

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Ysgol Bryn Elian
Windsor Drive
Colwyn Bay
Conway
LL29 8HU**

School Number: 6625403

Date of Inspection: 6 October 2008

by

**Gareth Hawtin Buckland
78306**

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

The inspection of Ysgol Bryn Elian took place between 06/10/08 and 09/10/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by Gareth Hawtin Buckland 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

Terms and Phrases Linked to proportions

Throughout the report, the following terms are used to reflect the broad proportions shown below.

Term	Equivalence description
Nearly all	With very few exceptions
Most	90% or more
Many	70% or more
A majority	Over 60%
Half	50%
Around a half	Close to 50%
A minority	Below 40%
Few	Below 20%
Very few	Less than 10%

Contents	Page
Context	1
Summary	2
Recommendations	8
Standards	8
Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?	8
The quality of education and training	14
Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	14
Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	18
Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	22
Leadership and management	26
Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?	26
Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	28
Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	30
Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning	32
Welsh second language	32
Science	34
Information technology	35
Modern foreign languages	37
History	38
Physical education	40
School's response to the inspection	42
Appendices	42
1 Basic information about the school	42
2 School data and indicators	43
3 National Curriculum assessments results	44
4 Evidence base of the inspection	45
5 Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team	46

Context

The nature of the provider

1. Ysgol Bryn Elian is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school of 823 pupils. The school opened in 1976 to serve the eastern side of Colwyn Bay and the surrounding villages. The catchment area for the school is diverse, including areas of relative wealth as well as areas of significant deprivation. The school serves rural and urban communities and attracts pupils from outside its traditional catchment area. The linguistic background of the pupils and students is almost exclusively English with a small number of pupils coming from Welsh-medium or other ethnic language backgrounds.
2. Since the last inspection, significant changes have taken place within the leadership of the school at both senior and middle leadership levels. The school has appointed a new headteacher from within the previous leadership team. As a result of this appointment, two further new appointments have been made at the senior level of leadership, one internal and one external. In addition, a number of new appointments of heads of departments have been made.
3. In the last three years, Ysgol Bryn Elian has been designated as a RAISE school by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). This designation derives from the WAG's measure of deprivation, essentially schools where more than 20% of the population are entitled to free school meals.
4. Provision in the sixth form is through a range of opportunities established in a number of ways. Sixth-form students based at the school are able to work on a traditional in-house curriculum or through provision from a collaborative programme with other institutions. This provision is enhanced by a very small number of students working as independent learners utilising information technology supported by staff within the appropriate departments.
5. The school has a supportive and active governing body, drawn from parents and persons of standing in the local community. There is also a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) that works to generate funds as well as supporting events through providing refreshments. The PTA is also a consultation body for developments in the school and is a registered charity.
6. Ysgol Bryn Elian has a clearly defined motto, "Achievement for All." This commitment is expanded upon and promoted in a variety of school publications so that all stakeholders are aware of the school's values. One way in which the school's values are exemplified is through the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, whereby the school enables a very large number of students to participate in the Award. The school has produced more than half of the gold Award winners in the county of Conwy.

The school's priorities and targets

7. The core purpose of the school is to:
- provide a first-class learning experience for all pupils;
 - maintain a well-ordered learning environment;
 - maintain and develop a caring ethos;
 - provide a fully comprehensive education for all pupils;
 - prepare all pupils for adult life; and
 - serve the community.
8. The school's specific aims are established with pupils, staff and parents in mind, demonstrating the inclusive nature of the school. They include:
- For all pupils**
- to set, achieve and maintain high standards throughout the school;
 - to encourage high standards of self-discipline and behaviour; and
 - to develop pupils' moral, spiritual and aesthetic awareness.
- For all staff**
- to encourage staff to reflect on and share good practice in the classroom;
 - to continue to improve standards of teaching and learning; and
 - to encourage commitment to the ideals of the school.
- For parents**
- to encourage parents to share in the education of their children; and
 - to involve parents in ensuring good attendance, punctuality and behaviour from the children.
9. The school's priorities for action, alongside the established targets for performance, are clearly outlined in the school development plan (SDP); the priorities reflect the school's aims.

Summary

10. Ysgol Bryn Elian is a good school that has the leadership and vision capable of making it become a very good school. Within the school, there are particular areas of strength including the:
- consistently high standards attained in Key Stage 3 (KS3) assessments and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results that demonstrate that the school is in an improving situation;
 - very good behaviour and attitudes displayed by pupils and students;
 - school's work on education for sustainable development and global citizenship (ESDGC); and
 - school's ability to achieve very good value for money.

Table of grades awarded

11. In the seven key questions, the following grades were awarded.

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

12. Within the school's self-evaluation report (SER), the school awarded itself a Grade 2 for all key questions except key question 1 where the school adjudged its performance as a Grade 3. The team concurred with the school's judgements in all key questions but awarded the school a Grade 2 for key question 1.

13. The reasons for the difference in grade in key question 1 are summarised as follows:

- the consistently high attainment over several years in KS3;
- the considerable improvement in GCSE results that moved the school's performance above the trend line for the past five years; and
- the high standards of behaviour and the positive attitudes pupils display towards their work.

Standards

Good features

14. Standards of achievement in the six subjects inspected during the inspection are displayed in the following table.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	1	20	12	1	0
KS4	2	19	6	0	0
Post-16	1	13	3	0	0
Total	4	52	21	1	0
Total %	5	67	27	1	0

15. In the six subjects inspected, pupils' standards of achievement exceeded the national target for Grade 2 or better set within Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in Wales Report (HMCI) (2008) by a significant margin; the target for Grade 3 or better was met.

16. In 2008, the KS3 core subject indicator (CSI) for the school was above both the local and national figures. Furthermore, in all core subjects as well as the CSI, the KS3 performance in 2008 was better than the local and national averages. When compared with schools of a similar intake, the school is consistently in the top 25%. More boys than girls attained the CSI. However, the separate performances of boys and girls were both above the local and national figures.

17. In KS4, the school has made extremely good progress in attainment in GCSE. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades in 2008 is an encouraging feature of the school's performance. In 2008, 66% of pupils achieved five or more A*-C grades and 97% of pupils achieved five or more A*-G grades. Both of these percentages are an improvement on the results from 2007 and higher than the school's targets. GCSE results compare extremely well with those of the Unitary Authority (UA) and national results.
18. Overall, when compared with similar schools, the school's GCSE results in 2007 place the school in the lowest 25% for over half of the indicators; elsewhere they are mainly in the upper quartile. However, indications are that the improved performance in 2008 will dramatically improve this picture.
19. Across KS3 and KS4, extremely high levels of value added are evinced in the 2008 results when performance is compared with attainment of pupils on entry to the school as well as the targets established for the pupils and the school.
20. The performance of sixth-form students remains good and in 2008, advanced level (A-level) results continued to improve with 63% of students gaining at least two A-C grades. The average points score is significantly higher than the results in 2007.
21. In addition to advanced subsidiary (AS) and A-level studies, the school has successfully embraced the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) at level 3 with nearly 30 students gaining an A grade in each of the last two years.
22. All pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEN) and those identified as looked-after children (LAC), make good progress. They participate well and are successful within mainstream classes.
23. Standards in all key skills, including the wider skills, have improved since the last inspection and are now generally good. Pupils' key skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing are good across all key stages; the use of information communication technology (ICT) to aid learning has developed very well and is good.
24. Pupils' personal, social and learning skills develop well as they progress through the school. Pupils are confident and are polite and personable to visitors, staff and each other.
25. Pupils understand the importance of good behaviour in a learning environment. This helps to establish the classroom as a place in which effective learning takes place. The standards of behaviour and the level of respect afforded all those involved in the school is a strength of the school.
26. The mean level of attendance over the last three academic terms is just below 92%; this is an improvement in the attendance rate of the school. This performance places the school in the top quartile of performance when comparing the school with similar schools.

Shortcomings

27. Standards in two wider key skills, namely improving one's own learning and problem solving, are not as high as in other areas.
28. Despite the school's overall success, there are shortcomings in standards in a number of aspects of work-related education (WRE) in key stages 3 and 4.

The quality of education and training

Good features

29. The quality of teaching in all of the lessons observed was judged as follows.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	4	30	16	0	0
KS4	2	22	10	0	0
Post-16	3	14	3	0	0
Total	9	66	29	0	0
Total %	9	63	28	0	0
All-Wales %	19	57	21	3	0

30. When compared with the average figures for Wales, the percentage of lessons graded 1 (9%) falls below the national average of 19%. Overall, teaching has good features and no lessons were graded lower than a Grade 3.
31. The proportion of lessons judged to be Grades 1 and 2 is, at 72%, slightly lower than the national average for secondary schools published in the recent annual report of HMCI of schools in Wales, and slightly lower than the targets established for 2010.
32. The great majority of lessons is well planned, well organised and contains clear objectives that are generally shared with pupils. Pace within the lessons is generally brisk; pupils respond well to the tasks presented.
33. Generally, assessment is regular and accurate; self and peer-assessment is undertaken in a minority of subject areas. National curriculum (NC) levels are universally applied throughout KS3 and, in KS4 and the sixth form, GCSE and AS/A-level grades are regularly referred to in the context of tasks that are being undertaken.
34. The school's curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of all pupils, is accessible to all and gives pupils and students the opportunity to achieve accreditation.
35. The option system in KS4 provides a strong element of flexibility to tailor course selection for pupils in line with the principle of individual learning pathways. All pupils have appropriate access to their chosen pathways through the Learning Network's option menu across the five domains.
36. The school continues to broaden its own curriculum offer in KS4 through a developing vocational provision, both school-based and in partnership with a neighbouring school and further education college. Although numbers of pupils participating in these courses are currently very low, the school continues to make considerable progress in addressing the agenda for Learning Pathways 14-19.
37. The extensive sixth form provision is created through a range of collaborative measures as well as self-delivered courses. The AS/A-level provision is enhanced through an established Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) programme that is timetabled for all students.
38. The school is a caring school providing significant contributions to the development and well-being of all its pupils. Strong support for physical development and healthy living are clearly seen through contributions made

within the range of extra-curricular activities as well as in the involvement of the school council in promoting healthy-living issues.

39. The school effectively promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils through all aspects of school life. Mutually respectful relationships are very much in evidence throughout the school and lead to some outstanding ways in which the school works together as a community.
40. The school has developed a range of highly successful partnership arrangements with employers, business and the local community; very effective links exist with parents, who find staff readily approachable. Very good links exist with Careers Wales.
41. The school is a very caring and inclusive place where all learners are effectively guided, supported and challenged. The good links with partner primary schools ensure that all pupils settle quickly into the routines of their new school. The transition arrangements on entry to the school and beyond KS4 provide strong support for all pupils. This includes those with SEN whose progress through school is very carefully tracked and supported by the SEN co-ordinator (SENCO).
42. The personal and social education (PSE) programme supports pupils' and students' social development well. The provision for spiritual and moral development is successfully nurtured through a range of available opportunities from assemblies through to curricular and extra-curricular activities.
43. The well-being of all pupils and students is seen as paramount. There is a well established link with Childline (CHIPS) and sixth form students and KS4 pupils have been trained and act as peer supporters to younger pupils. The school is very successful in promoting the healthy development, safety and well-being of pupils. Healthy eating and lifestyle standards are good.
44. All staff receive regular training and written instructions on child protection issues. Health and safety issues and risk assessments that ensure the well-being of all members of the school community are undertaken conscientiously. Students and pupils feel secure in the school.

Shortcomings

45. In a minority of lessons, too much direction is provided by the teachers and questioning is not used effectively; pupils become passive and the pace of the lessons and the levels of challenge are inadequate, especially for the more able.
46. Across the school, the quality of assessment practice is considerably variable with inconsistencies in the rigour of marking and the quality of teachers' comments in the routine marking of books. In addition, in some subjects, pupils and students do not receive sufficient guidance on how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Good features

47. The headteacher, assisted by a strong senior leadership team (SLT), provides effective leadership and vision for the school.

48. Within the short tenure of her headship, the headteacher has already demonstrated a brand of leadership that is inspirational, leading by example and embodying the values of a caring, inclusive community that are widely shared by staff at all levels.
49. The headteacher urges all staff to innovate and 'take risks' with their teaching, while at the same time insisting that curriculum projects are rigorously prepared, systematically managed and delivered on time and within budget.
50. The core values of the school are shared by all staff, creating a strong sense of collective purpose. Arrangements for monitoring the progress made by both individuals and departments are robust. Further arrangements for meeting the training needs of staff are very good and are consistent with the core values of the school.
51. The governing body contains considerable expertise and experience. Governors fulfil their leadership role effectively, taking a strategic, leading role in planning, monitoring and evaluating. Decision-making processes are both efficient and effective; the process of budget control is both rigorous and complex. Considering the work they undertake, governors in general make a real difference to the work of the school.
52. In many areas, the school's SER is extensive and realistic, accurately and honestly highlighting the good features of the school as well as areas for further development. There is a well-established culture of self-evaluation in the school that is clearly understood and valued by staff and pupils, who use it effectively to promote higher standards of achievement and attainment.
53. The school has made very good progress in addressing the key issues for action highlighted in the previous inspection report.
54. Financial management is a significant strength of the school. Through diligent financial planning, the senior managers and governing body provide appropriate funds for a continuous drive for improvement of school facilities.
55. The coherent and inclusive management of the school's finances is an outstanding feature. Overall, when measured against its outcomes, the school meets the needs of all pupils and students and provides outstanding value for money.

Shortcomings

56. The school SER, and some departmental reports, contain statements that are not adequately supported by first-hand evidence. At times, the methods used by the school, at school and departmental levels, to canvass the views of pupils, parents, governors and external agencies, are inconsistent and occasionally lack rigour.

Recommendations

In order to build on the current success, the school should:

- R1 further raise the quality of teaching through spreading existing good practice across all departments and increasing the range of good teaching practices within the school;
- R2 further develop all aspects of assessment across the school, with particular emphasis being placed on the quality of marking and feedback to pupils to ensure more detailed guidance on how to improve; and
- R3 undertake a thorough review of the provision for WRE, with particular emphasis being placed on KS4, to ensure the programme raises standards within this area.

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

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

57. The grade awarded is higher than the school's self-evaluation grade, which was a Grade 3. The team adjudged that a Grade 2 was to be awarded as a result of the:
- continued very good performance in KS3 assessments in Y9;
 - significant improvement in attainment at GCSE;
 - continued good performance in the sixth form; and
 - good standards of achievement observed across the school.
58. The following table shows the grades awarded for the standards that pupils achieved in key stages 3 and 4 in the six subjects inspected:

61 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Key stage 3	3%	59%	35%	3%	0%
Key stage 4	7%	70%	23%	0%	0%
Combined KS3/KS4	5%	64%	29%	2%	0%

59. National targets (2007) for standards in schools are that lessons should be graded 3 or better in at least 98% of cases and Grade 2 or better in at least 65%. Overall, in the six subjects inspected, pupils' standards of achievement exceeded the target for grade 2 or better by 4%; the target for Grade 3 or better was met. The figures in the table also indicate a considerable improvement upon the performance at the time of the previous inspection.

60. Within each individual subject, the grades awarded were:

Subject	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Sixth Form
Welsh	Grade 2	Grade 1	Grade 2
Science	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 2
Information technology	Grade 2	Grade 2	Grade 3
Modern foreign languages	Grade 2	Grade 2	Grade 2
History	Grade 3	Grade 2	Grade 2
Physical education	Grade 2	Grade 2	Grade 2

Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

Their success in attaining agreed learning goals

Good features

61. In 2008, the KS3 CSI for the school was, at 70%, above both the local and national figures. More boys than girls attained the CSI; however, the separate performances of boys and girls were both above the local and national figures. The percentage of pupils attaining above level 5 in each of the separate subjects of English and mathematics is above 80% and, in science, the figure is slightly under 80%.
62. In all core subjects and the CSI, the KS3 performance in 2008 was better than the local and national averages. Furthermore, when compared with schools of a similar intake, the school's performance in the CSI is consistently in the top 25% and has been so for the last five years.
63. In KS4, the school has managed to address the fall in performance in 2007, producing a significantly improved set of results in 2008. The standards of attainment in GCSE in 2008 are such that they return to an improving trend established over the three years prior to 2007.
64. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grades is an encouraging feature of the school's performance. In 2008, 66% of pupils achieved five or more A*-C grades and 97% of pupils achieved five or more A*-G grades. Both of these percentages are higher than the results from 2007 and the performance at five or more A*-C grades is more than twice the result obtained in 2007. 100% of pupils attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent.
65. The picture for the higher-achieving pupils, measured in the percentage of A* and A grades, demonstrates an upward trend with all but three subjects performing better than in the rolling average for the last three years.
66. GCSE results for 2008 compare extremely well with the local education authority (LEA) and national results and are better than the school's targets predicted. The five A*-C percentage is 8% above the LEA figure and 10% above that for all-Wales. In 2008, 42% of pupils attained the CSI compared with 43% locally and 41% nationally.
67. The school's free school meal (FSM) figure places the school on the boundary of two benchmarking bands. Overall, using the actual figure for FSM, when compared with similar schools, the school's GCSE results in 2007 placed the school in the lowest 25% for over half of the indicators; elsewhere they were mainly in the upper quartile. However, if the school's performance was to be considered in the adjoining FSM band (higher), the picture would have

improved, with four of the indicators moving upwards by at least one quartile; only two indicators, namely for English and the CSI, would have remained in the lowest quartile.

68. Indications, based upon local and national data, are that the performance of the school in 2008 will move the school from the lowest FSM quartile to the highest quartile within both of the two FSM bands used for the analysis.
69. A range of data is used by the school to set numerical targets for the end of each key stage and post-16. In KS4, the performance of the pupils in 2008 demonstrated an extremely significant level of value added when comparing the pupils' results with their attainment on entry and the targets set by the school.
70. From the evidence of the performance of the school, pupils of all abilities, at all stages of their learning, including those with SEN, are successful in their work.
71. The development of key skills is in evidence across the school. The standards in key skills are generally good. Standards of speaking, listening, reading and writing are good across both key stages.
72. Pupils of all abilities listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. Pupils speak with clarity and confidence in a range of contexts across the curriculum. Within whole-class and group discussions, pupils not only respond to questions but also have the confidence to raise their own questions and are capable of establishing good discussion and debate.
73. Despite a high proportion of the entry cohort having a reading age below their chronological age, access to the curriculum is not hampered by an inability to read materials used in lessons.
74. Good examples of sustained and extended writing are evident in a number of areas of the curriculum. The quality of presentation is generally good and pupils take pride in the work they produce.
75. There is a wide range of evidence of numeracy being used within many areas of the curriculum; the ability of pupils to use number in a range of contexts is good across both key stages but standards are higher in KS4 than in KS3.
76. Information and communications technology has developed extremely well since the last inspection and the standard of information technology skills in KS3 and KS4 is good and in line with the development of other key skills.
77. Competence in bilingual skills is variable across both key stages. Standards are good in Welsh second language lessons and across many aspects of the curriculum in KS4. The occasional use of the Welsh language is accurate and forms part of a number of subjects across the curriculum. Such a good picture is less in evidence in KS3.
78. Many bilingual signs of a high standard are visible around the school. Good displays in Welsh are found in many subject areas. The culture of Wales is celebrated in the school and is evident in some of the high quality displays around the school.
79. Standards in the use of the wider key skills are often good. Pupils demonstrate keenness when working together in pairs and in small groups. In these situations, the combination of high standards of discussion and high quality questioning, occasionally displays good practice in learning. In the best cases,

this provides a strong basis for the observed, good development of problem-solving skills.

80. Pupils in KS4 are provided with opportunities for the development of independent learning skills. They acquire new skills and knowledge and develop new concepts and understanding through a range of pieces of work in class and for homework; this practice is less in evidence in KS3.

Shortcomings

81. The standards achieved in improving one's own learning and problem solving are not as high as in other key skills.

Their progress in learning

Good features

82. Pupils readily acquire new skills, knowledge, concepts and understanding, often applying these successfully within new and challenging learning situations.
83. Pupils display interest and enthusiasm for, and demonstrate engagement in, the work they undertake. Tasks are generally appropriate and contain a range of learning experiences appropriate to the ability of the pupils involved. Generally, pupils recognise and understand the progress they are making and are able to explain how they can make further progress.
84. Many good opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect on the work they are doing, either individually or in small groups; such reflection is often done well by the pupils. A strong aspect of these opportunities in a minority of subject areas is the manner in which peer assessment is used to establish targets that, in turn, are discussed and moderated by the teacher involved.
85. The pupils make very good progress through each transition point in their learning and successfully move on without any significant pause in their learning experiences. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEN, progress well to fulfilling their potential. Pupils are able to adapt their learning to unfamiliar situations within their learning experiences.

Shortcomings

86. There are no significant shortcomings.

The development of their personal, social and learning skills

Good features

87. A significant factor contributing towards the good standards of attainment is the contribution that pupils make through their very good personal, social and learning skills. They use these skills extremely well in all aspects of school life.
88. The attitude of pupils towards their work is very good. They are actively engaged in the tasks presented in lessons and often display an open enjoyment in their learning.
89. The manner of pupils' movement between lessons is sensible and orderly; the school is a happy and relaxed community.
90. Pupils behave extremely responsibly around the school and in lessons. They understand the importance of good behaviour in a learning environment. There is a strong belief in the importance of self-discipline and working with others.

This helps to establish the classroom as a place in which effective learning takes place. The standards of behaviour and the level of respect afforded all those involved in the school is a very strong feature of the school.

91. The mean level of attendance over the last three academic terms was 92%. This places the school firmly in the upper quartile of performances when compared with similar schools. Nevertheless, the school recognises that this level of attendance needs to continue to improve. Punctuality to school, registration and lessons is generally very good.
92. Over the twelve months prior to the inspection, there were 32 temporary exclusions and no permanent exclusions. Of these exclusions, 20 of them were from one year group, namely Y10. Therefore, looking at the whole-school picture, the relatively low number of exclusions across the school is a favourable one.
93. Care, respect and concern for others are openly promoted within the school's PSE programme and many of the extra-curricular activities undertaken by the pupils. These features are openly visible within the daily work of the school. Such strengths help to ensure that all pupils are capable of successfully adapting to the wider community beyond the school.
94. The school provides pupils with work experience opportunities through an established work-experience programme. Employers' evaluations indicate the high quality contribution made by the pupils they receive.

Shortcomings

95. Despite all pupils being given the opportunity to undertake work experience during their school career, there remain shortcomings in standards within a number of aspects of WRE. These shortcomings occur in areas such as mentoring support from an employer and a curriculum or coursework assignment with employer involvement. The results of the benefits of WRE are not being fully realised by pupils in both KS3 and KS4.

Sixth Form

Their success in attaining agreed learning goals

Good features

96. The following table shows the grades awarded for the standards that sixth-form students achieved in the six subjects inspected:

17 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Sixth form	6%	76%	18%	0%	0%

97. At A-level in 2008, 63% of students gained two or more A-C grades and nearly 90% gained two or more A-E grades; 72% of students gained at least one grade A and the average grade for all students was in excess of a grade C. The average points score at A-level was 284, a figure significantly higher than that gained by students in 2007. All performance indicators improved on the results for 2007 and all school targets were met and, in some cases, exceeded.
98. The school's performance across all subjects at A-level is one of consolidation within the residual band of -1 to +1. The four subjects outside this residual band include chemistry and mathematics and numbers are small in all these subject areas. English and geography perform significantly better than +1.

99. For the past three years, the school has embraced the WBQ at Advanced level. The rate of success in this qualification is high and over the past two years nearly 30 students have gained an A grade in each year.
100. Students listen respectfully to their teachers and peers. They put forward points of view with a growing confidence. Higher-attaining students extend their responses and are articulate. There is good use and understanding of subject-specific vocabulary. In many subjects, there are good standards of discussion, particularly when students are given the opportunity to work collaboratively.
101. Reading skills are good. Students respond with understanding to a range of challenging texts. There is good progress in the development of critical analysis although students tend to rely on the teacher as expert.
102. Writing is often well organised. The development of ideas and arguments is in line with students' abilities. Students show that they competently use relevant quotations. All adapt language, style and format to fit the purpose of their writing.
103. Students' numerical skills are generally good. In a number of subjects across the curriculum, they are able to use and apply these skills effectively and competently.
104. Students make good use of ICT to support their studies. They have easy access to computing facilities and are autonomous in using a wide range of appropriate applications in their work.
105. Students collaborate effectively with each other and reach good standards in creative and problem-solving activities. Most take the necessary steps independently to improve their own progress.
106. Students in the sixth form work towards and succeed in accreditation in key skills through the WBQ.

Shortcomings

107. There are no significant shortcomings.

Students' progress in learning

Good features

108. Many students are achieving at least good standards. Evidence gathered suggests that students are committed to their work and making good progress.
109. Students carry out a wide range of challenging tasks, working independently on research projects and choosing appropriate sources of information for their work. This is resulting in students becoming analytical in their thinking. They generally respond well to their teachers' comments and advice, and make good progress.
110. There are some good examples of students making progress and becoming more mature learners, including instances of students challenging teachers and asking in-depth questions to confirm their understanding of principles, ideas and concepts.
111. There are occasions when students make their own purposeful notes and do not constantly rely on teachers for guidance and handouts and confidently contribute to debates, adding their own ideas and opinions.
112. Around 55% of Y11 pupils remain in the school for their sixth-form careers and a few students join from other schools. Almost 50% of Y12 students continue into

Y13 to complete their studies and around 85% of these proceed to higher or further education after leaving school.

Shortcomings

113. There are no significant shortcomings.

The development of students' personal, social and learning skills

Good features

114. Good progress is made in the development of students' personal, social and learning skills. In lessons, they show positive attitudes towards their learning and engage willingly in tasks.

115. Students are courteous and respectful. They contribute well to the life of the school by engaging in a wide range of activities including school performances, charitable work, duties as mentors of younger pupils and being representatives on the school's council. Their work as mentors of KS3 pupils is highly valued and they respond to their many challenges by behaving with a growing confidence and maturity.

116. In the sixth form, the mean attendance for the last three terms is above 91%. Students who attend generally arrive at school on time and are punctual to lessons.

117. The values and attitudes encouraged by the school in KS3 and KS4 are now prominent features in the sixth form. There are good opportunities for students to learn about the global community, the locale in which the school is situated and the workplace; they are being prepared effectively for life after school.

Shortcomings

118. There are no significant shortcomings.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

119. The grade awarded by the team confirms the grade the school awarded itself within the SER.

KS3 and KS4

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

Good features

120. The following table shows the quality of teaching and assessment in the 61 lessons observed in the six subjects and 23 lessons in other subjects, in KS3 and KS4.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6 Subjects	4%	35%	22%	0%	0%
Other subjects	2%	17%	45%	0%	0%
Total	6%	52%	26%	0%	0%
Total %	7%	62%	31%	0%	0%

121. There were outstanding features in the quality of the teaching in 7% of the lessons observed across both key stages. There was very little difference

between the key stages. Teaching had good features and no important shortcomings in 62% of lessons but teaching was better in KS4 than in KS3. Good features outweighed shortcomings in 31% of lessons, with very little difference between the key stages. No lessons had important shortcomings.

122. When compared with the average figures for Wales in 2006-2007, the percentage of lessons graded 1 (7%) falls below the national average of 19%. The percentage of lessons graded 1 and 2 (69%) is also below the national average of 76%. Furthermore, the percentage of lessons graded 1 and 2 falls short of the Welsh Assembly Government's target of 80% by 2010.

123. In lessons where teaching contained outstanding features:

- teachers have very clear objectives for the work in hand and make sure that pupils realise the purpose of what they are doing;
- teachers prepare work that challenges and supports pupils of different abilities, allowing them all to reach their full potential;
- the enthusiasm with which teachers explain the work and ask pupils perceptive questions is particularly effective;
- teachers carefully plan opportunities for pupils to develop their key skills to a high level; and
- lessons progress with a brisk pace.

124. In other lessons the above features were often present, but to a lesser extent.

125. Teachers' knowledge of their specialist subjects is good. All teachers plan their lessons carefully and most include a good range of well-timed activities.

126. Teachers usually set challenging work that motivates pupils and engages their interest. They choose good resources to use in lessons and often use data projectors or electronic white boards to provide an effective visual stimulus. Many teachers organise the support provided by learning assistants in an effective way.

127. Teachers explain the work clearly and are particularly skilled at asking searching questions that help pupils develop their understanding. At best, teaching approaches are modified during the lesson so that all pupils can master the work in hand. Very often teachers provide worthwhile summaries at the end of each session.

128. Almost without exception relationships in the classroom are very good. Most teachers exercise their authority well so that pupils behave appropriately and apply themselves to their work.

Shortcomings

129. Where shortcomings occur in lessons, these are frequently associated with too much direction by the teacher. In these cases, lessons do not have sufficient challenge and support for pupils of different abilities; these lessons often lack pace. In addition, within a very small number of lessons, off-task behaviour is ignored.

130. In a majority of lessons, homework is not used sufficiently to extend pupils' understanding. In others, there is insufficient planning of the key skills to be developed during the lesson.

131. In many lessons, planning does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their bilingual skills in lessons. Neither is there sufficient reference to Welsh culture.

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

Good features

132. The school has developed a very practical policy for assessment, recording, reporting and target setting. The policy is clear, comprehensive and up-to-date, offering good guidance to departments and teachers.

133. All departments are encouraged to develop their own approaches to the application of this policy. Although these vary, there are examples of good levels of consistency within departments.

134. There are many elements of good practice in the monitoring and assessment of pupils' work. In a minority of departments, teachers:

- assess pupils' work carefully and regularly;
- provide useful oral and written feedback to pupils; and
- make effective use of self and peer assessment

135. The school has a good system for assessing and recording pupils' progress. Large quantities of assessment data are held by teachers. This helps teachers to set targets for improvement and to monitor the progress of individuals. Teachers know their pupils very well and in a minority of lessons explicit reference is made to what individual pupils need to do to improve.

136. Most pupils are aware of their own targets and understand some of the things they need to do to improve. Pupils of all abilities are happy to share and discuss these targets.

137. In addition to information about attainment, teachers are provided with a wide range of other assessment information, including that which is contained on individual education plans (IEPs). These are usually present in classrooms and in the best lessons they directly inform aspects of the teaching.

138. Teachers assess their pupils each half-term and the results are recorded on the school's management information system. These data are used effectively by learning managers and heads of department to diagnose and to tackle underachievement.

139. Annual reports to parents are comprehensive and provide a useful overview of pupils' progress. The school gives parents the opportunity to comment on the reports.

140. The school meets all statutory requirements for assessment and reporting and satisfies examination board requirements. It has successfully participated in standardisation and moderation activities at the end of KS3 and so is making good progress in improving the rigour of teacher assessments.

Shortcomings

141. The quality of the assessment of pupils' work varies considerably across the school. A majority of teachers do not mark their pupils' work with sufficient

rigour. Feedback is often superficial and fails to give pupils worthwhile guidance on how to improve.

142. In many cases within annual reports to parents, pupils' targets for improvement are too general and insufficiently subject specific.

The Sixth Form

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

Good features

143. In the 17 lessons observed in the six subjects being inspected and the three lessons observed in the other subjects, the grades awarded for teaching and assessment were:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6 Subjects	3%	12%	2%	0%	0%
Other subjects	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%
Total	3%	14%	3%	0%	0%
Total %	15%	70%	15%	0%	0%

144. In 15% of lessons observed, teaching was good with outstanding features. In a further 70% of lessons, teaching was good with no important shortcomings and good features outweighed shortcomings in the remaining 15% of lessons. At 85%, the number of lessons graded 1 and 2 comfortably exceeds the national average for 2006/7 (76%) and already meets the WAG's target of 80% by 2010.

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

- carefully planned lessons, with clear objectives and containing a variety of suitably challenging tasks;
- effective teacher explanations, coupled with very effective questioning to develop learners' understanding;
- very good rapport between teacher and student that helps motivation;
- teachers show very good subject knowledge and have high expectations of their students; and
- lessons proceeding at a brisk pace.

Shortcomings

146. In lessons where there are shortcomings, these generally occur where there is excessive direction by the teacher. In many cases, students are not being given sufficient opportunities to develop their own ideas and understanding.

147. Homework is not used sufficiently to consolidate students' learning.

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

Good features

148. In the sixth form, the assessment recording and reporting of students' work is generally good.

149. In many lessons teachers mark and assess students' work well. In this day-to-day assessment of work, teachers help to identify strengths and illustrate how

work can be improved. Some teachers use self and peer assessment to good effect.

150. Students are aware of the criteria for success and the requirements of examination boards.

151. Reports for sixth-form students are comprehensive and provide a useful overview of progress.

Shortcomings

152. In some subjects, students do not receive sufficient regular feedback on how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.

153. As at KS3 and KS4, targets for improvement are too general and insufficiently subject specific.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

154. The grade awarded by the inspection team confirms the grade proposed by the school in its SER.

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

Good features

155. Overall, the curriculum meets learners' needs and gives them the opportunity to achieve accreditation through a number of learning pathways. The school strives to give all pupils and students equal access to all learning experiences.

156. The curriculum offers balance, breadth, flexibility, cohesion and progression. The school has effectively responded to 14-19 Learning Pathways recommendations. The options menu has been extended in KS4 with links with another school and the introduction of the WBQ programme for all pupils in Y10.

157. The provision through the network of schools is further developed in the sixth form with five schools sharing resources. The WBQ programme makes a strong contribution to the Learning Core for all students.

158. In both KS4 and the sixth form, elements of the Learning Core are well covered in the main curricular provision, the WBQ programme, the PSE and WRE programmes of study and the extensive extra-curricular programme.

159. In KS3, there is an effective balance of teaching time for most subjects, with the exception of history and geography in one year within the key stage. All pupils study information technology as a discrete subject across the key stage as well as pupils selecting to study either French or German as a modern foreign language on entry in Y7.

160. In KS4, although the curriculum is rather crowded, pupils are offered a good range of GCSE and vocational courses. All pupils in Y10 follow the WBQ programme and study a full GCSE course in Welsh.

161. Links with another secondary school provide opportunities to study hair and beauty; further vocational routes were offered but the numbers choosing these courses were too small to ensure viability. There is also a good provision for a

small number of pupils in Y11 who have difficulty engaging in the mainstream curriculum. These pupils attend a local college to study some vocational courses for one day per week.

162. The curricular programme in the sixth form offers a good range of AS and A2 courses and is supplemented by a number of subjects through the 14-19 Network. At present, these subjects can only be studied to AS level. However, plans are being developed to extend the provision to A2 level. The Advanced WBQ is well established in the sixth form. All students have time-tabled lessons for the WBQ programme and religious studies.
163. Learning experiences develop basic and key skills well, with the school being successful in gaining the Basic Skills Quality Mark (BSQM). The main and wider key skills are mapped in all schemes of work with the recent emphasis being placed on a wider skills approach in the curriculum. This is also reflected in the lesson plans submitted for lessons observed during the inspection.
164. The established WBQ course in the sixth form has several outstanding features in the delivery and moderation of the main and wider key skills. The school is now consolidating its procedures for assessing key skills for the full cohort in Y10 in the WBQ programme and in extending accreditation for some key skills in KS3.
165. Many pupils' and students' learning and social experiences are enriched by the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school. A large number of pupils and students take part in sporting and musical activities and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Over 80 students achieve the Duke of Edinburgh Award each year. The school has produced more than half of the gold Award winners in the county of Conwy. The wide range of experiences gained by a large number of learners in musical events in the community, school productions and eisteddfodau, and at all levels of the Duke of Edinburgh Award is an outstanding feature of the provision of the school.
166. Many subjects also make a strong contribution to the richness of the extra-curricular programme with regular clubs at lunch-time and at the end of the day, revision sessions, coursework clinics, enterprise and eco-related activities. A number of visits to theatres, field trips and abroad further broaden learners' experiences.
167. Learners' spiritual, moral and cultural development has many good features, with some outstanding features in the way that they work together socially. The ethos of the school reflects a clear sense of shared values and purpose. There is a warm and welcoming environment in which pupils and students can develop their potential.
168. Spiritual development is promoted in a number of subjects. Good opportunities are provided for learners to develop a sense of curiosity about life's meaning and purpose. Year assemblies and meetings in tutor groups include an act of worship and the content of these events relates to a range of appropriate themes reflecting the life, ethos and work of the school and contemporary issues.
169. One of the main strengths of the school is its commitment to ensuring that learners develop a sense of right and wrong. Most pupils and students respond well and treat their teachers, their environment and each other with respect. Racism and other forms of prejudice are not tolerated. Learners display their

concern and sense of responsibility for others through their support for a variety of charities and good causes.

170. The school is fully committed to the social inclusion of learners of all abilities and backgrounds. The wide range of extra curricular activities provided help to foster their social awareness as well as providing many opportunities for learners to take responsibility and to contribute to the ethos and social life of the school.
171. Learners acquire a good awareness of the Welsh culture through participation in a variety of activities including musical, eisteddfodau, Urdd events and lessons. They also have a good understanding of living in a multi-cultural society.
172. The partnership with parents, community, education providers and other institutions enhances the learning experiences for pupils and students, and contributes significantly to their personal development. There are a number of good features that include:
- the quality of information provided for parents through summaries of schemes of work in KS3, homework diaries and regular newsletters;
 - the overall support of parents when pupils are involved in extra-curricular activities and the commitment of the PTA in raising funds;
 - the considerable links with primary schools during the transition of pupils to the school, the well-established literacy project and the involvement of teachers in teaching music and modern foreign languages at schools. A number of primary schools use ICT, video conferencing and sports facilities at the school;
 - the links with other secondary schools and a local college in promoting the 14-19 Learning Pathways programme;
 - the strong partnership with Careers Wales, the support of employers in work-experience placements and the local Rotary Club in conducting mock interviews; and
 - the strong links with the University of North Wales, Bangor with initial teacher training placements which introduce fresh perspectives to the school.
173. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements. The school provides a daily act of collective worship and the programmes for PSE, WRE and careers education and guidance meet WAG guidelines.

Shortcomings

174. There are no significant shortcomings.

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

Good features

175. The provision for work-related education has a number of good features across all key stages. In KS3, all pupils have opportunities, through suspended timetable days, to experience the world of work through inputs by employers from a range of organisations. In KS4, all pupils benefit from an established work-experience placement in local companies, a scheme that is monitored by form tutors; de-briefing sessions are carried out in tutorial sessions.

176. All students in Y12, as part of the WBQ course, complete a week's placement; this experience provides students with further opportunities to investigate the world of work and contribute to their final portfolio.
177. There are strong working links with Careers Wales in many aspects of the school's programme. Careers Wales effectively provides good support in the preparation for work experience, maintaining a database of employers, planning the Dynamo Project inputs and carrying out agreed interviews in Y11 and Y12.
178. The provision for the development of pupils' bilingual skills is good. Sufficient time is allocated for the teaching of Welsh in both KS3 and KS4. All pupils study a full GCSE Welsh course with considerable success. This year, 15 students have begun studying Welsh to AS level. The school's commitment to developing bilingual skills is also evident in all communication to parents, with newsletters and the homework diary being bilingual. Many displays in teaching rooms and corridors promote the school's focus on bilingualism. Pupils and students benefit from opportunities to develop their bilingual skills in the school eisteddfod, the national Urdd eisteddfod and attending residential courses at Glan-Ilyn. A comprehensive audit has identified that 'Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig' is effectively embedded into schemes of work across the curriculum.
179. The school has made good progress in raising the awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship.
180. A pro-active Eco-committee has been instrumental in promoting initiatives at the school. The school has been successful in gaining the bronze Eco-Schools award and individual pupils have gained success in WAG competitions. A comprehensive audit across the curriculum has identified good coverage in many subjects in KS3 and KS4 and in the WBQ programme in KS5. There are presently a number of successful recycling initiatives in operation, with the school's catering service being fully committed to such ventures.
181. An outstanding feature is the commitment that the whole school has made to raising a substantial amount of money to support a building programme for a school in Madagascar. The school has established a close link with a school in Madagascar, with the target of raising £11,000 to support a building programme to provide much-needed facilities in a school in the area. Awareness of other cultures is promoted through the Comenius project which is linked to a school in Slovenia, and the World Club set up by learners at the school.
182. Overall, the school has a good awareness of employers' needs. The effective partnership with Careers Wales and the current, local knowledge of governors reinforces this and provides reliable information for pupils and students. Information at a national and international level is effectively covered in the WBQ programme in the sixth form.
183. Entrepreneurial and other business skills are generally developed well. In Y9, pupils have opportunities to meet and listen to entrepreneurs through the Dynamo Project. The strong emphasis on enterprise activities in the WBQ programme gives learners in KS4 and the sixth form a range of experiences to develop their skills in a range of initiatives. Further opportunities are well developed through involvement in the Young Enterprise scheme and visits to a number of business organisations.

184. Overall, the school has made good progress in addressing a number of national priorities. There are strengths in the Transition Plan, the progress with the Learning Pathways 14-19, the focus on bilingualism and the development of key skills initiatives and the WBQ programme.

Shortcomings

185. Despite vocational aspects of the curriculum being covered within the PSE programme, the impact of WRE and careers education and guidance is not sufficiently integrated into pupils' experiences across the curriculum.

186. Even though the broad aspects of bilingualism and Welsh culture are well developed in a range of extra-curricular situations, there is some inconsistency in the use of the language across the curriculum. This situation restricts the development of the bilingual competence of the pupils.

187. There are some opportunities for learners to take responsibility for their own learning but this aspect of the curriculum has not been developed sufficiently at present.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

188. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade awarded by the school in its own self-evaluation.

The quality of care, support and guidance

Good features

189. The school plans and manages its care arrangements very effectively. Members of staff work hard to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils feel secure and confident that their teachers are sympathetic to their needs and that problems that arise will be dealt with quickly.

190. Every pupil and student is assigned a personal mentor who monitors progress against attainment targets, together with effort and behaviour, on a six weekly cycle as part of the Aim Higher programme. Learning managers, form tutors and all mentors have ready access to this data thereby facilitating effective and early intervention as required. A learning mentor is attached to each year group, who provides effective support in working with the learning manager. Highly effective assertive mentoring is provided by the school's learning coach.

191. Pupils receive good advice about choosing courses in the sixth form and in further education. This is provided by a range of people including representatives of Careers Wales. Additional support is provided during PSE and in the sixth form via the WBQ.

192. Partnerships with parents and carers are good. They acknowledge and use the school's open-door policy and respond well to communications from the school so that an effective dialogue exists. Attendance at parents' evenings is good. Parents feel that their views are heard on a range of issues including the school discipline policy and the timings of the school day.

193. There is an efficient school council that works effectively for the benefit of all pupils. It provides the forum for pupils to express their views on a wide range of

issues on aspects of school life including the promotion of healthy eating and the introduction of a behaviour-management system. The head boy and head girl represent the school council on the governing body.

194. There are strong links with local partner primary schools and a very effective transition programme is in place. Year 7 pupils quickly develop a very clear understanding of what is expected of them and indicate that they settle into the school very easily.
195. A range of problem-solving, team-building and induction activities within the WBQ programme ensures smooth transition into post-16 education but similar support structures do not exist at the beginning of KS4.
196. Good attendance is a clearly expressed expectation of the school. There are effective procedures in place that have resulted in a steady improvement in pupils' attendance over the past three years. These include:
 - contacting home on the first day of absence;
 - regular monitoring of computerised attendance data via the Bromcom system;
 - setting of attendance targets for pupils who are a cause for concern; and
 - recognition and celebration of those with good attendance records.
197. There is a Careers Wales representative on site for four days each week and pupils are involved in a number of activities including The Real Game, Dynamo Project and Girls in Science.
198. The extent to which pupils value the guidance they receive, from Careers Wales and through the WRE programme, is variable. The provision in the sixth form is good through the WBQ and attendance of Careers Wales at the organised careers convention.
199. The school's PSE programme is delivered through a weekly lesson enhanced by cross-curricular support. A wide range of relevant topics is covered and external speakers make valuable contributions. It meets the WAG requirements.
200. There is a well-established link with Childline (CHIPS). Sixth-form students and KS4 pupils have been trained and act as peer supporters to younger pupils.
201. The school is very successful in promoting the healthy development, safety and well-being of pupils. Healthy eating and lifestyle standards are good. The school has recently won the Conwy Healthy Schools' Scheme Gold Award for the second time and responded well to the proposals in 'Appetite for Life'. A School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) has been established, water machines have been installed and a well-attended Breakfast Club opened. In addition, nearly half of the staff have received first aid training and are strategically situated around the school site.
202. Child protection procedures are well documented. All staff have received training and written instructions on how to respond to issues or incidents that may arise. Health and safety issues and risk assessments which ensure the well-being of all members of the school community are undertaken conscientiously. Students and pupils feel secure in the school.

Shortcomings

203. The guidance for pupils choosing courses in KS4 is not as well developed as at other transition stages.
204. Careers education and WRE, which are delivered as parts of the PSE programme, are not well as well developed as many of the other aspects of the programme, in either KS3 or KS4.

The quality of provision for additional learning needs

Good features

205. The school's provision for pupils with SEN has many good features and fully meets the requirements of the SEN code of practice.
206. The SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) offers very good guidance and is well supported by the SEN subject link teachers and the learning support assistants (LSAs). The SLT and the SEN governor ensure that pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) are provided with full access to all of the school's activities.
207. The SEN coordinator visits each primary school to discuss the needs of every pupil with SEN. This information, together with test results and detailed records of pupils' attainment, helps staff to prepare appropriate support for each pupil.
208. The school uses standardised tests to assess further pupils' levels of attainment in basic skills. This, together with other informal observations and assessments, provides further information that helps to plan suitable programmes of work. The SENCO liaises well with members of staff to help plan appropriate support for pupils in their various lessons across the school.
209. Each pupil with SEN has an IEP; these are well written, clear and specific. The IEPs are used appropriately to support learning. They are known to all members of staff and contain targets that can be applied to nearly all subjects across the curriculum. The IEPs provide good information to each member of staff on how lessons and activities may be adapted to meet pupils' needs. In many lessons, teachers plan and provide appropriately differentiated tasks for SEN pupils.
210. The support provided by the LSAs is a significant feature of the work in the school. They work well with teachers and are fully aware of each pupil's needs and of the lessons planned for them. The LSAs meet every half term to plan the type of support the pupils may need in the forthcoming lessons. This is good practice, ensuring that the correct level of support is provided, matching each lesson's aims and objectives.
211. Many sixth formers provide an effective paired-reading support for pupils with SEN. They have been trained on how to listen to pupils read and contribute well towards further enhancing these pupils' reading and spelling skills.
212. The school delivers a flexible learning provision for pupils with SEN in KS4. This helps to improve their standards and motivate them towards further learning. This is achieved through a well-planned, vocational curriculum that encourages the pupils to reach their full potential as citizens and in the work situation.
213. The school works closely with several agencies that provide specialised support for a number of pupils. A LEA-funded SEN unit for statemented pupils is housed at the school. This provides very good support through a variety of adapted and appropriate activities. The pupils within this unit are provided with many

opportunities to integrate with other classes. The unit is well managed by its staff and overseen well by the SENCO.

214. The school keeps parents of pupils with SEN fully informed of their children's progress. Pupils and parents are invited to contribute towards reviews of their IEPs and towards annual reviews of pupils who receive a statement of SEN.
215. The school has very effective strategies to manage and promote positive behaviour. The recently re-structured staged responses to address unacceptable behaviour are known to all. This has resulted in less bureaucracy and speedier and more effective responses in addressing any incidents of disruptive behaviour.
216. The school has established social inclusion measures that are particularly effective. The pupil support centre is extremely well organised and offers outstanding support to a number of pupils with various social and/or behavioural difficulties and who may be in danger of being excluded. The centre involves the pupils continuously in self-assessing and taking more responsibility for their own behaviour and learning procedures. The school has effective structures to re-integrate pupils who have been excluded for a fixed period of time.

Shortcomings

217. In a few lessons, within a range of subjects, teachers' planning and provision of appropriately differentiated tasks for SEN pupils are not consistently applied.

The quality of provision for equal opportunities

Good features

218. The school's provision for a small number of pupils who are looked after by the LEA meets statutory requirements. The school has established suitable arrangements to meet the needs of any pupil who may be learning English as an additional language. All such pupils make good progress throughout the school.
219. The school has established procedures to identify the more-able and talented pupils. A few teachers provide extended tasks for them in their lessons.
220. The school makes explicit challenge to stereotypes through curriculum content, the PSE programme, pastoral work and through assemblies. Boys and girls are treated equally. There are no restrictions on access to the curriculum for either sex though, on occasion, choices in KS4 and in the sixth form remain traditional.
221. The school has a clear anti-bullying policy. The procedures to raise pupils' awareness of the effects of bullying and to facilitate a 'tell' culture, are good. The school peer support system is highly effective in minimising the risk of bullying. The school actively promotes positive race relations. Records of bullying and racial incidents are kept. There are very few recorded incidents over the past three years.
222. The school meets all the requirements for the Disability Equality Scheme. There is a clear and detailed document that outlines the aims of the scheme and the responsibilities of the governing body, the headteacher, the staff and pupils.
223. The school is a fully inclusive community accepting pupils from a widening range of backgrounds and cultures. Through an increasing range of curricular and extra-curricular activities, the school recognises, respects and celebrates diversity, often utilising the knowledge of the pupils and their background cultures and languages.

Shortcomings

224. Despite some good practice in providing appropriate opportunities for the more-able and talented pupils, this practice is inconsistent across all areas of the school. The monitoring and evaluation of this provision have not yet been fully implemented across all areas of the school.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

225. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the school's self-evaluation grade.

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

Good features

226. The headteacher had been in post for five weeks at the commencement of the inspection, having previously been the deputy headteacher in the school. The remaining members of the SLT have also seen several new appointments as a result of the headteacher's appointment.
227. Within the short tenure of her headship, the headteacher has already demonstrated a brand of leadership that is inspirational. The headteacher leads by example, embodying the values of a caring, inclusive community that are widely shared by staff at all levels.
228. The headteacher urges all staff to innovate and 'take risks' within their teaching methodology, while at the same time insisting that curriculum projects are rigorously prepared, systematically managed and delivered on time and within budget.
229. The headteacher's vision and sense of direction for the school are shared with, and understood by, all staff; there is a strong belief amongst all staff in what is happening within the school. Conversations are about work currently taking place and about how members of staff can help each other in managing the many changes that have taken place.
230. Some new policies, for example on assessment and key skills, are not yet fully implemented. Consequently, it is too early to judge their impact, or that of leadership and management in general, on the surge in overall attainment achieved in 2008.
231. The school's mission statement is 'Achievement for All' and this sentiment permeates the work of the school. Examples of this care for equality and inclusion can be found in the:
- way in which the SLT consults with subject departments on development planning and with pupils on curriculum projects;
 - open-entry policy of the school;
 - care devoted to pupils with SEN;
 - efforts made to rehabilitate disaffected learners, from this and other schools, in the pupil support centre;

- unusual amount of mentoring support given to newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and the ways in which senior staff go out of their way to make them feel welcome; and
 - impressive fund-raising devoted to the building of a new schoolhouse in a village in Madagascar.
232. The school has made a major contribution to national and local priorities. The KS4 and sixth-form curricula have been considerably widened to accommodate Learning Pathways 14-19 and the WBQ. Meanwhile, a very well-managed transition project has been established with partner primary schools and the pupil support centre has attracted the attention of schools and other institutions across North Wales.
233. The accuracy of the school's target-setting procedures is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the fact that it predicted almost exactly the dramatic rise in GCSE performance that occurred in 2008. Performance targets for both school and individual departments are realistic yet challenging. Development targets derive from well-established processes of self-evaluation that feed into development planning at whole-school and departmental levels.
234. A particular strength of the leadership of the school is the way in which it distributes leadership to heads of department and classroom teachers, including NQTs. The key to the effectiveness of this process are the weekly meetings between members of the SLT and their link departments.
235. Whether curriculum change comes from above or below, its progress is monitored through these weekly meetings and supported by more formal reviews. In this way, middle managers become middle leaders, well supported but accountable for the work they set in place. The same principle applies at all levels including the NQT who was given permission to build a wildlife garden and is now running a competition for pupils to design the area.
236. Individual targets for all staff, teaching and support, emerge from a well-established system of performance management. Again, targets are realistic and, in most cases, useful to both the individual and the department concerned.
237. The school has a very good system of continuing professional development. This is very well organised to meet the training needs of all staff identified through performance management, departmental self-evaluation, career entry profiles, or in response to national priorities. Training courses are routinely evaluated and the implementation of new ideas carefully monitored, either through the performance management process or through the SLT link system. Professional support for trainees and NQTs is particularly impressive.

Shortcomings

238. There are no significant shortcomings.

How well governors or other supervisory bodies meet their responsibilities

Good features

239. The governing body understands its strategic role and subscribes fully to the school's mission statement. The headteacher and chair of governors have a very good professional relationship. This is based on mutual respect and a shared vision of the direction in which the school is heading.

240. At the same time, lines of accountability are always visible; the governors will always ask for, and occasionally challenge, proposals for policy changes or major items of expenditure. Financial government is particularly astute; spending is always based on tendering to secure best value for money.
241. Governors know their school extraordinarily well. The governing body as a whole receives, in rotation, presentations from all department and faculty heads on developments in their areas. Individual governors with particular expertise, for example, banking, health and safety, health visiting, provide their advice and support freely and are frequently available to assist the school. Others, who can, attend department meetings and are generally well informed about the work that goes on there.
242. Governors are well aware of their responsibility to the wider community of the school; a document is circulated every year to parents containing the name and contact details of each member of the governing body.
243. The governing body meets all of its legal requirements, including publication of complaint procedures, completion of an accessibility plan and production of an annual report to parents.

Shortcomings

244. There are no significant shortcomings.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

245. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the school's self-evaluation grade.

How effectively the provider's performance is monitored and evaluated

Good features

246. All senior and nearly all middle managers are well informed about performance in the area for which they are responsible. They use a wide range of first-hand evidence to assess performance and to inform the SDP and their own departmental development plans (DDPs). The evidence used includes external examination performance data, school assessment data, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' books.
247. The school is in its fourth year of self-evaluation at departmental and whole-school levels. The process of involvement from departments is robust and the documents are all considered collectively: the same process applies for the construction of the DDPs and leads to the formulation of the SDP. This process is conducted on an annual cycle and all departments follow the same format as the school's self-evaluation plan.
248. The school's SER is extensive and realistic. The report identifies the school's strengths, shortcomings and areas for development in all the key questions of the framework for inspection.

249. The findings of the inspection team match very well those in the school's SER. The grades are the same in six out of the seven key questions. The grade for key question 1 is one grade higher than that awarded by the school.
250. The SLT reinforces and supports this process through weekly meetings with the head of the departments with whom they have a strategic leadership link.
251. Leaders and managers continue to develop self-evaluation procedures that base evaluations on a wide range of first-hand evidence. There is a planned and systematic procedure for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance centred on teaching and learning.
252. Senior leaders consult with governors, pupils, parents, teachers, support staff and the wider community during the annual review cycle.
253. They use the results of this consultation to inform the self-review process.
254. A majority of departments has robust procedures for self-evaluation; they consult parents, pupils and governors and involve all teachers and support staff in the self-evaluation process.

Shortcomings

255. The school SER and some departmental reports contain statements that are not fully supported by adequate first-hand evidence.
256. The methods used by the school, at school and departmental levels, to canvass the views of pupils, parents, governors and external agencies, are occasionally inconsistent and lack rigour.

The effectiveness of planning for improvement

Good features

257. The action taken by the school to improve social inclusion and guidance is an outstanding feature of the planning undertaken for improvement. An effective and dedicated group of staff has transformed the provision for inclusion. This has resulted in great improvements in the attendance, behaviour and self-esteem of an identified group of pupils.
258. An extensive and highly effective mentoring programme is being used to raise pupils' achievements and attainment and help them to reach their potential.
259. There is an exceptionally clear link between self-evaluation, DDPs and the SDP that has resulted in a co-ordinated approach towards improvement. This is particularly evident in the planned actions directed specifically to improve standards in music and ICT; the resulting raising of standards in these areas is a testimony to the efforts of all staff concerned.
260. The governing body, headteacher and SLT are very effective in identifying what the school needs to do to move forward and have set challenging targets for improvement that are having a positive effect on the staff and pupils. This is evident in the progress made by pupils in their academic achievement and in their personal and social development.
261. The school identifies its priorities and allocates resources to them effectively. They support and drive the process forward by very efficient financial control.

262. All the key issues from the last inspection have been addressed and good progress has been made in;

- maintaining the school's positive ethos and consistency of teaching and learning;
- raising the standards to good or better for all the subjects identified as satisfactory; and
- implementing the plans for ICT across the curriculum.

Shortcomings

263. There has been less progress in the development of the independent learning and problem-solving skills of pupils in all key stages.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

264. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade in the school's SER

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

Good features

265. There are sufficient teachers and support staff for the school to run efficiently and the curriculum to be taught effectively. The contact ratio at 72% is considerably lower than the national average. There is a good blend of experienced teachers and those who are new to the profession. Nearly all teachers are appropriately qualified and trained for their specific area of delivered curriculum and the wider curricular needs of the school. All criminal records bureau (CRB) checks have been successfully undertaken for all staff in the school.
266. Staffing for support of learners with SEN, especially within the mainstream classrooms, is a very good feature. A well-led and well-qualified team of support assistants works very effectively with teachers in the support of pupils with learning difficulties. Support is particularly strong for pupils with behaviour difficulties.
267. Support in clerical and administrative matters is good. Caretaking and cleaning staff undertake their duties conscientiously and well. However, the level of technician support for science and ICT is only adequate in the light of increased demand from the evolving curriculum.
268. Resources available to departments are good and capitation is allocated according to a formula that equips subjects at a level sufficient to deliver the curriculum effectively. Mechanisms are in place to allow the allocation of supplementary resources to departments for their particular development. Good use is made of external curricular provision.
269. Workforce remodelling requirements have been met in full and finance for the established structure has been made available.

270. The learning resource centre is well used for private study by the sixth form during the day and by the rest of the school outside lesson time. A booking system exists for departmental access to the computer section of the centre and usage is extensive. Books and other resources are in good condition and subject to a financed renewal programme. However, there is relatively low usage of the facility as a lending library for pupils.
271. The school benefits from a very good level of sporting and leisure facilities, recently added to by a newly opened sports hall.
272. Information and communications technology provision is enhanced by the addition of digital projectors or inter-active whiteboards into almost all teaching spaces. This is associated with a subsequent investment in a virtual learning environment development.
273. The accommodation at the school is of high quality and sufficient for the effective and efficient delivery of the school's curriculum. The fabric of the buildings is particularly well maintained. Rooms are fit for purpose and relate well to curricular provision. The site is accessible but steep which generates minor issues. Toilets for one gender have recently been refurbished and there is planned expenditure for the remainder.

Shortcomings

274. There are no significant shortcomings.

How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money

Good features

275. The school employs a bursar to manage its budget and to have financial oversight of all aspects of the school. The finances of the school are very well tracked and evaluated.
276. The bursar informs regular appraisal of school finances by the governors and the headteacher. In addition, the school undergoes a regular, supplementary, external audit. Best value for all major purchases is always sought.
277. The school maximises the financial benefits it receives through extending its facilities to the community and through seeking external sources of income where possible. There is a clear match between spending and priorities for improvement.
278. Although the current size of the sixth form is such that there is no cross subsidy of costs from other areas of the curriculum, a subsidy has been needed within the current financial year. As new legislation generates a need for major expansion of curricular choice, the school is actively working with the local authority's 14-19 consortium to maintain financial viability for sixth-form provision.
279. The school has implemented planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) practice that meets all of the statutory requirements and is efficient and effective in raising standards. There is a well-established performance management programme that allows access by all staff to a continuing professional development programme that addresses their needs for personal and

professional development. The deployment of staff makes efficient and effective use of their time, expertise and experience.

280. In conclusion, the coherent and inclusive management of the school's finances is an outstanding feature. Allied to this feature are the improvements achieved in a range of areas such as standards, key skills and accommodation, resulting in the school providing outstanding value for money.

Shortcomings

281. There are no significant shortcomings.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Welsh second language

Key Stage 3	Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
Key Stage 4	Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
Sixth Form	Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 3

Good features

282. Standards have improved greatly over the last year with an increase in the percentage of pupils achieving level 5 and above from 47% in 2007 to 72.9% in 2008.

283. Pupils recall and recycle language learnt in previous lessons when they discuss topics that are new to them. They have a good grasp of a range of subject-specific vocabulary and a good range of sentence patterns. Most can vary the time and person of the verb appropriately.

284. Oracy standards are very good. Most pupils speak confidently with good pronunciation and intonation, listen carefully to their teachers and to one another and respond fully within the constraints of the topics they discuss. More-able pupils extend their responses using conjunctions and including reasons and more detail.

285. Most pupils read aloud clearly with appropriate emphasis to show understanding. They readily understand the main flow of texts on familiar topics. When working independently and in the classroom situation, they read, understand and prepare simple reviews based on a wide range of texts including magazines, a variety of books and poems.

286. Written work is neatly presented and of a high standard. They write in a variety of forms and for a range of purposes. Standards of language accuracy are good on the whole and pupils use the help sheets available to them wisely in order to improve their writing.

287. Pupils make effective use of ICT to produce Welsh texts. These include PowerPoint presentations and information leaflets.

Shortcomings

288. A minority of pupils tend to speak English to one another instead of persevering to speak Welsh.

Key Stage 4

Good and outstanding features

289. There are a number of outstanding features in KS4.
290. The whole cohort sits the GCSE Welsh second language full-course qualification at the end of KS4 and in 2008, 71% of the cohort achieved grades A* - C. This is an outstanding increase of 30 percentage points over the previous year's performance.
291. Pupils' recall of vocabulary and structures learnt previously and then building on them when discussing new topics is exceptional. They have a very good grasp of a wide range of sentence patterns that enable them to provide detail and discuss for extended periods. They vary verb forms appropriately and use a good range of clauses that enable them to respond in detail and at length.
292. Standards of oracy are outstanding. Pupils understand their teachers without difficulty when they speak to them in the target language. They also respond confidently to familiar and unfamiliar voices and interact effectively in pairs and small groups. They provide detail when they give explanations and the more-able pupils can maintain a spontaneous discussion with differing opinions for an extended period of time. Their pronunciation and intonation is very good and they speak with a good Welsh accent.
293. Pupils read aloud clearly and with appropriate emphasis and understanding. They read a range of factual materials to gather information for a variety of reasons. In class and independently, they read a variety of literary and non-literary materials including some authentic texts. They discuss these critically either in class or by writing reviews and appraisals.
294. Writing standards are very good; pupils write in a range of forms including diaries, letters, articles and presentations. They redraft to improve their own work. More-able pupils produce extended work that contains detail and complex sentence patterns that are accurate on the whole. Foundation tier candidates write in a good range of forms for a variety of purposes and generate work that is above the expectation for their ability.
295. Pupils use ICT appropriately to prepare leaflets and presentations and also to interpret responses to questionnaires that they have generated. Information and communications technology is also used effectively to present coursework.

Shortcomings

296. There are no significant shortcomings.

Sixth form

Good features

297. Listening and discussion skills are well developed. Students respond well to one another and to their teachers and many engage in a natural conversation with confidence. They are beginning to discuss the set texts with understanding.
298. Appreciation of poetry and film are developing well. In Y12, students are building on appreciation skills and vocabulary learnt previously and many make good use of specialist vocabulary and terminology when they express opinions and

appreciate the texts. They justify their opinions with well-thought-out reasons, some of them original. Some also quote to support their comments.

299. Within the context of the set texts, students are extending their vocabulary and are beginning to understand and use a wider range of complex language structures.

Shortcomings

300. There were no significant shortcomings.

Science

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

Key Stage 4 **Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

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

Key Stage 3

Good features

301. The percentage of pupils attaining level 5 and above in science in 2008 is slightly under 80%. This performance was better than the local and national averages, a picture established over the past few years.

302. Nearly all pupils show good recall of previous learning and demonstrate a sound understanding of the basic scientific concepts in chemistry, biology and physics.

303. Many pupils work confidently and efficiently, in pairs, to recall previous work. In their work on light, they are able to explain the meaning of transparent, translucent and opaque to the rest of the class.

304. Most pupils demonstrate an appropriate level of practical skills in their investigative work. They are able to record their observations in a suitable form and draw suitable relevant conclusions.

305. In practical work, pupils confidently work in small groups and follow instructions carefully with regard to health and safety issues.

306. Many pupils are able to plan their own investigations as part of a problem-solving exercise. They are able to talk confidently about their work using the appropriate scientific vocabulary and units.

Shortcomings

307. There are no significant shortcomings.

Key Stage 4

Good features

308. Examination results in this subject at GCSE are below local and national averages for passes at A*-C. However, despite this, there has been a significant improvement over the last two years. The results at A*-G have exceeded local and national averages in the last two years.

309. Most pupils use scientific terms appropriately when explaining previous concepts studied. Pupils can confidently recall and explain the structure and function of the different cells in a green leaf.

310. Most pupils are able to plan and carry out investigations using suitable diagrams and charts to record their findings. They are aware of the need for accuracy and reliability.
311. The more-able pupils can identify and control the variables in their investigation.
312. A majority of pupils applies prior learning well to new situations and many ask appropriate questions to further their understanding.
313. Pupils are able to use their knowledge of different food groups to inform their discussions on a Healthy Eating initiative that is taking place in the school.

Shortcomings

314. Despite the progress being made in science, a minority of pupils cannot recall or explain details of previous work.

Sixth Form

Good features

315. In the last two years, examination results at A-level have been broadly in line with local and national averages for grades A-E but slightly below for grades A-C. These results are in line with the students' ability and demonstrate progress from GCSE level.
316. Most students successfully work independently on a range of challenging tasks across all aspects of science.
317. Many students are able to access and understand complex scientific information, using suitable vocabulary and terminology in the process.
318. Nearly all students show confidence in using mathematical techniques in scientific calculations.
319. Most students are able to use complex scientific models with considerable confidence when explaining the physical properties of a range of organic substances.

Shortcomings

320. The standards of discussion, at length and in depth, of the scientific principles that underpin the learning are not adequate.

Information technology	
Key Stage 3	Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
Key Stage 4	Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
Sixth Form	Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key Stage 3 and 4

Good features

321. In KS3, there has been a significant improvement in standards during the last three years, with results being consistently well above the national average.
322. Since the school introduced the OCR ICT National award to all pupils, the results in KS4 have significantly improved and are above the national average.

323. By the end of Y7, nearly all pupils can independently choose when to use the Internet and are able to discuss Internet safety. Most pupils are able to distinguish between good use as well as the risks associated with using the Internet.
324. At the end of Y8, nearly all pupils are able to confidently manage their own workspace and create folders to store and retrieve work efficiently. This work is developed so that, by the end of KS3, most pupils use a wide range of applications with growing confidence and recognise the need to produce solutions for a specific purpose and audience.
325. In KS4, the majority of pupils plan independently, demonstrating the ability to refine and present information to meet the needs of a specific business audience. However, only a minority of pupils responds well to regular and constructive feedback even though they use exemplars well to acquaint themselves, and judge themselves, against examination standards.
326. Most pupils demonstrate the ability to create a business presentation and use slide transitions to meet the needs of a specific purpose and audience. A small number of pupils are able to add animations confidently to enhance the presentation of work.
327. Nearly all pupils across both key stages can design and create a webpage and add links to other pages. Most pupils also use images effectively from a variety of sources. In KS4, most demonstrate confidence in creating and editing video and audio files.
328. Most understand and use terminology associated with data handling and can demonstrate an ability to add records to a database and continue to search the database from the perspective of a proposed hypothesis. Throughout KS4, pupils develop their skills so that not only are most pupils able confidently to enter data into a database and search on at least one field, a few are able independently to search on more than one field and print results in a range of formats.
329. By the end of KS3, most pupils have a good understanding of spread-sheeting and are able to design and set up basic models and carry out basic calculations. The more-able pupils can also use formulae and independently produce meaningful charts.
330. This work is developed in KS4 and most pupils create a spreadsheet model to meet the needs of an organisation and are able to use basic formula, functions and format the page. The more-able pupils use more complex features of building a computer model.
331. Pupils with additional learning needs are well integrated within their classes and make good progress.

Shortcomings

332. Despite obtaining 80% pass rate at A*-C in 2008, only 9% gained a grade A*/A or equivalent.

Sixth Form

Good features

333. At sixth-form level, despite a drop in results between 2006 and 2007, the school obtained 100% pass rate in 2008.

334. Students base their IT work on real business models that provide a rich learning context. All students conduct appropriate research using a variety of sources, including the internet, and are discerning about the information they use. Most understand the need to develop a house style, the need to design annotated draft copies of the work and the need to check for accuracy of layout or content. Many students show maturity in evaluating a solution, knowing how to improve on a previous solution.
335. Most students use appropriate text styles, page layout and formatting techniques to create professional quality solutions. They are able to analyse a brief and develop a plan, systematically, drawing upon their understanding of the theory and apply their prior learning to new concepts with confidence.
336. By the end of the course the majority of students uses the supporting checklists and assessment objectives to gain a good understanding of the examination criteria.

Shortcomings

337. Very few students demonstrate the high order skills required to obtain the top grades.
338. A minority did not fully understand the need for careful planning and structuring of questions related to a data-capture form.

Modern foreign languages

Key Stage 3	Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings.
Key Stage 4	Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
Sixth Form	Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings.

Key Stage 3

Good features

339. Pupils work at appropriate NC levels and make good progress throughout the key stage. In 2008, in teachers' assessments, 87% gained level five or above, a figure that is well above both the school's results from the previous year and the all-Wales figure.
340. By the end of the key stage, pupils produce extended writing that is of a good standard. They are beginning to show an understanding of the grammar of the foreign language they are studying.
341. Pupils have good listening skills and are able to listen for both gist and detail.
342. Many pupils have good accents and their oral responses are easily understood.
343. By the end of the key stage, pupils are able to read and understand longer passages in the foreign language and work out the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Shortcomings

344. A minority of pupils does not extend their speech in lessons, limiting themselves to single words and short phrases in their oral responses.
345. Further to this, a few pupils make basic, careless errors in written work.

Key Stage 4

Good features

346. In 2008, GCSE results were good. In German, the number of pupils gaining A*-C grades exceeded the local and national figures. Although results in French fell below local and national figures, in both subjects positive residuals indicated that pupils performed well.
347. Pupils make good and rapid progress from simple to more complex language. Their awareness of the grammar of the target language increases throughout the key stage. Many pupils have good accents.
348. Pupils' written work, including GCSE coursework, is of a good standard. It is generally very accurate and contains appropriate idiom.
349. Pupils make good progress in listening and reading and by the end of the key stage, they are able to develop strategies for dealing with unpredictable language.

Shortcomings

350. A few pupils continue to make some basic mistakes in grammar and pronunciation.
351. A majority of pupils are not confident in recycling previously-learned language to produce longer oral responses in lessons.

Sixth Form

Good features

352. Students make good progress throughout the sixth form. Due to the small number of students, it is not useful to compare Advanced/Advanced Subsidiary level results with local and national figures.
353. Most students pronounce words accurately and are able to read aloud confidently in the foreign language.
354. By the end of the sixth form nearly all students are able to read authentic texts for both gist and detail. Listening skills are good and students show a good understanding of the foreign language when spoken at normal speed.
355. Many students show a good awareness of the grammar of the foreign language and are able to write accurately.

Shortcomings

356. A significant minority of students continue to make some basic mistakes in oral and written work and the unprepared oral responses of students continue to be short.

History

Key Stage 3	Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings
Key Stage 4	Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
Sixth Form:	Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcoming

Key Stage 3

Good features

357. There has been a clear improvement on standards of achievement reported at the last inspection. Pupils in Y7 use their knowledge to propose criteria for kingship in the Middle Ages and to choose between rival claims in 1066 on the basis of these criteria.

358. In Y8, a majority of pupils of differing abilities understand that past events, such as the sinking of the Mary Rose, had more than one cause.
359. The more-able pupils in Y9 talk confidently about the relative value of source material for an enquiry. In their study of the effects of empire in the 19th century, they question traditional views and stereotypes. Most of the pupils in Y9 understand that the value of a source as evidence is as much dependent on who wrote it as on what it contains.

Shortcomings

360. The understanding of a majority of pupils in Y7 is insufficiently grounded in knowledge of period to enable them to make valid historical choices.
361. Whilst the more-able pupils in Y8 are able to identify more than one cause of an event, they cannot make valid links between causal factors.
362. Generally, pupils across all years in the key stage lack understanding, relative to their age and stage of development, of the relationship between historical interpretations and the evidence on which they are based.

Key Stage 4

Good features

363. In 2008, 54% pupils gained A*-C grades at GCSE level; this was 13% below the national average but a 24% improvement on the results for 2007. Taking 2007 as an aberration, the 2008 GCSE A*-C results were in line with a general upward trend over the last five years.
364. The most noticeable gains in standards of achievement in KS4 are in the levels of pupils' understanding of historical method and their ability to appreciate the importance of subject knowledge as context for the interpretation of source material.
365. Pupils capably use published mark schemes to develop their conceptual awareness and so inform the way in which they solve historical problems. The pupils have the ability selectively to use mind mapping from Y10 onwards to assist them to analyse historical problems and to arrange their arguments.
366. Most pupils in Y10 can weigh the usefulness of sources of evidence for an enquiry; they understand that even unreliable evidence can still be useful for an understanding of an event or situation. By Y11, most pupils can use evidence from several sources to construct a simple written argument.

Shortcomings

367. For a minority of pupils in Y10, judgments about the usefulness of sources as evidence are restricted to mere descriptions of what they contain.
368. The proportion gaining A*-A grades did not rise in 2008 in line with the rise in A*-C grades.

Sixth Form

Good features

369. In 2008, 75% of students attained grades A-C. This is broadly in line with previous years but with only eight candidates it is difficult to form comparisons that are statistically valid.

370. In Y12, students develop a more sophisticated approach to source evaluation and are able to distinguish 'layers of context' in determining the value of sources dealing with historical events.

371. By the end of their course, students know how to construct more complex, written arguments, showing good awareness of the importance of question analysis, the role and composition of paragraphs and the techniques of source evaluation and cross-reference.

Shortcomings

372. There are no significant shortcomings.

Physical education

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

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

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

Key Stage 3

Good features

373. Pupils of all abilities make good progress working with diligence and enthusiasm. They participate regularly, work well alone and in co-operation with others in groups and are keen to improve their skills.

374. In gymnastics, both boys and girls demonstrate good control, moving around the space with confidence and clarity of shape in their development of simple sequences. The majority concentrates well in practising and refining their skills, listening to and, attempting to apply the advice given.

375. Despite the very limited gymnastic experience of some pupils in Y7, they make progress on a par with others in the groups.

376. In orienteering, most boys successfully work in co-operation with one another in problem solving. Most can orientate themselves using maps of the school site and work well together in groups to solve team challenges.

377. In games, boys and girls make good progress. They demonstrate good, and often very good, ball control in hockey and football, adapting play skilfully according to the situation. The most able players use space effectively and are confident in providing suggestions and encouragement for their team-mates.

Shortcomings

378. The focus on movement quality in gymnastics does not sufficiently challenge the more-able performers to extend their technical skills or develop their sequence work creatively.

Key Stage 4

Good features

379. The progress of pupils in both the core programme and the GCSE physical education course is good. GCSE results have improved significantly, in particular, those of the boys. Results compare well with local and national results.

380. There is generally good understanding of defending principles in football.

381. The new BTEC course, in addition to the existing GCSE course, provides an innovative range of opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership and coaching skills.

382. Pupils generally respond well to the use of video to record their work and evaluate progress. Most can identify weaknesses in line with given criteria and some suggest how they might improve.

Shortcomings

383. Pupils demonstrate effectively but they are less successful in both their oral and written work.

Sixth Form

Good features

384. Written work, including note-taking, demonstrates understanding, is well presented, coherent and thorough.

385. Discussion and debate are articulate and well considered, with students drawing from wider knowledge and experience.

386. Practical work in planning and delivering a tennis lesson shows good progress in learning. Students collaborate well, sharing ideas and work together successfully.

Shortcomings

387. There are no significant shortcomings.

School's response to the inspection

The governors, headteacher and staff are delighted that this inspection report recognises and highlights so many good features of our school, confirming our commitment to and successes with the children and students of Bryn Elian. The inspector's findings generally concurred with the conclusions of our own monitoring and self-evaluation processes which are now very much a part of the ethos of the school and help to drive up school improvement. The inspectors agreed that we are a happy and well-ordered learning community.

The good standards in teaching and learning reflect well upon the high quality of our teaching staff and the willingness of our pupils to learn. The report comments upon the good standards of achievement observed throughout the school. We were pleased that the very good behaviour and attitudes of pupils and students were seen to be a particular area of strength where the children were seen by the inspection team to understand the importance of mutual respect, displaying an interest and enthusiasm for learning. It was gratifying that our pupils were deemed to be courteous and respectful.

Our wide variety of cross-curricular events too was praised by the team as an outstanding feature, since here in Bryn Elian we too feel that we provide not just a sound academic basis for our children but also a rich variety of experiences beyond the classroom. Our values, exemplified in our motto "Achievement for All", are evident in our curriculum structures, inclusiveness, community participation and the excellent relationships between pupils and staff. We were delighted that the inspection team concluded that we had a strong sense of collective purpose and the care and support that we offer all of the young people in our charge is a strength of the school.

The report makes it clear that our sixth form provision is good with the Welsh Baccalaureate adding significantly to the successes of our students with outstanding features in the delivery of key skills. The report concludes that the values and attitudes evident in key stage 3 and 4 are prominent features in the sixth form. The fact that the report recognised that the students can achieve their potential here in Bryn Elian in a warm and welcoming environment, gives us great pleasure.

We concur with the findings of this report and would like to thank the team for its courtesy and professionalism throughout the course of the inspection.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Ysgol Bryn Elian
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-19
Address of school	Windsor Drive Colwyn Bay CONWAY
Postcode	LL29 8HU
Telephone number	01492518215
Headteacher	Mrs Eithne Hughes
Date of appointment	1 September 2008
Chair of governors y	Mr P Capper
Reporting inspector	Mr Gareth Buckland
Dates of inspection	6-9 October 2008

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	124	135	134	146	152	88	44	823

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	51	3	53

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	15.5:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	3:1
Average teaching group size	19
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	72%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	92.9	92.0	93.4	90.9	90.9	92.5	93.8	92.1
Term 2	92.3	92.3	93.5	89.7	90.1	91.4	91.7	91.5
Term 3	92.4	91.7	92.9	90.5	96.9	85.9	98.4	92.2

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	17.7
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	32

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results 2008 End of key stage 3:

KS3 National Assessment Results 2008														
Total number of pupils in Y9: 145														
Percentage of pupils at each level														
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	5	0	0	0	2	6	19	49	55	9	0
		National												
Welsh	Teacher assessment	School	4	3	0	0	0	2	16	19	58	34	9	0
		National												
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	5	0	0	0	0	8	14	44	42	24	7
		National												
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	24	46	61	9	9
		National												

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

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language) by teacher assessment			
In the school	70%	In Wales	56.7%

Public Examination Results: 2008

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	136
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	380

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2008:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	98.5	86	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	66	61	56
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	97	85	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	42	41	41
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	99	N/A	N/A
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	94.7	N/A	N/A
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	100	85	86
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	0	N/A	N/A
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	0	N/A	N/A
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	0	N/A	N/A
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	0	N/A	N/A

For pupils aged 17, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs	
Number of pupils aged 17 in January 2008	48
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2008	45
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2008	3

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	61.7	64	69
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	87.2	94	94
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	284.7	N/A	N/A
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	0	N/A	N/A
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	0	N/A	N/A

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Inspectors spent a total of 42 days in the school and were joined by the school's deputy headteacher as nominee. They held a meeting before the inspection.

During the inspection, inspectors visited:

- 104 lessons;
- registrations and assemblies; and
- some extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team met with:

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

The team also considered:

- the school's SER;
- 97 replies to the parents' questionnaire;
- comprehensive documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection;
- samples of pupils' reports; and,
- a range of pupils' work.

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

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Gareth Buckland Registered Inspector	Context; Summary; Appendices Key Question 1
Dylan Jones Lay Inspector	Accommodation; health and safety; attendance
David Hughes	Key Question 2
Glyn Davies	Key Question 3
Anthony Sparks	Key Question 4
Alun Griffiths	Key Question 6
Alan Kelly	History
Bethan Clement	Welsh 2 nd Language
Stephen Rowland	Key Question 7
Paul Martin	Information technology
Debra Makin	Physical education
Lynne Meiring	Modern foreign languages
Glyn Griffiths	Special educational needs
Mair Herbert	Nominee

Acknowledgement

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

Contractor
EPPC/Severn Crossing Ltd
Suite H
Britannic House
Britannic Way
Llandarcy
Neath
SA10 6JQ