

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

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

**Pen-Y-Dre High School  
Gurnos Estate  
Merthyr Tydfil  
CF47 9BY**

**School Number: 6754012**

**Date of Inspection: 09/03/09**

**by**

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

The inspection of Pen-Y-Dre High School took place between 9-13 March 2009. An independent team of inspectors, led by Julia Helen Cattle Longville 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.

Estyn's reports follow its guidance for the writing and editing of reports, which is available on the Estyn website ([www.estyn.gov.uk](http://www.estyn.gov.uk)). The table below explains the terms that Estyn uses to indicate quantities. The table is for guidance only.

<b>Nearly all</b>	with very few exceptions
<b>Most</b>	90% or more
<b>Many</b>	70% or more
<b>A majority</b>	over 60%
<b>Half/around half</b>	close to 50%
<b>A minority</b>	below 40%
<b>Few</b>	below 20%
<b>Very few</b>	less than 10%

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

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

There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a **standard** inspection.

## Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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## Context

### The nature of the provider

1. Pen Y Dre High School is a mixed 11-18 school maintained by Merthyr Local Education Authority (LEA). It has 878 pupils and students on roll including 111 students in the sixth form. At the last inspection, in March 2003, there were 1042 pupils and students in the school. A total of 140 students was in the sixth form.
2. The school serves a catchment area consisting mainly of the large Gurnos Estate as well as a number of Welsh valley communities on the edge of the Brecon Beacons. Pupils come mainly from five partner primary schools. Although pupils and students come from the full range of economic and social backgrounds, a high proportion is socially and financially disadvantaged. Thirty three percent of pupils are entitled to free school meals (FSM).
3. The school's intake covers the whole ability range although a relatively high proportion is of lower ability. Three pupils have statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and a further 116 have been identified as needing some support. All pupils speak English as their first language. There are no pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds in the school.
4. The senior management team consists of the headteacher, a deputy headteacher and six assistant headteachers. Three of the assistant headteachers have responsibility for a key stage and the other three are heads of the mathematics, science and English faculties.

### The school's priorities and targets

5. The school vision is to create opportunities for all young people to reach their potential in a supportive and dynamic environment. To reach this goal, the school identifies the need to raise the achievement of all pupils by;
  - ensuring that they are in school on each and every possible day;
  - boosting their self-esteem and aspirations;
  - encouraging them to work hard and to be curious about the world; and
  - ensuring that they have respect for themselves, for who they are and where they come from.
6. The school's priorities are to:
  - balance the budget over the two financial years 2008/09 and 2009/10;
  - improve school outcomes by summer 2009, quantified in the following way:
    - average point score of 200 points at 18+;
    - 50-60% 5 A\*-Cs or equivalents (recognised by QCA) at 16+; including level 2 qualifications in English/communication and mathematics/number:

- 85% of learners in the sixth form with at least one level 2 qualification in their portfolio of qualifications; and
- 50-60% level 5 or above in English, maths, science at 14+;
- promote inclusion by summer 2009, quantified in the following way:
  - 88-92% attendance, with 89% the success indicator;
  - 40-50 fixed-term exclusions.

## Summary

7. Pen Y Dre High School is a very good school. Through outstanding leadership and very strong direction, the headteacher successfully empowers others at all levels to make decisions and to innovate. This has contributed to the creation of an outstanding culture where there are high levels of mutual respect, learners are happy and staff morale is high. This is an inclusive school that places equally high value on the personal and academic achievements of all learners. The school provides exceptional choice that is tailored well to individual needs and aspirations. This is a school where exceptional people work exceptionally hard to ensure that all staff and learners achieve their potential.
8. The following table shows the grades awarded in the seven key questions.

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

## Standards

9. Overall, the standards achieved by learners have good features and no important shortcomings. The following table shows the grades awarded at Key Stage (KS) 3, KS4 and in the sixth form in the six subjects inspected.

<b>Standards in subjects inspected</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b>KS3</b>	<b>KS4</b>	<b>Sixth form</b>
English	1	2	1
Science	3	2	2
Modern Foreign Languages	3	2	-
History	2	3	3
Art	2	2	2
Drama	1	1	1

10. The following table shows the standards achieved by pupils at each stage in the 67 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected.

	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
<b>KS3</b>	14%	49%	31%	6%	0%
<b>KS4</b>	17%	61%	22%	0%	0%
<b>KS3+KS4</b>	15%	53%	28%	4%	0%
<b>6<sup>th</sup> form</b>	29%	57%	14%	0%	0%
<b>Total</b>	18%	54%	25%	3%	0%

### KS3 and KS4

11. Overall, results in tests, statutory assessments and examinations are good. At both key stages, in a few subjects and key indicators of performance there are outstanding features in pupils' attainment. The significant value added to the attainment of pupils across the ability range is a notable feature. With a very few exceptions, there is an overall upward trend in performance.
12. Standards in the six subjects inspected are good overall, except in science and MFL at KS3 and history at KS4 where good features outweigh shortcomings. There are outstanding features in the standards achieved by pupils in drama at both key stages and English at KS3. Performance is generally better at KS4 than at KS3.
13. Standards in key skills are good overall. A very high proportion of pupils attains accreditation in key skills at both key stages. There are shortcomings in pupils' bilingual competence. They rarely use the Welsh language outside of Welsh lessons.
14. Almost all pupils, including those with SEN and the more able and talented, make very good progress in relation to their ability. This progress is particularly impressive because it is often from a significantly low baseline on entry to the school.
15. Across the curriculum there is very little difference between the performance of boys and girls. At KS4, the fluctuation in attainment can be attributed to the performance of middle ability boys.

16. Most pupils make very good progress in their spiritual, moral and social development. Most have a very positive attitude to learning and are prepared to work hard to achieve of their best. There are shortcomings in pupils' attendance and their punctuality at the start of the school day.

### **The quality of education and training**

17. Teaching is underpinned by a high degree of mutual respect between pupils, teachers and support staff. In most lessons this is very successful in promoting very positive attitudes to learning. It also contributes significantly to the high standards of pupils' behaviour both within lessons and around the school
18. Teaching and assessment are at least grade 2 in just over two-thirds of lessons overall. There is, however, a significant difference between the quality of teaching and assessment at both key stages. At KS4 the proportion of lessons awarded grade 1 or 2 is much higher than that at KS3. There are shortcomings in around a third of lessons. Typically these occur because teachers do not involve pupils actively enough in their learning and there is insufficient pace and challenge.
19. Overall assessment arrangements are good. A particularly strong feature is the year profile which provides a very clear overview of a pupil's achievements. There is, however, too much variability in the quality of marking both within and across subjects. Written comments from teachers focus too much on general aspects such as completion and presentation and not enough on subject strengths and aspects for improvement. This also features in annual reports to parents and carers where comments from subject teachers are not subject specific enough.
20. The curriculum has many outstanding features. The school's success in meeting the complex and very diverse range of pupils' learning needs is outstanding. Continuous monitoring and review of course provision has resulted in a wide range of learning opportunities and accreditation.
21. Extra-curricular provision is strong. It includes a wide range of school based events, together with links with a Polish orphanage and a South African school. Pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are a high priority of the school. They make an outstanding contribution to various charities. Pupils can explain how they are making a difference and how it affects their personal development.
22. The school meets its statutory obligation in delivering a daily act of collective worship although there is too much variation in the quality of a number of form assemblies.
23. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their bilingual skills and there is relatively little incidental Welsh used during the school day. There is no opportunity for the majority of learners to undertake external accreditation.

24. The care, guidance and support for all learners are outstanding. The school provides a range of high quality personalised and confidential support for pupils of all abilities. Pupils' academic progress is carefully monitored. The Multi Agency Referral Group (MARG), that brings together school and other outside agency staff to manage and meet the needs of vulnerable learners is an outstanding feature.
25. The range of work-related opportunities for pupils and students is outstanding. The extensive Careers and World of Work programme ensures effective guidance to pupils and students. Pupils receive high quality advice and guidance in selecting appropriate pathways at the end of KS3 and KS4. Transition from KS2 to KS3 allows learners to settle quickly in their new environment.
26. The school promotes actively the safety and well-being of learners. The extent to which emotional and physical aspects of a healthy lifestyle are encouraged is outstanding. The school is working towards phase 5 of the Healthy Schools' initiative. Healthy menus in the school canteen are less well developed.
27. Provision for pupils with SEN, including those with severe learning and behavioural difficulties, is outstanding. Individual needs are identified and data are used effectively to plan and monitor pupils' progress. All staff have consistently high expectations of pupils with SEN.
28. The success of the nurture group and Ymlaen programme, for pupils at risk of disaffection, has resulted in improved attendance, accredited qualifications, reduced fixed-term and permanent exclusions as well as significant improvements in pupils' social skills and self-esteem.
29. The entitlement of all pupils of all backgrounds and abilities is a priority in the school. This is reinforced by the ethos of social inclusion that permeates throughout the whole school. Pupils are confident that incidents of bullying are quickly and sensitively dealt with.
30. Cross-curricular themes and assembly topics highlight racial equality. The Disability Equality Scheme and Access to the Curriculum Plan are appropriately detailed. Pupils' awareness of other cultures and religions and respect for diversity are very good.
31. Well-developed monitoring procedures have helped to improve standards in attendance, behaviour and progress.

### **Leadership and management**

32. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and very strong direction to the work of the school. He is very highly respected by pupils, staff and governors. The management of the headteacher is underpinned by a style that empowers other leaders and managers, develops their decision-making skills and encourages innovation.

33. The senior leadership team works very well together, provides high quality support for the headteacher and generally strong leadership in their areas of responsibility. Senior leaders, teachers and other staff collaborate very well in formal teams and working groups, and informally.
34. The arrangements for appraising staff are generally used well to enable managers to promote the professional development of teaching and classroom support staff. Appraisal for some non-teaching staff is not developed enough
35. Governors contribute well to setting the strategic direction and make a particularly effective contribution to financial management. They are becoming increasingly aware of good features of provision through links to faculties. In all major respects, the governing body fulfils its regulatory and legal requirements.
36. Self-evaluation has helped leaders and managers develop a culture of excellence in the school. Self-evaluation is well embedded into the work of the school and has resulted in the setting of clear priorities for improvement.
37. Self-evaluation is carried out systematically and robustly. Leaders and managers attach considerable importance to seeking the views of pupils and other interested parties. The outcomes from self-evaluation are used very well to plan for improvement.
38. Effective self-evaluation and planning for improvement have resulted in the school making outstanding progress since the last inspection. Procedures for self-evaluation are very successful in ensuring that the needs of all pupils are addressed.
39. There are sufficient suitably qualified and experienced teaching staff and learning support assistants to teach all aspects of the curriculum effectively. Teachers are supported well by administrative staff to ensure the day-to-day functions of the school are effectively carried out.
40. There is a good range of learning resources, including those for pupils with SEN. The provision of ICT equipment, in dedicated computer suites and in most subject areas, is outstanding. The library is inadequately stocked.
41. There are sufficient classrooms for the number of pupils and students on roll. Facilities for sporting activities are outstanding. However overall the accommodation is in poor condition. These include limited toilet facilities for pupils and no toilet facilities for visitors with a disability.
42. The school manages its finances exceptionally well. Spending decisions are intrinsically linked to the school's priorities for improvement. Through very careful budgeting and meticulous monitoring of funds, a substantial deficit has been eliminated and a surplus created.
43. Given the opportunities and experiences provided by the school, and the achievement of pupils and students, the school provides outstanding value for money.

## **Sixth form**

### **Standards**

44. Results of assessments and external examinations are generally good and occasionally very good in relation to students' abilities. In 2008 Advanced (A) level results were below local and national averages. However students often perform better than their predicted targets. In two of the past three years the school has produced the top performing student in Merthyr. Each year several students progress to prestigious universities.
45. Students achieve very good standards in the key skills of communication, application of number and ICT. Many apply these skills well to enhance their learning in subjects.
46. Almost all students have a positive attitude to learning. They understand what is expected of them and many work hard to achieve their targets and move on to higher education or the workplace. They are mature young people with very good personal and social skills. Students use these skills well, for example, when working with younger children in the school and when arranging charity events.
47. Students' attendance in classes is good. Students' overall attendance in school is a cause for concern as it is well below average levels.

### **The quality of education and training**

48. Teaching and assessment have many outstanding features in the sixth form and these are prominent in around a third of lessons. Teachers know students very well and treat them with considerable respect. They establish excellent working relationships both within and outside of lessons.
49. Most teachers use their subject knowledge very well to stimulate and challenge students in lessons. Often they skilfully use questions and interactive dialogue that probe students' knowledge and understanding. In most subjects the support and encouragement that teachers provide for students helps them exceed the targets set for them.
50. Teachers assess students' progress well in nearly all subjects. Marking is usually good and teachers provide constructive oral and written feedback to students that enable them to have a good awareness of how well they are doing.
51. Reporting arrangements are good overall but there is lack of consistency in the quality of comments from subject teachers. Often they provide a general comment relating to progress and attitude but do not focus enough on subject-specific content. As a consequence of this, strengths and targets for improvement in the subject are unclear.
52. Students receive extensive guidance about universities, careers and the world of work. Transition between KS4 and the sixth form allows students to settle quickly and prepare for new challenges.

53. The school provides wide-ranging opportunities for sixth-form students to follow the subjects and courses of their choice. The Welsh Baccalaureate qualification and the Merthyr Tydfil consortium links extend curricular opportunities for students.
54. Opportunities for students to gain accreditation in the key skills of application of number, communication and ICT are outstanding.
55. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a high priority of the school. The Personal Social Education (PSE) elements in the Welsh Baccalaureate in the sixth form ensure a wider awareness of self in relation to others. Students display outstanding care for others through their charity work and collections. Sixth formers carry out a wide range of community service through their Welsh Baccalaureate programme.

### **Leadership and management**

56. Management of provision for the sixth form is highly effective and results in outstanding features in many aspects of provision and the standards that students achieve. Self-evaluation and planning for improvement are very effective. The good and outstanding features noted at K33 and KS4 are also evident in the sixth form.
57. There is a good range of specialist teachers and students have access to a wide range of subject-specific resources to enhance their learning. However the size of the sixth-form common room, the facilities available in it and access to a dedicated study area with sufficient ICT equipment are inadequate for the number of students in the sixth form.
58. Overall the sixth form achieves good value for money.
59. The school has made significant progress in addressing the key issues from the last inspection report and almost all issues have been dealt with very successfully. The attendance of learners, although improved, remains an ongoing issue for the school.

## Recommendations

In order to build on its current success, the school should implement the following recommendations.

- R1 Improve standards in science and French at KS3 and history at KS4 and in the sixth form.
- R2 Continue to improve pupils' and students' attainment in examinations and especially the overall attainment of middle ability boys.
- R3 Continue efforts to improve attendance and punctuality at the start of the school day.
- R4 Develop further opportunities at KS4 to undertake accreditation in Welsh second language.
- R5 Improve the quality and consistency of reports to parents and carers.
- R6 Continue to work with the appropriate authority to improve the fabric of the building.

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

- 60. This grade is one grade lower than the grade in the school's self-evaluation report. Inspectors considered some of the outstanding features identified by the school to be good.

#### KS3 and KS4

- 61. There are many good features in the standards which pupils achieve. Overall, results in tests, statutory assessments and examinations are good. At both key stages, in a few subjects and key indicators of performance there are outstanding features in pupils' attainment. The significant value added to the achievement and attainment of pupils across the ability range is outstanding. With a very few exceptions, there is an overall upward trend in performance.
- 62. At KS3 in the last three years attainment in the core subjects, English, mathematics and science, has been below national averages. In 2008, 37% of

pupils reached at least level five in all three core subjects combined, compared to 30% six years ago. Despite this improvement, this figure is well below the national average. Results in English and mathematics have improved significantly over the past three years. Results in science were better in 2006 and 2007 but declined in 2008.

63. In comparison with schools where a similar proportion of pupils is entitled to free school meals, results at KS3 are good overall. In the last three years attainment has been above the average for similar schools in half of the key indicators of performance and in the top 25% in the Core Subject Indicator (CSI) in 2007. Attainment has been above the averages for similar schools in English, mathematics, science and the three core subjects combined at some point in the last three years.
64. At KS4 the percentage of pupils who gained five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) A\*-C grades and A\*-G grades in 2008 was well below local and national figures. However these are not a true reflection of attainment in the school because they do not include the attainment of pupils in a wide range of vocationally-based and key skills qualifications. When these are included, there are outstanding features in the attainment of pupils when compared to their ability on entry to the school. The school adds significant value to the attainment of pupils as they move through the school.
65. In comparison with GCSE results in similar schools, attainment in the key indicators of performance from 2006-2008 was above average in about half of the key indicators of performance. Attainment was better in 2006 and 2007 than it was in 2008 because there were more less able pupils in the cohort. Observations in class during the inspection suggest that standards are higher than the 2008 examination results suggest.
66. A high number of pupils gain success in vocationally-based courses. Almost all pupils gain accreditation in key skills qualifications. Together these qualifications add significant value to the overall attainment of pupils across the ability range.
67. Last year all Y11 pupils left school with qualifications. This is a notable feature of the overall performance of pupils at KS4.
68. Almost all pupils across the ability range achieve as expected. A significantly high percentage of these achieve well beyond expectation. In comparison with attainment on entry, almost all pupils, including those with SEN and the more able and talented, make outstanding progress in relation to their ability. This progress is particularly notable because it is often from a significantly low baseline on entry to the school.
69. Across the curriculum there is very little difference between the performance of boys and girls. At KS4, the fluctuation in attainment can be attributed to the performance of middle ability boys. When they perform well, overall attainment is better. Overall the school makes very good use of performance data to ensure that pupils across the ability range achieve their potential.
70. Standards of achievement in the six subjects inspected are at least good overall, except in science and MFL at KS3 and history at KS4 where good features outweigh shortcomings. There are outstanding features in the standards achieved by pupils in drama at both key stages and English at KS3.

The following table shows the grades awarded at KS 3 and KS4 in the six subjects inspected.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>KS3</b>	<b>KS4</b>
English	1	2
Science	3	2
MFL	3	2
History	2	3
Art	2	2
Drama	1	1

71. Standards of achievement at both key stages in the 44 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected are good overall. Standards are better in KS4 than they are in KS3. The percentage of grades awarded at each key stage, and in both key stages combined is set out below.

	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
<b>KS3</b>	14%	49%	31%	6%	0%
<b>KS4</b>	17%	61%	22%	0%	0%
<b>KS3+KS4</b>	15%	53%	28%	4%	0%

72. Standards are significantly better at KS4 than they are at KS3. At KS3, standards are lower than they are nationally. The proportion of KS3 lessons where standards were awarded grade one or grade two is nine points lower than the corresponding KS3 figure for all secondary schools inspected in Wales in 2006-2007 as reported by the Chief Inspector in his most recent annual report. The percentage of lessons where standards were awarded grade one is four points higher. In the Chief Inspector's Annual Report standards in 33% of lessons were awarded grades three or four compared to 37% in this inspection.
73. At KS4, standards are better than they are nationally. Standards were awarded grade one or two in 78% of lessons observed in this inspection. This is seven percentage points higher than the corresponding figure from the Chief Inspector's Annual Report. The percentage of lessons where grade one was awarded is three points higher than the KS4 national figure. Overall these figures compare well with national figures.
74. These figures show that significant progress has been made since the last inspection in the standards that pupils achieve. At that time, standards were awarded the two highest grades in 59% of lessons. This has risen to 68% in this inspection.
75. The very strong emphasis on key skills has improved significantly pupils' overall standard of performance. There are outstanding features in the extent to which pupils attain accreditation in key skills at both key stages.
76. Standards in key skills are good overall. Pupils mostly listen attentively and with purpose. Reading skills develop well and are good overall. Written work has a good level of technical accuracy in relation to ability and extended writing is fluent. The most able give extended oral answers when given the opportunity

but this is not consistent across all subjects. Where there are shortcomings, pupils' responses are short and do not reflect well enough their knowledge and understanding of the work being covered. Speaking is better at KS4 than it is at KS3.

77. Standards in numeracy are good. Pupils use number confidently in a range of subjects. Standards in ICT have improved significantly and pupils enjoy using the skills they have developed in discrete IT lessons across the curriculum.
78. There is a strong sense of teamwork in the school and pupils collaborate very well in a variety of different contexts. They respond particularly well in those lessons where they are expected to work independently and in small groups to solve problems.
79. There are shortcomings in pupils' bilingual competence and they rarely use the Welsh language outside of Welsh lessons.
80. In comparison with attainment on entry, pupils make excellent progress by the end of KS4. The school successfully caters for pupils of all abilities, supporting individual pupils' needs and providing a variety of courses that enable pupils to achieve very well. Pupils know their target grade or level in all subjects and most understand what they need to do to improve.
81. Pupils develop very good personal and social skills. Most have a very positive attitude to learning and are motivated to work hard to achieve of their best. The very positive relationships between teachers and pupils contribute significantly to the overall atmosphere in the school. The high level of mutual respect impacts very positively on the overall achievement of pupils across the school.
82. Most pupils make very good progress in their spiritual, moral and social development. The values and high expectations of staff and pupils in the school are clearly evident. The school frequently receives pupils excluded from other schools. The extent to which they successfully and sensitively integrate these challenging pupils is outstanding. Overall, pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. This is reflected in the reduction of temporary and permanent exclusions.
83. Overall, attendance has improved since the last inspection. It compares well with average attendance in similar schools but remains below local and national averages. Almost all pupils arrive punctually to lessons. The punctuality of a minority of pupils, often condoned by parents, at the start of the school day is a cause for concern.

### **Sixth form**

84. Generally results of assessments and external examinations are good and occasionally very good in relation to students' abilities. In 2008 A level results were below local and national averages. However students often perform better than their predicted targets. In two of the past three years the school has produced the top performing student in Merthyr.
85. In the sixth form, standards of achievement in the subjects inspected are good overall. There are outstanding features in English and drama. In science and art, there are good features and no important shortcomings. There are shortcomings in history but these are outweighed by good features.

86. Students achieve standards which have outstanding features in over a quarter of the lessons inspected. Overall there are good features and no important shortcomings in the standards achieved by students in 86% of lessons. These figures are based on a small sample of lessons observed in the six subjects inspected and should therefore be considered with caution. The percentage of grades is set out in the table below.

	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
<b>6<sup>th</sup> form</b>	29%	57%	14%	0%	0%

87. These figures compare favourably to the corresponding figures in the most recent Chief Inspector's Annual Report. In this inspection the percentage of lessons where standards were awarded the top grade is 12 percentage points higher than the national figure. The percentage where grade one and two was awarded is three percentage points higher than the national figure.
88. Students achieve outstanding standards in the key skills of communication, application of number and ICT. Many apply these skills well to enhance their learning in subjects across the curriculum. Speaking skills, in particular improve from KS4. Students are confident and articulate. They work especially well in groups to present the outcome of their research in a number of different subjects. They use ICT confidently to present and enhance their work. Almost all students gain level 3 accreditation in key skills. Most students develop their key skills well through the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification.
89. Almost all students have a positive attitude to learning. They understand what is expected of them and many work hard to achieve their targets and move on to higher education or the workplace. They are mature young people with very good personal and social skills. Students use these skills well, for example, when working with younger children in the school and when arranging charity events.
90. Students' attendance in lessons is good. However, a minority of students miss registration at the start of the school day.

## **The quality of education and training**

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

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

91. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
92. Overall there were 97 lessons observed across the school and the following table shows the grades awarded for teaching and assessment.

<b>Grade1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
19%	53%	27%	2%	0%

93. These figures are generally in line with those of other secondary schools inspected in Wales in 2007-2008, as reported in the Annual Report of the Chief Inspector. The proportion of lessons that were graded one or two is three percentage points below the national figure but the proportion of lessons graded one is two percentage points above them. There is a slightly smaller proportion of lessons that were graded four than is the case nationally.

### KS3 and KS4

94. The following table shows the overall grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment in the lessons observed. These are based on observations of 78 lessons.

	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
<b>KS3</b>	14%	47%	35%	4%	0%
<b>KS4</b>	17%	62%	21%	0%	0%
<b>KS3 &amp; KS4</b>	15%	53%	29%	3%	0%

95. The figures show that teaching and assessment are significantly better at KS4 than at KS3. At KS4 the proportion of lessons graded one or two is much higher than that at KS3. Also at KS3 there are some significant shortcomings in just under two-fifths of lessons whereas at KS4 this reduces to just over one-fifth.
96. In the six subjects inspected teaching and assessment are good with outstanding features in drama at both key stages. There are good features and no important shortcomings in English and art and design at both key stages, history at KS3, and science and modern foreign languages at KS4. Good features outweigh shortcomings in science and modern foreign languages at KS3 and in history at KS4.
97. Teaching is underpinned by a high degree of mutual respect between pupils, teachers and support staff. In most lessons this is very successful in promoting very positive attitudes to learning. It also contributes significantly to the high standards of pupils' behaviour both within lessons and around the school.
98. Nearly all teachers have good subject knowledge and in the best lessons they use this very well to assist pupils' learning. On these occasions they use questions skilfully that encourage pupils to provide extended responses that demonstrate understanding and reasoning. In a minority of lessons, however, they do not provide sufficient opportunities to promote pupils' active involvement in learning. In these lessons they use questions that require only short responses from pupils and that are not sufficiently challenging to probe understanding.
99. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly and nearly always ensure that pupils have an awareness of the lesson's purpose by sharing appropriate learning objectives with them. On most occasions the learning objectives pay due regard to pupils' knowledge and understanding of previous work. Most lessons are well structured with careful attention paid to the needs of individual pupils of

all abilities. Promoting pupils' key skills features prominently. Where appropriate, learning support assistants work very successfully alongside teachers to support pupils with SEN.

100. Appropriate periods of time are usually given at the end of lessons to consolidate work covered. On occasions, however, teachers pay too much attention to merely identifying key skills addressed and not enough on the extent to which pupils have met learning objectives.
101. Many teachers use a wide range of resources and activities to capture pupils' interests and attention. They often make purposeful use of ICT to present information to pupils in stimulating and relevant contexts. In nearly all lessons they ensure that they make their explanations comprehensible to pupils. On occasions, however, they focus too much on reading information from ICT slides without involving pupils enough in active dialogue.
102. Teaching is very successful in promoting equality for all. Teachers treat all pupils fairly and successfully meet their individual needs. They monitor and review pupils' progress carefully and have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils including those who are more able and talented and those with SEN.
103. Teaching encourages pupils to make some use of incidental Welsh in lessons and form periods. This, however, is not consistent nor extensive and is an aspect that the school highlights for further development.
104. Whole-school systems of assessment are good. A range of benchmark data is used well to set targets for individual pupils based on expected national curriculum levels throughout KS3 and GCSE grades at KS4. Each subject assesses pupils against these targets each half term and these are collated onto a whole-school database. A particular strong feature is the year profile, which provides a very clear overview of a pupil's achievements. This is particularly effective in recording and monitoring pupils' personal and academic progress and in identifying those who are underachieving relative to expectations for them.
105. Teachers generally assess pupils' work accurately and fairly. There is a common format for assessing pupils' work at both key stages and many teachers use this appropriately. Teachers usually mark pupils' work regularly but there is inconsistency in the quality of marking both within and across subjects. Occasionally comments from teachers focus too much on general aspects such as completion and presentation and not enough on subject strengths and aspects for improvement.
106. Many subjects have gained accreditation for assessing the national curriculum levels of pupils' work at KS3. Meetings have taken place with partner primary schools which focus on improving the accuracy of teacher assessments in core subjects at the end of KS2. These procedures are developing well but have not yet been extended into foundation subjects.

107. Most pupils have a good awareness of how well they are doing. They are familiar with their target grades and many have a good understanding of aspects for improvement. Pupils are involved purposefully in assessing their own performance in a minority of subjects and many pupils speak positively about this. There is also good use of peer assessment in several subjects and this is particularly strong in drama.
108. All statutory requirements for assessment and reporting on national curriculum subjects are met and teaching also fulfils the regulations of examining boards. Many teachers use their knowledge of examination requirements well to assist pupils in their preparation for them.
109. Annual reports to parents and carers provide useful information relating to the personal and academic progress of their child. Often, however, comments from subject teachers are not subject-specific enough. Many relate to general aspects such as presentation and attitude but do not give a clear enough indication of the pupil's achievement in the subject or identify clear targets for improvement.

### Sixth Form

110. The following table shows the overall grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment in all the lessons observed. These grades are based on the observations of 19 lessons

Grade1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
32%	53%%	16%	0%	0%

111. In the six subjects inspected teaching and assessment are good with outstanding features in English and drama. There are good features and no important shortcomings in art and design and science. Good features outweigh shortcomings in history.
112. Teachers know students very well and treat them respectfully. They establish excellent working relationships with them both within and outside of lessons. In most subjects the support and encouragement that teachers provide for students helps them exceed predicted targets.
113. Most teachers use their subject knowledge very well to stimulate and challenge students in lessons. Often they use questions and interactive dialogue skilfully to probe students' knowledge and understanding. In a few lessons, however, they do not provide enough opportunities for students to be actively involved in their learning. Where this occurs the lesson also lacks pace and students are not challenged enough
114. Lessons are nearly always planned thoroughly and structured thoughtfully with good attention paid to the needs of individual students. Teachers make good use of ICT to present their subjects in interesting and relevant contexts. They also make productive use of other resources and activities that are matched appropriately to students' needs.

115. Teachers assess students' progress well in nearly all subjects. Marking is usually good and teachers provide constructive oral and written feedback to students that enable them to have a good awareness of how well they are doing. In the best instances, written feedback is highly diagnostic with strengths and aspects for improvement highlighted clearly. This is strengthened where students are involved in assessing their own progress and that of their peers. This features very well in a minority of subjects such as English and drama but to a lesser extent in others.
116. Reporting arrangements are good overall but there is lack of consistency in the quality of comments from subject teachers. Often they provide a general comment relating to progress and attitude but do not focus enough on subject-specific content. As a consequence of this, strengths and targets for improvement in the subject are unclear.

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

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
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117. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
118. The school's success in meeting the complex and very diverse range of pupils' learning needs is outstanding. Learning experiences are often packaged in innovative ways to bring this about. The assistant headteachers and the learning champions ensure that individual learners' needs play a prominent part in reviewing course provision and in monitoring pupils' progress.
119. At KS3 the curriculum displays suitable balance, breadth, relevance, continuity and progression. The provision offered to KS4 pupils is outstanding. All pupils follow a large common core and then chose from one of three pathways. These include, three additional GCSE subjects, a choice of three level 2 BTEC courses and a wide range of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) level 1 courses. Senior staff and Careers Wales provide pupils and parents with guidance as to which route is most appropriate, although the final choice rests with the pupil.
120. In the sixth form, all students follow a Welsh Baccalaureate course that includes a choice of 20 A level subjects, two level 3 BTEC and three level 2 BTEC courses. The school is a leader in providing wide opportunity at 14-19. Best use is made of the Merthyr Tydfil consortium and students are guided to the relevant opportunity at different institutions.
121. Opportunities for pupils to develop and receive accreditation in key skills are outstanding. At KS3, most pupils gain internal accreditation in application of number, communication and ICT. At the end of Y9, they begin their level 2 key skill programmes. In 2008, 52% of Y11 pupils achieved a level 2 in communication; 65% were successful in application of number and 90% were rewarded with level 2 in ICT. In 2009, 77% have already achieved level 2 application of number.

122. Members of staff improves continuously the learning opportunities available to pupils and students. They rigorously monitor and evaluate programmes and this has led to, for example, pupils piloting level two programmes in the softer key skills and Y9 pupils beginning their GCSE science course.
123. Extra-curricular provision is very good and benefits pupils' development. It includes a very wide range of school-based events, together with links with a Polish orphanage and a South African school. The school takes part in an annual European schools' athletic event.
124. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a high priority of the school. The PSE programme is outstanding. The Phases scheme in KS4, and the PSE elements in the Welsh Bacculaureate in the sixth form, develop a wider awareness of self in relation to others. Learners display outstanding care for others through their charity work and collections. Sixth formers carry out a wide range of community service through their Welsh Bacculaureate programme, including the anti-drugs programme (Hype) with Y8 pupils. The Healthy Schools' Programme is very good.
125. The school meets its statutory obligation in delivering a daily act of collective worship, although there is too much variation in the quality of form assemblies. In the best examples teachers engage their pupils with readings, pictorial material and music, enabling pupils to consider and reflect upon a range of beliefs, experiences and questions.
126. Partnerships between the school and the community, the primary schools, the Merthyr 14-19 consortium and employers are strong. Year 5 and Y6 pupils are involved with learning on the Pen y Dre site and there is an active and developing transition plan in operation, which involves curriculum planning with partner primary schools. There are strong links with Initial Teacher Education and Training (ITET) institutions and the school has successfully operated the Welsh Assembly Government graduate teacher programme for several years.
127. The range of work-related opportunities for pupils is outstanding. They are delivered by a wide variety of staff. They include work experience in Y10 and Y12; careers experiences from Y8; vocational courses 14-19; the development of pupils' entrepreneurial skills; and compact schemes with the Education Business Partnership and the University of Glamorgan.
128. Bilingual skills are not developed enough and there is relatively little incidental Welsh used during the school day. This is an area the school highlights for development. There is no opportunity for the majority of learners to undertake external accreditation.
129. Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is well developed through schemes of work, work in form groups and assemblies, partnerships with the Urdd and Menter Iaith and via sporting activities.
130. An outstanding feature is the way that the school provides access to learning for its young people. Each year a number of students gain places at prestigious

universities and many others have gone to a range of higher education institutions. Specialist provision is made for pupils who are challenging in Y7 and Y8, for pupils in KS3 who are weak in language and number work and for pupils at KS4 who are in danger of disaffection.

131. There is an effective and developing programme involving pupils with aspects of sustainable development. This includes the re-cycling of waste paper via the abitibi scheme and re-cycling glass, tins and plastics through the War on Want scheme. The PSE and Welsh Baccalaureate programmes raise pupils' awareness of this and other world issues. The school is working towards the Green Flag award.
132. Outstanding aspects of the school are the way in which it promotes the well-being of all its learners, the manner in which it has built in rising expectation and the extent to which it attacks underachievement. It provides a curriculum which offers all success and which serves the community's needs.

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

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
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133. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
134. The care guidance and support for all learners are outstanding. Support structures provide a balance of high quality care as well as helping to raise levels of attainment. Relationships between learners, form tutors and learning champions are a significant strength. The MARG, which brings together school and other outside agency staff to manage and meet the needs of vulnerable learners, is an outstanding feature. Planned intervention strategies are monitored carefully to ensure they are appropriately targeted.
135. Parents are encouraged actively to become involved in their child's education. Parents receive abbreviated copies of school policies and are invited to comment on them. Many are supportive of open evenings. The School Council is active and encourages learners to become involved in decisions concerning their own learning. Members of the council have evaluated and monitored several initiatives including effectiveness of key skills, homework policy and an audit of the school environment. The school is part of a WAG pilot study into setting national quality standards for Children and Young People's Participation for Wales.
136. Pupils and students receive high quality advice and impartial guidance as part of the transition processes. Senior managers conduct individual interviews for all learners to ensure that they make the most appropriate choice of pathway. Links with Careers Wales are an important aspect of this guidance. The two-day induction programme into the sixth form is a significant strength and includes well-developed team building exercises at an outdoor activities centre. Learning Coach support is being developed.

137. Well-established KS2/KS3 transition planning ensures pupils transfer smoothly and quickly become familiar with their new environment. Planned regular visits to Pen y Dre by Y6 pupils encompass a wide range of curricular areas. Peer mentors provide effective support during the transition period. The Y7 School transition Council meets regularly and works alongside Y6 school representatives to discuss issues and promote a smoother transfer. Subject teachers regularly visit the primary schools to exchange teaching strategies.
138. The provision of personal support and guidance to learners has outstanding features. The school has developed many highly effective strategies to identify and support individual learners, many with complex issues. Learners are regularly reminded about the range of personal support available in school. The school counsellor reinforces this support. Helping Young People through Peer Education (HYPE) support provided by trained sixth-form students is a significant strength.
139. The coherent PSE programme is well co-ordinated and includes cross-curricular units, discrete PSE lessons and focussed activities. This framework provides the foundation for a broad, balanced and holistic approach to PSE. Learners are consulted and their views taken into account when decisions are taken if their future experiences in PSE are to be further improved and enhanced. This is an outstanding feature.
140. There are outstanding features in the monitoring of attendance, behaviour and progress. A small specialist attendance team monitors and promotes good attendance. There are very effective links with the Education Welfare Officer. The monitoring of individual progress is a significant strength and the use made of available data and the year profile to improve standards of attainment is very well developed. Effective monitoring of behaviour allows appropriate intervention strategies to be implemented at an early stage. The monitoring of punctuality, particularly at the start of the day, is less well developed.
141. The range and quality of careers education and guidance is an outstanding feature. There are close links with Careers Wales and individual specialist advice is provided from Y9 onwards. Relevant careers information and activities are included at all key stages and include enterprise activities, work experience, on-line progress files and mock interviews as well as impartial pathway advice and guidance.
142. The school actively promotes the safety and well-being of the learners. Both emotional and physical aspects of a healthy lifestyle are encouraged through support initiatives and participation in organised recreational activities. The school is working towards phase 5 of the Healthy Schools' initiative. Healthy menus in the school canteen are less well developed. Procedures and strategies for child protection are very rigorous and effective. The sensitive management of the welfare of Looked-After Children (LAC) is particularly strong.
143. The quality of provision for learners with SEN has outstanding features. Effective exchange of information with feeder primary schools and

sophisticated screening tests ensure that learners are quickly identified and appropriate provision put in place. Assessment, recording and monitoring of pupils' progress is an outstanding feature of the department's management.

144. Learners identified with severe learning difficulties, taught in small learning resource-base classes for all lessons in KS3, make good progress. They have full access to the National Curriculum and are very well taught by ALN and subject specialists. Appropriate strategies are used and learners are engaged with sufficiently demanding and stimulating material. There is limited movement from these classes into the mainstream and there are aspects of this arrangement that are not wholly inclusive.
145. The school's commitment to support a number of pupils with complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties is outstanding. The nurture class in KS3 is successful in meeting the identified behavioural needs of a small group of learners. Positive relationships and mutual trust are a significant strength in this initiative and contribute effectively to the learning process.
146. The specialist Ymlaen programme at KS4 is outstanding in supporting learners with challenging negative behaviour in an appropriate school-based environment. They are able to carry on with their education and at the same time receive appropriate emotional and behavioural support. The success of this intervention is exemplified by improved attendance, accredited qualifications, significant improvement in social skills and a reduction in fixed and permanent exclusions.
147. There is very good communication between the learning support department and other subject departments. This is facilitated by regular meetings between the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) subject link teachers. This reinforces the whole-school responsibility towards ALN. The presence of the headteacher at these meetings gives them more status.
148. Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) provide sensitive and appropriate support. The SENCo works closely with the senior LSA. There is an effective induction programme at the beginning of the year. The LSAs collaborate closely with subject teachers. A very effective CatchUp reading programme co-ordinated by an LSA improves the literacy skills of identified learners. They make good measurable progress.
149. All teaching staff are provided with copies of Individual Education Programmes (IEPs) and individual pupil profiles of needs. They are also available and updated on the school intranet system. IEP targets are shared with both learners and parents. The department has been successful in designing a learner-friendly IEP format which makes them understood by all learners. IEPs are effectively and regularly reviewed three times a year.
150. As a result of high quality support and high expectations pupils with ALN make good progress at both key stages. All pupils on the ALN register achieved success at the end of Y11 and received an accredited qualification including

GCSE. The SENCo is experienced and very organised. She is innovative in her vision of provision for learners with ALN in school.

151. The school provides outstanding support for learners with behavioural and emotional difficulties, including pupils who are transferred on a “managed move” basis from other schools. Targeted intervention strategies allow learners with significant behavioural difficulties to make progress without impeding the progress of others. The inclusion room offers learners whose behaviour is having a detrimental effect on their learning the opportunity to spend time in a secure environment as well as developing socially and educationally.
152. The value the school places on all individual learners is outstanding. Equal opportunities and social justice are the foundations upon which the school’s mission, vision and values are built. An ethos of social inclusion permeates throughout the whole school. The school’s sensitive support system for learners of all backgrounds and abilities is an important element in promoting equal opportunities. The Access Plan and Disability Equality Scheme are detailed and highlight curricular access to disabled pupils.
153. The promotion of gender equality is a significant strength. Stereotyping is successfully challenged when advising learners in their pathway choices and in mixed-gender classes such as drama, physical education as well as hospitality and catering. Learners learn to recognise and value the diversity of cultures and traditions through charity, cross-curricular themes and Diversity Day. Links and exchanges with South Africa and Poland reinforce this recognition of diversity. The school’s racial equality policy is in the process of being developed from the LEA draft policy.
154. The anti bullying policy has been developed in association with the school council. The very good behaviour around the school discourages harassment and oppressive behaviour. This is an outstanding feature. The buddy system reinforces the school’s strong values and friendly nature and provides further support against harassment and bullying. Learners are confident that incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively.

## **Leadership and management**

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

#### **Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

155. This grade matches the grade in the school’s self-evaluation report.
156. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and very strong direction to the work of the school. He is very highly respected by learners, staff and governors. He has a clear vision for the work of the school, which focuses on enabling learners to reach their potential and the core principles of equal opportunities and social justice.

157. The school's mission and core values are very well known and understood by teachers. Learners know the aspects their work, and their personal and social development, that are emphasised in the school's aims and values. Parents and others in the community served by the school appreciate the school's aims.
158. The management of the headteacher is underpinned by a style that empowers other leaders and managers, develops their decision-making skills and encourages innovation. This approach has contributed to the creation of an outstanding culture in the school in which leaders and managers reflect carefully on strengths and shortcomings, understand the dangers of complacency, and are keen to implement changes to secure improvement. This culture makes a significant contribution to the high staff morale.
159. In addition to the headteacher, the senior leadership team comprises the deputy headteacher and six assistant headteachers. The team has a wide range of experience and expertise. Its members work very well together. They provide high quality support for the headteacher and most provide strong leadership in their areas of responsibility. Overall, they have very good links with other teachers with leadership and management responsibilities. Teachers and other staff collaborate very well in formal teams and working groups, and informally.
160. The work of the leaders and managers in the school has led to outstanding outcomes in several aspects of the school's provision, which relate closely to the school's core values. Among these are:
- the exceptional progress made in developing choice in the learning pathways available to learners in KS4 and the attention to ensuring learners progress to appropriate education or training post 16;
  - the inclusive nature of the school that places equally high value on the achievements of all learners, including the significant number of learners that come to the school as part of 'managed moves' from other local schools; and
  - the large reduction in the number of learners who leave school without qualifications and the large number of learners that gain accreditation in key skills, especially in ICT and numeracy.
161. Managers at all levels use data very well to set realistic targets for those they manage. There are suitable arrangements, which managers implement successfully to monitor, to evaluate and improve the performance of individual staff, teams and faculties. The arrangements for appraising staff are generally used well to enable managers to promote the professional development of teaching and classroom support staff. This has contributed to improvements in leadership and management, and in the quality of provision for learners. Appraisal arrangements for other non-teaching staff are at an early stage of development.
162. Leaders and managers take good account of the priorities of the Welsh Assembly Government. In addition to the very good progress made in the

development of 14-19 learning pathways and the exceptional inclusive provision noted above, the school has made good progress in developing the Welsh Baccalaureate in the sixth form, promoting education for sustainable development and global citizenship, and encouraging healthy living. The school has made less progress in the development of learners' bilingual competence.

163. The work of the governing body has a number of strong features. They contribute well to setting the strategic direction of the school, making a particularly effective contribution to financial management. Regular reports to the governing body from the headteacher ensure that governors have a good overview of the work of the school, including learners' performance in external examinations. Through their links with faculties, governors are becoming increasingly aware of good features of provision and areas for development in the school.
164. Governors are very well led by their chairperson, support the school effectively and are justifiably proud of its strengths. In all major respects, the governing body fulfils its regulatory and legal requirements. There are, however, a few minor omissions in the school prospectus and the most recent annual report to parents.

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

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
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165. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
166. The findings of the inspection team match closely those of the school. The grades awarded by the inspection team are the same in six of the seven key questions of the Common Inspection Framework. The grade awarded by the inspection team for key question one is a grade lower than that awarded by the school.
167. Arrangements for self-evaluation are systematic and robust. Self-evaluation is well embedded in all aspects of school life. The process has helped leaders and managers to develop a culture of excellence in the school. All staff work extremely well together to reflect critically on all aspects of performance in the school. They make purposeful use of information generated from the self-review cycle to establish clear priorities for improvement.
168. The school self-evaluation report is detailed and evaluative. It identifies clearly strengths and areas for development in all key aspects of its work. The report refers to a range of evidence to support the judgements. This evidence includes a very detailed annual analysis of assessment and examination data and, as part of the performance management cycle, observations of the work of teachers with their pupils in lessons.

169. Teachers encourage learners to evaluate their own performances in many subjects. This enables them to have a clear understanding of their performance in subjects across the curriculum. It has also contributed positively to their performance in assessments and examinations.
170. Most senior and middle managers have very good knowledge of the strengths and shortcomings in the areas for which they are responsible. Most evaluations focus well on improving standards, learning and teaching, and on enabling pupils of all abilities to achieve their potential. Both formal and informal procedures are in place to monitor regularly the quality of work across the school.
171. Heads of Faculty and members of the leadership team, make consistent use of self-evaluation to initiate focused discussions about learners' achievement with teachers at faculty level. This develops an excellent team ethos that ensures all have an important role to play in continually improving quality and standards.
172. Heads of faculty and senior managers monitor systematically the quality of all aspects of provision in faculties. Many do so rigorously through lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' books and other work and faculty documentation. Teachers receive oral and written feedback on their performance and are encouraged to use this to reflect critically on all aspects of their work
173. Reviews are used very well to scrutinise regularly performance in faculties and other aspects of the school's work. Opportunities for teachers to work across faculties to observe each others work is a very good feature. External consultants are involved effectively in providing the school with a broader overview of its work. Internal and external reviews play a vital part in providing objective evidence of the school's performance.
174. Leaders attach considerable importance to seeking the views of learners and other interested parties. The extent to which almost all stakeholders are involved actively in this process is outstanding. Parents are less well involved in this process. Learners are not actively enough engaged in discussing and reviewing the quality of teaching and learning in the school.
175. Through the well-established school and year councils, pupils and students work very effectively together to represent the views of all learners. As part of this process, representatives of the school council meet regularly with the headteacher and chair of governors. As well as contributing to discussions about improving facilities, including those for ICT and sport, the school council has been involved actively in developing a wider choice of subject options and in promoting healthy lifestyles. Overall, pupils speak very enthusiastically about the opportunities given to them to voice their own opinions.
176. Leaders and managers use a good range of systems to actively seek the views of teachers and support staff. This has resulted in changes to the work of the leadership team, the introduction of the publication 'Leadership Matters' and improved communication between staff at all levels. Through the school

improvement teams, staff have contributed to the development and critical evaluation of strategies to enhance learning, for example, to improve assessment procedures, key skills and the management of learners' behaviour.

177. Improvement planning in the school is very good overall. The outcomes of the self-review process are used extremely effectively to establish key targets and priorities for action that are financially viable. These key targets include attendance, attainment and inclusion. There is a very good link between self-evaluation and improvement planning. In the best examples information is used very successfully by the faculty to produce detailed improvement plans that enable all staff to measure improvements objectively.
178. Overall, the school's work on self-evaluation and improvement planning is very effective. It has led to outstanding improvements since the last inspection in several important areas. Standards have improved in all of the six subjects inspected and there are many notable improvements in the attainment of learners in assessments and examinations at each key stage. There have also been significant improvements in the overall standards of pupils' key skills, including literacy and numeracy.
179. The school has made significant progress in addressing the key issues from the last inspection report and almost all issues have been dealt with very successfully. The attendance of learners, although improved, remains an ongoing issue for the school.

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

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
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180. This grade matches the grade in the school's self-evaluation report.
181. Overall, the number of teaching staff is sufficient to enable the extensive curriculum to be taught effectively. They are deployed appropriately and almost all teach their specialist subject. Teachers and learning support staff are suitably qualified, knowledgeable and experienced. There is a good blend of very experienced teachers and those new to the profession.
182. The team of LSAs and personal development and learning coaches work effectively and efficiently in activities that enhance pupils' learning. There is very good liaison between these staff and teachers. The planned and co-ordinated deployment of LSAs is very effective.
183. The deployment of technical support staff is appropriate and they provide good support to their designated departments.
184. Sufficient administrative support staff ensure that the office, reception, reprographics and library operations function effectively and that all day-to-day routines operate smoothly. The caretaking and cleaning staff contribute well to the maintenance of the school, keeping the buildings and grounds

commendably clean and generally litter-free. The educational welfare officer (EWO), located on-site, provides effective support.

185. The school fully meets its statutory obligation for workload remodelling. All teachers are allocated appropriate planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time and resources. This time is used correctly for its intended purpose.
186. Workforce restructuring proposals have been developed sensitively, agreed and implemented fully, almost three years ago. They have been used to devolve the wide range of curricular and pastoral responsibilities effectively. As a result of falling rolls and a reduction in the number of teachers, about two-thirds of the current teaching staff receive teaching and learning responsibility (TLR) allowances.
187. Overall, the range of learning resources available, including those for learners with SEN, supports the delivery of the curriculum well.
188. The school has made extensive investment to enhance its ICT facilities. All teachers make good use of their own personal laptop computer. There are ten dedicated computer suites which provide learners with ready access to ICT equipment in most subject areas. A fully-equipped mobile trolley containing twenty laptop computers supplements this provision. However, there is insufficient specialist ICT equipment and appropriate software in the music department for the number of pupils studying music at GCSE.
189. Interactive whiteboards or digital projectors are available in an increasing number of classrooms. Overall, this has enabled most teachers to develop teaching and learning techniques to enrich the quality of lessons.
190. Accommodation is used well. The number and range of teaching rooms are sufficient for the number of pupils on roll. The teaching rooms of most subjects are clustered together enabling efficient use of departmental resources. Examples of pupils' work and achievements and professionally-produced murals are displayed prominently around the school in classrooms and in communal areas.
191. The facilities for sporting activities are extensive and include large grassed playing fields, an all-weather playing arena, a swimming pool, a sports hall, a gymnasium, a fitness suite and a changing room block.
192. Arrangements for the security of school buildings are good. Internal and external cameras monitor successfully both the inside and outside of the school buildings.
193. Overall, the accommodation is in poor condition. Most corridors and many teaching rooms are in need of decoration. Facilities for sixth form students to meet and study are inadequate. Other shortcomings include:
  - limited toilet facilities for learners and no toilet facilities for those with disabilities;

- the under-utilized main library that is inadequately stocked;
  - worn and pot-holed tarmac surfaces around school site; and
  - the extensive flat roof that is nearly twenty years old and is susceptible to leaking.
194. Although accessibility to the schools' facilities does not comply with the requirements of the Disabled Discrimination Act (DDA), the statutory requirement to prepare an Accessibility Plan has been fully met.
195. The school extremely successfully pursues many ways of raising additional funds and, in recent years, has secured grants and sponsorships equivalent to over 10 per cent of its annual delegated budget. The acquisition and use of these substantial additional funds to enhance learning opportunities for all learners are outstanding.
196. All teachers have ready access to a planned and coordinated appraisal and development programme. Very good support is provided for trainee teachers and newly qualified teachers (NQT's). There is good transition from NQT induction to early professional development (EPD) and continued professional development (CPD).
197. Staff training is linked closely to the school's priorities for improvement, faculty development plans and to individuals' professional development aspirations.
198. The personal development plans and annual appraisals for administrative and site-management support staff are at an early stage of development and implementation.
199. Financial planning and spending decisions are linked very closely to the school's priorities for improvement and curriculum development. Faculty development plans are closely linked to the whole-school development plans. Allocation of department capitation is formula-based and departments occasionally bid for additional funds to supplement their capitation.
200. Meticulous financial management procedures help maximize the cost-effectiveness of school expenditure and investments. Senior managers, the finance working party and the governors' Finance Committee very frequently monitor and review spending decisions in great detail. Overall, the school's current financial management arrangements are outstanding.
201. The prudent financial management procedures have enabled the school, over the last three years, to eliminate a substantial budget deficit and create a surplus equivalent to around 3 per cent of the school's annual budget. This surplus enables the school to retain sufficient contingency reserves for unforeseen circumstances and future planned projects.
202. The most recent audit report indicated that good progress had been made to overcome the difficulties discovered at audit in 2006. The auditor, during the recent audit, classified the school as 'good overall'.

203. Given the opportunities and experiences provided by the school, and the achievement of pupils and students, the school provides outstanding value for money.
204. Health and safety issues identified by the inspection team were communicated to the school.

## Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

### English

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

#### KS3

##### Outstanding features

205. Nearly all pupils engage positively and to good effect in a wide range of writing activities. They do so with enthusiasm.
206. Most pupils collaborate very well in pairs and small groups to discuss literary and non-literary texts including film trailers. The most able respond from various perspectives and promote ideas. They justify those ideas by close reference to the text and negotiate the views of the small group or pair.
207. A significant number of pupils produces comparative writing focused upon the narrative style of authors including Angelou and Poe.

##### Good features

208. Many pupils listen attentively and with respect to the teacher and to one another. They are able to recall previous learning and pose questions to clarify understanding as required. A large majority responds to questions and demonstrates a good understanding of their work.
209. All pupils read a range of challenging fiction, media texts, poetry and drama including texts which reflect the culture of Wales. A majority reads aloud with accuracy; a minority does so with fluency; a few do so with expression. A majority demonstrates an ability to read inferentially and has the technical vocabulary to comment intelligently on the effect of stylistic choices.
210. In relation to ability a majority of pupils makes good progress in writing; they write in a range of styles and for a variety of purposes.
211. Pupils across the ability range are able to identify techniques used in persuasive writing and begin to incorporate them into their own work.

### **Shortcomings**

212. A small number of pupils fails to draft written work with sufficient rigour or structure their work as effectively as they might.

### **KS4**

213. Examination results in English at GCSE in the last two years have been significantly below the local and national averages for passes at grades A\*-C and A\*-G. Overall these results are in line with what might be expected for pupils of similar ability. Standards observed during the inspection were higher.

### **Good features**

214. Most pupils listen with respect, sustain concentration and respond promptly to the teachers' questions. Around half explain their work and ideas clearly. Pupils of lower ability put forward opinions and counter argue.
215. All pupils read a range of appropriately challenging fiction, poetry and drama. They produce sustained responses that are in line with their ability to challenging tasks focusing upon issues such as the themes of dreams and loneliness in 'Of Mice and Men' and comparing the presentation of villains in two works by Dickens.
216. Standards of writing are mostly good in relation to ability. In the best cases pupils' writing is often the product of diligent drafting. It is structured, organised and sustained. Technical skills reflect ability.

### **Shortcomings**

217. A small minority of pupils produces written work that is sometimes unfinished and lacking technical accuracy, predominantly with regard to punctuation and weaknesses in spelling. Drafting is not always rigorous.

### **Sixth form**

218. Examination results in English at A level are close to the national figure and represent good progress. The standards observed during the inspection were higher.

### **Outstanding features**

219. Students collaborate extremely well in small groups to analyse texts. They promote ideas, hypothesise, justify opinions, challenge, negotiate and solve problem with a growing confidence.
220. Students discuss effectively a range of challenging concepts including the influence of language in the dystopian novels '1984' and 'A Handmaid's Tale'

and the links between the works of poets including Heaney and Sheers. They also demonstrate a well-developed awareness of the social and literary contexts of novels such as 'Frankenstein' in their discussion of Shelley's representation of women. This represents outstanding progress in relation to ability.

### **Good features**

221. By the end of the course most students produce well-crafted critical writing which includes appropriate quotations and cross-references.

### **Shortcomings**

222. In a small minority of cases students' written work lacks clarity of expression.

<b>Science</b>
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<b>KS 3</b>	<b>Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings</b>
<b>KS4</b>	<b>Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
<b>Sixth Form</b>	<b>Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings</b>

### **KS3**

#### **Good features**

223. Many pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge of scientific facts and an understanding of scientific concepts and processes encountered within the KS3 Programme of Study. They often apply their acquired skills and knowledge within novel situations.

224. A large majority of pupils uses correct scientific terms when discussing their work.

225. Many pupils carry out practical work in a safe and competent manner. They make and record appropriate observations and accurate measurements.

226. A large majority draws accurate diagrams, completes data tables and constructs graphs correctly. They describe the trends and patterns shown by the graphs accurately.

227. A large majority of pupils are able to reprocess scientific information and present this in different formats such as mindmaps.

228. Many draw appropriate conclusions from the results of their activities and investigations. They offer explanations for variations in the outcomes.

229. When required, nearly all pupils successfully work together in a co-operative and helpful manner in order to investigate problems and research scientific information.

230. Pupils with SEN progress well in science.

### **Shortcomings**

231. A small minority of pupils is insecure in their knowledge and understanding of science. They are unable to draw appropriate conclusions from the results of their activities and investigations.

232. A small minority of pupils is unsure in identifying and justifying their choice of variables in a fair test and do not complete and correct their work.

### **KS4**

233. GCSE examination results for the last two years have been below national and local averages for A\*-C grades. Examination results for A\*-G grades improved for 2008 but remain below national and local averages. Welsh Examination Database and other statistical information indicate that results are broadly in line with those of similar pupils across Wales.

### **Good features**

234. Many pupils continue to build successfully their knowledge and understanding of science and its applications within the GCSE programme. They are adept at recalling previous work and information.

235. A large majority demonstrates an understanding of increasingly complex concepts and processes such as heat transfer, atomic structure and feeding relationships.

236. Most pupils, and of all abilities, continue to develop their practical skills when planning and conducting investigations, and presenting their results.

### **Shortcomings**

237. A small minority of pupils has difficulty in giving extended verbal responses to scientific questions. They are unable to give scientific explanations for their findings and observations.

238. Pupils rarely use electronic spreadsheets to present their results and a small minority fails to complete and correct their work.

### **Sixth form**

239. At A level, students' achievements are broadly in line with those of similar pupils across Wales.

### **Good features**

240. The vast majority of students make good progress in biology and chemistry.

241. The vast majority of students demonstrate good recall and understanding of key scientific principles and concepts in the work undertaken.
242. The vast majority of students apply their knowledge and skills well when carrying out observations, in solving problems and when investigating novel situations.
243. Most students have good practical and investigative skills. They carry out practical work carefully and safely and using a wide range of apparatus.

### **Shortcomings**

244. A small minority of students is less secure in their recall of previous work. They do not maintain their work in an organised and accessible format and work is sometimes inaccurate or incomplete.

<b>Modern foreign languages</b>
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**KS3                    Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**  
**KS4                    Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

### **KS3**

#### **Good features**

245. Most pupils listen well. They show that they understand familiar language and can copy and use the pattern questions and answers they hear.
246. A few pupils ask and answer questions confidently, pronouncing words well.
247. Most pupils read and understand simple printed or word-processed texts. Many of them use glossaries and dictionaries well to help them understand unfamiliar words.
248. Most pupils copy words and phrases well in writing. Many write short sentences, adapting patterns by altering details in descriptions to suit their needs. A minority of abler pupils write brief paragraphs accurately.
249. Pupils with SEN listen attentively and repeat the language structures they hear well; they also read and copy out simple sentences with good understanding.

### **Shortcomings**

250. Most pupils do not speak at length or use French unprompted. Many use a narrow range of language and are quick to speak English.
251. Many pupils mispronounce French words, revealing the sounds of their home language strongly. As a result, a few of them are hard to understand.

252. Many pupils make mistakes in spellings, punctuation and basic grammar in speech and writing. A large majority of pupils does not write enough at length; a minority does not adapt pattern sentences well and often leaves written work incomplete.

#### **KS4**

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

254. The proportion of the year group studying GCSE French is very small. Examination results at grades A\*-G are broadly in line with local and national averages. Standards observed during the inspection were higher.

#### **Good features**

255. Most pupils follow without much difficulty a good range of French spoken at normal conversational speed.

256. Nearly all pupils read printed and word-processed text, such as instructions or tourist information, with good understanding.

257. Most pupils keep up about half a dozen exchanges in conversation, making themselves clearly understood; a minority do so with confidence.

258. Most pupils write competently at length. They use a suitable style and range of language to write letters, produce descriptions and to offer opinions.

259. In a few cases, pupils' responses include much detail, expressed with a good level of accuracy. Many pupils use different tenses well.

#### **Shortcomings**

260. A small minority of pupils needs things to be repeated several times before they follow what is said. They use a repetitive range of language when both speaking and writing. They make mistakes in spellings and grammar which detract from what is often good content.

<b>History</b>
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**KS3            Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

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

**Sixth Form    Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

#### **KS3**

#### **Good features**

261. From Y7 pupils develop a good sense of chronology. They use and construct timelines and place events in the appropriate historical period. Relative to their ability, pupils are secure in their knowledge, understanding and recall of the topics studied.
262. Pupils in the nurture group make good progress. They understand how castles changed over time and explain why they became more difficult to attack. In their work on the Black Death, they show empathy for its impact on the lives of people of the past.
263. In Y7, pupils studying William's victory at the Battle of Hastings understand that events can have several causes. Pupils of average and high ability explain why some causes are more important than others.
264. Throughout the key stage, most pupils acquire and successfully develop a range of historical skills. Many use subject-specific vocabulary accurately, with understanding and in the correct contexts.
265. Nearly all pupils develop investigative approaches to examining people and events in history. Pupils of average and above average ability are able to plan an historical investigation, select relevant material and organise their arguments logically.
266. All pupils present their learning in a variety of styles and formats such as essays, letters, newspaper reports and posters.
267. Most pupils distinguish between primary and secondary sources. They extract information effectively from pictorial and documentary sources. The more able increasingly demonstrate the ability to interrogate a range of sources and assess these for both reliability and usefulness.
268. In Y9 pupils understand that different interpretations have been put forward for the sinking of the Titanic. More able pupils consider and assess the strengths and weaknesses of the differing interpretations before arriving at a judgement.

### **Shortcomings**

269. The work of a few pupils of average and below average ability contains inaccurate spellings of historical terms.
270. The oral contributions made by a few pupils in KS3 are too brief and infrequent to enable them to display or develop their knowledge and understanding.
271. A very few pupils fail to appreciate that people in the past saw issues and events in different ways to those of subsequent generations.

### **KS4**

272. Examination results in this subject at GCSE in the last two years have been below local and national averages for passes at grades A\*- C. These results are lower than those expected for pupils of similar ability.

### **Good features**

273. Pupils build upon the range of skills acquired in KS3 and make progress. They investigate historical questions effectively, examine issues thoroughly and produce balanced arguments.

274. Note-taking skills are well developed and pupils make good progress in summarising their learning. They use ICT tools effectively to enhance their written work and to further develop their research skills.

275. Through their study of the development of medicine, they demonstrate a sound understanding of causation and change. In their work on Jenner and Lister they recognise the role of individuals in promoting change and identify the factors, which have promoted or prevented change at other points in the past.

276. In their coursework on the assassination of President Kennedy, pupils consider the differing interpretations which have been put forward. They analyse contemporary and secondary sources of evidence in detail and assess the strengths and weakness of the competing explanations.

### **Shortcomings**

277. A few pupils do not write in sufficient depth or detail to fully explain the points they seek to make in their written work. As a result they are unable to meet fully the requirements of examination style questions.

278. A small minority of pupils experience difficulty in analysing sources of evidence. When assessing the usefulness of evidence to a historian, they focus on the content of the source and do not pay sufficient attention to its origin.

### **Sixth form**

279. Examination results in this subject at A level have fluctuated in the last three years. In 2006, 67% of candidates achieved passes at grades A/B, which was in line with local and national averages. There were no candidates in 2007. In 2008 results were below local and national averages for passes at A/B and were lower than those expected of students of similar ability.

### **Good features**

280. In their written work, students are able to select and organise material to develop logical arguments based on evidence. When considering historical problems, they use their own knowledge and evidence from sources to construct balanced arguments.

281. They make progress in developing their skills of investigation and analysis. They are able to synthesise the views of professional historians and show that they understand and can explain the differences in interpretations found in their arguments.
282. Students are developing the ability to use assessment criteria to highlight their strengths and weaknesses and so develop the ability to improve their own learning.

### **Shortcomings**

283. The work of a few students contains factual inaccuracies and explanations are not sustained and developed in sufficient depth.
284. In assessing the utility of a source of evidence, most students occasionally omit to analyse its attribution thoroughly and take insufficient account of the context in which it was produced.
285. Students' skills in cross referencing, identifying omissions and making inferences are undeveloped.

<b>Art and Design</b>
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**KS3                    Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings.**  
**KS4                    Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings.**  
**Sixth Form        Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings.**

### **KS3**

#### **Good features**

286. Pupils of all levels of ability make good progress and demonstrate competent, sequential development in their work. They gain knowledge and understanding of the visual elements of art and design, the structured development of skills and the manipulation of materials and techniques. They annotate accurately responses to their own and others' artwork. This is clearly exemplified in their sketchbooks, departmental benchmarking portfolios and displays throughout the school.
287. In Y7 all pupils effectively explore and investigate the 'undersea world'. Most draw shells accurately from direct observation. Pupils carry out well-organised research in to sea creatures which form the basis of an impressive large scale, multi-media, creative whole-class mural. In addition, pupils design and make well-constructed ceramic fish and work collaboratively within a group to create sturdy, well made, imaginative, colourful 3 dimensional 'funky fish' from recycled materials.
288. Pupils in Y7 visit Plantasia Tropical Planthouse in the initial stages of a project based on the work of Henri Rousseau and the theme of the jungle. The majority of learners have good technical skills in drawing plants from direct observation

and make good use of their sketchbooks to record ideas and show the logical development of their work. Learners also show the ability to successfully develop their drawings by adding geometric coloured shapes to the surface and effectively utilising mark-making methods to add a layering technique to their work.

289. Y8 pupils have a good understanding of a range of Welsh artists. They create competent pencil compositions in the style of Welsh artist, David Carpanini. They show reliable evidence of studying the work of Ogwyn Davies and John Piper which informs their preparatory work for simple polystyrene prints of chapels. They study successfully the art of other cultures and show a good understanding of how to select appropriate Mehendi imagery and symbols to create competent designs to decorate a hand in the tradition of Indian body adornment.
290. Y8 pupils show good levels of understanding of Pop art. They create accurate observational drawings of everyday objects in pencil and understand how these can be scaled up to create sculptures in the style of Claes Oldenburg.
291. Y9 pupils work effectively to explore natural forms in the context of Cezanne's work. They achieve good standards as a result of drawing a still life of fruit from direct observation whilst carefully utilising a wide range of techniques and materials during the process of creating an A3 composition and a healthy eating poster.

### **Shortcomings**

292. Pupils do not use computers to create art or to manipulate imagery.
293. Pupils do not explore textiles as a media to experiment or create final outcomes.

### **KS4**

294. Examination results in art at GCSE level have been below local and national averages for passes at A\* - C grades. Pupils achieved 100% passes at Diploma level in the BTEC course.

### **Good features**

295. The vast majority of pupils in KS 4, including pupils with SEN, show a good understanding of the procedures which are necessary to generate worthwhile research. They effectively engage with a diverse range of materials and techniques to competently record from direct observation through photography and employ drawing skills which demonstrate well-developed mark-making techniques.

296. The vast majority of pupils develop ideas confidently and are able to discriminate between concepts and imagery which are worthy of further attention and development. They also understand the significance of making connections with the work of other artists to inform their creative art-making and are systematically acquiring the skills to enable them to complete their work to a good standard.
297. Pupils in Y10 demonstrate good investigational skills through their research to generate ideas for a logo for a garden centre. Their research includes carefully selected, appropriate fonts, well-composed photographs, observational drawings and prints of plants with many pupils achieving good standards. Pupils have a thorough understanding of the brief and are able to demonstrate the sequential development and modification of their ideas through their work books.
298. Pupils in Y11 make purposeful use of an appropriate balance of primary and secondary sources to direct and inspire their creative making. A noteworthy component of Y11 work is their investigation into the local environment and the connections made with Welsh artists, such as Karan Phillips, John Piper, Gwilym Pritchard and David Carpanini which result in creative painted compositions and lino prints which incorporate text and imagery in the style of Ogwyn Davies and reach good skill levels.
299. The large majority of pupils uses their sketchbooks productively to record their ideas and investigations and to collect visual and written responses which inform the development of their ideas. Sketchbook pages are generally carefully annotated and document well-considered personal responses and evaluations. This is especially transparent in the context of a 3 dimensional mask making project which was inspired by a visit to the Pitt Rivers Museum and Ashmolean Gallery in Oxford.
300. In Y11 pupils in the 'Ymlaen' group have some knowledge and understanding of the planning process involved in developing a visual path from an initial idea to a final creative outcome. Pupils show secure skill levels with a few achieving very good standards in their acrylic painting on canvas. All pupils have confidently developed a highly personal response through their work based on their heroes, such as rap stars, boxers and BMX champions and the skilful work of their teacher/artist, Patrick Killian.

### **Shortcomings**

301. The majority of pupils does not spend enough time on one project during the first unit of work to explore a subject in depth.
302. There is little evidence of the use of ICT to create art and to manipulate imagery.
303. The work of a few pupils does not demonstrate clear, logical development and they do not develop their work into a final creative outcome.

## **Sixth form**

304. Examination results in Art at A level are close to the local and national figure and represent good progress.

## **Good features**

305. A strong feature which pervades throughout the work of students is the way in which they use the inspiration of Welsh artists in their work. Students utilise visits to galleries, such as Cyfartha Museum and Art Gallery, the National Museum and Art Galleries of Wales in Cardiff, the Pitt Rivers Museum and Ashmolean Gallery in Oxford by making good use of these first-hand resources in their art work. In addition, the quality of students' work benefits from working with visiting artists.

306. In Y12, all students from across the ability range demonstrate that they are able to analyse and reflect on the work of artists presented to them during live presentations, generate appropriate questions to further inform their understanding and help them to work collaboratively to make good group presentations to illustrate their understanding and opinions of the range of work discussed.

307. Students are generally self-reliant and independent in their approach to their studies. Consequently, they undertake visual and textual research and enquire into a wide spectrum of subject matter, such as the local environment, natural forms, portraiture and seascapes. Many students demonstrate their ability to reach good levels of achievement, for example, when creating a body of work featuring original, meticulously designed self-portraits.

308. Students' sketchbooks are thoughtfully structured and reflect well their developing thinking and responses. They work successfully from direct observation, experiment with materials and methodologies and make links with the work of artists, craftspeople and designers. This stimulates their personal, creative, competent end-of-unit solutions. All students are able to discuss their work confidently as it progresses and their comments are well supported by thoughtful annotations in their sketchbooks.

## **Shortcomings**

309. The work of a few students lacks clear development and the connection between imagery is not apparent or explained.

<b>Drama</b>
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**KS3**

**Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

**KS4**

**Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

**Sixth Form**

**Grade 1: Good with outstanding features.**

## **KS3**

### **Outstanding features**

310. Many pupils discuss and analyse their own performance and that of others to outstanding effect. They are very aware of the characteristics of effective performance and are able to identify techniques used by other groups. They often use subject-specific vocabulary appropriately to offer constructive comments for improving performances. This significantly improves the quality of the pupils' work.
311. A significant majority of pupils works with clear purpose, takes responsibility for their own learning and demonstrates a distinct pleasure in doing so.

### **Good Features**

312. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEN, achieve well.
313. Nearly all pupils listen attentively and respectfully. They respond to a variety of stimuli with purpose and enthusiasm.
314. Standards of presentation are good. Most pupils are able to devise and develop a range of work including tableaux to depict stereotypes and positive and negative images of peer pressure, to a good standard.
315. Most pupils portray character with the use of movement and action. The more able pupils use voice, facial expression, body language and gesture to convey emotions.

### **Shortcomings**

316. A very small number of pupils does not possess the movement skills to demonstrate their interpretations.

## **KS4**

317. Examination results in this subject at GCSE in the last two years have been well above national and local averages for passes at grades A\*-C and at A\*-G.

### **Outstanding features**

318. There is outstanding collaboration and interaction in small group work as pupils engage effectively in a wide range of activities. These include responses to a diverse and challenging range of texts including Ariel Dorfman's 'Widows', Vickery's 'A Night Out' and 'Split Ends' together with Godber's 'Lucky Sods' and 'Shakers'.
319. Pupils reflect on dramatic outcomes and provide sensitive analysis and evaluation of their own work and that of others. This has a clear, positive impact upon the raising of standards.

320. All pupils listen attentively and respectfully. They respond to instructions with real purpose and demonstrate outstanding enthusiasm and commitment to their work.

### **Good features**

321. Nearly all pupils demonstrate good skills in speaking and listening. They are able to employ a range of subject-specific vocabulary with accuracy and to good effect in different situations including discussions on character motivation and on determining the most effective staging methods.
322. Standards of presentations are good. Pupils communicate ideas effectively. They adopt and sustain role with highly effective use of movement, voice, expression and gesture.
323. Written work reflects good analytical skills based upon scrutiny of a range of performances. Nearly all pupils, benefit from, and achieve well in, all elements of the course.

### **Shortcomings**

324. On a very small number of occasions, pupils remain passive and are overly reliant upon others.

### **Sixth form**

325. Examination results at AS and A2 level are significantly above national figures overall and also at grades A and B. These results represent outstanding achievement.

### **Outstanding features**

326. There is outstanding collaboration and interaction involving all students in paired and group work. They promote ideas for performance beyond formally devised pieces, justify opinions and negotiate decisions.
327. Students respond extremely well in interpreting challenging texts such as Potter's 'Blue Remembered Hills', Dorfman's 'Death and the Maiden' and Strindberg's 'Miss Julie'. The textual analysis of the more able students is often outstanding.
328. Nearly all students provide extremely perceptive peer-assessment demonstrating clear understanding of criteria and using sophisticated, subject-specific vocabulary. This has a clear and positive impact upon the raising of standards.

### **Good features**

329. Students demonstrate an understanding of the role of the director applying this knowledge to convey meaning in various situations including the preparation of physical theatre, influenced strongly by the conventions of the Greek Theatre.
330. The written work of the majority of students is mostly of a very good standard. Critical evaluations are well structured and incorporate appropriately referenced critical comments.

### **Shortcomings**

331. There are no significant shortcomings.

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

332. Pen Y Dre High School found the inspection process to be invigorating. It has strengthened our capacity for improvement, celebrated our success and enabled us to focus more sharply on the areas in which more work is needed. As a school we feel better prepared to meet the challenges which face us in what will be a rapidly changing future educational environment.

## Appendix 1

### Basic information about the school

Name of school	Pen-Y-Dre High School
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Gurnos Estate Merthyr Tydfil
Postcode	CF47 9BY
Telephone number	01685 721726

Headteacher	Mr John Williams
Date of appointment	September 1993
Chair of governors / Appropriate authority	Mrs Elizabeth Martin-Jones
Reporting inspector	Julia Helen Cattle Longville
Dates of inspection	9-13 March 2009

## Appendix 2

### School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	127	136	138	182	184	70	41	878

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	50	4	52.4

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	17:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	4.5:1
Average teaching group size	20.7
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	81%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	85	86	84	82	94	72	78	85
Term 2	89	90	88	85	83	82	71	86
Term 3	91	90	89	87	85	84	74	88

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	33%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	48 (temporary) 2 (permanent)

## Appendix 3

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

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2008															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 87															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	1	0	0	0	0	6	11	24	40	16	3	0	0
		National	1	0	0	0	0	1	7	21	36	24	9	0	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	2	0	0	0	0	5	11	28	27	22	5	0	0
		National	1	0	0	0	0	1	8	20	28	27	14	1	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	3	0	0	0	0	1	16	29	28	17	4	1	1
		National	1	0	0	0	0	1	6	21	35	26	10	0	0

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

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language) by teacher assessment			
In the school	38	In the Wales	60

**Pupils aged 15**

**Number of pupils aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 171**

**Percentage of pupils aged 15 who :**

	entered at least one qualification	achieved the Level 1 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE pass in English or Welsh first language and mathematics	Core Subject Indicator (2)	Average wider points score per pupil
School 2007/08	100	74	49	24	22	313
LEA Area 2007/08	100	82	46	34	33	320
Wales 2007/08	98	87	58	46	44	356
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	7	268
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	23	255

**Number of boys aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 89**

**Percentage of boys aged 15 who :**

	entered at least one qualification	achieved the Level 1 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE pass in English or Welsh first language and mathematics	Core Subject Indicator (2)	Average wider points score per pupil
School 2007/08	99	67	40	20	19	283
LEA Area 2007/08	98	78	40	29	29	297
Wales 2007/08	98	84	53	42	41	334
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	6	247
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	20	242

**Number of girls aged 15 who were on roll in January 2008: 82**

**Percentage of girls aged 15 who :**

	entered at least one qualification	achieved the Level 1 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold	achieved the Level 2 threshold including a GCSE pass in English or Welsh first language and mathematics	Core Subject Indicator (2)	Average wider points score per pupil
School 2007/08	100	82	57	28	24	344
LEA Area 2007/08	100	87	52	39	37	345
Wales 2007/08	99	90	63	50	48	379
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	7	289
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	27	268

(1) For details on qualifications, point scores and contribution to thresholds, please see guidance at [SSSP guidance](#).

(2) For information about which syllabuses are included in each subject area see Notes for Guidance. For the provisional SSSP this will be the traditional GCSE definition. In the final SSSP, this definition will include a wider range of qualifications.

.. Data not available

**PEN-Y-DRE HIGH SCHOOL**

**SSSP**

**Summary of Secondary School Performance (1)**

LEA/School No. 675/4012

**Pupils aged 15**

	Percentage of pupils aged 15 who :		Percentage of boys aged 15 who :		Percentage of girls aged 15 who :	
	achieved one or more ELQ (2) only	Left full time education without a qualification (3)	achieved one or more ELQ (2) only	Left full time education without a qualification (3)	achieved one or more ELQ (2) only	Left full time education without a qualification (3)
School 2007/08	2.9	0	3.4	0	2.4	0
LEA Area 2007/08	4.5	1.1	6.7	1.6	2.2	1.6
Wales 2007/08	2.6	1.5	3.4	1.9	1.7	1.2
School 06/07/08	5.3	..	6.4	..	4.2	..
School 05/06/07	4.5	..	5.2	..	3.8	..

**Pupils aged 17**

	Number of pupils aged 17 who were on roll in January 2008: 62		Number of boys aged 17 who were on roll in January 2008: 28		Number of girls aged 17 who were on roll in January 2008: 34	
	Percentage of 17 year old pupils entering a volume equivalent to 2 A Levels who achieved the Level 3 threshold	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17	Percentage of 17 year old pupils entering a volume equivalent to 2 A Levels who achieved the Level 3 threshold	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17	Percentage of 17 year old pupils entering a volume equivalent to 2 A Levels who achieved the Level 3 threshold	Average wider points score for pupils aged 17
School 2007/08	88	472	94	418	84	516
LEA Area 2007/08	91	532	92	522	90	540
Wales 2007/08	94	631	93	596	95	659
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	..	..
School 05/06/07	..	..	..	..	..	..

(3) For details on qualifications, point scores and contribution to thresholds, please see guidance at [SSSP guidance](#).

(4) Entry Level Qualification

(5) As defined under the National Performance Indicator EDU/002.

.. Data not available

**PEN-Y-DRE HIGH SCHOOL**  
**School Type: Secondary**  
**Linguistic Delivery: Bilingual or English**

**LEA/School No. 675/4012**

**Number of SEN Unit/Special Classes: 0**

**Number of Pupils on Roll in NCY 11: 172**

**Percentage of compulsory school age pupils eligible for FSM 2007/08: 34.3**

**Percentage of compulsory school age pupils eligible for FSM 06/07/08: 34.0**

**Percentage of compulsory school age pupils on SEN register: 36**

**Percentage of 15 year old pupils on SEN register: 27.5**

**Level of Welsh Bacallaureate Offered:**

	Post-16 Pupils			Pre-16 Pupils	
	Advanced	Intermediate	Pilot Foundation	Pilot Intermediate	Pilot Foundation
<b>Welsh Bacallaureate Offered: Yes</b>	Yes	No	No	No	No

. Data not applicable

.. Data not available

## Appendix 4

### Evidence base for the inspection

Inspectors, including the school's nominee spent a total of 48 days in the school and met as a team before the inspection.

These inspectors visited:

- 97 lessons taught by teachers in all subjects;
- acts of collective worship;
- registration and form-tutor periods; and
- extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team met with:

- staff, governors and parents before the inspection began;
- senior managers, middle level leaders, teachers, support and administrative staff;
- a representative from the local authority;
- representatives of the community and other partners; and
- groups of pupils and students.

The team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- replies to the parents' questionnaire;
- comprehensive documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection; and
- a range of pupils' work in all subjects across the curriculum from Y7 to Y13.

After the inspection, the registered inspector held meetings with the senior management team and governors.

## Appendix 5

### Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Julia Longville	Registered Inspector Context, Summary, Recommendations Key question one, Key question 6, Appendix
David Williams	Key question two
Angus Dunphy	Key question three
Gwyn Griffiths	Key question four (SEN)
Alan Lowndes	Key question five
Kerry Jones	Key question seven Lay Inspector
Ken O'Shea	Nominee
Tony Sparks	English and Drama
Jeff Loxton	Science
Martyn Williams	Modern Foreign Languages
Gareth Barber	History
Shan Samuel Thomas	Art

### Acknowledgement

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

### Contractor:

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