a cost-effective way and derives significant benefits from having a sixthform. The deployment of teachers ensures best use is made of their time and expertise. The way the school identifies the particular talents of individual members of staff, and then sets out to develop them to their potential, is an outstanding feature.
41. The school manages its finances to ensure the best possible outcome for all pupils. The budget is expertly produced to achieve this in the most cost-efficient way. The school is exceptional in the way it seeks out and acquires additional funding from many sources to augment funds devolved from the LEA.
42. A continuous review of actual expenditure against the budget helps ensure cost-effectiveness. This is supported by ongoing assessment of how the cost of individual items, such as energy, could be reduced. For example, the school has arranged to have a wind turbine installed. The focus on maximising income and minimising spending, linked to high standards of achievement, ensures the school provides very good value for money.

Sixth form

Standards

43. Results of assessments and examinations in the sixth form are generally good, and occasionally very good, in relation to students' abilities. Although relatively few students gain the highest grades at Advanced (A) level, most students complete their courses successfully. Many achieve, or surpass, their agreed target grades.
44. Standards of achievement in the subjects inspected are good overall in the sixth form. There are outstanding features in art and design. There are shortcomings in music but these are outweighed by good features. These shortcomings are confined to a very small number of lessons.
45. Students achieve standards which have outstanding features in a fifth of lessons. In a further two-thirds of lessons, standards have good features and no important shortcomings. These figures are based on the observation of 15 lessons in the six subjects inspected in detail. The figures should be viewed with caution because the small size of the sample limits their reliability.

46. Students achieve good standards in all key skills. They demonstrate outstanding skills in ICT, particularly in mathematics, science and art. Many students develop their key skills well through their involvement in the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification and make good progress.
47. Most students have well-developed personal and social skills and make good use of them as they contribute to the school community. They continue to make good progress in their spiritual, moral and cultural development. Most are very good role models for younger pupils. Many students provide useful support for younger pupils by helping them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Students behave well and most have good records of attendance.

The quality of education and training

48. Teaching has good features, some of which are outstanding. In most lessons, teachers expect high standards and their challenge to students to achieve excellence is an outstanding feature. Most teachers are very skilful in using questions to develop students' reasoning and critical thinking.
49. There is a strong rapport and respect between teachers and students and this outstanding feature contributes to a positive environment for learning. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subjects and are well equipped to teach all aspects of them.
50. Planning of lessons is an outstanding feature. Most teachers have clear objectives which guide students' learning and provide criteria for reviewing progress. In many cases the structure of lessons is meticulously timed, yet sufficiently flexible to respond to students' needs. In nearly all cases, teachers enable students to reflect on their learning.
51. The creative use of a wide range of resources to support learning is outstanding. A few teachers make incidental use of the Welsh language in the classroom, but in most lessons, the Welsh language is seldom used.
52. Assessment of students' achievement and progress is outstanding. Systems for collating and analysing evidence of attainment are managed well and data are used effectively to monitor progress and highlight strengths and shortcomings.
53. Marking is detailed in most cases and gives clear advice about how the student can improve. Most teachers give high quality feedback in class and help students to plan their own improvement.
54. In a minority of the annual reports to parents there is not enough detail about how students have achieved in subjects and what they can do to make further progress. Overall, however, parents are informed regularly and well of the progress of students.
55. Students follow a range of courses giving them appropriate opportunities to gain qualifications. The various courses prepare students very effectively for continued studies and employment. The recently introduced Welsh

Baccalaureate and consortium links with other educational providers in the locality enhance further the curricular provision.

56. The induction programme for pupils entering Y12 is very good. Guidance is comprehensive in documents produced to help them make informed choices of subjects and courses. Effective careers guidance continues in the sixth form.
57. The carefully structured PSE programme is an integral part of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification, taken by nearly all students in Y12. The planned contributions of external speakers and visits reinforce awareness of issues relevant to young people. Students in Y12 participate effectively in the 'Get Sorted' programme of alcohol and drug awareness for pupils in Y8.

Leadership and management

58. The sixth form is managed efficiently. Its management reflects the school's aims and values and ensures that routines operate smoothly. Managers encourage students to participate fully in the life of the school. Management systems enable students to receive good academic support as well as personal advice and guidance. The work of the sixth form is monitored effectively.
59. Self-evaluation and planning for improvement are effective. The good and outstanding features noted at KS3 and KS4 are also evident in the sixth-form.
60. There is a good range of specialist teachers and students have access to a wide range of learning resources. Facilities for private study and computer use are outstanding. There are relatively small numbers in a few classes in Y13. Provision for students in these classes is less cost-effective than the provision in the rest of the school. Overall, however, the sixth form provides many benefits to the school community and achieves good value for money.

Recommendations

In order to make further progress, the school should implement the following recommendations.

- R1 Address the shortcomings in subjects identified in this report.
- R2 Continue to develop pupils' bilingual competence*.
- R3 Improve the quality of reporting to parents by making comments about learners' achievements more detailed and ensuring all reports include advice for improvement.
- R4 Further develop strategies to support the development of literacy and numeracy skills of pupils with ALN*.

*These recommendations are addressed in the current SDP (2007-2010)

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

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

61. This grade does not match the grade in the school's self-evaluation report. Although the inspectors agreed with the school's self-evaluation, they considered some of the good features to be outstanding and, therefore, awarded a higher grade.

KS3 and KS4

62. At KS3 in the last three years, attainment in the core subjects, English, mathematics and science, has been a little below national averages. There are variations between these subjects. The best results have been in mathematics. Results in science have been lower than in mathematics but higher than in English. The core subject indicator (CSI), the percentage achieving NC level five in all three subjects, has shown little variation during this time. At present it is less than two points below the national average.
63. In comparison with schools where a similar proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals, results at KS3 are mainly good. In the last three years attainment has been above the average for similar schools in nine out of 12 key indicators of performance and in the top 25% in five cases. Attainment in mathematics and in the CSI has been above the averages for similar schools in each of the last three years.
64. At KS4, attainment in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations has improved significantly recently. The percentage of pupils who gained five or more A*-C grades in 2008 is 12 points higher than in 2007. The percentage of pupils who achieved the KS4 CSI (GCSE grade C or above in all three core subjects) increased by 13 points at the same time. The scale of these improvements is outstanding. Both indicators of performance are now above local averages but are a little lower than national averages.
65. In comparison with GCSE results in similar schools, attainment in the key indicators of performance from 2005 to 2007 was a little lower than the averages. Although comparative data for 2008 were not available at the time of the inspection, the significant improvements in results in 2008 are likely to make comparisons more favourable. Standards observed in lessons inspected indicate that these improvements in achievement have been maintained.
66. Nearly all pupils, including those with ALN, achieve standards which are good in relation to their abilities. At KS4 most pupils achieve very good standards. They build successfully on previous learning. There are variations in the standards that girls and boys achieve across the curriculum. In a few subjects, for example in mathematics and science in recent years, boys have

outperformed girls. Across the curriculum, however, there is little evidence of significant differences in boys' and girls' achievement overall.

67. Standards of achievement in the six subjects inspected are at least good overall, except in history at KS3 where good features outweigh shortcomings. In art at both stages, in music at KS3 and in mathematics at KS4, the standards that pupils achieve have outstanding features. The standards that pupils achieve at each stage are summarised in the table below.

	KS3	KS4
Mathematics	2	1
Science	2	2
Modern foreign languages	2	2
History	3	2
Art and design	1	1
Music	1	2

68. Standards of achievement at both stages in the 54 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected are also generally good. At KS4 they are particularly good with outstanding features in a third of lessons and no important shortcomings identified in any lesson. The percentages of grades awarded at each stage, and in both stages combined, are set out in the table below.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	24%	48%	24%	3%	0%
KS4	33%	67%	0%	0%	0%
KS3 and KS4	28%	56%	15%	2%	0%

69. At KS3, standards are higher than they are nationally. The proportion of lessons where standards were awarded grade one or two is five points higher than the corresponding KS3 figure for all secondary schools inspected in Wales in 2006-2007 as reported by the Chief Inspector in his most recent annual report. The percentage of lessons where standards were awarded grade one is 14 points higher. In the Chief Inspector's Annual Report 33% of lessons were awarded grades three or four compared to 27% in this inspection.
70. At KS4, standards are considerably higher than they are nationally. Standards were awarded grade one or grade two in all lessons observed in this inspection. This is 29 points higher than the corresponding figure from the Chief Inspector's Annual Report. The percentage of lessons where grade one was awarded is 19 points higher than the national KS4 figure. These figures are impressive and denote significant outstanding achievement.
71. These figures show that significant progress has been made since the last inspection in the standards that pupils achieve. At that time, standards were awarded the two highest grades in 54% of lessons. That figure has risen to 84% in the two stages combined in this inspection.
72. Standards are at least good with no important shortcomings in all key skills. There are outstanding features in pupils' listening and ICT skills, and in the way

they work together. Most pupils demonstrate good speaking and reading skills. They make particularly good progress in the development of their English language literacy skills.

73. Pupils' bilingual competence is less well developed. It is a little better at KS3 than KS4. Most pupils demonstrate better listening and reading skills than the more active skills of speaking and writing. They seldom use their skills in communicating in the Welsh language, except in Welsh lessons.
74. Nearly all pupils, including those with ALN, make good progress in learning in relation to their abilities and previous attainments. By the end of KS4, most pupils have made very good progress by comparison with their abilities on entry to the school. They know the level of their performance in different subjects and understand what they need to do to make further progress.
75. Most pupils display very positive attitudes to learning. They show interest and good levels of motivation in lessons. They concentrate well and persevere with their work. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are good. Pupils respect the views and beliefs of others and show concern for people who are less fortunate than they are. These factors help generate a very good atmosphere for learning and prepare pupils well for lifelong learning and participation in the wider community.
76. Pupils have good personal and social skills. They behave very well in lessons and around the school. The 'Right to Learn' policy clearly sets out the expectations regarding pupils' behaviour and most pupils respond positively. This helps to make the school a safe and orderly environment. There has been a reduction in the number of pupils who have been given temporary exclusions since the last inspection. Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
77. Overall, attendance is good. It has increased since the last inspection and now compares favourably to average attendance in similar schools. It is also higher than the local and national average. Nearly all pupils arrive punctually to lessons and at the start of the school day.

Sixth form

78. Results of assessments and examinations in the sixth form are generally good, and occasionally very good, in relation to students' abilities. Although relatively few students gain the highest grades at A level, most students complete their courses successfully. Many achieve, or surpass, their agreed target grades.
79. Students make good progress toward achieving their agreed learning targets in most cases. Progress is monitored regularly and students know their current levels of performance and the results they are capable of attaining. Nearly all students understand what they should do to make further progress.
80. In the sixth form, standards of achievement in the subjects inspected are good overall. There are outstanding features in art and design. There are

shortcomings in music but these are outweighed by good features. The shortcomings are confined to a very small number of lessons.

81. Students achieve standards which have outstanding features in a fifth of lessons. In a further two-thirds of lessons, standards have good features and no important shortcomings. These figures are based on the observation of 15 lessons in the subjects inspected in detail. They should be viewed with caution because the small size of the sample limits their reliability. The percentages of grades are set out in the table below.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Sixth form	20%	67%	13%	0%	0%

82. These figures compare favourably to the corresponding figures in the most recent annual report of the Chief Inspector. In this inspection, the percentage of lessons where standards were awarded the top grade is three points higher than the national figure whilst the percentage where grade two was awarded is one point higher.
83. Students achieve good standards in all key skills. They make good progress in applying their communication and numeracy skills in an increasingly wide range of contexts. They write at greater length and for many different purposes and audiences. They demonstrate outstanding skills in ICT, particularly in science, mathematics and art. Many students develop their key skills well through involvement in the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification and make good progress.
84. Most students have well-developed personal and social skills and make good use of them as they contribute to the school community. They continue to make good progress in their spiritual, moral and cultural development. Most students are very good role models for younger pupils. Many students provide useful support for younger pupils by helping them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. Students behave very well.
85. Attendance in the sixth form is good and has improved significantly in recent years. Students understand the importance of maintaining good attendance records. In most cases punctuality is good, both in lessons and at the start of the school day.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

86. This grade does not match the grade in the school's self-evaluation report. Although the inspectors agreed with the school's self-evaluation, they considered some of the good features to be outstanding and, therefore, awarded a higher grade.

87. There has been a considerable improvement in the quality of teaching and assessment since the last inspection. Whereas then 60% of lessons were graded one and two, the figure now is 87%. This is 11% higher than the corresponding figure for all secondary schools in Wales as reported by the Chief Inspector in his most recent annual report. The percentage of lessons awarded grade one is 14% higher than the national figure.

KS3 and KS4

88. The following table shows the percentages of grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment in 54 lessons observed in the six subjects at KS3 and KS4.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	27%	45%	21%	6%	0%
KS4	52%	48%	0%	0%	0%
KS3 and 4	37%	46%	13%	4%	0%

89. The following table shows the percentages of grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment in 81 lessons observed overall.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	22%	55%	20%	4%	0%
KS4	50%	47%	3%	0%	0%
KS3 and KS4	32%	52%	14%	3%	0%

90. Teaching has outstanding features at both key stages, but, overall, teaching is better at KS4 than it is at KS3.
91. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils and challenge them with demanding activities. In the most successful lessons, teachers use probing questions to extend pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding. This skilful use of questioning is outstanding at KS4. Most lessons are well paced and succeed in motivating and engaging pupils. However, in a very few lessons there is not enough participation by pupils.
92. The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils is outstanding. This has a powerful impact on the extent to which pupils work in a productive manner and have positive attitudes to their work. Pupils are very appreciative of the environment produced by teachers in which, in nearly all cases, they can fully concentrate on their learning.
93. Most teachers are very competent and have outstanding subject knowledge. As a result of professional development within the school and good access to other forms of training, they are familiar with recent developments in education. Since all teachers have received training in "critical skills", they are particularly well equipped to address the focus on skills in the revised NC.
94. The consistency of teachers' planning is outstanding. Nearly all teachers organise their lessons well and place them in a sequence that builds on previous knowledge and understanding. In a few cases planning is extremely

detailed. With very few exceptions, teachers explain clearly what pupils are going to learn and display these learning objectives prominently in the classroom. At the end of lessons they provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on their learning and review their progress. The consistency of this approach to reviewing progress is another outstanding feature.

95. Most teachers successfully use a suitable range of teaching methods. In the best lessons, teachers stimulate the interest of the pupils, use a good variety of well-timed activities and structure the lessons into manageable sections. Although most teachers involve pupils actively in their learning, a very few spend too much time giving information.
96. In many lessons the skilful use of discussion in pairs and groups enables pupils to learn effectively from others and enrich their understanding. The innovative way in which collaborative learning is used to develop skills in the 'Opening Minds' lessons is an outstanding feature.
97. Classroom resources are selected carefully by most teachers and succeed in engaging pupils and helping them to learn in ways that suit them. Resources produced by teachers themselves are of a high quality. The widespread use in classrooms of data projectors to display visual images, show video clips, and generally provide information to support teaching is outstanding. However, only in a very few cases is the electronic whiteboard used in an interactive way.
98. Many teachers plan carefully to ensure that all pupils are given the same opportunities for learning. Boys and girls are questioned equally and pupils with ALN are supported well. There are good examples of teachers preparing activities and materials for the full range of ability in classes. However, in many classes work is not adapted well enough to meet the individual needs of all pupils. Only in a few cases do teachers plan to cater for the needs of MAT pupils.
99. A minority of teachers use incidental Welsh effectively in a variety of contexts, but there is relatively little use of the Welsh language in lessons.
100. The processes used in the school for assessing what pupils achieve and how they progress are highly successful. Pupils' learning is assessed regularly and assessment is regarded as an essential part of teaching and learning in the school. In most cases it is used well to inform pupils of the next steps needed to make progress, and also to help teachers in their future planning.
101. Most pupils know clearly what they are achieving in their subjects and what they must do to improve. Data are used well to identify pupils who under-achieve and to help set targets for improvement.
102. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully within most departments and by heads of year. In many subjects pupils are also given opportunities to assess and evaluate their own progress and that of their peers. To enhance this process teachers use Progress Files successfully with the pupils to formally review targets, set further ones and plan how they can be achieved.

103. Most teachers mark pupils' work regularly and many make detailed and constructive comments, giving pupils a clear understanding of their strengths and how to make further progress. However, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of feedback given to pupils in different subjects.
104. The quality of oral feedback to pupils in class is outstanding and succeeds in helping them improve their learning. Most teachers make themselves readily available to respond to questions, keep a close watch on pupils' progress in class and continuously move pupils on in their learning.
105. The school meets the statutory requirements for assessing and reporting, and the requirements of the examination boards are satisfied. Many teachers have also been involved in productive discussion of samples of pupils' work to ensure that their assessment is based on a common understanding of standards. There are excellent procedures for discussing with their primary school teachers the standards achieved by pupils entering the school.
106. Parents are informed well of pupils' progress by two reports each year. A full report gives more detailed information about achievement in subjects. The reports vary in quality: a few do not give enough information about what pupils have achieved, and a minority does not indicate what pupils can do to improve their learning.

Sixth form

107. The following table shows the percentages of grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment in 15 lessons observed in the six subjects.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Sixth form	33%	67%	0%	0%	0%

108. The following table shows the grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment in 22 lessons observed overall.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Sixth form	36%	64%	0%	0%	0%

109. In most lessons, teachers expect high standards and their challenge to students to achieve excellence is an outstanding feature. Most teachers use questions very skilfully to develop students' reasoning and critical thinking. They direct relevant questions to individual students, encourage investigation and research and promote independent learning successfully. In a very few lessons there is little opportunity for students to participate actively.
110. Relationships between teachers and students are outstanding. There is a strong rapport and respect which contributes to a positive environment for learning where critical dialogue can take place. Teachers know students well and cater for their individual learning needs. Students are appreciative of the support and individual help given to them by their teachers.

111. Most teachers have excellent knowledge of their subjects and are able to teach all aspects of them effectively. They are aware of recent developments in education, particularly about the different ways in which students learn and how to develop skills. In most cases teachers are confident and enthusiastic and they transmit this to the students.
112. The consistency observed in lesson planning is an outstanding feature. Most teachers have clear objectives, which they share with students. These learning objectives guide students' learning and provide criteria for reviewing progress. In many cases the structure of lessons is meticulously timed, yet sufficiently flexible to respond to individual needs. In nearly all cases, teachers enable students to reflect on their learning and review their progress during the lesson.
113. The creative and innovative use of a wide range of resources to support learning is an outstanding feature. Many teachers produce high quality materials themselves and these are, in most cases, carefully chosen to enrich the students' learning. Most teachers use the data projector and whiteboard in an imaginative way to provide suitable visual interest and information.
114. In most cases teachers are skilful enough to know when it is best to use individual tasks or collaborative activities. Where group activities are most successful students are encouraged to think critically, express their own views and challenge those of others. In a few cases strategies to involve more passive students in question and answer sessions are not effective enough.
115. The school has developed very successful approaches to assessment in the sixth form. Students' work is assessed regularly and accurately, with emphasis on students' achievement and how they can make further progress.
116. Students are set targets and know clearly how well they are doing in subjects and how to improve. Systems for collating and analysing evidence of attainment are managed well. Information is used effectively to monitor progress, identify strengths and shortcomings and set targets for improvement.
117. Overall, work is marked regularly and, in many cases, in a detailed and rigorous manner. Despite some inconsistency in marking and the quality of feedback given to students in different subjects, most teachers' comments give encouragement and clear advice about how to improve.
118. Most teachers give continuous and high quality feedback in class. This is an outstanding feature. It enables students to correct errors, consolidate learning and plan their own improvement. In many cases students are given opportunities to assess their own performance critically and to discuss with others how they can improve their work.
119. Parents are informed regularly of the progress of students. The annual report, in most cases, provides a full written commentary of students' achievement in specific subjects. However, in a minority of reports there is not enough detail of that achievement and what students should do to make further progress.

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

120. This grade does not match the grade in the school's self-evaluation report. Although the inspectors agreed with the school's self-evaluation, they considered some of the good features to be outstanding and, therefore, awarded a higher grade.
121. The curriculum has many outstanding features. It meets learners' needs at all key stages and gives pupils and students of all abilities the opportunity to gain qualifications. The curriculum is balanced, coherent and relevant and ensures progression between key stages.
122. The school has developed successfully option menus within Learning Pathways 14-19 including the introduction of appropriate vocational courses. The school takes great care in providing appropriate options and courses for KS3 pupils. They are consulted and very well advised by senior staff members.
123. The key elements of Learning Pathways 14-19 have been addressed very effectively. The curriculum provides Individual Learning Pathways for all 14-19 learners. It is broad and flexible and addresses the various requirements of the Learning Core.
124. The school has outstanding curricular links with primary schools. At KS3 the school has developed an innovative approach to the new skills-based NC. The thematic 'Opening Minds' programme for Y7 pupils, taught by the same teacher for a number of lessons, promotes continuity. It engages all pupils fully in a wide range of challenging and relevant tasks both as individuals and in groups.
125. The sixth form is open to all students. The school offers a good range of Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and A level courses and vocational courses at levels one to three. The introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification in Y12 adds a new dimension to the curriculum. Students choose from a good range of options suited to their individual needs. The various courses prepare students very effectively for continued studies and employment.
126. The school has retained the Basic Skills Quality Mark. The varied learning experiences across key stages are planned very well to develop learners' basic and key skills effectively. Key skills are highlighted in lessons and integrated in schemes of work. Provision is co-ordinated very well throughout the curriculum. Key skills are accredited at all key stages.
127. The diverse range of extra-curricular activities in the school broadens greatly pupils' and students' learning experiences. This is an outstanding feature. Musical and dramatic productions, sporting activities, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, a rich variety of visits together with subject clubs contribute effectively to learners' personal and social development.

128. The comprehensive after-school E3+ programme is outstanding. Its wide range of recreational and educational activities is very popular with pupils and students. A majority of learners attend at least one activity.
129. The school promotes very successfully learners' personal development in various ways. The comprehensive PSE programme, morning assemblies and form tutor periods enrich learners' social and moral development. Learners' involvement with the PONT initiative linking Pontypridd with a town in Uganda and a number of successful fund-raising events indicate their concern and care for others who are less fortunate than they are.
130. Partnerships with parents, the community and other providers of education are outstanding. The school utilises home-school agreements purposefully. Parents and members of the community receive informative, well-designed newsletters recording school activities and events. The E3+ programme of evening class activities illustrates clearly the school's community links. The school has a long and very well-established partnership with initial teacher training institutions.
131. The school has collaborated very effectively with other educational providers within the locality and consortium links have enhanced the curricular provision.
132. The curriculum complies with legal requirements at all key stages, including the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. This was a key issue at the last inspection.
133. Work-related education is very prominent in the curriculum. Links with the EBP, visits by employers and talks by visiting speakers add greatly to pupils' perception of the world of work. Learners in Y10 and Y12 undertake work placements which are monitored well. The school has a very effective partnership with *Gyrfa Cymru - Careers Wales*.
134. Aspects of *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* feature in many subjects and schemes of work. All pupils in KS3 and KS4 study Welsh as a second language. Pupils have a positive attitude to learning Welsh. Bilingual signs raise awareness of Welsh in everyday life. However, planned opportunities to promote learners' bilingual skills across the curriculum are limited.
135. A range of strategies is used to tackle social disadvantage and stereotyping very successfully. This is an outstanding feature. The school ensures equality of access and opportunity to everyone. The curriculum is open to all and no pupil is disadvantaged. The Prince's Trust XL club offers opportunities for pupils to successfully re-engage in education. Pupils have been actively involved with the Retired Senior Volunteer Programme on intergenerational work, thus further demonstrating the school's community links.
136. Many subjects successfully promote education for sustainable development and global citizenship. The active Eco-committee has instigated a number of recycling initiatives and is working to make the school more sustainable and environmentally friendly. Learners are very aware of the significance of healthy eating.

137. The school has developed very close and productive links with local businesses. Very successful vocational courses have been introduced to the curriculum to take account of employers' needs. Notable examples are the courses in construction skills and the built environment.
138. The school has developed a very effective and comprehensive range of entrepreneurial activities across all key stages. These include a wide range of business-based activities including Project Dynamo and Young Enterprise. Through their involvement in these activities, many pupils and students participate in competitions and this helps promote their entrepreneurial skills.
139. The outstanding features of the curriculum reflect national priorities for lifelong learning and community regeneration.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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140. This grade does not match the grade in the school's self-evaluation report. Although the inspectors agreed with the school's self-evaluation, they considered some of the good features to be outstanding and, therefore, awarded a higher grade.
141. A coherent and established pastoral structure provides good support and guidance for all learners. Pastoral team members work well together. They have positive working relationships with learners and know them well. Regular full pastoral and team meetings reinforce good communications between team members. Strong links with a wide range of outside support and community agencies are outstanding. Support is co-ordinated effectively by a newly appointed key worker who is also the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).
142. Effective links between home and school reinforce care and support for learners. Parents are actively encouraged to be involved in their child's learning. Community-based initiatives encourage parents to be more involved with the school. This involvement is reinforced effectively by a support worker employed by the People and Work Unit, who not only works in school but also sets up activities involving both parents and learners in the community.
143. Pupils feel valued and the school council is an effective forum for pupils to voice their opinions on various issues such as bullying and enhancing the school environment. Many projects have been promoted and delivered effectively by the school council. Partner primary school pupils' views are heard and appreciated in the Grand School Council which meets every term with representatives from the primary schools.
144. The school provides good guidance for learners making option choices at the end of KS3 and KS4. Documentation for informing choices in the sixth form is particularly impressive. This guidance is reinforced by an outstanding careers programme. The award of the Careers Wales Quality Mark for both CEG and

WRE reflects the importance the school places on providing learning opportunities to develop lifelong learning and a range of careers challenges.

145. Very good links with Careers Wales are strengthened by a full-time careers adviser on site. Careers modules are prominent in the PSE programme at KS3, KS4 and in the sixth form. Pupils in Y10 follow a British Safety Council Award programme, leading to qualification at Entry Level 3, before they start work experience. This is outstanding. The Learning Coach is at present undertaking accreditation and is developing close links with heads of year and form tutors.
146. The strong curricular and pastoral links with partner primary schools enable learners to settle in quickly. Transition arrangements begin in Y5 and gain momentum throughout Y6. Aspects of the Transition Plan are outstanding. They include joint training initiatives leading to consistent teaching strategies and a focus on common skills across the cluster. Pupils become familiar with teaching strategies involved in 'Opening Minds' before transfer. 'Childline' trained Y10 SNAP mentors support learners during the transition period.
147. Provision for personal support and guidance, including access to PSE, is outstanding. The PSE programme promotes learners' personal and social development and includes health and well-being at appropriate times. Lessons are delivered effectively through the 'Opening Minds' programme at KS3, discrete lessons at KS4 and the Welsh Baccalaureate in the sixth form. The PSE programme review includes a school council activity to identify topics of most concern to young people. Specialist services are used very effectively to develop self-esteem and provide positive peer role models. Individual specialist counselling is available through the Pupil Project, Detached Youth Worker programme, Eye-to-Eye project and the Restorative Justice programme.
148. The school's procedures for monitoring attendance, punctuality and behaviour are good. Group and form initiatives have had a positive impact on improving attendance rates throughout the school. Academic progress is monitored effectively by heads of year using the 'traffic-light' system. This identifies underachievers so that these pupils can be mentored. The monitoring of progress by form teachers is not fully developed.
149. The strategies for promoting healthy living are outstanding. They are a priority of the school. Emotional, physical and social aspects, including healthy eating, are co-ordinated very effectively and embedded naturally in school life. The school has achieved the Phase One Healthy School's Award. The Child Protection policy conforms to the LEA procedures. All members of staff are made fully aware of these procedures in the staff Standard Operating Procedures booklet.
150. The provision for pupils with a range of ALN has many good features. Contacts with the partner primary schools in Y5 allows for early positive links to be established with both pupils and parents. Pupils' needs are diagnosed early and close contact with outside support agencies are established to discuss pupils who require specialist intervention and support.

151. Commitment to inclusive education is shown by the introduction of mixed-ability teaching in Y7, except in English and mathematics. Pupils with ALN are taught in discrete classes in Y8 and Y9. Not enough use is made of adapting work to suit pupils' individual needs in some of these lessons. Most learners make good progress in relation to their prior attainment and their identified needs. Learners with ALN are integrated well into all aspects of school life.
152. Classroom support staff includes school-based Learning Support Assistants (LSA) and Special Needs Support Assistants (SNSA) employed by the LEA. They provide sensitive support to learners in discrete and mixed-ability classes. They are deployed appropriately according to levels of need. The team has a positive and respectful relationship with learners. Strategies to support the development of literacy and numeracy for pupils with ALN are underdeveloped.
153. Individual Educational Plans (IEP) generally relate well to learners' needs. Targets are usually realistic and accessible to learners. Progress against IEP targets is reviewed three times a year. Management of IEPs is administered by an LSA. Copies of IEPs are distributed to subject departments and to parents of pupils with ALN. The relationship between the learning support department and subject departments has not developed enough to provide the most effective support. Statements of ALN are appropriately reviewed annually.
154. Pupils' behaviour, both in and out of the classroom, is a significant strength. This is reinforced by the friendly and caring ethos of the school. Expectations for behaviour and the consequences of misbehaviour are established clearly in the 'Right to Learn' policy. Consistent behaviour management strategies reinforce this outstanding feature. Pupils with significant behavioural difficulties receive appropriate support from outside agencies.
155. The school has a strong community ethos. Learners from different backgrounds are easily assimilated. The school's ethos ensures there is no discrimination. Initiatives and strategies to redress social and educational imbalances have outstanding features. Community link support agencies support learners both in school and in the community. Each individual learner receives sensitive support and care according to need with a strong emphasis on developing self-esteem and confidence. Support for learners with disabilities and EAL is good. Strategies to challenge and extend MAT learners are developing.
156. The school's strong values and friendly ethos actively discourage all forms of stereotyping, harassment and discrimination. All subject options are open to all pupils and efforts to improve the achievement of boys have had positive impacts. The anti-bullying policy has been reviewed by the GB, parents and the school council and procedures are understood clearly. The racial equality policy is reinforced effectively by planned units of work in PSE and religious education. Good relationships are encouraged successfully.
157. Disabled learners can gain access to all facilities and areas of the school. The Disability Equality Scheme and Access Plan are published in a single document. Clear outcomes are identified and the school has taken reasonable action to ensure disabled learners do not suffer from less favourable treatment.

158. Activities and initiatives through which learners can develop an understanding of diversity are outstanding. An appreciation of the global community is developed through the highly effective PONT partnership with Uganda. The school has received the United Nations Gold Star Communities Award for its education programme. A range of activities including EU Mock Elections, Africa Day, 'Around the World in 80 Schools' DVD, modules in the PSE programme and collective worship reinforces this understanding.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

159. This grade does not match the grade in the school's self-evaluation report. Although the inspectors agreed with the school's self-evaluation, they considered some of the good features to be outstanding and, therefore, awarded a higher grade.
160. The headteacher provides effective and outstanding leadership. He has a clear vision for the school. Under his leadership, the school is making very good progress. He receives excellent support from the deputy headteacher who shares his vision. Together they give purposeful strategic direction to the work of the whole school. They have high expectations for learning, behaviour and relationships.
161. Members of the LT work very well together. They ensure that the school's values are embedded in daily routines and that these routines operate smoothly. Members of the LT have very good links with middle managers. Their work enables departments to evaluate performance, analyse data and plan future developments well. Managers at all levels are committed to the school's aims and values which promote equality of opportunity for staff and pupils.
162. Leaders and managers take good account of Welsh Assembly Government priorities. They collaborate well in partnerships with other local providers of education and are committed to developing provision for Learning Pathways 14-19. Good progress has been made in developing education for sustainable development and global citizenship and in promoting healthy living. Less progress has been made in the development of pupils' bilingual competence.
163. Particularly good progress has been made in tackling issues connected to community regeneration. There are outstanding features in this aspect of the school's work. A number of important initiatives such as E3+ and intergenerational work enhance the school's role in the community. Members of the community are frequent visitors to the school.
164. Managers at all levels use data well to set challenging but realistic targets for those they manage. Suitable arrangements are implemented successfully to improve the performance of individual staff, teams and departments. The

processes of setting targets and managing performance have impacted on the recent significant improvements in standards at KS4. They have also enabled the school to make outstanding progress in improving standards and quality since the last inspection.

165. Suitable systems for appraising staff are used very well. These procedures enable leaders and managers to identify professional development needs. Members of staff have attended relevant and beneficial courses and other training opportunities. In the great majority of cases, professional development has a positive impact.
166. The sixth-form is managed efficiently. Its management reflects the school's aims and values and ensures that routines operate smoothly. Managers encourage students to participate fully in the life of the school. Management systems ensure that students receive good academic support as well as personal advice and guidance. The work of the sixth form is monitored effectively.
167. The GB contributes well to the school's leadership. Governors know the school well. They monitor its performance and provide very good levels of support. They conduct much of their work through a good range of sub-committees to ensure the school is managed effectively.
168. In all major respects, governors fulfil their legal and regulatory duties. There are, however, a few minor omissions from the most recent annual report to parents.

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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169. This grade does not match the grade in the school's self-evaluation report. Although the inspectors agreed with the school's self-evaluation they considered some of the good features to be outstanding and, therefore, awarded a higher grade.
170. The findings of the inspection team differ from those of the school in all seven key questions. They are one grade higher in all key questions. The inspection team felt that there were sufficient outstanding features in all key questions to warrant the upgrading. The inspection team, however, agreed with the content of the self-evaluation report.
171. Self-evaluation is established well in the work of the school. Arrangements are highly systematic and based upon relevant first-hand evidence. Leaders and managers make good use of the information generated from self-evaluation to establish clear priorities for improvement.

172. The school has produced a self-evaluation report that is detailed and evaluative. It identifies clearly the school's strengths and areas for development in all key questions of the CIF. The report refers to a range of evidence to support the judgements. The evidence includes a rigorous analysis of assessment and examination data presented in a simple, yet thorough, common format. In addition, first-hand observations of the work of teachers in lessons provide further basic information.
173. Leaders and managers have a good knowledge of the strengths and shortcomings in their areas of responsibility. Evaluations focus well on improving standards and teaching and learning and in supporting pupils and students to reach their potential.
174. Links between senior and middle managers are very effective in developing consistent approaches to self-evaluation. Members of staff are encouraged to reflect critically on all aspects of their work and take appropriate actions. The culture of review, evaluation and action which has developed in recent years is outstanding.
175. Pupils and students are actively encouraged to express their views on learning, teaching and several other aspects of school life. The extent to which the views of pupils and other interested parties are taken into account is outstanding. Pupils feel valued by the school. This plays an important part in motivating them to succeed.
176. The effectiveness of planning for improvement is outstanding. All stakeholders are committed to improve provision, standards and learning experiences for all pupils and students. Planning at all levels is outstanding. There are clear links between self-evaluation, departmental and whole-school development plans which inform further developments.
177. Strong teamwork links evaluations with measurable outcomes. In particular, actions have led to improvements in achievement and attainment, behaviour and attendance. There has also been an improvement in the self-belief of the pupils and students in their commitment to the school and education.
178. Managers are very forward-thinking and innovative in their approach. They evaluate evidence and ideas continuously to plan for improvement. All members of staff are familiar with the value of continuous review and reflection leading to successful improvements.
179. The headteacher, members of the LT and governors are very effective in identifying the key areas to be tackled in order to move the school forward. Challenging targets for improvement have had a positive impact on pupils' and students' learning and progress and on their personal and social development.
180. Overall, self-evaluation and planning for improvement are very effective. They have led to outstanding progress in addressing the key issues from the last inspection in several important areas. These include:
 - significant improvement in achievement of pupils, particularly boys;

- considerable improvement in ICT across the curriculum;
- development of effective strategies by senior managers to link with departments to monitor and improve standards, teaching and learning;
- improved use of assessment strategies to inform pupils about how well they are doing and how they can improve; and
- considerable improvement in pupils' attendance.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

181. This grade does not match the grade in the school's self-evaluation report. Although the inspectors agreed with the school's self-evaluation, they considered some of the good features to be outstanding and, therefore, awarded a higher grade.
182. There are enough teachers to teach all aspects of the curriculum well. There is a good range of experienced and recently qualified teachers with a high quality of subject expertise. Very few lessons are taught by non-specialist teachers and this has little adverse effect on learning experiences. There are also sufficient members of classroom support staff who assist teachers well.
183. The staff providing support for non-teaching functions, such as administration, finance, information systems, maintenance and supervision, also make a significant contribution to the efficient running of the school.
184. The school is making good use of its resources for workforce remodelling. Over the last three years, the LT has been rationalised and simpler lines of responsibility introduced. This has increased the efficiency of the management of the school. It has also introduced a School Improvement Group, consisting of representatives of teaching and non-teaching staff, which has an open brief to discuss all aspects of the school's work.
185. The amount and quality of resources for learning across the school are very good and, in four of the six subjects inspected, are outstanding. The provision of ICT equipment, such as interactive whiteboards and computers, is particularly impressive.
186. Accommodation is exceptional in the way it has been maintained, refurbished and adapted to meet the changing demands of the curriculum. The lower school is recently built and includes teaching rooms of high quality including a drama studio and music suite. The upper school, though some twenty years older, does not suffer by comparison. Classrooms and public areas are decorated attractively and very well maintained. Impressive wall displays throughout the school promote a positive learning environment and the common signage across both buildings helps create a consistent ethos.
187. The library in the lower school meets the needs of pupils at KS3, but pupils at KS4 make little use of it. Whilst pupils at KS4 have access to a good range of

subject-related books within each department they have more limited opportunities to develop their reading of fiction.

188. Recent additions and alterations across the school have made a significant contribution to the learning experience and the quality of life of learners. These include the construction annexe, the sports hall, the 'Bytezone' snack area, the technology and science computer suites and the drama studio. Facilities for students in the sixth form for private study and social relaxation, including the study area, resources centre and café, are outstanding.
189. The school is very well staffed and resourced to meet the needs of its pupils. Despite having to downsize in recent years to meet the challenge of falling rolls, it has increased the average class size in the main school only slightly and reduced it significantly in the sixth form. As a result, there are some large classes at KS3 and some very small ones in the sixth form. However, this does not have any adverse impact on the standards of achievement of either set of learners. Overall, the school gets good value for money from its sixth form.
190. Teaching and non-teaching staff are deployed efficiently throughout the school. There are also very good procedures in place, linked to the performance management process, to provide all staff with ongoing training and support to maintain their personal and professional development.
191. The school meets its statutory requirements in relation to the provision of planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time for teachers and ensures this time is used effectively. It also provides sufficient time for managers to carry out their roles effectively.
192. The school is exceptionally good at identifying the talents of individual members of staff and developing these to the ultimate benefit of the individual and the school. For example, the site manager, who has experience of working in the construction industry, was assisted to become a part-time teacher of construction skills. Also, a teacher has recently been appointed head of year in just her fourth year of teaching while the bursar has progressed to become a member of the LT after starting as an administrative officer.
193. The school's highly efficient budgetary system revolves around ensuring the best possible outcomes for its pupils. It reviews the cost-efficiency of individual courses constantly, especially in the sixth form, and is ever vigilant in its search for cost savings. It has developed a relationship with the Welsh Water Educational Centre whereby water consumption is monitored and water-saving devices have been introduced into toilet cisterns. Also, a wind turbine is planned for which the school has obtained funding.
194. Other examples of cost-efficiency include the surplus created on the catering account, following the increased purchase of food after the improvements in facilities and changes to menus. Also, the weekly period of enrichment activities for pupils in Y7 and Y8, run in conjunction with the E3+ project, has significantly increased their learning experiences.

195. The success with which the school identifies and acquires funds, from sources outside the LEA, is an outstanding feature. Members of the LT, individually and collectively, actively seek out grant aid from a wide range of sources. Very close links are maintained with appropriate personnel in the LEA to assist them in this. An exceptional example of this is the significant level of funding secured by the school through work with other organisations. An example of this is to provide community workers to work closely with the school and a 'Communities First' area.
196. Currently, the school has a budget deficit. The school is working closely with the LEA to eliminate this deficit.
197. The school provides a very good education for its pupils and students and supports and guides them in their personal development very well; several aspects of this provision are outstanding. It does this in an extremely efficient way, thus ensuring very good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Mathematics

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

KS3

Good features

198. Most pupils of all abilities have a good knowledge and understanding of work covered in lessons. They work very productively and usually make good progress in the tasks given to them. The majority of pupils show good levels of mathematical reasoning in explaining aspects of their work and in tackling problems. Many pupils of higher ability display high standards of mathematical reasoning in making conjectures and justifying them competently.
199. Standards in pupils' knowledge and understanding of number are usually good. Most pupils recall basic number facts competently and apply these confidently to solve appropriate problems. Their knowledge and depth of understanding of number increase throughout the key stage and by Y9 many pupils use these very well in more complex problem-solving situations.
200. More able pupils make purposeful use of estimating, use calculators well and round answers to appropriate degrees of accuracy. They draw and interpret information from a range of graphs accurately and spot relationships between straight lines drawn on a grid.
201. Most pupils of middle to lower ability have a sound knowledge of a range of concepts. They find the probability of an event and express their answers in

appropriate forms using both fractions and decimals. They know basic facts about angles and apply these competently to find missing angles in simple related problems. Many have a good knowledge and understanding of statistical averages and use these accurately to find the mean and mode.

202. Pupils with ALN work very well in lessons. Most have secure knowledge of number and spatial concepts. They recognise positive and negative numbers and use them competently to solve related problems at an appropriately challenging level. Most plot the co-ordinates of points in four quadrants accurately and many find the co-ordinates of the mid-point of a line on a grid.

Shortcomings

203. A small minority follow set procedures shown to them with insufficient understanding of what they are doing. They make fundamental errors and do not check the accuracy of their work enough.
204. A minority of pupils of middle to lower ability are hesitant in calculating mentally. They tend to rely too much on more formal written methods and do not have a secure enough knowledge of appropriate mental strategies. Occasionally they use calculators in simple calculations where a written or mental method would be more appropriate.

KS4

205. Examination results in mathematics at GCSE in the last two years have been broadly in line with national and LEA averages for passes at A*-C and A*-G grades. These results represent good achievement for these pupils relative to their ability.

Outstanding features

206. Many pupils show exceptionally high levels of mathematical reasoning in their work. They engage very competently in more extended problem-solving activities and share their ideas very well with others to enhance their understanding. They have very competent skills in algebra that enable them to make generalisations and to justify them with good levels of confidence.
207. More able pupils are entered for GCSE statistics in Y11. This year nearly all of these pupils achieved passes at A*-C and a third achieved passes at A*-A grades. This represents outstanding achievement for these pupils. These pupils are now studying modules in decision mathematics at A-level and most of them show a very good knowledge and understanding of algorithmic procedures to find critical paths in a network.
208. Pupils with ALN make excellent progress in lessons. They have a very secure knowledge and understanding of concepts in time and apply these very competently to solve related problems. Their overall engagement in their work is exceptionally good.

Good features

- 209. Most pupils of all abilities use mathematical vocabulary and techniques accurately in written and spoken work. They recall previous work with good levels of understanding and show good standards across all attainment targets.
- 210. Pupils of middle to lower ability have a good awareness of the features of scatter diagrams. They use this competently to assess the extent of correlation between two sets of variables. They show a good knowledge of concepts in number and handling data and apply these well to solve related problems.

Shortcomings

- 211. A few pupils make careless errors and do not check the accuracy of their answers enough.

Sixth form

- 212. Examination results in mathematics at A level were above local and national averages in 2007 for passes at A/B grades. In 2008 the results were below local and national averages for passes at A/B grades. Although the number of students is small the results overall represent good achievement for these students relative to their ability.

Good features

- 213. Most students make good progress in the sixth form and develop increasing confidence in working independently to enhance their problem-solving skills.
- 214. Most students have a good knowledge and understanding of concepts in pure mathematics. They use these competently in appropriately challenging tasks.
- 215. Nearly all students make very effective use of graphical calculators to increase their knowledge and understanding of a range of functions. They use a range of iterative procedures to find approximate roots for equations and have an awareness of conditions under which they will converge.
- 216. Most students show good standards in mathematical applications. For example, in decision mathematics, they use a range of algorithmic procedures competently to solve problems to find critical paths in a network. Standards in mechanics are very good.

Shortcomings

- 217. Occasionally students tend to rely too much on the teacher and are hesitant in tackling more unfamiliar questions.

Science

KS3 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS4 Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Sixth form Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

KS3

Good features

218. Most pupils have a good understanding of their current work. For example, they can explain some of the interrelations in ecosystems, others understand the principles behind the extraction of metals from their ores whilst many can apply their understanding of the particulate nature of matter to the behaviour of solid, liquids and gases. Many pupils with ALN have knowledge and understanding well above expectations for their ability. They can recall and explain complex details of previous work.
219. Pupils communicate their understanding of scientific ideas effectively, especially using drawings and diagrams. Many draw good graphs to show their data. Nearly all use scientific terms correctly, both orally and in writing.
220. Pupils carry out practical work carefully and systematically. They make simple observations and record them appropriately. Nearly all follow instructions carefully, for example on how to use a microscope. Many can draw reasoned conclusions from their data.
221. During all science lessons pupils acquire new knowledge and understanding. Most can extract and use scientific information from written sources well.
222. Pupils are developing an appropriate understanding of some of the ethical and practical issues surrounding scientific development. For example, some pupils understand the implications of pollution and acid rain.

Shortcomings

223. A few pupils are not clear about what they must do during group work or practical sessions.
224. A few pupils cannot recall or explain the scientific details of previous work, neither can they apply their understanding to unfamiliar situations.
225. A few pupils are not clear about what they need to do to improve.

KS4

226. GCSE results have been consistently below local and national averages for a number of years. However, there was a dramatic improvement in 2008. They are now above the Wales average and significantly better than the LEA

average. In view of the ability of the pupils at the school these exceed expectations. Both boys' and girls' performance has improved significantly, with girls improving to a greater extent.

Good features

227. Most pupils achieve standards that are in line with expectations. Many pupils of middle and lower ability pupils achieve standards that far exceed expectations. These pupils carry out complex practical work to a very good standard.
228. Most pupils have a good understanding of their current work. Many pupils can recall and explain details of previous work. Many can apply their knowledge to explain unfamiliar situations.
229. During their lessons pupils acquire new knowledge and understanding. Most can extract and select appropriate scientific information from a range of resources, including the internet. They communicate their scientific understanding effectively, using text, drawings, diagrams, graphs, charts and drawings. They use scientific terms accurately, both orally and in writing.
230. Pupils plan scientific investigations and carry out practical work carefully and with due regard to health and safety. They make systematic observations and record their results appropriately. The average and more able can recognise patterns in their data and draw reasoned conclusions. Pupils' ability to use graphs to display their data is good.
231. Pupils are developing an appropriate understanding of ethical and practical issues surrounding scientific developments. They see how science can be used in the fight against crime and can debate the issues surrounding power generation in an informed way.

Shortcomings

232. A small minority of pupils have difficulty in recalling details of previous work. Very often these pupils cannot use terminology correctly.

Sixth form

233. Examination results in the three separate science subjects at A level have been below local and national averages in most cases. These results are lower than those to be expected of students of similar ability.

Good features

234. Students have a good understanding of the subject matter of their courses. They can recall and explain details of previous work. Their standards of attainment are in line with their ability.

235. Students' ability to communicate scientific ideas is good. They use complex scientific terminology well, both orally and in writing. They can both plot and interpret complex graphs.
236. Many students have a sound understanding of experimental error. They can identify likely sources and suggest ways of minimising the error.
237. Students plan and carry out practical work with care. Their practical skills are good and they handle complex apparatus well. They can use data logging equipment and software to record, manipulate and display their results.

Shortcomings

238. A few students find it difficult to recall previous work or explain its details.

Modern foreign languages

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

KS3

Good features

239. Most pupils read and listen well. Most pupils in Y8 identify different places correctly from descriptions. Many pupils in Y9 demonstrate their good understanding by translating short texts well into English. A few of them make deductions about things they hear, using the context and not simply the words stated to improve their understanding. In consequence, they give fuller answers.
240. Many pupils speak with good accents and intonation. Many pupils in Y7 ask and answer simple questions. By Y8 most pupils use different styles of questions to keep up a conversation of four or more exchanges, adapting patterns and substituting elements. Many give their opinions clearly.
241. Most pupils write short paragraphs well by adapting given models. By Y8, most pupils use a tense apart from the present. A majority of pupils link their sentences together to make their writing more fluent.
242. By Y9 most pupils adapt and re-use language well in different contexts. Many write with a good level of grammatical accuracy.
243. Pupils for whom English is an additional language and those with ALN achieve well, both in mainstream groups where work is adapted to suit them, and in special sets following a modified curriculum for those with particular needs.

Shortcomings

244. A few pupils are hesitant when they speak. They lack confidence, need much repetition, and often mispronounce words. In particular, they sound what should be “silent” word endings.
245. A few pupils do not speak or write at length or with sustained accuracy: by Y9 they continue to mix up the genders of common nouns.

KS4

246. Examination results in French at GCSE in 2006 were below local and national averages for passes at A*/A grades but slightly above them for passes at A*-C grades. In 2007 passes at A*/A grades were above local but below national averages; passes at A*-C grades were above both. In 2008 over three-quarters of the candidates attained grade C or better, although no pupil attained grade A*. These results represent good achievement for these pupils.

Good features

247. Most pupils write well. They use a good range of vocabulary, sometimes quite specific to themes such as those of environmental issues and sustainable development. This is a result of their good reading skills, particularly their good use of dictionaries and reference materials.
248. Most pupils use a good variety of connectives to make their own work read with some fluency. They present their opinions well in essays, drawing appropriately on previous learning to offer reasons in support of their views. Most pupils use past and future tenses well, many also distinguishing whether things are in the recent or more distant past. Most pupils can explain what they plan or want to do, or even what they are compelled to do.
249. By Y11 most pupils engage confidently in discussion, listening carefully and genuinely exchanging views, not just repeating the same patterns.

Shortcomings

250. The pronunciation of many pupils, although it rarely compromises meaning, often reveals their home language strongly.
251. Many pupils make occasional mistakes in elementary grammar such as number, gender, articles and verb forms. This prevents them reaching the very highest levels.

Sixth form

252. Examination results in this subject at A level in 2006 and 2007 were below local and national averages for passes at A/B grades. In 2008 no student attained grade A and three-quarters of them did not attain their predicted grade. These results are lower than those to be expected of students of similar ability.

253. There is currently only one student taking French in the sixth form. It is therefore inappropriate to comment on standards.

History

KS3	Grade 3:	Good features outweigh shortcomings
KS4	Grade 2:	Good features and no important shortcomings
Sixth form	Grade 2:	Good features and no important shortcomings

KS3

Good features

254. Pupils generally have secure levels of knowledge and understanding of the topics they study. Most of them recall the previous learning successfully, using appropriate subject-specific vocabulary accurately.
255. Most pupils by Y9 have a sound understanding of chronology. They are reasonably confident in applying their background knowledge and understanding when evaluating the variety of sources of evidence which they use to analyse historical events.
256. Many pupils make good progress in developing problem-solving and investigative skills when challenged with historical problems in work with partners or in groups and when questioned directly by teachers. They ask appropriate questions of themselves and their peers when using primary and secondary sources of evidence, for example, when studying working life in 19th century Welsh mines. Most pupils extract relevant information successfully from a range of written texts, visual material and documentary evidence.
257. The most able pupils show a growing confidence in their historical enquiry and this is evident in both their written work linked to the Battle of Hastings and their questioning of events such as Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot.
258. Most pupils succeed in testing the sources of evidence for reliability, utility and bias. They show awareness of the operation of propaganda and most can explain its causes and effects. The majority of pupils use sources of evidence successfully to construct balanced and reasoned arguments in class discussions and written work.
259. Above average and most average ability pupils can compare and contrast differing interpretations of historical events and can explain how these differences in viewpoint are formed, as in Y8 regarding the relative powers of the Church and the Crown in Tudor times.
260. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the history of their local community, especially its industrial development and decline. Most pupils have

a good knowledge and awareness of the significance of the culture of Wales and this is underpinned by educational visits to local castles and museums.

261. By Y9, most pupils can distinguish between the long-term and short-term causes of historical change. Also, by the end of the key stage, pupils are successful in selecting, organising and communicating information in their discussion groups and written assignments.
262. By Y8, most pupils develop their thinking skills. They respond well to questioning and problem-solving linked to scenarios about how the course of history might have altered if key events like the Gunpowder Plot had different outcomes. Additionally, the most able pupils can link this act of political terrorism with contemporary incidents.
263. Pupils with ALN make good progress in acquiring the key historical skills. Their recall of previous learning, for example of women and child labour in the 19th century, and their ability to extract information from sources of information are, overall, secure.

Shortcomings

264. The standards of written work in history of a minority of pupils show significant variations in quality. These pupils do not complete written tasks regularly and this constrains their progress in history and their ability to assess their own learning development.
265. The written work in history of a minority of pupils, particularly boys, is badly presented. Spelling and punctuation are poor and use of language is underdeveloped.
266. A significant minority of pupils do not include sufficient detail in their written responses to homework tasks. Their work often lacks depth and analysis and tends to be a simple description of historical events.
267. A minority of pupils lack confidence in presenting extended oral responses to questions on historical topics.

KS4

268. Examination results in history at GCSE in the last two years has been below the local and national averages for passes at A*-C grades. These results are lower than those to be expected for pupils of similar ability.

Good features

269. There are many good examples of extended writing in pupils' books, predominantly those of girls. Many pupils, often girls, take a great deal of time and pride in their work, producing written work, computerised slide shows and posters of high quality.

270. The majority of pupils continue to build upon their key and historical skills which they have acquired at KS3. Overall, most pupils, especially those of above average ability, investigate historical problems and events with greater maturity and depth of response.
271. Most pupils make good progress in their oral skills, especially by Y11. Class and group discussions on topics such as the contribution of pioneers in health and medicine in the 19th century are articulate and pupils gain confidence in their own ability by raising relevant and interesting questions.
272. More able pupils can provide appropriate explanations for differences in the attitudes and motivation of groups of people in the past, for example, physicians such as Pasteur, Lister and Simpson. Pupils in Y10 ask detailed and searching questions about the use of power and propaganda by figures like Hitler, Goebbels and Himmler in pre-war Germany and offer their ideas as to why people acted as they did in particular historical events.
273. The written work of most pupils is appropriately organised and presented to demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of historical topics. Most able pupils produce work of very good quality and it is notable that the extended writing of these pupils shows research skills and independent learning.

Shortcomings

274. The writing of a small minority of pupils varies in quality. These pupils struggle to express their understanding of historical topics in extended writing tasks.
275. The written work of a small minority of pupils is poorly presented with mistakes in spelling and punctuation. The difficulties they experience in using language hamper the communication of their knowledge of history.
276. A few pupils are less confident in sustained speech than in sustained writing. They do not tend to offer extended answers to questions about historical topics.

Sixth form

277. Examination results in history at A level in the last two years have been above local and national averages for passes at A/B grades but below them for passes at A-E grades. These results are in line with students' ability.

Good features

278. Students have good levels of knowledge and understanding of key historical events, key individuals and debates linked to the political and legislative developments of nation states.
279. Most students have secure oral and presentation skills. In some cases their presentational skills are very good, as in Y12 political studies of Mary

Wollstonecraft, William Cobbett and the Merthyr Riots of 1831. Their oral skills and analytical capabilities are very good as demonstrated in their work on the Liberal Reforms of 1906-14 and 'votes for women' linked to the Suffragette movement.

280. Students learn to ask increasingly interesting and relevant questions of each other as they utilise various sources of evidence. They are clear in their recognition of the operation of bias and propaganda.
281. Students show good skills in selecting and organising their material which they use to respond to challenging learning tasks set by their teachers. Their essays offer a balanced mix of factual information and persuasive argument. They weigh their particular stance carefully and research extensively before forming a final opinion or written comment. This is demonstrated, for example, in their studies of the impact of the French Revolution and of 'new Liberalism' in early 20th century British political history.

Shortcomings

282. A very small number of students continue to find it difficult to move beyond description and offer interpretation and evaluation of issues in history in their oral and written work.
283. These same students also struggle with their extended writing and their spelling and written presentation. This impairs the quality of their work in history.

Art and design

KS3 Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
KS4 Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
Sixth form Grade 1: Good with outstanding features.

KS3

Outstanding features

284. From Y7 onwards the majority of pupils make exceptionally good progress and show a developing knowledge and understanding of the visual elements of art and design. There is visual evidence of this in their sketchbooks through the sequential development of skills, their use of materials and techniques, and annotated responses to their personal artwork and the art of others as they progress through the school.
285. In Y7, Y8 and Y9 pupils develop a very good knowledge and understanding of art, craft and design from a range of periods and cultures. They use this imaginatively to influence their work. Examples of this are the humorous, imaginative three-dimensional shoes created by pupils in Y7 and the handbags made by Y9 pupils.

Good features

286. In Y7, all pupils experiment with mark-making techniques to create a diverse range of textures to represent natural forms through the use of paint and a selection of appropriate equipment, such as sticks, brushes and sponges. Pupils represent shell textures to a high standard showing competent observational drawing skills and produce lively, expressive outcomes.
287. All pupils in Y8 work productively and experimentally to explore techniques to create textures in clay as part of the preparatory process to discover suitable surface qualities for their ceramic models of imaginary monsters. Pupils then utilise these techniques to very good effect in their well-constructed, three-dimensional figures.
288. In Y9 pupils work enthusiastically to connect with the work of Welsh artists Anthony Evans and Martyn Evans through their quirky and competent observational studies of the local environment. They then develop these studies into highly successful lino prints on a range of textured and patterned papers. As part of their work, learners write poems about their town and use the poems as a surface on which to print, thereby making excellent links with the work of Ogwyn Davies.
289. All pupils in Y9 are able to demonstrate good levels of understanding of the printmaking process through their practical outcomes. They are able to explain the process they need to adopt in order to make improvements in their work.

Shortcomings

290. There are no significant shortcomings.

KS4

291. Examination results for A* - C grades in art and design at GCSE for 2008 are well above the LEA and national averages. Similarly, GCSE results for A* - G grades and Entry level results have also been above the LEA and national averages. These results represent very good achievement for these pupils.

Outstanding features

292. The research process is particularly strong in the work of the majority of pupils in Y10 and Y11. They use their observational skills to very good effect and incorporate a wide range of mark-making materials and techniques to inform their explorations and investigations into given topics. They develop ideas imaginatively and are selective in their choices of imagery to extend developments on the route to their final creative outcomes.
293. A good balance of primary and secondary sources is used effectively in Y11 to instigate ideas. An outstanding feature of pupils' work in Y11 is their investigation into the local environment, their personal identity and the connections with local artists which result in highly personal, creative triptychs.

Good features

294. In Y10, all pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of how to develop designs from areas of their painted compositions. They experiment with a range of textile techniques, such as felt collage, crayon transfer and paint transfer to produce mini T-shirt designs of a high standard. They also make good use of ICT to transfer imagery onto fabric.
295. Pupils in Y10 also explore the art of other cultures successfully to develop a range of imaginative creative outcomes, such as masks and prints.
296. Many learners make good use of their sketchbooks to record ideas, to plan, to experiment with techniques, and to collect written and visual information. Sketchbook pages are annotated well, contain purposeful evaluations, personal written responses and address the work of a range of artists, craft workers and designers.
297. The majority of pupils show a well-developed understanding of how to convert their ideas from two to three dimensions via a range of materials, such as papier-mâché and ceramics. Good evidence of this ability is seen in the Y10 African mask-making project and the Y11 triptych project.
298. Pupils undertaking the Entry Level qualification are able to show a good variety of art experiences in their portfolios, such as fairly skilled observational drawings of natural forms in a variety of media and techniques which are successfully developed into competent, individual, colourful outcomes in batik.

Shortcomings

299. There are no significant shortcomings.

Sixth form

300. Examination results in art and design at A level in the last two years have been above local and national averages for passes at A – C grades. These results represent very good achievement for these students.

Outstanding features

301. In Y12, all students from across the ability range display excellent levels of experimentation, imagination and creativity in their group constructions of sculptures connected to the work of contemporary artist, Sarah Lucas. All students also demonstrate mature, high-level analytical and evaluative skills whilst deciphering and reflecting on each other's work.

Good features

302. In Y13 all students work independently to research and investigate effectively a diverse range of personally selected individual themes such as movement, myths and mythology and the sea. One student is producing a sophisticated collection of highly expressive, large-scale portraits which are drawn from direct observation and display inventive mark-making techniques.
303. Sketchbooks are used thoughtfully and methodically to record observations, ideas and feelings, experiment with materials and techniques and make strong, thoughtful contextual references that enhance their line of enquiry. All students are able to talk about the development of their work confidently and pages in their sketchbooks are carefully and thoroughly annotated to explain choices, processes and progression of ideas.

Shortcomings

304. There are no significant shortcomings.

Music

- KS3** **Grade 1: Good with outstanding features.**
KS4 **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings.**
Sixth form **Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings.**

KS3

Outstanding features

305. Class orchestra performances by Y7 pupils are outstanding. Technical competence on a range of classroom and chosen instruments is above expectations for pupils of this age. All Y7 pupils, including those with ALN, keep time together and play with accurate tuning and rhythm. The most able improvise instrumental solos with confidence and good musical expression. Most pupils in KS3 have good keyboard skills using correct finger and hand techniques. They play with sensitivity and fluency.
306. Composing standards achieved by very many pupils in Y8 are outstanding. Using the song "What shall we do with the drunken sailor?" as a stimulus they produce original work using simple but effective harmony. They redraft their work and produce pieces with individual character and interest.

Good features

307. Standards in singing are good for nearly all pupils in KS3 and very good for Y9 girls. They know a variety of songs in English and Welsh and perform these expressively with correct phrasing. Most pupils in Y8 can maintain an independent melodic line throughout a two-part song. Most pupils in Y9 can do this throughout a three-part song.

308. Listening skills for most pupils are good. Nearly all pupils acquire good recall skills when memorising and repeating rhythm sequences. They hear, assimilate and reproduce sounds accurately by stamping, clapping and clicking. Nearly all pupils have a clear understanding of how the elements of music cause changes to the mood and style in compositions. They make perceptive observations and comments when discussing their own music and the music of others.

Shortcomings

309. There are instances when very few pupils sing out of tune.

KS4

310. Examination results in music at GCSE in the last two years have been below national and LEA averages for passes at A* - C grades and passes at A*/A grades. The results, however, are in line with pupils' ability.

Good features

311. Nearly all Y10 pupils have good listening skills. They understand the principles of "Fusion" in modern popular music. Using advanced, descriptive language they give precise details of the components that make the music unique. Most Y11 pupils have good recall of previous learning in their "Music for Dance" module. They can identify many features of the Tango Argentino comparing different performances and interpretations of the same music.
312. Performing standards for all Y10 pupils are good or very good. The large classroom orchestra of 29 pupils rehearses well as a cohesive unit. They practice regularly and rigorously achieving high expressive standards in "La Vida Loca" for example. In Y11 all pupils, including those with ALN, achieve standards appropriate to their ability.
313. Many pupils in KS4 achieve composing standards in keeping with expectations for their age and ability. They can explore a broad range of sounds generated by computer and use them to produce compositions that are musically interesting. The most able create balanced works containing key changes and subtle thematic developments.

Shortcomings

314. A few pupils compose in a rudimentary style which lacks interest.

Sixth form

315. Examination results in music at A Level in the last two years have been below local and national averages for passes at A/B grades. The results are broadly in line with students' abilities.

Good features

316. Nearly all Y12 students clearly understand the musical structures used in their set work "Guys and Dolls". Their understanding of three-part fugue and its applications in the Baroque and 20th century is good. Most Y13 students have a good understanding of musical instruments. They can describe how Bartok uses the orchestra to achieve the textures which characterise his music. All pupils are equally adept at analysing music from scores and recordings.
317. Performing standards for nearly all Y12 students are good. Their playing on their chosen instruments is technically secure and musically accurate. Those who sing as soloists are equally capable. All Y12 students achieve high standards of choral singing when performing challenging music from "Guys and Dolls".
318. Composing standards for most students in Y12 are good. Their initial ideas, although brief, contain many interesting ideas. They rework these developing more sophisticated melodies and richer harmony. They refine their pieces systematically making substantial progress and improvements in the process.

Shortcomings

319. A minority of pupils compose music that lacks originality and depth.
320. The knowledge and understanding of music history by a few pupils are insecure and superficial.

School's response to the inspection

321. The governors, headteacher, staff and pupils welcome the fact inspectors identified outstanding features in all areas of the school's work. The awarding of the highest grades in all seven key questions confirms the professional and positive manner with which everyone exercises their responsibilities and that effective self-evaluation and planning for improvement has enabled the school to make outstanding progress in addressing the key issues for action from the report of the last inspection.
322. It is particularly pleasing that the inspectors recognised the quality of teaching as an outstanding feature in all key stages. Such standards are achieved by highly skilled professionals who give considerable thought to the needs of all learners in the way they plan, resource and deliver each lesson. We greatly value the work of classroom support staff and their important contribution was also noted in the report. Grades awarded for individual lessons are significantly above national averages and this is testament to the work of all staff and their 'outstanding' relationships with pupils and students.
323. Our school is committed to ensuring equality of access and opportunity to everyone. We are pleased that inspectors confirmed that our curriculum ensures no pupils is disadvantaged, with initiatives such as Opening Minds at KS3 and our comprehensive after-school provision, including the E3+ programme highlighted as outstanding. Individual Learning Pathways are provided for all 14-19 learners and the positive recognition for staff in this report commends their work with many school partners to deliver the essential experiences that contribute effectively to learners' personal and social development.
324. We are very proud of our pupils and place great importance on celebrating successes together and seeking their opinions. That pupils feel valued and our Listening to Learners programme allows them to make a significant contribution to school improvement is a reassuring aspect of the report. Our 'Right to Learn' policy sets high expectations for everyone and is fundamental to promoting the strong values and friendly, community ethos identified by inspectors. Well established links exist with parents, partner primary schools and outside support agencies and these continue to foster our commitment to developing each learner's self-esteem and confidence.
325. We strongly believe that leadership and management at all levels are innovative, visionary and transformational. Schools are a focus for continual change and it is encouraging that inspectors consider our leaders and managers to be very innovative and forward-thinking in their approach. We accept the recommendations in the report and the 'outstanding culture of review, evaluation and action' identified will ensure appropriate action is taken. We are pleased that the contribution of all staff, teaching and non-teaching is recognised as 'significant' and it is essential that we continue to provide the 'exceptional opportunities' for each individual member of staff to develop their careers.

326. Detailed planning and innovative decision making has enabled the school to make maximum use of resources available. The report acknowledges that the budget is expertly produced and essentially that 'the school provides value for money'. This is a tribute to the work of governors and staff over many years and it is rewarding that inspectors felt the quality of the school campus made a 'significant contribution to the learning experience and the quality of life of learners'.
327. Our mission statement is 'Learning and Achieving Together'. This endorsement of our school ensures that we can move forward confidently, managing change into the opportunities that our pupils and students deserve to make a success of their lives.
328. The school acknowledges the professional, collaborative approach and diligence of the inspection team. We acknowledge the thoroughness of the inspection process and accept its findings.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Pontypridd High School
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Albion Community Campus, Cilfynydd, Pontypridd Rhondda Cynon Taff
Postcode	CF37 4SF
Telephone number	01443 486133

Headteacher	Mr Huw Cripps
Date of appointment	1 st January 2007
Chair of governors / Appropriate authority	Mr Peter James
Reporting inspector	Mr Peter Carter
Dates of inspection	24 th – 28 th November 2008

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	186	154	147	158	151	88	52	936

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	49	11	55.9

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16.6 : 1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	N/A
Average teaching group size	20.4
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	79%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	92	90	89	89	86	89	80	89
Term 2	89	90	89	88	84	87	82	88
Term 3	91	89	87	87	96	90	93	90

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	20%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	52 (temporary) 0 (permanent)

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2008															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 157															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	2	14	27	35	19	3	0	0
		National	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	21	36	24	9	0	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	2	15	23	33	22	5	0	0
		National	0	0	0	0	0	1	8	20	28	27	14	1	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	1	0	1	9	26	31	23	8	0	0
		National	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	21	35	26	10	0	0

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

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by teacher assessment		by test	
In the school	55.35	In the school	
In Wales	57	In Wales	

Public Examination Results:

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ	
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2008	155
Average GCSE or GNVQ (wider) points score per pupil	327

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2008:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	80	n/a	n/a
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	52	47	56
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	78	82	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	33	33	41
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	68	n/a	n/a
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	94	n/a	n/a
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	0	4	3
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	5	4	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	-	-	-

For pupils aged 17, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs	
Number of pupils aged 17 in January 2008	65
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2008	52
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2008	13

Report by Peter Guy Carter
Pontypridd High School, 24/11/08

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	54	60	69
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	85	93	94
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	546	542	631
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	-	-	-

UA Unitary Authority

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Fourteen inspectors, including a peer assessor and the school's nominee, spent the equivalent of 52.5 days in the school. They held a meeting before the inspection.

During the inspection, inspectors visited:

- 103 lessons or part lessons, 69 in the six subjects and 34 in other subjects;
- registrations, assemblies and form tutor periods in each year group; and
- some extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team met with:

- staff, parents, governors and representatives of the LEA before and during the inspection;
- senior leaders, middle managers, teachers and members of support staff;
- groups of pupils and students representing each year group; and
- representatives of the school council.

The inspection team also considered:

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

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

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Peter Carter (Registered Inspector)	Context, Summary, Recommendations, KQ1, KQ5, Appendix
Graham Davies	KQ2
Clive Rowlands	KQ3
Gwyn Griffiths	KQ4
Ronald Graham	KQ6
Edward Tipper (Lay Inspector)	KQ7
David Williams	Mathematics
David Hughes	Science
Martyn S Williams	Modern foreign languages
Peter Treadwell	History
Shan Samuel-Thomas	Art and design
Brendan Barry	Music
David Lewis	Peer Assessor
Kenneth Phillips	Nominee

Acknowledgement

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

The inspection contractor

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