

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

**A report on the quality of education in**

**Radyr Comprehensive School  
Heol Isaf, Radyr, Cardiff, CF15 8XG**

**School number: 6814070**

**Date of inspection: 26/04/10**

**by**

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**Under Estyn contract number: 1203909**

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

The inspection of Radyr Comprehensive School took place between 26/04/10 and 30/04/10. An independent team of inspectors, led by Kevin Adams 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. Radyr Comprehensive School is an 11-18 co-educational community school in the local authority of Cardiff. The total number of pupils on roll is 1258, compared with 1384 at the time of the last inspection in April 2004. There are 313 students in the sixth form, compared with 247 in 2004. Boys outnumber girls significantly in key stage 3.
2. The school serves a relatively prosperous area consisting of predominantly suburban and semi-rural communities in the north-western part of the city. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is 6%, which is well below the average of 16.3% for all secondary schools in Wales.
3. English is the first language of 96% of the pupils. A small minority of pupils come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and three of these pupils receive support for English as an additional language.
4. Most pupils enter the school from its six feeder primary schools, a small number coming from various other schools. The school's intake represents the full ability range, but contains a greater proportion of pupils of above average than below average ability. Statements of special educational need (SEN) have been made for 16 pupils, and a further 117 pupils are on the school's SEN register.
5. The headteacher, one deputy and one assistant headteacher were in post at the time of the last inspection. The other deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher took up their posts in 2006 and 2008 respectively. Since September 2009, a head of department has been seconded as an additional member of the leadership team.

### **The school's priorities and targets**

6. The school aims 'to provide a caring and stimulating environment in which all who learn and work are helped to achieve their full potential - and enjoy the process'. This aim is summarised in the motto 'Opportunity, success and enjoyment for all'.
7. The school's vision is that, by 2013, it will maintain a justified local and national reputation as a model of excellence and good practice, provide an excellent and continually improving teaching and learning environment, and provide outstanding opportunities for staff development.

8. The school's targets for improvement in 2009-10 are to increase the effectiveness of curriculum delivery, to ensure that it is a centre of excellence in provision at 16+, to develop a more inclusive curriculum structure and to develop relationships and practice throughout the school.

## Summary

9. Radyr Comprehensive School is a good school in which pupils and teachers work together happily and productively. The school has responded well to nearly all the key issues of the 2004 inspection report and standards have improved in all key stages since the time of that inspection. There are outstanding features in the quality of care, support and guidance for pupils and in the school's efficiency in using resources.
10. The inspection team agreed with the school's judgements on two of the seven key questions, but awarded one grade lower for four questions, and two grades lower for the remaining question.

### Table of grades awarded

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

### Standards

11. Inspectors awarded the following grades for standards in the six subjects inspected:

Subject	Key stage 3	Key stage 4	Sixth form
English	2	2	1
Science	1	1	2
History	1	1	2
Art	1	1	1
Music	2	1	1
Religious education	2	2	No grade

12. The percentages of grades awarded for standards in the 77 lessons observed in these subjects are:

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
38%	58%	4%	0%	0%

13. This represents a very high proportion of lessons with no important shortcomings. Grades are not evenly distributed across subjects and key stages. The proportion of lessons containing some outstanding features is exceptionally high in two of the six subjects.

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

14. Pupils' attainments in statutory assessments at key stage 3 and in public examinations at key stage 4 in the last three years have been mostly well above national averages.
15. In key stage 3, pupils' performance in the core subjects has been consistently strong in relation to their ability and prior attainment. Their performance in the non-core subjects has been more variable. Pupils' examination results in key stage 4 have been mostly good in comparison with those of pupils in similar schools (those with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals); their performance has been less strong against a few of the main indicators.
16. Standards in science, history and religious education have improved significantly since the time of the last inspection. Good and very good standards have been maintained in the other three subjects inspected.
17. In both key stages, pupils achieve at least good standards in all key skills. Their skills in working with others are good with outstanding features. Their bilingual skills are less well developed.
18. Pupils of all ability levels, including those with SEN, make good progress across each key stage. Most pupils have a good understanding of what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds attain results that are at least as good as those of other pupils.
19. Nearly all pupils are well motivated, polite and courteous. Their attendance is good and their behaviour is very good.

### **Sixth Form**

20. Students' attainments in public examinations in the last three years have been well above national averages. Most students achieve good standards in relation to their ability and prior attainment.

21. Standards in English and history have improved since the last inspection, while good or very good standards have been maintained in the other three subjects inspected in the sixth form.
22. Students achieve at least good standards in all key skills. The quality of their collaborative working is often outstanding. Their bilingual competence reflects limited progress from earlier key stages, except in the case of those students who are studying Welsh as a subject.
23. Students demonstrate a mature attitude to their work, high levels of motivation and commitment, and a good capacity to work independently. Once they have adjusted to the new approaches to work required in the sixth form, they make good progress. Their attendance and punctuality to lessons are good.

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

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

24. The quality of teaching is good. In most lessons there are good working relationships, learning objectives are clear and teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and their attitude to work. In many lessons, teachers' planning is thorough, their explanations are clear and pupils have good opportunities to learn by working together.
25. The percentages of grades inspectors awarded for teaching and assessment in the 80 lessons they observed in key stages 3 and 4 are shown below.

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
34%	50%	16%	0%	0%

26. The proportion of lessons that have some outstanding features is higher in key stage 3 than in key stage 4. However, the proportion of lessons that have some important shortcomings is also much higher in key stage 3 than in key stage 4, representing just over a quarter of the lessons observed in that key stage. Grades are not distributed evenly across subjects, and the proportion of lessons containing some outstanding features is exceptionally high in three subjects.
27. In a majority of classes, teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and provide useful feedback to pupils. Over the last two years, teachers have improved the way in which they use assessment to help pupils learn, particularly in key stage 3. The quality of reporting to parents is good.

### **Sixth form**

28. The percentages of grades inspectors awarded for teaching and assessment in the 29 lessons they observed in the sixth form are shown below.

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
48%	41%	10%	0%	0%

29. There are outstanding features in a very high proportion of history, art, music and English lessons, but with a much lower proportion evident in the other lessons observed. Few lessons have important shortcomings.
30. Outstanding features relate mainly to the high quality of relationships, teachers' planning and preparation, questioning and support for students. Additional good features include the effective sharing of learning objectives and the planning of activities well matched to learning.
31. In most subjects, teachers' marking is thorough, helping students to understand the demands of examination specifications and to identify what they need to do to succeed. Reports to parents are of good quality.

### **Whole school**

32. The curriculum in key stages 3 and 4 is suitably broad and balanced and meets all statutory and course requirements and the needs and interests of pupils. The key stage 3 curriculum is enhanced by the provision of learning skills lessons in Years 7 and 8, and a second foreign language for some pupils in Year 9. The school offers a suitable range of courses in key stage 4 and nearly all pupils are able to follow their chosen individual pathways. However, efforts to promote uptake for vocational courses have had limited success to date.
33. The school offers a suitable range of curriculum choices in the sixth form, but it does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of religious education at this level.
34. Provision for the development of pupils' key skills and basic skills is good. The recent introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) has enhanced the development of key skills in the sixth form.
35. The school's provision of out-of-hours learning and extra-curricular activities is outstanding, and there are high levels of participation by pupils.
36. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good and their spiritual development is good. The school meets the statutory requirement of providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils in key stages 3 and 4. All sixth-form students have opted to withdraw from daily collective worship.
37. The quality of provision for personal and social education (PSE), work-related education (WRE) and careers education and guidance (CEG) is good. The promotion of education for sustainable development and global citizenship (ESDGC), through both the curriculum and additional initiatives, is outstanding.
38. The school has established effective partnerships with parents, associate primary schools and various other groups and organisations.

39. All subjects contribute well to the development of Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig. However, there is limited provision across the school for the development of pupils' bilingual skills.
40. The care, support and guidance that the school provides for its pupils has many outstanding features, including the excellent support given to individual pupils, a comprehensive key stage 2 – 3 transition programme, high levels of support for pupils with SEN and a thorough and innovative approach to policy and practice in relation to the Disability Equality Scheme (DES).
41. The school is a very caring community, where interpersonal relationships are very good. All pupils are well known and well supported by staff at all levels.
42. The school makes very good arrangements to promote the health and wellbeing of its pupils. Policy and practice relating to behaviour management are also very good and reflect significant improvement since the time of the last inspection.
43. The school's aim of providing equal opportunities for all is clearly reflected in all areas of its work.

### **Leadership and management**

44. The school sets out appropriate aims, vision and values that are understood by all and reflected well in practice. The headteacher allows other members of the leadership team to apply their well-developed management skills in taking full responsibility for designated aspects of the management of the school, and this ensures strong leadership at this level.
45. All heads of year and many heads of department carry out their roles effectively and provide strong leadership of their teams. The work of a few middle leaders is outstanding. Leadership and management are less strong in a few subject areas. The school's line management system is very effective in most respects but has not been completely successful in addressing inconsistencies at middle management level.
46. The school takes account of all national priority areas. It has made particularly good progress in addressing aspects such as transition and ESDGC; bilingualism is less well developed. Arrangements for performance management are well established, thorough and suitably linked to continuing professional development.
47. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Students benefit from good provision and support, and the school has implemented a number of suitable strategies aimed at helping students to adjust to sixth-form work and at raising standards, particularly in Year 12.

48. Governors make an effective contribution to the management of the school. Through the main governing body and the four committees, they apply a range of expertise to good effect in supporting and challenging the work of the school. They fulfil most statutory duties but they have not ensured that the school meets statutory requirements for the provision of religious education in the sixth form and there are a very few omissions from the school's prospectus and the annual report to parents.
49. Senior leaders and most middle leaders have a good knowledge of the strengths and areas for development within their particular areas of responsibility. They base their judgements on a wide range of evidence. However, they do not currently use information from lesson observations or from pupils' written work consistently to inform judgements about standards in subjects.
50. The school's staffing, accommodation and resources are appropriate overall to meet the needs of all pupils, although there remain a few areas for development, for example the lower school building. There are outstanding features in the work of support staff, the provision for newly-qualified teachers and students, the contribution of the estates manager and his team, and the improved provision for information technology (IT) and its impact on teaching and standards.
51. Rigorous financial management, with expenditure clearly focused on teaching and learning, has had a significant impact on raising standards since the last inspection. The school's systematic planning, monitoring and review of the available budget constitute an outstanding feature and help to ensure that the sixth form and the school as a whole provide very good value for money.

## Recommendations

In order to secure further improvement, the school should:

- R1 continue to raise standards of achievement, particularly in those subjects where pupils' performance in public examinations or statutory assessments is below expectations;
- R2 improve the quality of teaching in lessons where there are shortcomings, particularly in key stage 3;
- R3 develop strategies to ensure consistency in middle management generally and, in particular, in the evaluation of standards and progress in subjects;
- R4 secure further improvement in national priority areas by:
- developing further strategies to promote the full range of courses offered at 14+\*;
  - improving provision for the development of bilingualism;
- R5 ensure that the school meets statutory requirements with regard to:
- the provision of religious education in the sixth form\*,
  - the content of the school prospectus and the annual report to parents;
- R6 work in collaboration with the local authority to continue to improve aspects of the accommodation, in particular the lower school building\*

\* These aspects are partly addressed in the current school improvement plan.

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

52. In its self-evaluation report, the school awarded a grade 1 for this key question. The inspection team did identify some outstanding features, particularly in relation to some of the subjects inspected in detail. However, when they considered the standards observed in lessons and in pupils' work together with pupils' performance in statutory assessments and public examinations in the last three years, they judged that there were insufficient outstanding features overall to justify the higher grade.

#### Key stages 3 and 4

53. Pupils' attainments in statutory assessments at key stage 3 and in public examinations at key stage 4 in the last three years have been mostly well above national averages.
54. In key stage 3, the results of statutory assessments in the separate core subjects placed the school in the highest quarter of its group of similar schools (those with fewer than 10% of pupils entitled to free school meals) in each year, except for English in 2007. Performance in the core subjects has been similarly strong in relation to that of other members of Radyr's family of schools<sup>1</sup>, with particularly high levels of performance at level 6 and above and in science generally.
55. The proportion of pupils attaining level 5 or above in all three core subjects increased by six percentage points over the three years, to stand 24 points above the national average in 2009. Compared with the time of the last inspection, the school's performance in relation to national averages was slightly less strong in 2009 in each separate core subject, but slightly stronger in relation to the attainment of level 5 or above in all three.
56. In terms of the value added from the end of the previous key stage, pupils' performance in the last three years has been consistently in line with, or better than, that of pupils of similar prior attainment and backgrounds in other schools in Wales<sup>2</sup>.
57. Results in a minority of the non-core subjects have been consistently in the top half of the group of similar schools. Those in the remainder of subjects have been more variable and often lower. This variation in results is partly

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<sup>1</sup> Families of schools were created in 2009 to enable schools to compare their performance to similar schools across Wales. These families were provisional for 2009. Families include schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals, living in deprived areas, from ethnic minority backgrounds, and having special educational needs.

<sup>2</sup> This comparison is based on data provided in the Welsh Assembly Government's Value Added Summary.

attributable to inaccuracies in teacher assessment, which is less well established in the non-core subjects.

58. Girls outperform boys in almost all respects. While the pattern has varied to a certain extent from year to year and from subject to subject, it is not significantly different overall from that in Wales as a whole.
59. In key stage 4, the proportion of pupils attaining the Level 2 Threshold<sup>3</sup> has remained constant in the last three years - above the Wales average, but by a smaller margin in each year. When compared with similar schools, performance was in the highest quarter in 2007 and 2008, and in the second quarter in 2009. Pupils' attainment of the Level 2 Threshold including an A\*-C pass in English and mathematics has fallen very slightly over the three-year period but remains in the highest quarter.
60. Pupils' attainment of A\*-C grades in the separate core subjects rose from 2007 to 2009, mostly in line with trends in Wales as a whole. Performance in science was in the highest quarter of similar schools in all three years, that in English and mathematics in two years out of three. The proportion of pupils attaining A\*-C grades in all three core subjects increased by a lesser extent than nationally over the period, but remained in the highest quarter.
61. The percentage of pupils attaining the Level 1 Threshold<sup>4</sup> increased slightly, in line with the Wales average, between 2007 and 2009. It was in the second quarter of the group of similar schools in two of these years, and in the third quarter in the other year. In the same period, pupils' average wider points score<sup>5</sup> declined in relation to the Wales average, taking performance from the highest quarter to the third quarter of similar schools.
62. Only two or three pupils left school without a recognised qualification in each of the last three years; this is in line with the national average. At the end of Year 11 in 2009, 89% of pupils continued in full-time education in school or in further education. Only 1.4% of the cohort are known to be not in education, employment or training; this is much better than the national average.
63. The school's performance in comparison with other members of its family was, for the majority of indicators, above average in 2007 and 2008, and close to the average in 2009. Pupils' performance in terms of the value added from previous key stages (as compared with pupils of similar ability levels and backgrounds in other schools) has been more mixed<sup>6</sup>: in 2007, pupils performed mostly in line with, and in some respects above, expectations; however, in 2009, and more significantly in 2008, aspects of performance were below expectations.

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<sup>3</sup> a volume of qualifications at Level 2, equivalent to five GCSE grades A\*-C

<sup>4</sup> a volume of qualifications at Level 1, equivalent to five GCSE grades D-G

<sup>5</sup> The wider points score includes an allocation of points for each externally approved qualification that a pupil attains.

<sup>6</sup> This comparison is based on data provided in the Welsh Assembly Government's Value Added Summary.

64. Girls consistently outperform boys. For Level 2 indicators, the pattern is in line with that in Wales as a whole. In terms of average wider points score and attainment of the Level 1 Threshold, the gap between girls' and boys' performance is narrower at school than at national level.
65. Pupils' examination performance at key stage 4 reflects overall improvement since the time of the last inspection, particularly in relation to Level 2 indicators.
66. In the six subjects inspected, standards are good with outstanding features in science, history and art in both key stages, and in music in key stage 4. In music in key stage 3, and in English and religious education in both key stages, there are good features and no important shortcomings. Standards in science, history and religious education have improved significantly since the time of the last inspection. Good and very good standards have been maintained in the other three subjects.
67. The following table shows the percentages of grades awarded for standards in all the lessons observed at key stages 3 and 4 in these six subjects.

54 lessons	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
<b>Key stage 3</b>	41%	52%	7%	0%	0%
<b>Key stage 4</b>	33%	63%	4%	0%	0%
<b>Key stages 3 and 4</b>	37%	57%	6%	0%	0%

68. The figure of 94% of lessons at grade 1 or 2 is well above the average of 73% for all secondary schools inspected in Wales in 2008-9 (as reported in the Chief Inspector's Annual Report for that year) and the national target of 65% set for 2010. It represents a very high proportion of lessons with no important shortcomings.
69. Compared with the last inspection, the proportion of lessons graded 1 or 2 in key stage 3 has increased from 63% to 93%, and that in key stage 4 from 57% to 96%. This clearly reflects significant improvement within the subjects inspected. (It is not possible to make a precise evaluation of the improvement across the school as a whole from these figures because of the different evidence base for each inspection).
70. The percentages shown above do not represent an even distribution of grades across the six subjects. For example, the total number of lessons graded 1 includes exceptionally high proportions of such lessons in two of the subjects.
71. Pupils of all ability levels achieve well in lessons, including pupils with SEN and more able and talented pupils. The strong performance of more able pupils is reflected in the numbers attaining level 7 and above by the end of key stage 3, and A\* grades at GCSE. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds attain results that are in line with, and sometimes better than, those of other pupils in the school.
72. The standard of pupils' communication skills is good in both key stages.

73. Nearly all pupils listen attentively to their teachers and demonstrate understanding through their responses. They also listen carefully to the comments of other pupils. Many pupils are able to give extended and considered oral responses, hold stimulating discussions and use technical subject vocabulary effectively. Nearly all pupils express themselves clearly and confidently when speaking within groups or pairs.
74. Most pupils read confidently, can comprehend a range of texts and apply their reading skills appropriately across the various subject areas. When they read aloud, most do so fluently. Most pupils are able to write confidently and accurately in a range of styles, including both factual and imaginative work. They make appropriate use of technical vocabulary relating to particular subjects. There is some variation in the quality of presentation of pupils' work in both key stages.
75. Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) have improved since the last inspection and are now good. In key stage 3, many pupils prepare and present information well using word processing or multimedia software, and use the internet well for research. In some subjects, they make effective use of subject-specific software to enhance their work. Pupils in key stage 4 continue to use IT resources well, particularly for research, investigation, and the presentation of work.
76. Nearly all pupils demonstrate good mathematical skills and are able to apply these appropriately in their work in different subjects, for example in relevant contexts in mathematics, science, physical education and technology.
77. Pupils' bilingual skills have good features that outweigh shortcomings. Most pupils make suitable progress in Welsh lessons. In other contexts, they show understanding when teachers use simple Welsh phrases and they are able to use the language at a basic level for answering the register, counting in Welsh and writing the date.
78. Pupils' completed work and that seen in lessons show that most pupils are making good progress in acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills and in applying these in a range of new situations.
79. Most pupils have a good understanding of what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve. Effective use of a range of appropriate assessment for learning strategies by many teachers helps pupils with this. Most pupils are aware of their target levels and grades for each subject, and are making good progress towards these.
80. Nearly all pupils are keen to learn and are willing participants in lessons. Most demonstrate enthusiasm for their work and maintain very good levels of concentration. They are keen to contribute to whole-class, small group and paired activities.
81. Standards of behaviour are very good. This applies to lessons, to behaviour in the yard, and also to movement around the school, despite the many narrow

corridors. Nearly all pupils are courteous and show respect for one another, and for teachers and other adults. This is a school where pupils and teachers work together happily.

82. Attendance over the last year has been above the national average and in line with that of similar schools. Unauthorised absence is slightly above the national average; this is because the school does not give permission for pupils to take holidays during term time. Nearly all pupils arrive punctually for school each day. The lateness of a few pupils to lessons causes a delayed start in a very few cases.
83. Most pupils demonstrate good thinking skills and apply these well in a variety of situations, for example lesson starters and carefully planned group activities. In art, pupils in some classes demonstrate outstanding thinking skills when they plan, develop and reflect on their work. In a few subjects, and particularly in history, more able pupils demonstrate the ability to apply higher-order thinking skills.
84. Pupils apply problem-solving skills effectively in a range of situations across many subjects. When given suitable opportunities, many pupils also demonstrate good creative skills; these are particularly evident in art and music, but also feature in some lessons in other subjects, for example English and technology.
85. Pupils' collaborative working is good with outstanding features. In many lessons, pupils work together very effectively in pairs or small groups, demonstrating a mature approach, a good understanding of roles and responsibilities, and respect for the views of others. They provide very good support for one another, and their collaborative working often has a significant positive effect on the standards that they achieve. Compared with the time of the last inspection, pupils now receive many more opportunities to work independently of the teacher, and consequently they demonstrate improved confidence and skill levels.
86. Pupils make very good progress in developing their personal, social and moral skills. They enjoy very good relationships with other pupils and staff. They demonstrate clearly, through their comments and actions, respect for diversity within the school and the community.

## **Sixth form**

87. Students' attainments in public examinations in the last three years have been well above national averages and generally in line with expectations in relation to their ability and prior attainment.
88. The proportion of students attaining the Level 3 Threshold<sup>7</sup> rose by five percentage points in the last three years, reaching 100% in 2009 and reflecting

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<sup>7</sup> a volume of qualifications at Level 3, equivalent to 2 A-E passes at A level

improvement in relation to the national average. Students' average wider points score and the proportion of students attaining two or more passes at grades A-C remained above the national average, but by a reducing margin over the three-year period.

89. The proportions attaining two or more A-C grades and two or more A-E grades have improved significantly since the time of the last inspection.
90. At the end of the 2008-9 academic year, most Year 12 students remained at the school to continue their studies in Year 13, while a high proportion of Year 13 students proceeded to higher education or further education.
91. In the subjects inspected, standards are good with outstanding features in English, art and music. In science and history, there are good features and no important shortcomings. The grades awarded for English and history reflect improvement since the last inspection, while the other subjects maintain good or very good standards. There is insufficient evidence to judge standards in religious education.
92. The following table shows the percentages of grades awarded for standards in all the lessons observed in the five subjects inspected in the sixth form.

23 lessons	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
<b>Sixth form</b>	39%	61%	0%	0%	0%

93. The proportion of lessons graded 1 or 2 was 100%, which is well above the figure of 83% in all sixth forms inspected in Wales in 2007-8<sup>8</sup> and reflects a significant increase on the 78% reported in the last inspection. As with key stages 3 and 4, the evidence base is different from the last inspection; in this case, the number of subjects is one fewer again and the sample of lessons much smaller.
94. Standards in communication skills are good. Most students' oral contributions are mature and well balanced, and students are able to use technical vocabulary accurately to inform their discussions. They are able to consider and explain their ideas effectively, listen well to others' contributions and give extended answers in response to questions.
95. Most students can comprehend a variety of text and respond effectively, noting key issues and other relevant information. Most students' writing skills are good, and more able students often produce fluent extended written work.
96. Almost all sixth-form students regularly use ICT well for research and communication. In science, students use applications such as data-logging and modelling software with confidence, and this enhances their learning. Sixth-form students are generally more independent than younger pupils in their use of ICT to support their studies.

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<sup>8</sup> The Chief Inspector's Annual Report for 2007-8 is the most recent one to give separate figures for the sixth form.

97. Students demonstrate good mathematical skills and they are able to apply these, where relevant, in the subjects that they study. Some physics and chemistry students demonstrate particularly high skill levels in working with formulae and equations.
98. Nearly all students have good language skills in English. Students' bilingual competence reflects limited progress from earlier key stages, except in the case of those students who are studying Welsh as a subject.
99. Students make good, and in some cases very good, progress in lessons. Their progress is generally less good during the first part of Year 12, when many experience some difficulty in adjusting to the new approaches required for sixth-form study. However, nearly all improve during the course of the year and secure good progress across the key stage as a whole. Once settled, students demonstrate the ability to work well independently. The quality of their collaborative work is often outstanding.
100. Students demonstrate high levels of motivation and commitment. They behave very well and are polite and courteous. Students' attendance and punctuality to lessons are good.
101. Most students show a good awareness of their own strengths and areas for development, and are able to plan effectively to improve their work. They know their target grades for each subject, and most are making good progress towards these.

## The quality of education and training

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

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

102. In its self-evaluation report, the school awarded a grade 1 for this key question. The inspection team judged the quality of teaching and assessment to be grade 2 because, although there are outstanding features in a minority of lessons, these are unevenly distributed across subjects and key stages, and their impact on standards of achievement across the school is insufficient to justify the higher grade.

#### Key stages 3 and 4

103. The following table shows the percentages of grades awarded for the quality of teaching and assessment in all lessons inspected in key stages 3 and 4.

80 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
<b>Key stage 3</b>	40%	35%	26%	0%	0%
<b>Key stage 4</b>	27%	68%	5%	0%	0%
<b>Key stages 3 and 4</b>	34%	50%	16%	0%	0%

104. The figure of 84% of lessons awarded grades 1 and 2 is above the national average of 76% for all secondary schools inspected in 2008-9 and the Welsh Assembly Government target of 80% for 2010, and is a good feature.
105. The proportion of lessons awarded grade 1 for teaching and assessment is particularly high in three subjects, and is generally much higher in the subjects inspected in detail than in the other lessons observed during the inspection.
106. The proportion of lessons that have some outstanding features is higher in key stage 3 than in key stage 4. However, the proportion of lessons that have some important shortcomings is also much higher, representing just over a quarter of the lessons observed at that key stage.
107. In a minority of lessons observed in key stage 3 and key stage 4, there are some outstanding features in teaching, including:
- highly effective planning, meeting all pupils' needs very well;
  - excellent relationships and support for individuals;
  - high quality displays, presentations and extended learning opportunities that excite and engage pupils;
  - questioning that is intensive, open-ended and very effectively targeted at individuals, stimulating pupils to think deeply about their work; and
  - very good provision for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and apply a wide range of thinking and other learning skills.
108. In key stage 3, these lessons are mainly in science, art, English and history. In key stage 4, a majority of these lessons are in science and history.
109. There are many good features that are common to a high proportion of lessons. For example:
- in nearly all lessons there are friendly and purposeful working relationships between teachers and pupils;
  - most teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and their attitude to work, and pupils respond well to these expectations;
  - most teachers make the purpose of lessons clear and review learning thoroughly through questioning;
  - in many lessons, teachers' planning is thorough, they make good use of time and appropriate learning resources, and they provide pupils with good opportunities to learn by working together;
  - many teachers explain and instruct clearly, applying good subject knowledge;
  - in many lessons at key stage 3, teachers provide pupils with a wide range of challenging tasks and activities which most pupils complete at a good pace; and
  - many teachers use ICT effectively to enhance the clarity of their explanations.
110. A minority of key stage 3 lessons and a very few key stage 4 lessons have some important shortcomings; for example:

- planning is ineffective, so the activities, resources or support provided do not fully meet the needs of all pupils;
  - the teacher does not manage to engage all pupils in learning, leading to a loss of pace and limited progress;
  - the grouping of pupils is not appropriate for the task set;
  - questioning does not encourage or allow suitably detailed responses or does not involve enough pupils; and
  - teachers provide pupils with materials containing factual errors or do not fully understand how to develop pupils' subject skills effectively.
111. In most lessons, teachers' use of Welsh to promote pupils' bilingual skills is restricted to taking the register and brief greetings.
112. In many subjects, homework provides pupils with appropriate tasks that effectively extend their learning beyond the classroom.
113. In a majority of classes, teachers mark pupils' work regularly and thoroughly, and they give pupils useful feedback about the quality of that work. Over the last two years, teachers have improved their assessment, which they now use more effectively to help pupils learn. In particular:
- teachers share learning objectives with pupils in nearly all lessons, and in a majority of cases they use questioning and observation well to monitor pupils' progress towards those objectives;
  - nearly all pupils receive oral and written feedback which helps them to understand how they can improve their work;
  - most teachers encourage pupils to assess their own work and that of other pupils regularly; in around half of these assessments, pupils show that they understand what they do well and what most needs to improve; and
  - most teachers monitor and record pupils' progress effectively and a minority use this assessment information effectively to plan to meet the needs of individuals.
114. Teachers generally apply these strategies more consistently in key stage 3 than in key stage 4. However, in a majority of classes in key stage 4, marking is rigorous and prepares pupils well for the challenge they will face in GCSE and other examinations.
115. Departments and year teams work together effectively to monitor progress and respond to underachievement. Most pupils can recall their target levels or grades and know how well they are currently performing in relation to those targets.
116. Most subjects have achieved accreditation for their portfolios of pupils' work at key stage 3. However, in a minority of non-core subjects, the assessment of pupils' levels at the end of key stage 3 is insecure; this is reflected in the degree of variation in results from year to year.
117. The school meets statutory requirements for assessment and fulfils the regulations of examination boards.

118. The quality of reporting to parents is good. Progress reports, annual reports and parents' meetings help the school and parents to address any identified underachievement. The annual report and end-of-key-stage report meet all statutory requirements. Heads of year and form tutors summarise learning and respond to parental comments appropriately. The quality of teachers' comments is generally good but, in a few reports, comments lack specific detail about progress in subjects and do not provide sufficient guidance about how to improve.

### Sixth form

119. In the sixth form, there are outstanding features in a very high proportion of history, art, music and English lessons, but with a much lower proportion evident in the other lessons observed. Few lessons have important shortcomings.
120. Grades for the quality of teaching in all lessons observed in the sixth form are:

29 lessons	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
<b>Sixth form</b>	48%	41%	10%	0%	0%

121. Outstanding features in teaching in sixth-form lessons include:
- well-established and productive relationships between students and teachers;
  - very high quality planning and preparation which have a significant impact on the standards achieved by students;
  - particularly effective one-to-one support and outstanding opportunities for students to learn from one other; and
  - skilful questioning that challenges students to think deeply.
122. Good features found in most sixth-form lessons include:
- careful planning, including the preparation of good quality resources for learning;
  - teachers' good subject knowledge;
  - good relationships, with teachers having high expectations of their students;
  - learning activities and classroom organisation that are well matched to the planned learning;
  - clear learning objectives that are shared with students.
123. In a few lessons in the sixth form, planning is inappropriate or does not fully meet students' needs, the pace is too slow, inappropriate grouping of students leads to ineffective discussion, or there is insufficient rigour when teachers work with students to consolidate learning.
124. In most subjects, teachers' marking is thorough; this helps students to understand the demands of examination specifications and what they need to do to succeed. In a few classes, marking lacks rigour, is irregular or provides insufficient feedback to students about how to improve. The use of

assessment to help students improve is outstanding in art and history, and good in a majority of other subjects.

125. Sixth-form reports provide students with helpful information about their work, including identification of what needs to improve and how individual students can improve their performance.

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

**Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

126. The school awarded a grade 1 for this key question. The inspection team awarded grade 3 because there is an important shortcoming in that the school does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of religious education in the sixth form.
127. The curriculum meets all statutory and course requirements at key stages 3 and 4.
128. In key stage 3, the curriculum is appropriately balanced and includes provision for all national curriculum subjects as well as religious education, PSE and drama. The curriculum is enhanced in Years 7 and 8 by the inclusion of learning skills lessons, and in Year 9 by the provision of an additional foreign language for some pupils and key skills lessons for the remainder. Learning experiences meet individual pupils' needs well and enable them to make good progress from key stage 2 and throughout the key stage.
129. In key stage 4, pupils study all statutory subjects and choose from a range of courses representing all five domains of learning. By basing its provision each year on information about pupils' preferred subject choices, the school is able to allow nearly all pupils to follow their chosen individual pathways. The school's option menu meets the requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure, 2009. While the school has established appropriate partnerships with other establishments to offer a full range of courses, its efforts to promote uptake for vocational courses have had limited success to date. An extended opportunities programme linked with Coleg Glan Hafren makes suitable provision for a small number of pupils.
130. In the sixth form, there are suitable option arrangements that allow students to choose from mainly GCE AS and A levels and a few BTEC courses, again with a free choice system in place to seek to meet the needs of as many students as possible. The school has introduced the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) this year, and good planning ensures that students gain maximum benefit from this enhanced provision. The school has planned a programme for delivering religious education through a series of whole-day events, and some progress has been made with introducing this into Year 12. However, the school has made no arrangements for current Year 13 students and its provision as a whole does not meet statutory requirements.

131. The school makes good provision for the development of pupils' key skills. All departments develop key skills appropriately within their subject areas. A Skills Group monitors basic and key skills provision across the curriculum, and has also begun to develop suitable strategies to enhance provision, for example a 'Skill of the Month' initiative. There are opportunities for many Year 9 pupils and all Year 12 students (through the WBQ) to gain key skills qualifications. The school makes good provision for developing pupils' basic skills and has consistently retained the Basic Skills Quality Mark.
132. The school provides an impressive range of out-of-hours learning and extra-curricular activities, with a high proportion of pupil involvement across all key stages. This is an outstanding feature. The school has achieved the Quality Mark for Out-of-Hours Learning, and pupils gain accreditation through the Children's University for their participation in the various activities provided. Close links between the school's sports provision and the Welsh Assembly Government's 5x60 initiative ensure a wide range of experiences that help to develop positive attitudes towards sports in general. Pupils also benefit from a good range of high quality provision in many other areas, including music and drama. Educational visits, both in this country and abroad, contribute significantly to the development of pupils' social and cultural awareness. The school's provision, which is open to all pupils, complements the curriculum well and makes a valuable contribution to the development of pupils' social skills and the raising of their self-esteem.
133. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good and their spiritual development is good. All subjects make an appropriate contribution to the development of Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig and help to raise pupils' awareness of their own culture. The school makes suitable provision for spiritual development through assemblies and tutorials as well as some curriculum subjects. The 'Thoughts for the Week' programme purposefully encourages pupils to consider spiritual and moral issues. The school meets the statutory requirement of providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils in key stages 3 and 4. In the sixth form, all students have opted to withdraw from daily collective worship.
134. There are effective partnerships between the school and parents. A committed group of parents makes a valuable contribution to musical and sports activities. Curricular links with associate primary schools, for example in physical education, Welsh and French, are very effective in helping to ensure continuity of learning and good progress for pupils. Partnerships with the community, the careers service and other agencies are good. There are well-established links with initial teacher training institutions.
135. The school makes good provision for PSE through a broad, balanced programme that meets all requirements. The school's provision for WRE and CEG is also good. Within the PSE programme there are careers units from Year 7 to Year 13. The school also arranges key activity days which promote the world of work, for example an Enterprise Day in Year 9 and an Industry Day in Year 10. Close collaboration between the school and Careers Wales

ensures that pupils have access to suitable guidance when making choices at the end of key stages 3 and 4. Work experience for pupils in Years 10 and 12 is well established, with close monitoring of the quality of pupil placements. A few teachers have also benefited from work experience.

136. The school makes provision for the development of pupils' skills in English across a range of subjects. All pupils in key stages 3 and 4 receive lessons in Welsh second language. In key stage 4, pupils are able to achieve a GCSE qualification in Welsh second language, with most pupils opting for the short course. There is some suitable additional provision to support pupils' bilingual skills, for example teachers' use of key Welsh language patterns in lessons, tutorials and assemblies, and a Welsh club run in conjunction with the Youth Service. However, overall provision for the development of bilingualism across the school is limited.
137. The school effectively tackles stereotyping and social disadvantage and promotes high achievement and equal opportunities for all pupils.
138. The promotion of ESDGC is an outstanding feature in the school. There is a strong focus on initiatives that have a positive impact on the curriculum and on raising all pupils' awareness. Particular strengths in relation to sustainable development include well co-ordinated cross-curricular provision in geography, science and design technology, and a range of activities and initiatives outside lessons that have contributed to the achievement of the Silver Award Green Flag. Provision for the development of global citizenship includes a Fair Trade club, two multi-national projects and close links with schools in Europe and Asia.
139. The school reflects well national priorities for lifelong learning and community regeneration.

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

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
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140. This grade matches the school's own self-evaluation judgement. The inspection team awarded this grade because it identified outstanding features in the support provided for individual pupils at all levels, the arrangements for transition from key stage 2, the support for pupils with SEN and the school's approach to practice in relation to the DES. The team judged that the consistently high quality of care and support is making a significant contribution to maintaining and improving standards in the school.
141. The school is a very caring community, where interpersonal relationships at all levels are very good. The learning environment encourages respect, and pupils respond accordingly. There is a clear, well-planned pastoral structure, and this provides the basis for outstanding care and support that place a clear focus on individual needs. The school's arrangements are firmly embedded and are well understood by pupils and teachers alike. All staff place a very

high value on their pastoral roles and responsibilities and carry them out with an exceptional degree of thoroughness, efficiency and consistency. Communication and team work are very effective at all levels from form tutor to senior leader. Heads of year provide consistently strong leadership of their teams.

142. All pupils are well known and well supported by staff at all levels. Heads of Year (with the exception of Year 7) stay with their cohort as they move through key stages 3 and 4, and this helps to maintain and build on the relationships that they establish with pupils. The location of the base rooms for all forms in each particular year group in the same area of the school results in a cohesive year group ethos that has many benefits for the pupils. Pupils feel safe and secure knowing that they have immediate and easy access to heads and assistant heads of year; also, communications and actions on any matter are quick, efficient and effective.
143. Heads of year gather detailed information about pupils' pastoral and academic development and use this effectively to monitor the progress of individual pupils. Regular meetings allow staff to share information and respond quickly to any issues that arise. Staff give particular attention to monitoring the progress of vulnerable pupils; as a result of the support they receive, many of these pupils make good progress in improving their attendance, attainment and relationships with staff.
144. The school has an open-door policy for parents and carers to discuss any issue of concern. Parents are seen as key partners in learning, and staff with pastoral responsibilities are readily available to meet them, either in school or at home. The school is constantly seeking further ways of engaging with parents. The pupils' planner provides pupils and parents with good information on behaviour, punctuality, attendance and homework.
145. The school has established very good links with a range of other partners who provide support for individual pupils. Effective working relationships with the on-site youth workers benefit the pastoral team with the sharing of information.
146. Outstanding arrangements are in place to support pupils in their move from primary to secondary school. The school works very well in collaboration with its associate primary schools. Together, they have established very strong curricular links across a broad range of core and foundation subjects and through additional ventures such as the Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) initiative. They also arrange a variety of activities during Year 6 that help pupils to get to know teachers, other pupils and the school. These arrangements are very effective in ensuring that pupils settle in quickly at their new school and in securing very good continuity in pupils' work.
147. Pupil surveys in Year 6 generate detailed information that staff use extremely effectively to plan provision and to allay any concerns. The school undertakes a further survey early in Year 7 to assess how well pupils have settled and are coping with the demands of a larger school. The same head of year takes responsibility for each new Year 7 group, and this helps the school to maintain

strong links and undertake very effective planning with associate primary schools. Year 7 pupils report that they found both curricular and social aspects of the transition arrangements to be extremely helpful; the school has consulted them regarding any improvements that could be made. Parents of Year 7 pupils emphasise the value of the additional autumn term meeting with form tutors to discuss how well pupils are settling in. The school's tracking records indicate that most pupils make good progress or better in Year 7, and this is confirmed by the good and very good standards that inspectors observed in lessons and in pupils' work.

148. Teachers plan and deliver tutorial periods effectively. The 'Thoughts for the Week' programme is well designed and ensures that there is coherence and consistency in the school's provision for collective worship in tutorial periods and assemblies. The PSE programme covers a good range of appropriate topics. Many outside agencies, including the police, make an effective contribution to this programme.
149. Pupils in Year 9 receive good information and advice from the school and the careers adviser in relation to 14-19 Learning Pathways. Year 11 pupils receive helpful advice about future subject choices and careers. In addition, pupils in both year groups have an individual guidance interview with a senior member of staff and head of year, often with their parents also present.
150. In Years 9 to 13, form tutors perform many of the functions of a learning coach. They hold termly meetings with all pupils, either one-to-one or in small groups, during which they provide appropriate guidance and support. From Year 10 onwards, staff identify groups of pupils to receive additional mentoring support, and the progress of these pupils is closely and effectively tracked by the head of year and key stage leader.
151. The school has a very thorough system in place for monitoring attendance, and heads of year work well with the education welfare officer and the school attendance officer to secure its effective implementation.
152. All staff have access to an excellent IT-based behaviour log that allows them to take immediate action in line with the school's behaviour management policy. Pastoral staff use this system effectively to monitor any persistent poor behaviour. Staff record details of merits and early stages of sanctions in pupils' planners in order to inform and involve parents at the earliest opportunity. Arrangements for the use of the Internal Exclusion Room are well managed, and regularly monitored.
153. The school has very good arrangements to promote the health and wellbeing of all pupils. The out-of-hours learning programme provides very good opportunities for participation in a wide range of activities that promote a healthy lifestyle. The school consults with pupils regularly in seeking to provide additional activities that will engage and appeal to even more pupils.
154. There are appropriate, well-established arrangements for first aid within the school, with twelve qualified first-aiders on site. The school nurse, who visits

once a week, provides counselling support to supplement the new on-line counselling service that is available to all pupils.

155. The school has well documented and effective child protection procedures. There is a designated and trained senior member of staff, and fully trained reserves. All staff have received suitable training in child protection matters.
156. The school council is well established and effective. Its members take a strong lead in canvassing the views of their peers through surveys and year councils to highlight areas of concern and to establish priorities for their work plan. Appropriate sub-groups lead developments on the identified priorities of healthy eating and eco-schools. Members of the council liaise effectively with the Cardiff Youth Forum and the local community council.
157. The Special Educational Needs coordinator (SENCO) works closely with the team of teaching assistants (TAs) and key academic and pastoral staff to provide outstanding support for pupils with a range of SEN. The team hold regular meetings to discuss individual pupils' progress and plan appropriate support. Pupils with SEN are welcomed in the department during break and lunch times, and this provides valuable support for their emotional development.
158. The SENCO provides outstanding support and advice on teaching resources and strategies to each department. The TAs provide effective additional support for pupils, either individually or in small groups. Appropriate assessment of pupils is undertaken in the associate primary schools and on entry to the school. This enables staff to identify pupils with a range of additional learning needs, including more able and talented (MAT) pupils, and to organise appropriate support.
159. The school meets the statutory requirements for inclusive education. Individual education plans (IEPs) are of outstanding quality. They provide clear, individual targets set in consultation with departments, together with very good advice on the particular strategies for teaching and classroom management that are likely to have maximum benefit for individual pupils. All IEPs include relevant measurable targets and clear criteria for success and development, and these are regularly reviewed. Nearly all teachers make very effective use of IEPs to plan suitable activities and provide very good support for pupils. Pupils with SEN achieve good, and sometimes very good, standards.
160. The school provides effective additional learning support, where required, to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. It also provides appropriate support for pupils with very specific learning needs. Records show that these pupils are making good progress and are gaining confidence in their own ability.
161. In consultation with pupils and parents, the school has developed a very effective behaviour policy that is clearly understood by all. High expectations of behaviour are evident throughout the school, and teachers apply

appropriate rewards and sanctions consistently. This reflects considerable improvement since the time of the last inspection. The pastoral team use target and progress cards and personal support plans effectively to support behaviour and progress issues. Referral to partner agencies for additional support is well co-ordinated through the SENCO and senior leaders.

162. The school deals effectively with incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Any incident of oppressive behaviour is taken seriously, monitored and recorded. A clear anti-bullying policy and procedures are in place and are understood by pupils. The school council is developing plans for an e-mail system that will allow pupils to notify any incidents of bullying.
163. All pupils, regardless of gender and race, have equal access to the curriculum and other school activities. The school promotes multi-cultural understanding successfully through a number of subjects and through such whole-school activities as assemblies.
164. The school has an outstanding, innovative approach to practice in relation to the statutory DES. The consultation process to produce the action plan, involving governors, staff and parents, supports the school's inclusive agenda. The school has modified the physical environment, where necessary, and has demonstrated clearly that it is prepared to take whatever action is necessary to accommodate individual needs. The school has undertaken a review and an impact assessment of its behaviour management, SEN and MAT policies, and has modified these appropriately to make reasonable adjustments for pupils covered under the DES.

## Leadership and management

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

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

165. The school awarded a grade 1 for this key question. The inspection team awarded one grade lower because, although they identified many strengths, they judged that there are insufficient outstanding features in leadership and management across the school to justify the higher grade.
166. The school's 'Strategic Framework' for 2008 – 2013 sets out appropriate aims, vision and values, supported by clear commitments. These were agreed following a thorough process of consultation that involved staff, governors, parents and pupils. The plan underpins all school policies and planning. Its principles are shared by all staff and are reflected well in practice across the school.
167. The headteacher took the lead in establishing the school's strategic framework and clearly promotes its principles. Since the last inspection, he has modified his approach to leadership and, in particular, to his management of the leadership team. He is aware of the particular strengths of the other members of the team and allows each to take full responsibility for designated aspects of the management of the school.
168. The two deputy headteachers and one of the assistant headteachers have considerable experience of working at senior management level; they apply strong management skills to good effect in leading particular initiatives, and their effectiveness is reflected in many of the improvements that have taken place in recent years. The other assistant headteacher and the seconded member of the team are developing well in their new roles and have already begun to make valuable contributions in their designated areas of responsibility.
169. Members of the leadership team work together very well as a team; they each bring different strengths to the team and therefore complement one another effectively. They have suitably high expectations of pupils and staff. With the exception of the seconded member of the team, each acts as a line manager to several departments or year groups. They provide good support and represent their departments well at leadership team meetings. In addition, they evaluate examination performance and challenge aspects of the work of their departments. Regular meetings, held half-termly with heads of departments and fortnightly with heads of year, provide a sound structure for this practice. All staff value these arrangements which have led to improvements in provision and standards. The line management system has helped to improve the quality of middle management but a degree of inconsistency remains at this level.

170. Most middle managers carry out their roles effectively, and there are a few examples of outstanding practice in this area. The school has recently achieved accreditation through the Investors in People Leadership and Management Model, and its preparations for this made an important contribution to the development of middle managers' skills. All heads of year and many heads of department provide strong leadership of their teams. Leadership and management are less strong in a few subject areas.
171. All managers have appropriate job descriptions and suitable allocations of time to allow them to carry out their duties effectively.
172. Good communication and teamwork help to ensure that all staff have a shared understanding of the school's aims and values. Through a programme of regular scheduled meetings, they are able to share ideas and contribute to discussions about good practice and improving standards and provision.
173. The school considers a range of relevant data when setting targets for pupils' attainments. It uses targets effectively to guide pupils' preparation for examinations and other assessments.
174. The school takes account of all national priority areas. It has given due attention to the development of pupils' learning skills at key stage 3 and is investigating the possibility of further developments to the organisation of the curriculum in order to enhance provision. It has established appropriate partnerships with other schools and meets in full the requirements of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure, 2009, in relation to courses offered at 14+. However, its efforts to promote uptake for vocational courses have had limited success to date. The schools' arrangements for transition from key stage 2 to 3 and its provision for ESDGC are outstanding features. Its provision for bilingualism is less well developed.
175. Arrangements for performance management are well established and thorough, and are in place for both teachers and support staff. Performance management is suitably linked to professional development and has a positive impact on teachers' work. Last year, one of the objectives for all teaching staff was on the common theme of assessment for learning, and developments in this area have already led to improvements in classroom practice, particularly in key stage 3.
176. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Students benefit from good provision, guidance and support, and the school has implemented a number of suitable strategies aimed at helping students to adjust to sixth-form work and at raising standards, particularly in Year 12.
177. The governing body (GB) makes a valuable contribution to the management of the school. Governors have a range of professional experience and expertise, which they use well for the benefit of the school. They demonstrate a good understanding of the main strengths and areas for development in the school and provide an appropriate level of support and challenge. The main body and the four committees meet regularly. Additional meetings of the chairs of each

group and the headteacher ensure that their work is well co-ordinated and their approach consistent.

178. Governors contribute well to the strategic direction of the school. They had a full involvement in the production of the strategic framework document, they consider draft school improvement plans annually, and they participate in regular reviews of the school's progress in addressing identified priorities.
179. Individual governors are linked to departments in the school. In some cases, these link roles are well established and have an impact on the work of departments; in others, progress has been more limited, often because particular governors are not easily available at times that are convenient to the departments.
180. The GB fulfils most of its statutory responsibilities. However, it has not ensured that statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form are fully met, and there are a very few omissions from the school's prospectus and annual report to parents.

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

<b>Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
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181. In its self-evaluation report, the school awarded a grade 1 for this key question. The inspection team judged grade 2 to be more appropriate. This is because, while many aspects of self-evaluation and planning for improvement are comprehensive and thorough, inspectors did not identify the outstanding features required to justify the higher grade.
182. Members of the leadership team make good use of a broad range of evidence to monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility. All have a clear understanding of the good features and areas for development in these areas, and across the school as a whole. However, they do not currently use information from lesson observations or from pupils' written work consistently to inform judgements about standards in subjects.
183. Well-developed systems for self-evaluation are in place, and all staff understand these. The roles of senior and middle leaders in relation to self-evaluation are well established and the responsibilities of senior leaders are clearly defined. The senior leader linked to each year or subject team has a good impact in ensuring that systems are implemented consistently. All middle leaders use a wide range of evidence to evaluate how well their teams are performing.
184. The school's self-evaluation report is suitably detailed, covering the standards achieved by pupils in examinations and assessments at various levels and the quality of a very wide range of the school's work. The report provides senior leaders with appropriate guidance in identifying priorities and strategies for

improvement. The judgements made in this report are clear and are well supported by evidence.

185. The inspection team agreed with the school's judgements on two of the seven key questions, awarding one grade lower for four questions, and two grades lower for the remaining question. Where the inspection team's judgement was one grade lower than the schools' own evaluation, this was due mainly to the school's interpretation of what are outstanding features. Where the inspection team's judgement was two grades lower than the school's evaluation, this was because of an important shortcoming not identified by the school.
186. The self-evaluation reports produced by middle leaders show some variation in quality. Most make appropriate judgements and a minority present particularly clear evaluations. In a few cases, judgements are not sufficiently critical or evaluative.
187. Leaders and managers consult pupils, teachers and support staff on a range of matters, and they listen to, and take heed of, the views expressed. This is a particularly strong feature of the school's self-evaluation arrangements.
188. The leadership team take suitable account of a wide range of information, including evaluations made by middle leaders, when identifying school priorities. Current priorities are well focused, manageable and clearly communicated to all staff. Departmental and year-team improvement plans are all appropriately linked to the school's priorities. A minority of departments cleverly integrate these with the priorities they have identified through their own departmental self-evaluation. In a few subjects, improvement planning lacks detail and does not place sufficient focus on subject-specific issues.
189. The school ensures that its priorities reflect the school's aims, vision and values. The school improvement plan is clearly related to its identified priorities, and contains very good detail about planned actions, how success can be measured and what resources will be required. In recent years, effective planning has helped to improve the educational provision made by the school. Appropriate allocation of resources ensures that plans can be implemented effectively.
190. The school has made good progress with addressing nearly all of the key issues of the last inspection. In particular:
  - standards have improved overall, and particularly in science, religious education and history in key stage 3 and key stage 4, and in English and history in the sixth form;
  - sixth-form students are now more independent learners;
  - the school has established more focused and consistent monitoring and evaluation systems, which more fully involve all members of staff in the processes;
  - the quality and usefulness of homework have improved across the school;
  - pupils' behaviour has improved significantly, while their punctuality to lessons has also improved;

- the accommodation available to the school has improved and is now largely fit for purpose and allows for full delivery of the curriculum; however, there are still shortcomings in some buildings and in some parts of the school grounds;
- there is now appropriate provision for pupils' spiritual development across the school;
- the curriculum in key stage 4 now meets statutory requirements for the provision of religious education;
- the school now meets the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

191. Provision for religious education in the sixth form still does not meet statutory requirements.

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

<b>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</b>
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192. This grade matches the school's own self-evaluation judgement. It is one grade higher than that given for Key Question 1. This is because inspectors judged that extremely efficient financial management is having an impact on standards and provision in the school. This is reflected in the high standards observed in the six subjects inspected and in the overall improvement in standards since the time of the last inspection.
193. The teaching staff is experienced, well qualified, and sufficient to meet the needs of all pupils. Nearly all teaching assistants are qualified to the highest level, and most science technicians have appropriate specialist qualifications. The school deploys its teachers and support staff extremely efficiently to gain maximum benefit from their time and expertise. Nearly all lessons are taught by subject specialists, and the two cover supervisors are assigned to classes according to their expertise wherever possible. Resource technicians provide valuable support in science, technology and information technology, and are highly valued by the teaching staff. The appointment of an assistant to the IT network manager has strengthened further the day-to-day support for pupils and teachers.
194. The administration support staff, together with the finance and data management teams, give outstanding support to pupils and staff. They are very well trained to undertake a wide range of duties and to meet their developing responsibilities. They provide staff with comprehensive financial plans and reconciliations, together with a range of other valuable information and support. They also carry out many additional responsibilities thoroughly and efficiently.
195. Overall, the provision of resources to departments is good. Books and other teaching materials are up-to-date and in good condition. Learning resources produced in-house support pupils well. The good quality of resources has a

positive impact on the quality of education and the standards achieved by pupils.

196. The library has an adequate range of appropriate books and journals. It has a stock of computers that is well used by pupils, both during lessons and outside teaching hours. Boys and girls make equally good use of the library lending facility.
197. The school has improved its provision of IT resources considerably in recent years. There are now five networked IT suites, 150 additional networked computers and a further 88 computers within the department. Three of the IT suites can be reserved for use by departments. This improvement in provision has led to increased pupil access to computers, and there are plans for further developments in this area. The computer network is robust and reliable and is extremely well managed by the IT network manager and his team. Most classrooms have a fixed data projector and many have interactive whiteboards. There remains a shortage of computers in a few areas of the school.
198. All pupils have access to a virtual learning environment (Moodle) through the school website. This contains a range of resources to support and extend their learning. Moodle is accessed by a growing number of students and is leading to increased independent study.
199. The investment in IT has led to improved standards in ICT skills across the curriculum since the last inspection. The way in which development in this area is managed, and its impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning in the school, constitute an outstanding feature.
200. The accommodation is adequate for the number of pupils on roll and allows for full delivery of the curriculum. Most rooms are fit for purpose and large enough to cater appropriately for most class sizes. The refurbished areas of the school, including demountable classrooms, provide a bright and welcoming environment for teaching and learning. Most departments have suites of rooms that are in close proximity to one other, and this has helped to ensure effective team working within departments.
201. The estates manager and his team of two caretakers, one maintenance officer and 21 cleaning staff ensure that the school site is well maintained, clean and free of litter. There is an ongoing programme of redecoration and refurbishment. Each year, the estates manager submits a carefully costed programme of improvements for approval by the committees of the governing body. He and his team have undertaken much of the work themselves, securing substantial improvements to the accommodation, particularly in the creative studies and music blocks and the swimming pool. This is a very cost-effective way of upgrading facilities and is an outstanding feature.
202. There remain areas for development. The school's teaching blocks are on different levels and access for those with mobility problems is difficult. The

school has an appropriate access plan in place designed to address this issue. The lower school block is in need of external repair and general refurbishment.

203. There are well-established procedures to develop teachers and support staff. Training needs derive from the school's performance management procedures. This system is extremely well designed and balances very well the needs of the school with those of the individual. CPD is very well planned and thoroughly evaluated. Six months after a training event, there is an impact analysis to measure the benefits on teaching and learning; this is a particularly strong feature.
204. The staffing and finance committees of the GB meet to discuss the staffing requirements for each new academic year. These are costed and built into the proposed school budget.
205. The school provides outstanding guidance and support for newly-qualified teachers, teachers in the early stages of their professional development and students undertaking initial teacher training courses. Comprehensive programmes are in place, and these are well organised and effectively delivered. Action plans are detailed and carefully designed to meet the needs of individuals.
206. The school has an agreed structure for teaching and learning responsibilities and meets statutory requirements for workforce remodelling. Each teacher has an appropriate allocation of planning, preparation and assessment time.
207. The allocation of capitation to departments is based on an agreed formula that takes into account a range of appropriate factors. Departments may bid for additional funding for activities which reflect whole-school or departmental priorities and show a clear focus on improving teaching and learning.
208. The sixth form provides very good value for money, with an average class size of 16 in Year 12 and a high proportion of students remaining in school to complete their A level studies.
209. The teaching and learning, staffing, facilities and finance committees of the GB ensure that expenditure is closely linked to the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. Financial decisions are focused appropriately on curricular needs and improvements in teaching and learning.
210. The business manager reviews spending monthly and provides detailed reports to the headteacher, governing body committees and heads of department; the finance committee also undertakes a monthly evaluation of school spending. The headteacher, the business manager and chairs of the GB's four committees meet regularly to consider the available budget. The school has consistently produced a balanced budget, albeit with a reducing balance of reserves.
211. The school constantly seeks ways of making savings. Recent initiatives include an online ordering system which attracts a substantial discount, and

provision for different areas of the school to be heated independently. Energy efficient lighting has been installed, as well as low-cost multi-function printers and copiers. There is a regular income from community use of the sports centre and the swimming pool. The Parents, Staff and Friends Association also makes a valuable contribution to school funds.

212. The school's rigorous, systematic planning, monitoring and review of the available budget constitute an outstanding feature and help to ensure that the school provides very good value for money.

## Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

### English

Key stage 3: **Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings**  
Key stage 4: **Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings**  
Sixth form: **Grade 1 – Good with outstanding features**

213. Examination results at GCSE in the last two years have been above national averages for passes at grades A\*/A and A\*-C. The attainments of all pupils except middle ability boys have been in line with, or above, expectations.

214. At A level, examination results in the last two years have been in line with national averages for passes at grades A/B and A-E and represent very good achievement for these students.

### Key Stage 3

#### Good features

215. Most pupils make good progress in their learning, and this is reflected in their attainment at the end of the key stage. In contrast to the national trend, the attainment of boys in the last two years is only slightly lower than that of girls. Pupils with SEN make outstanding progress by the end of the key stage.

216. Nearly all pupils engage thoughtfully with a range of texts, including texts that reflect the language and culture of Wales.

217. Most pupils:

- listen and respond purposefully to the teacher and to their peers;
- speak clearly in a variety of situations, showing good awareness of audience and purpose;
- show good understanding of character, theme and plot in prose texts, and have a good awareness of how language features influence both fiction and non-fiction;
- can select relevant information from texts and use a good range of learning strategies, such as skimming and scanning and text marking, to clarify meaning;
- write creatively and imaginatively in a range of forms and for different audiences and purposes; and

- have a good understanding of how language features and presentational devices in texts can inform their own work.

### **Shortcomings**

218. A few pupils:

- are passive and disengaged in whole class and group situations and do not make sufficient progress; and
- write superficially in response to texts.

219. A few more able pupils do not build sufficiently on their prior attainment.

### **Key Stage 4**

#### **Good features**

220. Most pupils build on the skills they have acquired previously and make good progress by the end of the key stage. Pupils with SEN make very good progress relative to their ability.

221. Most pupils:

- listen and respond effectively in pairs, groups and as a class; their discussions and collaborations in group work are mature and thoughtful;
- have a good understanding of how language features and literary devices shape fiction and non-fiction texts; they show very good understanding of character, plot and theme in literature and of persuasive techniques in non-fiction texts;
- use a range of purposeful learning strategies to locate information, clarify meaning and support points of view;
- use technical terminology appropriately and effectively in text analyses;
- plan, draft and improve their work effectively; and
- produce extended writing that is creative, purposeful and accurately presented.

#### **Shortcomings**

222. The progress of a few pupils is limited due to their failure to play an active part in group work and their over-dependency on the teacher.

223. The extended writing of a very few middle ability pupils contains basic errors.

## **Sixth form**

### **Outstanding features**

224. More able students undertaking the English Language/Literature option make outstanding progress.
225. In both language and literature options at AS and A2, more able students show maturity, sophistication and insightfulness in discussions and in written responses to texts.
226. In both options, most students are outstanding in their capacity to:
- work together collaboratively and effectively to develop understanding of texts;
  - work independently; and
  - use very purposeful learning strategies such as text marking and concept mapping to probe meaning.

### **Good features**

227. Most students make good progress and attain good results at AS and A level.
228. In discussions, and in their written work, most students show good understanding of character, plot and theme.
229. Most students write creatively and accurately in response to a range of stimuli. They use stylistic conventions with confidence and show good awareness of contexts.
230. Many show good appreciation of other interpretations in their reading and writing.

### **Shortcomings**

231. A very few students:
- are passive in group discussions;
  - are uncertain when responding to unseen texts; and
  - attain results in AS and A2 Literature that are not in line with their ability.

<b>Science</b>
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Key stage 3 **Grade 1 - Good with outstanding features**

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

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

232. Examination results at GCSE in the last two years have been well above national averages for passes at grades A\*/A and A\*-C. Results represent very good achievement for these pupils.

233. Examination results at A level in the last two years have been mostly well above national averages for passes at grades A/B and A-E. Results generally represent good achievement for these students.

### **Key Stage 3**

#### **Outstanding features**

234. Nearly all pupils fully understand:

- the purpose and required outcomes of a practical activity;
- how to plan carefully; and
- what they need to do to achieve accurate results.

235. In the key tasks and investigations in class, most pupils carry out investigations to a high degree of accuracy, understand fully the need for reliable results, and show outstanding communication skills. They draw thorough conclusions and evaluate their work very well.

236. Most pupils in Year 7 can identify the fact that, when testing the properties of metals and non-metals, it is important to make the test fair.

237. Many pupils, including those of lower ability:

- answer a range of searching questions thoroughly; and
- contribute significantly to establishing how the lesson activity should be carried out.

238. A few most able pupils demonstrate exceptional knowledge and understanding of course work.

### **Good features**

239. Most pupils:

- can recall thoroughly a wide range of information;
- can explain basic scientific ideas such as the theory of particles;
- gain understanding of new concepts quickly;
- demonstrate a good range of comprehension and analysis skills to handle information well; and
- make good progress in lessons and over time.

240. Nearly all use appropriate scientific terminology.

### **Shortcomings**

241. A few pupils:

- do not show a clear understanding of more complex concepts; and
- overcomplicate issues, drawing in irrelevant factors when planning investigations.

### **Key Stage 4**

#### **Outstanding features**

242. Most pupils, of all abilities and in all areas of science:

- demonstrate a very clear knowledge and understanding of concepts, such as red shift in their study of the stars; and
- can apply their knowledge confidently and accurately to new contexts such as examination questions.

243. Most pupils, especially in biology, carry out practical work such as producing cultures in an organised and thoughtful manner. They plan and undertake their work safely, and reflect carefully on what they have done and seen.

244. In chemistry, most pupils possess high skills in writing chemical formulae and equations consistently and accurately. They can then gain all necessary information from the equations they have written.

245. Pupils of lower ability make significant progress during lessons, gaining a clear understanding of, for example, the carbon cycle.

### **Good features**

246. Most pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of an extended range of terminology.
247. Many pupils:
- are able to plan an investigation well, identify the one variable they can change and what they must measure;
  - carry out practical activities efficiently, make measurements as accurately as possible and have a clear idea of purpose and how they intend to take their knowledge onwards; and
  - in written work, show well developed comprehension skills, draw accurate graphs, gain information from them, and record practical results appropriately.
248. The majority of pupils of middle to lower ability can recall a good range of previous knowledge such as different types of compounds and their properties and half life.

### **Shortcomings**

249. About half of pupils produce answers that are a little brief and lack depth and rigour.
250. A minority of pupils:
- work too quickly through an activity and give too little thought to outcomes; and
  - are not careful enough when using formulae and units.
251. A few pupils of lower middle ability make no progress during the lesson.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Good features**

252. Nearly all students:
- are able to identify the key features of an Advanced Notice examination paper in physics and demonstrate very good analytical skills;
  - use modelling to develop their ideas; and
  - demonstrate good drawing skills, especially in biology.

253. Many students:

- demonstrate good recall, for example, typical reactions of groups of elements;
- can explain practical observations using theoretical concepts;
- demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge to new circumstances, identify key points and solve problems; and
- use more advanced formulae and equations to solve problems and carry out calculations accurately.

254. The majority of pupils use practical apparatus such as burettes and microscopes well.

### Shortcomings

255. A few students:

- show some confusion over the connections between a number of different concepts; and
- do not demonstrate enough rigour or depth when reviewing practical evidence or answering A level style questions.

## History

Key stage 3: **Grade 1 – Good with outstanding features**

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

Sixth form: **Grade 2 – Good features with no important shortcomings**

256. Examination results at GCSE in the last two years have been significantly above national averages for passes at grades A\*/A and A\*-C. Most pupils perform close to expectations.

257. Examination results at A level in the last two years have been below the national averages for passes at A/B and A-E and significantly below expectations. However, current A level students are making progress in line with or above expectations.

## **Key Stage 3**

### **Outstanding features**

258. Most pupils:

- become more and more secure in their chronological awareness, making perceptive comparisons within and across historical periods;
- use their knowledge and understanding to make informed decisions about the significance of the events they investigate; this is particularly so for middle ability and less able pupils who use very specific terms for the events and people they study;
- plan their enquiries effectively: they pose questions which become increasingly searching as their knowledge grows; they carry out purposeful independent research, for example into 19<sup>th</sup> century Cardiff; they expertly recognise when sources show bias and therefore do not present a complete picture of the past; they evaluate their enquiries intelligently with increasing accuracy; and
- construct written explanations of events with growing clarity and precision; middle ability and more able pupils do this with increasing levels of sophistication.

### **Good features**

259. Most pupils make reasoned judgments about interpretations, suggesting likely reasons for differences in the views of historians, for example, in the case of the Amritsar Massacre.

### **Shortcomings**

260. There are no important shortcomings.

## **Key Stage 4**

### **Outstanding features**

261. Most pupils:

- use their extremely detailed knowledge and understanding to reach confident judgments about the periods they study; and
- use very specific details about change within and across historical periods in discussion of each period they investigate; they do this with increasing accuracy across the key stage; this directly impacts on the outstanding quality of their written answers to questions about progress and change over time.

262. Many pupils consider why developments or individuals are significant, for example scientists in the Renaissance, and consistently present well considered reasons for this.

### **Good features**

263. Most pupils interrogate sources, testing them for reliability and constructing arguments based on their limitations or usefulness. In doing this, they make good use of a variety of sources, both visual and written.

### **Shortcomings**

264. There are no important shortcomings

### **Sixth form**

#### **Outstanding features**

265. Most students have an extensive knowledge and understanding of the events they study. Their writing shows detail and precision, and reflects a very good sense of period. They confidently apply the language of significance.

#### **Good features**

266. Most students:

- use good research skills to complete well explained coursework; they read widely and discriminate wisely when using the internet for historical information;
- consider the complexity of causation using specific historical language orally and in writing;
- understand clearly why historians disagree; they contrast and compare these in detail, for example when considering the many interpretations of the Holocaust; and
- analyse events and issues to construct well thought-out arguments; they learn these skills quickly to make good progress at the start of the course, for example when explaining the causes of the French Revolution.

#### **Shortcomings**

267. There are no important shortcomings

## Art and Design

Key stage 3: **Grade 1 – Good with outstanding features**

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

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

268. Examination results at GCSE in the last 2 years have been above national averages for passes at grades A\*/A and A\*-C. These results reflect very good achievement in relation to pupils' ability.

269. Examination results at A level in the last 2 years have been above national averages for passes at grades A/B and A-E. These results reflect very good achievement in relation to pupils' ability.

### Key Stage 3

#### Outstanding features

270. Most pupils make very good use of sketchbooks to practise, developing recording skills that are outstanding.

271. They use materials, tools and techniques with increasing confidence and flair, and in each year across the key stage they make significant progress in building on their knowledge, understanding and skills.

272. Many pupils:

- demonstrate that they are able to make images and artefacts, such as paintings of fish and sculptures of distorted self portraits, to a standard that is outstanding; and
- use a variety of processes including painting, drawing, collage and ceramics to a standard that is outstanding.

#### Good features

273. Many pupils:

- make good use of what they know and understand about the work of other artists to inform and enrich their own work; for example, stories inspired by Aboriginal art, lead to practical work that is innovative and personal;
- use sketchbooks well to collect, collate and present their ideas, thoughts and feelings; the more able express their ideas fluently and with confidence; and
- show, through their project based on Egyptian art work, that they understand the relationship between the work of others, from different cultures, places and times, and their own work.

274. Many pupils with additional learning needs achieve standards above expected levels.

### **Shortcomings**

275. A few pupils in Year 9 are too reliant on copying from second-hand sources.

276. In a minority of cases, pupils' analysis of the work of others is superficial.

277. A majority of pupils make very little use of subject-specific software for manipulating images and developing ideas.

### **Key Stage 4**

#### **Outstanding features**

278. Most pupils:

- systematically develop a critical appreciation of historical and contemporary practitioners; this has a significant impact on the excellent standards that they achieve in their own practical work;
- use their sketchbooks to document methodically and thoroughly their observations, thoughts, experiences and ideas; and
- are highly skilled across a wide range of artistic processes; during the key stage they show resilience and commitment to mastering the methods of making drawings, paintings, and ceramics; they make three-dimensional structures that show imaginative and proficient use of materials, tools and techniques; they make paintings that show skilful use of wet and dry materials.

#### **Good features**

279. Most pupils:

- are able to investigate a theme and present articulately information gathered from a wide selection of art, craft and design resources, including visits to galleries, books, and the internet; and
- are able to build successfully on prior knowledge and skills through accomplished peer assessment and critical self evaluation.

#### **Shortcomings**

280. A few pupils:

- rely too heavily on photographs when recording from observation; and

- struggle to analyse the work of others critically; consequently their understanding of the work of others lacks rigour and depth.

## Sixth form

### Outstanding features

281. Nearly all students:

- are able to follow personal lines of enquiry; their research is focused and sustained, and leads to highly innovative, accomplished, sophisticated and creative images and artefacts; and
- demonstrate outstanding technical competence across a range of processes.

282. Nearly all students who choose to use ICT for manipulating images achieve outstanding success.

### Good features

283. Nearly all students:

- reflect critically on their own work and make good progress in every aspect of the course; and
- develop ideas well from resources that they have collected and collated.

### Shortcomings

284. A few students adapt the ideas of others rather than develop their own.

<b>Music</b>
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Key stage 3: **Grade 2 – Good features with no important shortcomings**

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

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

285. In the last two years, GCSE examination results have been significantly above national averages for passes at A\*/A and A\*-C. They represent very good achievement for pupils in relation to their ability.

286. The proportions of students achieving grades A/B and A-E in A level have been significantly higher than national averages for the past two years. These results represent good achievement in relation to students' ability.

### **Key Stage 3**

#### **Good features**

- 287. Most pupils in Year 7, and many pupils in Year 8, sing with enthusiasm, good intonation, and good diction. Many can maintain an independent melody line when singing in parts.
- 288. Most pupils in all years can perform fluently on a range of classroom percussion and keyboard instruments, using good technique. Pupils who receive additional instrumental lessons make good use of their own instruments in class.
- 289. Most pupils make good progress when working in groups and pairs to compose pieces in response to a variety of stimuli. Many of these pieces are imaginative and contain good musical interest. Many Year 9 pupils create imaginative individual compositions using ICT, and a few of these are outstanding.
- 290. Most pupils have a good understanding of the musical elements. They can identify aspects of their use when they listen to music, and they make good use of appropriate terminology when responding to what they hear. They have a good grasp of prior learning and talk informatively about their work.

#### **Shortcomings**

- 291. The quality of singing is not consistent across all classes, particularly with respect to tone quality.
- 292. A minority of pupils have difficulty keeping in time when they perform, and lack the technical skills needed to perform fluently and accurately.

### **Key Stage 4**

#### **Outstanding features**

- 293. Many pupils produce imaginative and interesting compositions that are of a high standard. They make very effective use of ICT as a compositional tool.
- 294. Many pupils are highly perceptive when they listen to music, and use appropriate terminology effectively when describing what they hear.

#### **Good features**

- 295. Most pupils achieve at least good standards on their chosen instrument or voice.
- 296. All pupils show a good understanding of the use of musical elements, and display good knowledge of prior learning.

### **Shortcomings**

297. A few pupils have difficulty keeping in time when they perform with others, and tend to rush.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Outstanding features**

298. Many students perform to a very high standard on their chosen instrument.
299. Many students produce outstanding compositions using ICT. These compositions are imaginative in their use of texture, harmony, timbre and structure.

#### **Good features**

300. All AS and A level students display good listening skills, and show a very good understanding of features within their set works. They make good use of terminology when commenting on music.
301. Music technology students have a good understanding of MIDI. They have a good understanding of various techniques and effects, and can identify these in music of different styles. These students also produce sequencing and multi-track exercises that are of a good standard.

### **Shortcomings**

302. Although most music technology students are articulate when describing what they hear orally, they are less fluent when expressing themselves in writing.

<b>Religious Education (including Religious Studies)</b>
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Key stage 3: **Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings**

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

Sixth form: **Insufficient evidence on which to make a judgement**

303. No pupils were entered for the GCSE full course in 2008. The one pupil entered in 2009 attained a result that was in line with expectations. Current Year 10 and Year 11 classes reflect an improved uptake for the full course.
304. GCSE short course results at A\*/A and A\*- C were well above the national average in 2008 and close to the national average in 2009. The proportion of pupils entered for this course was significantly higher than the national average in each of those years.

## Key Stage 3

### Good features

305. Most pupils across the ability range have good factual knowledge and understanding of the units of work studied. They make good progress in learning across the key stage.
306. Pupils with SEN make good progress. They make good contributions to group and class discussions on the topics studied, and their written work is of good quality.
307. Nearly all pupils engage in extensive research and make presentations of good quality based on this research.
308. Most pupils:
- are confident in expressing and justifying their personal standpoints on moral and religious issues; they ask appropriate, and sometimes searching, questions;
  - show an awareness of how religious belief influences behaviour; for example, they understand that moral decisions and actions are influenced by what a person believes;
  - have a good understanding of religious symbolism associated with different religions; for example, when studying the Jewish Passover, they understand the significance of items on a 'seder' dish;
  - use religious language appropriately and demonstrate a good understanding of key terms and concepts such as the Muslim concept of 'jihad'; and
  - use evaluation skills with confidence.

### Shortcomings

309. A few pupils:
- simply describe beliefs and practices rather than offering explanations or justifications for them; and
  - have a limited understanding of the link between religious belief and practice and contemporary society.

## **Key Stage 4**

### **Good features**

310. Nearly all pupils, across the ability range, show good knowledge and understanding of the units of work studied.
311. Nearly all pupils:
- are aware of the differences between secular and religious approaches to how the world was created and understand well the authority that Christians give to the biblical account of creation; many can distinguish between literal and non-literal interpretations of the creation story;
  - develop the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to enable them to raise, and respond to, religious and moral questions; and
  - have good evaluation skills and can weigh up pros and cons of an argument, give alternative viewpoints and justify their point of view, drawing on religious and contemporary evidence.
312. Most pupils:
- identify similarities and differences between and within religions; for example, they can identify denominational differences regarding views on sex before marriage and contraception, and also appreciate the ways in which Jews and Christians differ in some beliefs and practices;
  - use religious language appropriately and demonstrate a good understanding of key terms and concepts; and
  - enhance the quality and depth of their work through effective pair and group discussions; those pupils taking the full course have well-developed debating skills and demonstrate a depth of understanding.

### **Shortcomings**

313. A few pupils:
- give insufficiently detailed oral and written responses; and
  - do not draw upon enough evidence to support their viewpoints or the viewpoints of others.

### **Sixth form**

314. No pupils have taken a public examination in this subject in recent years.
315. There is insufficient evidence on which to make a judgement on standards in religious education in the sixth form.

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

We are delighted that, in terms of both standards and teaching and assessment, high proportions of the lessons that inspectors observed were awarded grades 1 and 2, with percentages above, and in some respects well above, national average and target figures. The improvement since our last inspection that this reflects is testimony to the quality and professionalism of the staff and the hard work of our pupils.

We are also pleased that inspectors identified a number of outstanding features, especially in relation to our out-of-hours and extra curricular provision, the way our youngsters are cared for, guided and supported and our efficiency in maximising the use of our resources.

We shall address the recommendations thoroughly and with the same commitment that has brought about the many improvements since 2004 that were identified by the inspection team. Indeed, we are pleased to note that a number of the recommendations made by the inspectors are recognised as forming part of our current planning procedures and can confirm that the others are being built into our 2010-11 development plan.

We should like to thank all those parents, local authority officers, heads of local primary schools and others in the community who supported the school and the quality of its provision during the inspection process.

## Appendix 1

### Basic information about the school

Name of school	Radyr Comprehensive School
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Address of school	Heol Isaf Radyr Cardiff
Postcode	CF15 8XG
Telephone number	02920 845100

Headteacher	Mr Steven M Fowler
Date of appointment	September 1995
Chair of governors / Appropriate authority	Mrs Margaret Lloyd Cardiff
Reporting inspector	Dr Kevin Adams
Dates of inspection	26 <sup>th</sup> – 30 <sup>th</sup> April 2010

## Appendix 2

### School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	201	174	185	180	205	154	159	1258

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	64	15	72.7

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	17.3 : 1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	-
Average teaching group size	23.1
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	74.9%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school (= Y7 – 11)
Term 1	94.9	92.8	93.0	92.0	91.6	91.6	83.9	92.9
Term 2	94.8	92.0	92.3	90.9	89.0	91.4	83.2	91.8
Term 3	97.4	94.8	94.8	94.8	93.1	96.2	85.5	95.0

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	6
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	20 temporary 0 permanent

# Appendix 3

This report uses data for 2009 for LEA and Wales comparative information

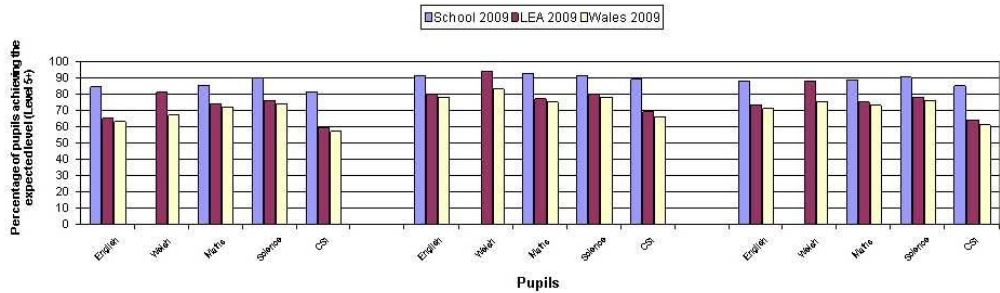
**Radyr Comprehensive School**  
Cardiff

LEA/School no: 681/4070

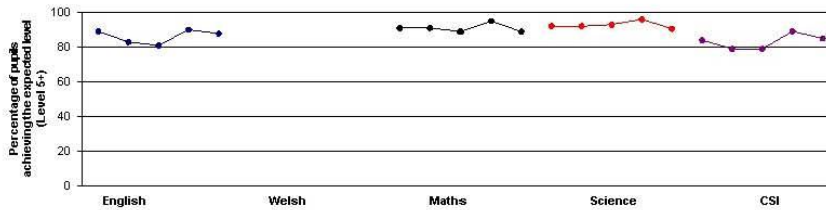
## School comparative information: National Curriculum Assessments 2009 with benchmarking Key Stage 3

Percentage of boys, girls, and pupils achieving at least the expected level (Level 5+):

	Boys			Girls			Pupils		
	School 2009	LEA 2009	Wales 2009	School 2009	LEA 2009	Wales 2009	School 2009	LEA 2009	Wales 2009
English	85	65	63	92	80	78	88	73	71
Welsh		81	67		94	83		88	75
Maths	86	74	72	93	77	75	89	75	73
Science	90	76	74	92	80	78	91	78	76
CSI	81	59	57	89	69	66	85	64	61



### School Performance over time (2005 - 2009)



### Contextual Information

Benchmarked against schools with a similar percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals.

School's results shown in greyed boxes. Column headings refer to...

- Quartile 1 School is in the top 25 per cent.
- Quartile 2 School is in the top 50 per cent but not the top 25 per cent.
- Quartile 3 School is in the bottom 50 per cent but not the bottom 25 per cent.
- Quartile 4 School is in the bottom 25 per cent.

Free School Meal Group

Less than 10 percent eligible for FSM

	Quartile 4	Lower Quartile Boundary	Quartile 3	Median Boundary	Quartile 2	Upper Quartile Boundary	Quartile 1
English		78		82		88	
Welsh		72		79		88	
Maths		78		83		88	89
Science		83		87		90	91
CSI		69		76		80	85

#### Notes:

1. Figures for Welsh refer to attainment in Welsh first language only.
2. CSI = Core Subject Indicator. To achieve the CSI a pupil must achieve at least the expected level 5 in both Mathematics and Science and either English or Welsh first language.
3. If there were no pupils eligible for assessment in a subject for a particular year the graph will discontinue and show a gap for that year.

**Pupils aged 15**

**Number of pupils aged 15 who were on roll in January 2009 : 217**

**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 2008/09	100	97	78	71	72	422
LEA Area 2008/09	100	87	59	44	43	367
Wales 2008/09	99	88	61	47	46	379
School 07/08/09	99	95	78	..	70	430
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	67	425

**Number of boys aged 15 who were on roll in January 2009 : 116**

**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 2008/09	100	96	73	67	69	408
LEA Area 2008/09	100	85	55	43	42	355
Wales 2008/09	98	86	55	43	43	357
School 07/08/09	99	95	73	..	67	417
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	64	410

**Number of girls aged 15 who were on roll in January 2009 : 101**

**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 2008/09	99	99	84	75	76	439
LEA Area 2008/09	100	89	62	46	44	380
Wales 2008/09	99	91	66	51	50	401
School 07/08/09	99	96	83	..	73	445
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	69	439

(1) For details on approved qualifications, point scores and contribution to thresholds, please see the Database for Approved Qualifications in Wales (DAQW) at <http://www.daqw.org.uk/>

(2) For information about which syllabuses are included in each subject area see Notes for Guidance.

(3) Entry Level Qualification.

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

.. Data not available

**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 (3) only	Left full time education without a qualification (4)	achieved one or more ELQ (3) only	Left full time education without a qualification (4)	achieved one or more ELQ (3) only	Left full time education without a qualification (4)
School 2008/09	0	0.9	0	1.7	0	0.0
LEA Area 2008/09	2	1.4	3	1.4	1	1.4
Wales 2008/09	2	0.9	3	1.0	1	0.8
School 07/08/09	0	..	0	..	0	..
School 06/07/08	0	..	0	..	0	..

**Pupils aged 17**

	Number of pupils aged 17 who were on roll in January 2009 : 152		Number of boys aged 17 who were on roll in January 2009 : 65		Number of girls aged 17 who were on roll in January 2009 : 87	
	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 2008/09	100	764	100	770	100	760
LEA Area 2008/09	96	665	96	651	96	677
Wales 2008/09	96	688	95	656	97	715
School 07/08/09	..	765	..	755	..	773
School 06/07/08	..	..	..	..	..	..

- (1) For details on approved qualifications, point scores and contribution to thresholds, please see the Database for Approved Qualifications in Wales (DAQW) at <http://www.daqw.org.uk/>
- (2) For information about which syllabuses are included in each subject area see Notes for Guidance.
- (3) Entry Level Qualification.
- (4) As defined under the National Performance Indicator EDU/002.
- .. Data not available

**Key Stage 4 free school meal benchmarking data for Radyr Comprehensive School (6814070)**  
(summary data)

Free school meals (FSM) benchmarking group (a)	2007	2008	2009
Up to and including 10% of pupils of statutory school age eligible for FSM	6.4%	5.7%	6.2%
Over 10% and up to and including 15% of pupils of statutory school age eligible for FSM			
Over 15% and up to and including 20% of pupils of statutory school age eligible for FSM			
Over 20% and up to and including 30% of pupils of statutory school age eligible for FSM			
Over 30% of pupils of statutory school age eligible for FSM			

Source: Pupil Level Annual Schools' Census (PLASC)

(a) From 2009, a three-year average of these data is used to determine the free school meal benchmarking group for the school, and so these data are presented as a three-year average from that point (i.e. by taking the data for the current year, and also the two years prior in deriving the figure).

**Summary of positions within the relevant FSM benchmarking group for each achievement (a)**

Subject	2007	2008	2009
Percentage of 15 year olds achieving the level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and Maths	.	1	1
Percentage of 15 year olds achieving the level 2 threshold	1	1	2
Percentage of 15 year olds achieving the level 1 threshold	2	3	2
Percentage of 15 year olds achieving the Core Subject Indicator	1	1	1
Average wider points score across all subjects	1	2	3
Percentage of 15 year olds achieving a level 2 qualification in English	1	1	2
Percentage of 15 year olds achieving a level 2 qualification in Mathematics	1	2	1
Percentage of 15 year olds achieving a level 2 qualification in Science	1	1	1

**Absence data (a):**

Percentage of half-day sessions missed due to absence	3	2	3
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Sources: Pupil Examination Performance Information and Pupil Level Annual Schools' Census (PLASC)

(a) A rating of 1 means that school's position is within the highest 25% of schools in the relevant benchmarking group.

A rating of 2 means that school's position is within the highest 50%, but not the highest 25% of schools in the relevant benchmarking group.

A rating of 3 means that school's position is within the lowest 50%, but not the lowest 25% of schools in the relevant benchmarking group.

A rating of 4 means that school's position is within the lowest 25% of schools in the relevant benchmarking group.

This system applies to both subject performance and absence. A rating of 1 indicates above average performance and also above average absence within the relevant benchmarking group, while a rating of 4 indicates below average levels of each indicator.

The symbol "." means that data are not applicable.

The symbol "~" means that data are not available until late 2009.

## Appendix 4

### Evidence base of the inspection

Fourteen inspectors, including a peer assessor and the school's nominee, spent a total of 53 days at the school.

Before the inspection, inspectors considered a range of documentation provided by the school and held discussions with:

- the headteacher;
- the leadership team;
- the governing body;
- parents; and
- representatives of the LA.

During the inspection week, inspectors visited:

- 77 lessons in the six subjects inspected;
- 32 lessons taught by other teachers at the school; and
- registrations, tutorials, assemblies and extra-curricular activities;

Discussions were held with:

- members of the leadership team;
- middle managers;
- teachers
- support staff;
- the Chair and other members of the governing body;
- groups of pupils and students from each year group;
- the school council; and
- headteachers of associate primary schools.

The team also considered:

- 125 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents;
- the work of a representative sample of pupils in each year group;
- samples of work in each subject inspected; and
- documentation provided by the school during the inspection week.

## Appendix 5

### Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

<b>Team member</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>	<b>Role</b>
Kevin Adams	Key Questions 1 and 5	Registered Inspector
Elizabeth Heaven	Aspects of Key Questions 1, 4 and 7	Lay Inspector/Core Team
Michael Tibbott	Key Questions 2 and 6 Science	Core Team
Mererid Morgan	Key Question 3	Core Team
Susan Allerston	Key Question 4	Core Team
David Trace	Key Question 7	Core Team
Jennifer Williams	English	Team Member
Martin Holmes	Science	Team Member
Miriam Norton	History	Team Member
Lorraine Buck	Art and Design	Team Member
Emyr Wynne Jones	Music	Team Member
Victoria Thomas	Religious education (including religious studies)	Team Member
Andrew Williams		School Nominee
Fiona Bell		Peer Assessor

The inspection team is very grateful to the school, the staff, the pupils, the parents, governors and other members of the school community for their welcome and co-operation during the inspection.

Contractor: ESIS  
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