

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

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

**Ysgol Bro Ddyfi  
Machynlleth  
Powys  
SY20 8DR**

**School Number: 6664003**

**Date of Inspection: 21 April 2008**

**by**

**William Gwyn Thomas  
79567**

**Date of Publication: 25 June 2008**

**Under Estyn contract number: 1203107**

**© Queens Printer and Controller of HMSO 2008: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The copyright in the material must be acknowledged as aforementioned and the title of the report specified.**

**Copies of this report are available from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide copies of the report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the cost of reproduction may be made to others requesting a copy of the report.**

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

The inspection of Ysgol Bro Ddyfi took place between 21/04/08 and 24/04/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by William Gwyn Thomas undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

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

There are three types of inspection.

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

For short inspections, there are no subject reports.

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

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

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

This school received a **standard** inspection.

## Year groups and key stages

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

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

### Primary phase:

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

### Secondary phase:

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

### The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Context</b>	1
<b>Summary</b>	2
<b>Recommendations</b>	7
<b>Standards</b>	8
Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?	8
<b>The quality of education and training</b>	13
Key Question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	13
Key Question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	16
Key Question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	20
<b>Leadership and management</b>	23
Key Question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?	23
Key Question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	25
Key Question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	27
<b>Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning</b>	29
Welsh first language	29
Mathematics	31
Science	33
History	35
Music	36
Physical education	37
<b>School's response to the inspection</b>	39
<b>Appendices</b>	40
1 Basic information about the school	40
2 School data and indicators	40
3 National Curriculum assessments results	41
4 Evidence base of the inspection	43
5 Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team	44

## Context

### The nature of the provider

1. Ysgol Bro Ddyfi is an 11-18 mixed, designated naturally bilingual school maintained by Powys Unitary Authority (AU). There are currently, 310 pupils on roll with 52 in the sixth form, compared with 284 at the time of the last inspection in April 2002 when there were 29 students in the sixth form. It is situated in Machynlleth, in north west Powys, and is close to the borders of Ceredigion and Gwynedd. The present buildings date back to the 1930's and 1950's, but there are plans to upgrade the buildings and develop the school as a community school.
2. In 2005, the region was the subject of a Geographical Pathfinder project. Current plans address the recommendations that were made and accepted in 2006, following this investigation. The first phase of the project, to develop a vocational and learning centre post-16, will open in September 2008.
3. Pupils attend the school from a wide area that extends from Carno in the east and Aberangell in the north west. The school also accepts pupils from Ceredigion and Gwynedd. Since 2006, students from Tywyn and Dolgellau secondary schools have joined the sixth form.
4. Agriculture continues to play an important role in the area, but tourism offers a limited form of seasonal employment. Many of Machynlleth's wards are in the objective one region, where social deprivation prevails.
5. Pupils of all abilities are received by the school. Seven pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) and a further 44 have been identified as needing some support. Two pupils are disapplied from the National Curriculum (NC). Two pupils are "looked after" by the local authority. Fourteen point six percent of the pupils are registered for free school meals in the 2007/08 academic year. This figure is much higher than the average for Powys Unitary Authority and close to the all-Wales average.
6. Sixty-five per cent of the pupils come from homes where the predominant language spoken is English. Thirty-four point five per cent come from Welsh speaking homes. Sixty-four per cent of pupils speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard within the school. No pupils receive support teaching in English as an additional language.
7. The headteacher was appointed to the post in January 2005. The composition of the senior management team (SMT) includes the headteacher, deputy headteacher and three assistant headteachers.
8. Vocationally-based courses at key stage (KS) 4 and in the sixth form are being developed internally and in partnership with other providers in the area.

### The school's priorities and targets

9. The school's main aim is to develop each individual to his or her full potential, educationally and socially, to enable each person to play a full and meaningful role within the community.
10. The school sets out its nine aims and objectives clearly for all to understand.

11. The school has prepared a three-year development plan, 2005-2008, which identifies five main priorities. They include:
  - upholding and raising standards particularly in KS3;
  - ensuring that the school is inclusive;
  - developing bilingual skills of all pupils;
  - ensuring efficient use of resources; and
  - promoting good practice to ensure quality, including monitoring teaching and learning.
12. The school also sets numerical targets for success at the end of KS3 and KS4 that, in 2008:
  - 45.3% of pupils should reach at least level 5, in teachers' assessments in all core subjects combined, at the end of KS3 (English 67%, Welsh 77%, mathematics 77%, science 73.9%); and
  - in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations, 59.2% of pupils should gain at least five GCSE grades A\*-C, and 100% gain at least five GCSE grades A\*-G.

## Summary

13. Ysgol Bro Ddyfi is a school that has developed appreciably over the last three years and has the potentiality to develop even further under the guidance of the current headteacher. The school has several strong features which relate specifically to the:
  - vision, expertise and drive of the headteacher;
  - good quality teaching throughout the school; and
  - effective support and guidance to pupils.
14. The school has a number of shortcomings which need attention. These include:
  - redistributing the roles of senior managers;
  - raising standards further in all subjects; and
  - strengthening the link between school and departmental planning.

### Table of grades awarded

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

15. These grades match those of the school's self-evaluation report in key questions 1, 2, 4 and 6. They are lower than that which the school awarded itself in its self-evaluation report in key questions 3, 5 and 7.

### Standards

16. In KS3 between 2005 and 2007, there has been a continued improvement in pupil performance in English, mathematics, science and the core subject indicator (CSI). However, excluding mathematics, pupil performance is below that achieved in the previous inspection.
17. In 2007, on the basis of results at the end of KS2, other than mathematics, where the performance is in the top 50%, when compared with similar schools in Wales in terms of free school meals, the school does not currently add good value at KS3. Performance in English, Welsh, science and the CSI is in the bottom 50%.
18. In KS4, results have fluctuated over the last three years. In 2007, the percentage of pupils gaining at least five grades A\*-G at GCSE was in the top 25% when compared with similar schools. However, the figure for those pupils gaining at least five grades A\*-C at GCSE placed the school in the bottom 25%. This variation is reflected in the value added between KS3 and KS4. During the last three years, very few boys and no girls left school without a recognised qualification.
19. In 2007, girls outperformed boys in all key indicators at KS4.
20. Results at A level reflect appropriately the wide range of ability in the sixth form. Student performance was below local education authority (LEA) and national averages at grades A-C and A-E in 2006 and 2007.
21. In the six subjects inspected, the following grades were awarded:

	<b>KS3</b>	<b>KS4</b>	<b>Sixth Form</b>
Mathematics	2	3	2
Science	2	3	2
Welsh first language	2	2	2
History	2	2	2
Music	1	1	1
Physical education	2	2	3

22. In the 67 lessons observed in these subjects, the following grades were awarded for standards of achievement:

	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
<b>Whole school</b>	11%	61%	27%	1%	0%

23. The percentage of lessons graded 1 and 2 in this inspection (72%) is above the all-Wales figures in the latest Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training 2006-07 of 71%. This figure is well above that achieved in the last inspection.
24. Overall, the percentage of lessons graded 1, 2 and 3 exceeded the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) Vision into Action 2010 target of standards in 98% of lessons being graded 3 and above.
25. Music contributed significantly to the percentage of lessons awarded the highest grade. There has been an improvement in standards at KS3, with none of the six

subjects being below a Grade 2. In KS4, standards have declined in science. They have remained the same or improved in the other subjects. None of the six subjects inspected had a standard that was below a Grade 3.

26. Throughout the school, the standards that pupils achieve in most of their key skills have improved. The skill of improving one's own learning is not as good in KS4 and the sixth form as it is in KS3. Pupils' bilingual skills are good and are clearly evident within the school community.
27. Pupils are not fully aware of what they have to do to improve in some areas of the curriculum. The target setting processes within the school are not fully embedded and require further development in KS4 and the sixth form. Pupils of middle and lower ability underachieve.
28. A strength of the school is the development of pupils' personal, social and moral skills. The behaviour of pupils and students is good. They show respect towards visitors, staff and their peers and appreciate the opportunities provided by the school.
29. Pupils show good awareness and understanding of moral issues, beliefs and cultures. Even though assemblies contribute significantly to raising these standards, the quality of the tutor periods is inconsistent and this has an adverse impact on pupils' spiritual development.
30. The annual attendance rate is 93.8%. It is above the annual rate for Wales (90.6%) in 2007. It is also above the Wales rate of 91.2% when compared with similar schools in terms of the free school meals.
31. The school works very closely and effectively with Careers Wales and industrialists to facilitate the preparation for movement to post-16 education or the world of work.

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

32. The range of teaching methods and resources used to engage pupils is an outstanding feature of teaching. Where teaching is good or very good, the quality of relationships between staff and pupils is high. Staff use appropriate questioning techniques and expectations are high.
33. There is appropriate pace and resources are used well. Teachers have a good grasp of their subject knowledge and key skills are developed within the classroom.
34. The following grades were awarded for the 84 lessons observed in the school.

	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
<b>Whole school</b>	17%	65%	18%	0%	0%

35. The size and nature of this sample differs from the last inspection. However, the percentage of lessons graded 1 and 2 in this inspection (82%) is above the all-Wales figures in the latest Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training 2006-2007 of 76%. The figure is also well above that achieved in the last inspection and above WAG's Vision into Action 2010 target of 80%.
36. There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching both within and between subjects.

37. Where assessment practices are consistent, rigorous and accurate, departments are able to monitor pupil progress and pupils are clear on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. There are inconsistencies in the use of assessment data, especially on how to raise standards and in the tracking of pupil performance.
38. Where reports to parents are very good, pupil targets are subject specific.
39. The school's curriculum offers a range of subject options to its pupils in KS4 and the sixth form. Links with Coleg Powys and Coleg Meirion Dwyfor are beginning to extend the 14-19 option menu at these key stages. The curriculum is accessible to all and provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to achieve accreditation.
40. The school provides good extra-curricular activities, which enrich pupils' personal development. Many pupils also benefit from the wide range of cultural activities available.
41. Pupils' key skills are developing through classroom activities. However, the school does not currently accredit these skills.
42. Careers education is a good feature with one career's officer being based in the school. Pupils' active participation in the promotion of education for sustainable development has enabled the school to achieve the Eco Schools' Bronze Award.
43. The school contributes effectively to the well-being of its pupils. The canteen provides a daily menu of healthy foods; physical activities are well supported, including the 5x60 programme. Pupil fitness levels are good as they are encouraged to be in "exercise mode" to improve fitness levels. Students regularly use the leisure centre on a daily basis. The school site is very clean.
44. The school is a close community where there is a high standard of care and support. Parents are very appreciative of the school.
45. Transition arrangements between each key stage are carefully planned and managed. The close links with partner primary schools enable pupils to enter the secondary school with confidence and settle in quickly.
46. Monitoring pupil attendance raised attendance levels in KS3/4. The Bromcom system enabled the school to introduce a reward system, which improved pupil behaviour.
47. The quality of provision for pupils with SEN and those with emotional and behavioural difficulties is generally good. Teachers diagnose pupils' needs carefully and implement a range of effective support strategies.
48. Overall, the school's provision for equal opportunities is good, giving all pupils as many opportunities as possible.
49. The school council has had a positive impact on the school's policies for improving pupil facilities. It has also enhanced the qualities of its members' skills.
50. There is a comprehensive anti-bullying policy that is used to deal effectively with incidents. Child protection procedures are well embedded in the school.

### **Leadership and management**

51. Progress has been made over the last three years and there has been an increasing momentum for change. Standards in KS3 have been improved, the

quality of teaching has been substantially enhanced and departments are being monitored.

52. The headteacher has taken a leading role in directing these initiatives, showing clear vision and leadership. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher. The contribution of the assistant headteachers is restricted by their teaching commitments and responsibilities as heads of key stages.
53. The leadership roles of the headteacher and her deputy are constrained by the fact that they have too many managerial responsibilities. There are links from the SMT to all departments but the effectiveness of these links is variable. Departments are monitored and lesson observations undertaken. However, quality assurance requires more rigour and remedial action applied sooner. Clearer lines of responsibilities and increased accountability are required to improve target setting and raising standards.
54. In several instances, there is high quality leadership and management at middle-management level. Leaders give clear directions and are consistent in raising standards; they lead their departments well. Their quality of teaching is outstanding. However, the skills of these people are not utilised by the school. Neither are these qualities and good practices shared with the school as a whole.
55. Staff are valued and continuous staff development is undertaken. However, there is insufficient continuous professional development for leaders at all levels to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively.
56. Governors understand their roles and are involved in the strategic management of the school. They are linked to departments in a supportive role, but this role has not been fully embedded. The chair of governors plays an active role in the life of the school.
57. The school's self-evaluation processes are developing in the work of all staff. The school's self-evaluation report and the grades given by the inspection team were the same in four of the key questions.
58. There is inconsistency in the way in which middle managers use information obtained from the self-evaluation process. Managers do not use data rigorously to identify underachievement. Neither do they apply strategies effectively to counter this underachievement. There is insufficient challenge when scrutinising departmental performance.
59. In a few departments, development plans address issues identified in their evaluation processes. However, there are inconsistencies within departments and planning for improvement is ineffective. There is no clear link between self-evaluation, department and whole-school development planning.
60. The school is well staffed and employs suitably-qualified and experienced staff. Twenty-five per cent teach outside their main specialist areas. Appropriate training and support is given to these individuals.
61. The school makes best use of its accommodation, using display work in the classrooms and in the corridors to enhance its appearance as a learning environment. The shortcomings in the teaching accommodation will be improved in September 2008 with the opening of a new block.

62. The small teaching groups in the sixth form and some in KS4, result in the uneconomic deployment of staff. Pupil standards in information and communications technology (ICT) have been substantially enhanced by the considerable investment in computers since the last inspection. All classrooms have interactive white-boards that support teaching and learning.
63. The school manages its budget allocation effectively, through the school administrative officer. The governing body monitors spending appropriately.
64. Overall, the school does not currently achieve good value for money due to the high cost of the sixth form, the inconsistent standards of achievement of pupils in KS4 and the sixth form and the variable quality of management.
65. With regard to the key issues from the previous inspection, the school has made satisfactory progress on:
  - management issues to ensure consistency of implementation and monitoring of agreed actions; and
  - recommendations relating to the sixth form.
66. However, the school has made good progress in relation to:
  - raising standards in unsatisfactory or satisfactory subjects;
  - improving pupil behaviour and enhancing teaching strategies; and
  - broadening oracy skills in both languages at KS3.

## Recommendations

In order to achieve its objectives, the school should focus on the following priorities:

- \*R1. Raise standards in all subjects within the school.
  - \*R2. Develop and standardise assessment structures and improve the quality of advice given to pupils and students across the school.
  - \*R3. Develop the Learning Core to raise standards within the school by; strengthening all components; accrediting key skills; and incorporating aspects into the personal and social education (PSE) programme.
  - R4. Restructure the responsibilities of the senior management team to enable members to undertake their monitoring roles effectively.
  - R5. Create and develop an effective middle-management structure to contribute to the strategic direction of the school. Strengthen the monitoring and accountability roles of managers within the school.
  - \*R6. Improve the quality of whole-school and departmental development planning processes to strengthen the link between the budget and self-evaluation.
- \* *The school development plan (SDP) addresses several of these recommendations.*

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 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

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

#### KS3 and KS4

#### Pupils' success in attaining agreed learning goals

68. The following grades were awarded for standards of achievement at KS3 and KS4 in the 51 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	15%	62%	23%	0%	0%
KS4	8%	56%	32%	4%	0%
KS3+KS4	12%	59%	27%	2%	0%

69. In 71% of the lessons, pupils achieve standards that have good features and no important shortcomings. In 98% of lessons, good features outweigh shortcomings. There were good features but shortcomings in important areas in one lesson.
70. The school grades are equal to the grades awarded for standards in lessons for grades 1 and 2 in all secondary schools inspected in 2006-2007. They equal the national 2010 Vision into Action target of 98% for standards to be graded 1, 2 or 3.
71. Standards associated with grade 1 in both key stages are due to the consistent outstanding work identified in music and some outstanding work in Welsh and history.
72. In KS4 in the six subjects inspected, standards in music are outstanding; standards in Welsh first language, history and physical education have good features and no important shortcomings; standards in science and mathematics have good features outweighing shortcomings.
73. In KS3, standards in music are outstanding; standards in Welsh first language, history, physical education, mathematics and science have good features and no important shortcomings. Overall standards are better in KS3 than they are in KS4.
74. Results in teacher assessments in the core subjects, except Welsh first language at the end of KS3, have improved over the last three years (2005-2007). The greatest improvement was evident in mathematics where pupil achievement had risen by 13 percentage points. Overall attainment in 2007 varied between the top 25% to below the average for similar schools where between 10-15% of pupils are entitled to receive free school meals.
75. The school's free schools' meals (FSM) percentage is very close to the 15-20% grouping (a difference of one pupil) where the core subjects and the CSI would have been placed in the top 50% for similar schools in Wales had the school been in this category.
76. Teacher assessments in English, Welsh, science and mathematics were above national averages in 2007. The percentage of pupils achieving at least level 5 in teacher assessments at the end of KS3 in the CSI is equal to the national average.

77. The 2007 figures in KS3, with the exception of mathematics, highlighted that pupils achieving at least level 5 in English, Welsh, science and the CSI, had not exceeded the previous inspection's KS3 results.
78. Between 2005 and 2007, girls consistently outperformed boys in English and Welsh with the difference being a minimum of 20 percentage points.
79. In 2007, the school did not compare favourably with similar schools when comparing added value from KS2 to KS3.
80. At KS4 in 2007, the percentage of pupils achieving at least five GCSE grades at A\*-C is below LEA and national averages. When compared with similar school in Wales, the percentage of pupils in the five A\*-C category is in the bottom 25% of schools with similar free school meal entitlement. This was the situation in two out of the last three years. However, the percentage of pupils achieving at least five A\*-G grades was in the top 25%. In 2007, the school's CSI result, when compared with similar schools in Wales, is in the bottom 25%.
81. Between 2005 and 2007, the percentage of pupils achieving a grade C or above in the core subjects varied. During this three-year period, pupil achievement in English, mathematics and the CSI, was below LEA averages.
82. When compared with similar school in Wales, the percentage of pupils gaining an A\*-C, GCSE grade in English, mathematics and science is in the bottom 25% of schools with similar free school meal entitlement.
83. Between 2005 and 2007, girls consistently outperformed boys in English and Welsh with the difference being a minimum of 11 percentage points.
84. Pupils who had achieved at least a level 5 in English, mathematics, science and Welsh at KS3 in 2005, underperformed significantly in their GCSE examinations in 2007. This contributed substantially to the low CSI.
85. Many pupils do not reach their full potential by the end of KS3 or KS4.
86. It is more apparent that middle and lower ability boys underachieve.
87. The school's target setting processes have improved in KS3, but require further refinement in KS4.
88. In both key stages, pupils' speaking, listening, writing and reading skills in Welsh and English have improved and now have good features and no important shortcomings. Their bilingual skills are strong as is evidenced by their use of both languages confidently in all activities.
89. However, their numeracy skills and their skills of improving one's own learning in both languages are better in KS3 than they are in KS4. In KS4, good features outweigh shortcomings.
90. Pupils work well with one another in class. This has enabled them to raise their standards in creative and problem solving activities.
91. Standards in ICT skills throughout both key stages have good features and no important shortcomings. All pupils follow an ICT course in KS3 and most pupils follow the short course in KS4. Access to ICT rooms is difficult and this restricts the cross curricular development of the skill. However, there is very good practice in some subjects, but it is inconsistent.

92. The school has not begun to accredit the good work undertaken in key skills in either key stage. Pupils' experiences of key skills within lessons have improved. However, there are no portfolios of evidence to verify the standards achieved in these skills.

### **Their progress in learning**

93. The overall ability of the pupils entering the school varies from year to year. Expectations and outcomes are influenced by the percentage of boys within the year group. When there is an imbalance of boys, the year group does not perform as well.
94. Based on prior attainment and ability on entry to the school, the pupils in KS3 in 2006 and 2007 did not perform in line with what was expected in the CSI. However, even though boys' performance was lower than that of the girls' performance in English and Welsh, it had improved over these two years.
95. Compared with their performance in KS3, pupils did not achieve as well as was expected at the end of KS4 in 2007 in over 50% of their GCSE subjects. Underachievement was evident within the other GCSE subjects. Sixty per cent of the cohort underachieved significantly in three or more subjects, four-fifths being boys. Insufficient attention is given to track and tackle boys' underachievement in both key stages.
96. Nearly all pupils from the Y11 cohort were entered for five A\*-G subjects at GCSE examination level.
97. In 2007, only 35% of pupils achieved the level 2 threshold (at least five GCSE grades at A\*-C including mathematics, Welsh first language or English). This figure was well below LEA and national averages.
98. Ninety-eight per cent of the cohort was entered for one or more entry level, GCSE short course, GCSE or equivalent in 2007.
99. The extent to which pupils make progress varies between subjects and between different key stages. There has been a marked improvement in pupil progress in KS3 over the last three years.
100. Pupils acquire new knowledge and skills, but the process of assessing how well they have achieved is inconsistent. There is very good practice in some departments but this has not been shared on a whole-school basis. Pupils are not fully aware of what they have to do to improve. There is inconsistency across the curriculum in procedures of how pupils need to improve. Written and oral feedback is variable in quality. However the processes are stronger in KS3 than in KS4.
101. Pupils' abilities to improve their own performance vary between the key stages. Targets for improvement are given but where there is inconsistency, they are not specifically subject focused. The good practice evident in KS3 is beginning to impact on KS4.
102. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) achieve good standards that are matched to their ability or better. They receive good support which contributes significantly to their success.

103. Pupils receive very good induction for moving between each key stage. The careers service provides comprehensive advice about higher education and employment opportunities.

### **The development of their personal, social and learning skills**

104. A strength of the school is the progress that pupils make in their social, moral and personal skills. These are stronger in KS3 than they are in KS4. Further good skills are evident in pupils' social and cultural developments. Pupils' spiritual skills are less well developed.

105. Pupils work well in lessons; individually and collaboratively. They show interest and enthusiasm in their work, particularly in KS3.

106. Pupils have a high regard for their teachers because of their caring nature. The atmosphere within the school community is very calm and orderly. Pupils' behaviour is very good in most instances, both within the classroom and around the school. They show respect and behave responsibly towards one another, to members of staff and to visitors. The school's pastoral support system facilitates good behaviour in the school community. This contributes positively to pupils' attentiveness in most classes.

107. The attendance level for 2006-2007 was 93.8%. This is above the WAG's target of 93% and above the all-Wales average attendance of 90.6% for 2006/07. The majority of pupils are punctual to lessons. During the inspection, pupils' attendance was good.

108. During the last academic year, one pupil was permanently excluded and 13 were temporarily excluded. Pastoral support plans had been prepared for the return of those pupils who had been temporarily excluded.

109. Assemblies and form tutor periods, where pupils have opportunities to reflect on moral, spiritual and religious topics, contribute to pupils' development. However, even though school assemblies are meaningful and relevant, not all tutor periods contribute effectively to the spiritual dimension.

110. Pupils demonstrate a sound awareness of equal opportunities' issues and show great respect for diversity, both within school and in society. There are good links with the community and local businesses. Through these, and values promoted by the school, pupils are prepared well for participation in the workplace and community.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Students' success in attaining agreed learning goals**

111. In the six subjects inspected, standards in music are good with outstanding features; good features and no important shortcomings prevail in mathematics, science, history and Welsh. Standards in physical education have good features that outweigh shortcomings.

112. Standards associated with grade 1 in the sixth form are due to the outstanding work identified in music.

113. The following grades were awarded for standards of achievement in the sixth form in the 16 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected:

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
6%	69%	25%	0%	0%

114. Although the sample is small, these figures indicate that students achieve standards that have good features and no important shortcomings in 75% of the lessons. The profile of grades awarded for standards in lessons inspected in the sixth form for grades 1 and 2 indicate that they are below those (83%) reported in the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales for 2006-2007.
115. Results in external examinations in 2006 and 2007, were close to those achieved by students in the last inspection for two or more A level grades at A-C. The A-C pass rate in 2006 and 2007 was below LEA and national averages.
116. In 2006 and 2007, the percentage of pupils gaining two or more A levels or equivalent at grades A-E continued to be below the previous inspection's results. They were also below the local authority and national averages for these two years. The average A level points score per student for 2006 and 2007 was above the previous inspection figure.
117. Girls' and boys' average points scores widened to five percentage points in 2007 in favour of the girls. Girls significantly outperformed boys during this period at grades A-C at A level examinations.
118. The school has successfully developed some vocational courses, including the CACHE and agricultural courses, which cater well for students of all abilities. However, pupil numbers are small in nearly all groups.
119. Students achieve good standards in all their key skills except that of improving one's own learning. Here, their skills are underdeveloped, as students require substantial support. The standards of students' ICT skills in the six subjects inspected have mostly good features and no important shortcomings.
120. Good levels of communication in both languages are evident in class discussion. Most students are prepared to give extended answers to teacher questioning and the quality of discussion is good.
121. Group work is well developed in most subject areas and is a good feature in the sixth-form. These qualities assist students to enhance their good problem-solving skills.

### **Their progress in learning**

122. Students study from within a range of AS, A2 and vocational courses. In 2007, 91% of students achieved at least A-E passes in two or more subjects. In 2006, this figure was 1% higher. Completion rates have varied in the last three years.
123. In 2007, students did better at A level than expected from their GCSE results in only three out of ten subjects studied. The maximum number of students in each subject studied was only four. Fifty-five per cent of those entered, underachieved in one or more of their examination subjects.
124. The retention rate to the sixth form is improving and the school attracts students from Gwynedd and Ceredigion. Most students enjoy the challenges of the sixth form and appreciate that they are able to study the subjects of their choice, in their own school. A majority of those who return proceed to higher education on completion of their courses.
125. Students who have a mature attitude to work are prepared well for progression to university or the world of work. However, students do not have a clear

understanding of their levels of achievement; nor are they clear on what they have to do to improve. Students receive both written and verbal guidance from their subject teachers, but there are instances when the guidance is insufficiently focused.

126. They are monitored informally and there is no robust structure to ensure that students are given realistic targets to reach their full potential. Pupil targets for improvement are not based sufficiently on base-line data. Even though pupils have performed very well at GCSE level, their target grades at A level are far too low.
127. Targets for improvement are set but not scrutinised rigorously enough. Students self-assess their performance from their annual reports. However, the self-evaluation exercises are not completed and there is insufficient monitoring of the process.

### **The development of their personal, social and learning skills**

128. Students have well-developed personal and social skills. They gain in maturity during their period of study in the sixth form and have a valuable experience. Their leadership skills are very good and this has enabled them to strengthen the relationships between senior and junior pupils. They have very good relationships with staff.
129. Students do not use their free time wisely as the library facilities are underutilised. Currently, there is a shortage of appropriate accommodation for the sixth form. This will be addressed in September 2008 with the opening of a new vocational/life-long learning centre. The way in which this time is used is not monitored effectively. This has a detrimental impact upon students' academic standards.
130. Members of the sixth form undertake their duties around the school effectively and are an added means of support for younger and new pupils to the school. They prove to be very good role models to the remainder of the school.
131. Students are well supported by staff and they show appreciation of the opportunities made available to them.
132. Attendance in lessons is closely monitored but not their free time. Students gain much from their sixth-form experiences, in their academic, personal, social moral and wider development.

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

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

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

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

### **How well teaching and training meet learners' needs and the curricular or course requirements**

#### **KS3 and KS4**

134. The following grades were awarded for the quality of teaching in the 51 lessons observed in the six subjects inspected:

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
20%	65%	15%	0%	0%

135. The grades awarded for the quality of teaching in the 67 lessons observed overall in KS3 and KS4 were:

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
18%	63%	19%	0%	0%

136. These grades are significantly higher than those awarded in the school's last inspection, and represent substantial improvement, although the size and the nature of the sample are different. At that time, only 42% of the lessons were judged to be good and 9% judged to be very good. Nine per cent of lessons seen then were judged to be unsatisfactory.

137. In this inspection 81% of lessons were judged to be good or very good which is higher than the figure for inspections in Wales in 2006-2007 where 76% of lessons were judged to be either grade 1 or 2. The school has met the secondary target for 2010 in WAG's Vision into Action, that the quality of teaching should be grade 2 or better in 80% of lessons. No lessons in this inspection were a grade 4, compared to 3% nationally.

138. An outstanding feature of the teaching is the range of teaching methods and resources that engage and interest the pupils. These include the use in many lessons of the interactive whiteboard, including use by pupils. This motivates and develops pupils' thinking and learning skills. Additionally, there is widespread use of individual whiteboards to ensure that all pupils respond to teacher questioning and are actively engaged in lessons. This is particularly effective in KS3.

139. The school has also undertaken several homework audits over a number of years and an outstanding feature includes the reporting to parents every eight weeks on four pieces of homework received in each subject. This includes a grade for attainment and effort.

140. In the best lessons, particularly in KS3, there are high expectations and challenge in the work that pupils undertake and a variety of tasks set which include whole-class, group, paired and individual work. A key feature in these lessons is the very detailed planning and preparation, which ensures that there is very little time wasted.

141. There are many good features of teaching across all lessons. These include:

- the positive working relationships between pupils and teachers;
- healthy attitudes to learning; and
- appropriate pace and challenge.

142. Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength of the school. This quality also applies to teachers teaching outside their subject specialism. Good opportunities are provided for these teachers to attend courses to ensure that they keep up to date with the latest developments in the subjects they teach.

143. Teaching meets the needs of bilingual learners very well where lessons are provided in both English and Welsh. An encouraging development is the teaching of both groups through the medium of Welsh.

144. The following shortcomings were evident in a few lessons:

- introductions by the teachers being too long;
- insufficient planning to meet the needs of all pupils; and

- lack of challenge, pace and variety in the activities.

145. In general, teaching throughout the school successfully promotes equality of opportunity, and ensures that pupils achieve regardless of their gender, ethnic background or educational need. Most teachers give generously of their time to offer additional support in revision sessions that help pupils' learning even further.

146. Pupils with ALN are taught well overall, with the LSAs offering effective support across lessons.

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

147. The school's assessment policy is comprehensive and clear for monitoring pupils' progress against targets. These are understood by both pupils and parents. Assessment for learning is beginning to be embedded into the teaching.

148. Both subject departments and form tutors have a role in monitoring pupils across the school. The assessment co-ordinator has an overview of whole-school assessment data and uses this to identify underachievers, particularly after interim and full reports have been issued. Form tutors have timetabled interviews with their own pupils and during these interviews individual pupil targets are set or reviewed. Pupils also write their own targets.

149. Each pupil in Y11 is mentored by a member of staff. However, the academic monitoring of KS4 borderline pupils is not yet sufficiently focussed to impact effectively on their individual grades.

150. In a number of subjects, assessment procedures are consistent, rigorous and accurate. The work of pupils is marked with clear indications of attainment and effort and what the pupils need to do to improve. Pupils in these subjects are actively involved in self and peer-assessment.

151. Assessment is good at KS3 and is developing as a learning tool, although not consistently across the school. Assessment for learning is not yet fully embedded in all subjects and pupils are not always clear as to how they could improve their work. All subjects, both core and foundation, have been part of the pilot for the new KS3 moderation at the end of Y9. This should improve the consistency of assessment procedures across the school.

152. Where there are inconsistencies in assessment practice, the shortcomings include:

- inconsistent implementation of assessment for learning as a method of raising standards and involving pupils in their own learning;
- inconsistent methods of assessment with little or no feedback of how pupils should improve their work;
- subject departments not setting challenging targets for pupils; and
- failing to monitor pupil progress with sufficient rigour, particularly in KS4.

153. Annual and interim reports to parents provide comprehensive information on their child's academic and personal achievements. They give a clear picture of pupil progress in each subject based on attainment and effort. In the best reports, pupil targets are subject specific and give a clear way forward for pupils to develop.

154. The school meets statutory requirements for assessment and reporting and fulfils the regulations of examination bodies.

### **Sixth form**

#### **How well teaching and training meet learners' needs and the curricular or course requirements**

155. The following grades were awarded for the quality of teaching in the 17 lessons observed in the sixth form.

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
12%	76%	12%	0%	0%

156. In the previous inspection 66% of lessons were judged to be good or better in the sixth form. In this inspection, 88% of lessons in the sixth form were judged to be good or better. This figure is significantly higher and exceeds the 83% of lessons which were judged to be good or better in the sixth form during 2006-2007 inspections in Wales.

157. The outstanding features evident in KS3 and KS4 are also present in the sixth form. These include:

- a range of teaching methods and resources used;
- high expectations and challenge; and
- detailed planning.

158. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects and their knowledge of examination requirements are used to good effect in providing a clear focus to lessons.

159. Positive relationships between students and teachers contribute significantly to good learning. There is appropriate pace and challenge in lessons.

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

160. Most of the assessment of students' work is good, as teachers inform students clearly of the criteria used in examinations and the requirements of the examination boards.

161. There is good oral feedback in lessons to students about their work which helps them improve. Students' written work is usually well marked and linked to examination criteria. Students comment on the usefulness of feedback given. Self-assessment and subject-specific targets for improvement are given. However, students' assessments and targets are not monitored and reviewed sufficiently across the sixth form. Neither are the targets set sufficiently early, nor are they challenging in some subjects. Some targets bear no correlation with the students' achievements in the same subject in their GCSE examination.

#### **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.**

162. The school awarded itself a grade 2 in its self-evaluation report. The grade awarded by the inspection team is one grade lower because good features outweigh shortcomings. These shortcomings relate to the:

- underdevelopment of the Learning Core and subject domains;

- lack of accreditation opportunities in key skills;
- imbalance in the size of teaching groups throughout the school; and
- inconsistency in the quality of worship during tutorial periods.

### **The extent to which learning needs meet learners' needs and interest**

163. The school delivers a range of structured programmes designed to allow pupils to achieve their academic and social potential. All pupils have the opportunity to gain accreditation in all subjects studied at every level.
164. The curriculum is broad and balanced and option choices offered at KS4 are flexible to meet individual pupil needs. However, there has been little movement to establish the options in their subject domains. The choices available at this key stage and in the sixth form generate small groups in some subjects and this restricts the opportunities for pupils to challenge one another on any hypothesis or fact. Pupils disappplied from the NC have the same opportunities as other pupils as the school's equal opportunity's policy prevails. The time allocated to subjects at KS3 and KS4 is adequate, but the time allocated for subjects in the sixth form is at a bare minimum with no formal provision for monitoring self-supported activities.
165. In KS3, pupils follow courses that comply with NC requirements. The opportunity exists to study two modern foreign languages, namely French and German. Personal and social education is taught in the tutor time allocated for registration and is enhanced by the suspension of the timetable for a week for further personal development. There is a clear curriculum plan for PSE. These give opportunities to pupils to develop and refine their skills. However, there are timetabling issues in Y8 with physical education being taught in week one only of a two-week cycle and there is a large class of boys in the same year-group. In some subjects, two lessons are timetabled on the same day.
166. At KS4, the opportunity exists for pupils to experience some vocational courses through the school's link with Coleg Powys. In addition, courses are available in childcare and business studies. Overall, the subject choices available in the curriculum are extensive, but group sizes are small. Statutory requirements relating to religious education are met in this key stage. The school has made a start in complying with the requirements of the 14–19 Learning Pathways. This curricular area is developing. The core curriculum for all pupils includes ICT.
167. In the sixth form, the extensive choices offered to students results in some groups being very small, fewer than five in number. This is expensive and uneconomic. In some subjects, this is compounded by the need to offer the courses through the medium of English or Welsh or bilingually. The school has not begun to arrange its subject options in domains. A video conferencing course has been established with Coleg Meirion Dwyfor for psychology. A vocational BTEC agriculture course has been developed with Glynllifon and an accredited CACHE course in childcare, involves local play school placements, are also provided by the school. The school is continuing to develop to meet the requirements of the 14-19 Learning Pathways but accepts that further advances are necessary. Some courses do not progress from Y12 to Y13.
168. The curriculum includes basic and key skills and the school has obtained the Basic Skills Quality Mark. Key and basic skills are evident in the lessons

observed and the school has conducted an audit of the work done on these elements in every lesson. However, neither is this work co-ordinated nor is it accredited at any key stage. Although key and basic skills are established, current provision is underdeveloped to meet the needs of the Learning Core and the school's intentions to enter the Welsh BaccaLaureate. The school is aware of the importance of these elements in raising standards and is working towards a solution that meets these requirements.

169. The extra curricular opportunities within the school are a strong feature, particularly in music and physical education. Opportunities exist in many curricular areas and pupils compete successfully in the Urdd and local eisteddfodau. Groups from the school visit the local church as part of their religious education studies and curricular trips have been taken abroad. School teams compete regularly with some success in rugby and football games against other schools and these sports are also offered to girls. Very good opportunities are available to pupils in these activities. Teachers give generously of their time to enable pupils to consolidate and develop their understanding of subject matter after school, at lunchtimes and even during school holidays. Opportunities provided by the 5x60 scheme are valuable. Sixth-form students have the opportunity to gain the Sports Leadership Award.
170. The school successfully promotes the personal development of pupils by its strong emphasis on moral, social and cultural development of individuals. However, this is stronger at KS3. Numerous opportunities are afforded to pupils and students to take part in dramatic or musical presentations in assembly. All present in morning assembly partake in singing a hymn; the words of which are displayed by technology on the back-wall of the stage. Pupils show a readiness to be actively involved in this process. The quality and delivery of the school assemblies observed during the inspection week was excellent.
171. However, the content and quality of whole-class assemblies in tutor groups was inconsistent, and barely met the legal requirement. The opportunities for pupils to be involved in these tutor activities were extremely variable.
172. Pupils display respect for one another, their teachers and visitors to the school. They work well together in pairs or in groups. Sixth-form students support Y7 pupils through the buddy reading scheme and are also involved as critical friends. These support activities are an important contributor to their personal development. Opportunities exist within several areas of the curriculum to study other cultures and to develop the '*Cwricwlwm Cymreig*'. Cultural activities including singing, dancing and musical activities are well supported by pupils and students during lunchtimes and after-school.
173. Learning experiences are enriched by effective partnerships. Parental and community links are good. There are some curricular links on a rotational basis with the partner primary schools. The school is involved in providing initial teacher training (ITT) for students from Aberystwyth University. Some students, who undertook their training at Ysgol Bro Ddyfi, have been appointed to the school on a permanent basis.
174. All legal requirements are met. In technology at KS3, all the required aspects are covered. There is a daily act of worship and the school complies with all the requirements of examination boards. The PSE programme is developing and deals with health, sex education, substance misuse, careers education and

guidance. Careers Wales works well with the school and discharges its contractual obligations effectively.

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

175. Careers education provision is good, as the needs of the school are met by two careers officers, one being based on the school site. The main careers officer for the school is bilingual, enabling her to deal effectively with all situations. The company arranges specific advice to pupils with SEN by arranging a designated officer to meet and interview these pupils. Some business elements, which are stronger in KS3, are delivered through the PSE programme. The personal development week in KS3 enables pupils to work with employers or businesses. Entrepreneurial skills are developed further when pupils are given the opportunity to create their own companies. During the personal development week, pupils sell the products they have made.
176. Experiences in both Welsh and English are available to pupils. The bilingual competencies of the pupils develop as they progress through the school. Many subjects, especially PSE, art and technology, contribute effectively to the '*Cwricwlwm Cymreig*'.
177. The school provides equality of access to all pupils and students irrespective of their background. Wherever possible, the school takes great care to ensure pupils are able to study the subjects of their choice. The courses offered are all accessible to boys and girls.
178. The school develops its pupils' knowledge of sustainable development through its links with the Centre for Alternative Technology at Corris. Paper and cardboard recycling is an ongoing project within the school which has achieved the Eco-Schools' Bronze Award.
179. The needs of employers are considered within the area and in a wider context. In mathematics, a display is evident showing the employment opportunities offered by the subject. The school works well to develop links with employers and opportunities exist within the curriculum for all to develop problem-solving skills. With the assistance of the Forestry Commission, pupils and students used these skills during the construction of the round Celtic house on the school site. The PSE programme provides further opportunities to develop problem-solving skills.
180. The curriculum reflects national priorities for lifelong learning and community regeneration. Pupils have the opportunities to gain appropriate knowledge and skills during their time in the school. Opportunities exist in a number of subjects for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. Currently, this skill is underdeveloped.

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

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

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

#### **The quality of care, support and guidance to learners**

182. The school is a close-knit community where all staff and pupils know one another well. Pupils receive a high standard of care and support. A learning coach is employed on a part-time basis. This person has successfully supported pupils in KS4 with advice and guidance. Older students support younger pupils well. Parents report that the school is a very caring and supportive community. The open-door policy ensures that all parents have equal and regular access to discuss their child's education. Good and effective links with local employers enable pupils to follow suitable work experience placements.
183. The quality of advice and guidance given to pupils moving from KS3 to KS4, and to the sixth form is effective. Options evenings are arranged to enable pupils to meet relevant staff and support agencies and to assist them make informed choices. Frequent consultations are arranged with pupils and their parents. This support is a strength of the school.
184. All year groups are represented on the school council which has contributed to raising the skills' levels of its membership. Significantly, the head girl represents the school council on the governing body. The school listens to the suggestions made by the school council. It has agreed to include the school logo on uniform, and improve facilities in the school's toilets.
185. Morning registration periods provide tutors with opportunities to discuss pupils' progress through regular checking of their planners. Each pupil has full access to a specific and well-planned PSE programme delivered by form tutors as well as on specific timetabled days. Pupils feel confident that they can approach any member of staff to discuss their concerns or problems.
186. The school has established a series of well-planned activities to help new pupils become accustomed to their new environment. This provision helps them settle well in the school. The headteacher and other teachers visit primary partner schools to acquaint themselves with these pupils. Parents attend an induction evening and are fully informed of all aspects of school life, expectations and activities.
187. The school makes effective use of the Bromcom pupil management system to track and monitor each pupil's personal development. Pupil attendance is monitored in each lesson. This ensures a continued and effective monitoring system of attendance and punctuality. School staff promptly follow up any unexplained absences.
188. The school's system of rewarding pupil performance, achievement, behaviour, and attendance is well organised. The focus on positive re-enforcement through monitoring and celebrating achievement is a strength of the school. This is effective in improving behaviour, and is highly valued by the parents.
189. Good links have been established between the school and other providers of education. New vocational courses have been introduced in conjunction with the local college. Careers staff provide expertise and advice in career choices. They

effectively support pupils in identifying future learning and employment opportunities.

190. Effective arrangements have been made to encourage and enable pupils and students to be healthy. The kitchen staff promote a greater choice of healthy options on the lunchtime menu. Water is freely available to all pupils and the early homework club provides a healthy start to the school day for many pupils. Their well-being is catered for further by five staff being trained to "First Aid at Work level" and all other staff have undergone basic First Aid training.
191. The installation of CCTV cameras has contributed substantially to improved behaviour within the school.
192. There are appropriate child protection policies and procedures in place. The school has a named child protection officer. Staff receive appropriate training and they are aware of procedures. However, the school's ancillary staff have not received child protection procedure training. Good links have been established with all appropriate supportive services.

### **The quality of provision for additional learning needs**

193. Pupils are assessed early in relation to their learning needs. The school has established effective links with primary partner schools to gather relevant SEN information. The school's SEN co-ordinator (SENCo) and LSAs visit pupils in primary schools to ascertain their learning needs and plan appropriately to meet their needs.
194. New pupils are tested on entry to the secondary school on their standards in spelling. This complements the reading standards details received at the end of KS2.
195. The SENCo regularly monitors pupil progress through a variety of standardised tests to assess progress and identify areas of underachievement. This information is used effectively to plan future support and provision. However, effective monitoring of provision in mainstream classes is not fully developed.
196. The quality of provision for those pupils who are withdrawn for specific specialist support in basic literacy skills is good. Learning assistants provide support of high quality in these lessons. The SENCo provides a supportive and caring environment, which provides pupils with a good base for learning.
197. Pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) are of good quality. They record pupils' individual targets, which are clear and specific. Appropriate resources are identified and applied with suitable teaching strategies.
198. Planned support by teachers within mainstream classes is inconsistent. In the best examples, teachers use information from the SENCo to provide a range of strategies designed to match pupils' specific subject targets such as in music or physical education. However, in a minority of lessons, teachers do not modify tasks, nor adapt resources sufficiently to meet the pupil's identified needs. In some instances there is an over-reliance on the LSA to provide support for the pupil.
199. Sixth-form students provide an effective paired-reading programme for identified younger pupils who make good progress in their reading skills. A few pupils with specific learning difficulties receive effective support on a withdrawal basis.

200. Pupils with ALN in KS4, follow an alternative curriculum. These pupils make good progress on the courses. Several have made the successful transition to further education and have gained accreditation.
201. The designated SEN governor visits the school regularly to discuss provision.
202. The school keeps parents fully informed of their child's progress. Pupils and parents contribute towards the IEPs, which are reviewed each term. Most parents attend the annual reviews of the statements, which are of good quality. All reviews and statements meet statutory requirements.
203. Monitoring pupil behaviour is effective. Pupils respond positively to the school's behaviour policy and code of conduct. The initiative to establish a points system that rewards good behaviour and attitude is highly effective. Younger pupils are well supported by trained sixth-form students during non teacher-contact time.

### **The quality of provision for equal opportunities**

204. The quality of equal opportunities is good. The school's policy is well implemented and ensures that all pupils are entitled to take a full part in all aspects of school life.
205. Statutory requirements regarding reviews and provision for looked-after children are met fully.
206. The school's homework club supports pupils effectively. Pupils who do not have access to ICT resources at home benefit from this scheme. Non-Welsh speaking pupils who move into the area, are well supported and integrated into all the school's activities.
207. Pupils learn about the importance of respecting different faiths and cultures in lessons and school assemblies. Aspects of diversity are well planned and are incorporated into some lessons, including art, religious education and music. The school library holds a varied selection of books reflecting different cultures. The weekly lunchtime Mandarin club raises an awareness of a different language and its culture.
208. The school readily challenges stereotype viewpoints, and ensures that pupils' needs are met. In many lessons, teachers plan materials and resources to appeal to both boys and girls.
209. The procedures to raise pupils' awareness of the effects of bullying, and for reporting any instances of oppressive behaviour, are good. The school peer support system is highly effective in minimising the risk of bullying. The school actively promotes positive race relations. A record of bullying, and racial incidents is kept. To date, no incident of either has been reported.
210. The school provides well-written and appropriate pastoral support plans (PSPs) for those pupils who return to school after a period of fixed-term exclusion. This enables pupils to be re-integrated well into school.
211. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Equality Scheme and indicates how access for those with disabilities could be improved. However, no time scales have been set for implementing these improvements. Although some areas of the school are not fully accessible to pupils with certain disabilities, suitable arrangements have been made to meet their needs.

## Leadership and management

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

#### Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

212. The school awarded itself a grade 2 in its self-evaluation report. The grade awarded by the inspection team is one grade lower because good features outweigh shortcomings. These shortcomings relate to:

- inadequate distribution of roles in the SMT;
- informal and inconsistent monitoring of staff and departments; and
- a lack of management training opportunities for all leaders.

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

213. The school actively promotes equality of opportunity for all, regardless of linguistic, cultural or social background. Everyone in the school is treated with respect and has the opportunity to contribute to the school's development through staff meetings or the school council. All views are valued. There is a strong family ethos and a sense of belonging within the school. The success of students in their achievements reflects the strength of this policy.

214. The school has taken into account some national priorities. In particular, the school is currently working very closely with the LEA's 14-19 Learning Pathways' co-ordinator to develop and meet WAG's 14-19 agenda. It has achieved the Bronze Eco-Schools' Award and has an effective policy to improve the well-being of pupils and students.

215. The aims and expectations of the school are made clear to all governors, staff, pupils and visitors by the headteacher. She has a vision to develop the school to maximise the opportunities available to its pupils. This is being achieved by strengthening procedures and raising standards at all key stages. All associated with the school are committed to the aim of developing the school to its full potential.

216. The headteacher is the driving force within the school and she has achieved considerable success in raising standards since her appointment three years ago. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and between the two of them; their enthusiasm and skills are impacting positively on developments. These are clearly evident in the school's high quality of teaching and the substantially improved pupil achievement in KS3. These successes are beginning to be embedded in KS4 and the sixth form.

217. The headteacher and her SMT have a visible presence around the school. Within this team, she is supported by three assistant headteachers. However, their managerial roles are not fully developed. The effectiveness of the headteacher and deputy headteacher to undertake all their responsibilities is constrained by the fact that they currently undertake too many managerial roles themselves.

218. Each member of the SMT, including the headteacher, is linked to a department or a cluster of departments. The links between senior managers and the

departments they line manage, have been developed, but vary in their effectiveness.

219. There is inconsistency in the degree of rigour with which the SMT assures quality and reviews the work of individual subject departments and pastoral teams. The current four-year review cycle of the school is too long. Classroom observations of certain staff and departments have not been undertaken by senior managers but have been completed by middle managers. However, there is an inconsistency regarding the formality of the monitoring.
220. The school's monitoring arrangements for tracking and evaluating the provision for pupils with ALN, and the more able and talented, are beginning to be embedded in each key stage.
221. Each assistant headteacher has a high teaching commitment and each has a responsibility for a key stage. They monitor and support their tutors, but at times, systems are informal.
222. Very good features of leadership and management at middle-management levels are evident in Welsh and music. In many effective departments, there is a clear focus on teaching and learning, exemplified by detailed schemes of work, good target setting practices and good programmes of quality assurance. Middle managers of high quality are committed to raising standards by monitoring work on a formal and informal basis. Currently, best practice is not shared amongst all staff within the school.
223. There is an element of inconsistency in the quality of middle management. Not all middle managers understand their roles clearly. In some departments, there is a lack of leadership, and there are shortcomings to be eliminated. There is insufficient rigour in monitoring and planning for improvement is inadequate.
224. Line-managers are unable to attend their link departmental meetings as all meetings are scheduled for the same evening. Because several staff teach in different departments, some meetings are held during the lunch hour.
225. The school ensures the professional development of teaching, administrative and technical staff accordingly. However, the training of staffs with managerial responsibilities, including senior managers, is inadequate. Potential managers are not afforded opportunities to shadow middle or senior managers. Neither are heads of department involved in formal discussions with the SMT to consider strategic issues.
226. The school has a system of performance management with each person being given three agreed targets. The process is undertaken in accordance with performance management requirements. The programme for the induction of newly qualified teachers, and teachers new to the school is well organised and managed.

#### **How well governors or other supervisory bodies meet their responsibilities**

227. The governing body includes members who have supported the school over a number of years. Those recently appointed to the governing body are gaining in confidence and have widened the expertise of this group. The individual expertise of certain governors is used very effectively in the work of the governing body. However, the strategic role of the governors is evolving as they become more involved in influencing the strategic direction of the school.

228. The well-established governors clearly understand their roles and act as critical friends in an effective manner. They possess sound knowledge of the running of the school.
229. The teacher governor representatives make an important contribution to the working of the group. Recently, the governing body has been extended by the addition of the chair-student of the school council. This has enhanced the status and importance of this body within the pupil/student population.
230. The sub-committees of the governing body meet on a regular basis and receive regular reports from the headteacher.
231. The chair of governors and chairs of the sub-committees are in regular discussion with the headteacher and ensure that these committees work productively for the benefit of the school. The chairperson is regularly in school to discuss issues with the headteacher. She has made visits to observe the quality of teaching in several departments.
232. Governors have direct links with departments, but the effectiveness of these links is variable. The system is developing and beginning to be embedded. Some governors have undertaken lesson observations.
233. Through the inspection process, governors have become more involved in the strategic management of the school. The quality of their strategic management and involvement in the evaluation processes are developing.
234. All regulatory requirements are met.

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

**Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

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

**How effectively the school's performance is monitored and evaluated**

236. The findings of the inspection team agreed with the grades awarded by the school in its self-evaluation in key questions one, two, four and six. In the other key questions, however, the inspection team awarded one grade lower than the school. This is because the inspection identified some important shortcomings in each of these key questions. Overall, the school's self-evaluation report is of good quality identifying the school's strengths and areas of provision that it believes require further development. However, it is insufficiently critical.
237. Whole-school monitoring and self-evaluation exercises use common formats and training has been provided to all staffs on their use and completion. A four-year cycle for school improvement provides a termly focus for monitoring and evaluating specific areas. Attendance, behaviour and homework have shown an improvement following this cycle. However, this cycle is insufficiently robust and is too long.
238. All departments have undertaken a standard self-evaluation based on Estyn's seven key questions. The quality of departmental self-evaluation documentation is variable. The majority give an accurate picture of the aspects that need to be improved but lack challenge in areas noted for improvement. There is no clear

link between the self-evaluation documents; the departmental development plans (DDPs) and whole-school SDP.

239. Leaders and managers use appropriate methods to gather evidence, which include analysing data, examining pupils' work and observing lessons, for self-evaluation. However, these do not focus sufficiently on standards and are inconsistent across the school.
240. Pupils are often consulted. They are represented by the school council, which meets every half term. A representative of the school council attends governing body meetings. Whole year groups have been surveyed on many aspects of school life, for example, canteen facilities, contact diary, Y9 on their views of the KS3 curriculum, and Y6 following their visit to the school. Parents are also consulted regarding homework and parents' evenings. Results from the consultations are analysed and feedback provided to those concerned.

### **The effectiveness of planning for improvement**

241. The school ensures sufficient resources for supporting its main priorities and objectives. However, the link between the strategic planning process as identified in the SDP and the school budget is insufficient. There is also a lack of success criteria and quantified targets, which hinder the process of evaluating measurable improvement in standards, both within the DDP and the SDP.
242. The standard of departmental development planning is inconsistent. In the best practice, there is a clear link between departmental self-evaluations and developmental priorities, which focus appropriately on raising standards. This good practice is inconsistent across the subjects. As with self-evaluation, the links between members of the leadership group and departments do not yet promote rigour in development planning.
243. A minority of DDPs are of a good quality. Others note matters to be developed but there is no comprehensive strategy on how to achieve the plans and no specific targets to evaluate progress. Priorities identified by the self-evaluation process do not always lead to actions to bring about improvement. The link to the SDP is inadequate.
244. The SDP for 2005-2008 includes the school's intentions and priorities over a three-year period, culminating this year. It has been reviewed annually, but lacks strategic targets and budgetary implications, which mean that it is difficult to monitor improvement effectively. It is also difficult to hold colleagues to account for progress or lack of it. The SDP for September 2008 onwards is currently being prepared.
245. The school has responded well to several of the key issues identified in the previous inspection. There have been improvements in:
- standards in mathematics and other unsatisfactory or satisfactory subjects;
  - oracy skills and bilingualism;
  - classroom behaviour at KS3; and
  - dining facilities.
246. Lessons are interrupted less frequently and new teaching strategies have raised standards in KS3. Experiences of key skills are now evident within subject areas.

247. Satisfactory progress has been made in the following areas. There is:

- some provision of sixth-form courses with Coleg Meirion Dwyfor and Coleg Powys;
- an improved but inconsistent management structure for monitoring and evaluating; and
- a large range of learning experiences provided to students.

248. However, even though students are provided with more opportunities to develop the full range of key skills, these skills are not accredited.

249. Neither is there a coherent cycle linking performance management, school improvement planning and self-evaluation into a cycle of inter-related activities.

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

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

250. The school awarded itself a grade 2 in its self-evaluation report. The grade awarded by the inspection team is one grade lower because good features outweigh shortcomings. These shortcomings relate to:

- inefficient use of staffing;
- inadequate link between the school's budget and the SDP; and
- variable quality of management in the school.

#### **The adequacy, suitability and use of staffing, learning resources and accommodation**

251. The school is very well staffed to meet its curricular requirements and pupils' learning needs. It has a very favourable pupil/teacher ratio of 10.9:1. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and there is a good balance between experienced teachers and those new to the profession.

252. Over 25% of the teaching staff teach other subjects outside their subject specialisms. These teachers are given effective support by the heads of department and appropriate INSET by the school. Pupil attainment in these subjects is not affected detrimentally.

253. Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are well supported. The school has a well-structured induction programme for NQTs and they are regularly supported by departmental heads and a designated member of staff.

254. The administrative staffs are sufficient and they work effectively to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the school.

255. Technical non-teaching staffs provide good support in science, technology and ICT lessons.

256. Learning support assistants provide good support to pupils in most of their lessons. However, not all teachers plan purposefully to make the most effective use of these assistants in the classroom.

257. Although parts of the school are old, the school has ensured that these areas provide a pleasant learning environment. The school manages its own cleaning service efficiently and effectively. The caretaker provides a good service by

ensuring that the buildings and the school campus are kept clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.

258. There are some shortcomings in the accommodation:

- the library is small with a restricted stock of books; and
- unsuitable accommodation for teaching drama and physical education to GCSE and A level standard.

259. However, a new block is being built as a direct result of findings from a Geographical Pathfinder project undertaken by WAG. This will vastly improve the teaching accommodation from September 2008.

260. Good use is made of the swimming pool, fitness room and the sports hall in the leisure centre by the physical education department.

261. There are sufficient resources to deliver a full and balanced curriculum in all subjects. All departments have an adequate supply of books, equipment and apparatus. The pupil/computer ratio of 3.7:1 is favourable. However, access to computer rooms is difficult.

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

262. There is some ineffective and uneconomical deployment of staff within departments in KS4 and the sixth form. Currently, the school has one head of science for KS3 and another for KS4.

263. Resources in departments are used economically and efficiently to promote successful teaching and learning. However, there is insufficient contact time available to enable teachers to teach students for eight hours per subject per fortnight in the sixth form.

264. Resources are allocated to departments using an agreed formula which the staff deem to be fair and effective. Departments are also usually successful when they bid for additional finance or grants that are available.

265. The school has invested heavily in interactive white-board facilities and staff training. These initiatives have had a very positive impact on teaching standards in the school.

266. The professional developmental needs of individual members of staff and departmental are identified by interviews with members of the SMT. This is undertaken as part of the school's appraisal and performance management system. However, staff development is mainly in subject areas only and very few members of staff have been given opportunities to develop managerial skills.

267. The managerial skills of staff at all levels vary in quality. The school does not have an effective middle-management structure. There is a disproportionate allocation of managerial responsibilities in the SMT and this restricts its effectiveness.

268. There are appropriate arrangements to provide protected time for teachers for preparation, planning and assessment. However, time provided for some of the SMT does not match their responsibilities.

269. The school has responded appropriately to the recommendations made in this year's audit report. The school budget is prepared by the headteacher, the

administrative officer and the authority's finance budget officer. The school's administrative officer monitors the budget very effectively on a daily basis. The school projects that it will have a deficit budget at the end of the school year if present financial arrangements are maintained. However, the governors have already prepared strategies to ensure that this does not occur.

270. There is no clear link between the SDP and the school budget. The SDP does not provide sufficient detail of the costs of implementing the school's priorities and there is no clear correlation between the SDP and departmental priorities for improvement and benefits to pupils.
271. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks have been made on all teaching, support and volunteer staff working in the school.
272. Taking into consideration the high cost of the sixth form, the inconsistent standards of achievement of pupils in KS4 and the sixth form and the variable quality of management, the school does not currently provide good value for money.

## Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

### Welsh first language

<b>Key Stage 3:</b>	<b>Grade 2:</b>	<b>Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
<b>Key Stage 4:</b>	<b>Grade 2:</b>	<b>Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
<b>Sixth Form:</b>	<b>Grade 2:</b>	<b>Good features and no important shortcomings</b>

273. Examination results at GCSE in language and literature in 2006 were below LEA and national results for passes at A\*-C. In 2007, results in language were below LEA and national results for passes at A\*-C but above in literature.
274. In the sixth form, examination results at A level in 2006 and 2007 were higher than national averages for passes at A/B.

### KS3 and KS4

#### Good features

275. In KS3 and KS4, pupils' listening skills are good across the ability range. They are ready to respond to teachers' questions and to one another confidently.
276. Across both key stages, pupils seize on regular opportunities to be involved in a variety of oral activities, and show that they are able to collaborate successfully in pairs and in groups, in problem solving situations, presenting information and when expressing an opinion.
277. The more able in KS3 succeed in maintaining a hubbub of oral activity maturely and at length. They display a good grasp of language and syntax and pupils use a wide vocabulary. By KS4, they reason and offer counter arguments on controversial topics intelligently using relevant evidence as they develop and justify a point of view.
278. In both key stages, the majority of pupils take advantage of opportunities to reinforce terminology and enhance their language through the effective use of modern technology, including the interactive whiteboard, visual images and oral games. Through their use, pupils' understanding of the work they are doing and

their grasp of the language are extended which encourages them to think independently.

279. Reading standards are good in both key stages. Most pupils, across the ability range, are increasing in their ability to read aloud meaningfully.
280. Across both key stages, a number of the pupils deal with extended reading materials, displaying the ability to respond intelligently to literary, non-fiction and mediative texts orally and in writing.
281. Pupils glean information effectively from different sources and present it methodically and concisely. They use ICT skills to organise information effectively showing good awareness of audience needs.
282. In KS3, pupils' appreciation skills across the ability range are developing well. They discuss the content and style of a variety of texts quoting evidence to support their opinion. By KS4, a good number of the pupils display intelligent personal responses in their judgemental work. The work of the best pupils shows appropriate detail, quoting evidence, and maturity as they develop their ability to think analytically when interpreting a poem or a novel.
283. In both key stages, pupils' standards in writing are varied. The majority of pupils across the ability range write extendedly in a variety of formats with the good practice of effective planning contributing to raising standards through the key stages.
284. In KS3, the standard of the work in respect of content and expression improves year on year and pupils use language succinctly and effectively. By KS4, the extended work of the best and the ideas offered are mature using language in a variety of ways to create effect.
285. Pupils seize on regular opportunities to evaluate their own oral and written work and that of their peers against specific criteria. These activities together with pupils' ability to re-draft their work refine their language skills and contribute to raising standards.
286. Pupils with SEN achieve good standards across the skills, appropriate to their ability.

### **Shortcomings**

287. In both key stages, spelling and mutation errors impede the accuracy of the written expression of a number of average ability pupils.
288. In KS3, a minority of pupils are reluctant to contribute orally at length. In these instances, they remain passive, satisfied with brief responses and find it difficult to contribute coherently to group discussions by extending their responses.
289. In KS4, the written analytical work of a minority of pupils is inconsistent. In these instances, the work is not as detailed and well developed and at times is incomplete.

### **The Sixth Form**

#### **Good features**

290. In Y12 and Y13, students are able to express opinions clearly orally displaying good knowledge and understanding of different texts. They respond extendedly

and appropriately, confidently changing the direction of the discussion using suitable vocabulary and terminology.

291. Students' understanding of the essentials of grammar is developing effectively and they use their grammatical knowledge appropriately with the best expressing themselves in natural, refined language orally and in writing.
292. Students' ability to deal judgementally with the set texts is developing well through the sixth form. Generally, they show good understanding of the content and style of the various texts, in prose and poetry from different periods, dealing with the concepts effectively and summarising complex facts.
293. In responding to media texts, students develop the ability to think analytically. Standards are good when they think independently getting under the skin of the characters and offering original ideas when discussing their motives, their relationship with one another and their significance in scenes.
294. Students' ability to read extensively for pleasure and background reading to set texts are developing well. In Y13, they cross-reference appropriately comparing literary texts and enriching their responses to the novel by dealing with the themes of different authors.
295. The students produce engaging creative work, the content is original and well planned. At its best, the expression displays a firm grasp of the language.

### **Shortcomings**

296. In analysing various literary texts in Y12 and Y13, the ability of some students to intertwine meaningful quotations into their work by structuring their answers is not yet fully developed.
297. In Y12 and Y13, some students find it more difficult to analyse and discuss the effectiveness of the characteristics of style by referring intelligently to the techniques used to analyse varied texts. At times, the interpretation is scant and the comments are not consistently progressive and incisive.

<b>Mathematics</b>
--------------------

<b>Key Stage 3:</b>	<b>Grade 2:</b>	<b>Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
<b>Key Stage 4:</b>	<b>Grade 3:</b>	<b>Good features outweigh shortcomings</b>
<b>Sixth Form:</b>	<b>Grade 2:</b>	<b>Good features and no important shortcomings</b>

298. Examination results at GCSE in the last two years have been variable always being below or just below local and above national averages in some years. No pattern exists to show a constant difference between boys and girls.

299. Examination results at A level in the last two years show that every candidate has achieved a grade. The numbers studying the subject are small but results are broadly in line with students' ability.

### **KS3 and KS4**

#### **Good features**

300. At KS3, pupils of all abilities develop their understanding of the subject as they move through the key stage. Nearly all complete a substantial amount of work during the three years that they study the subject during Y7–Y9 to a good standard.

301. They deal effectively with numbers and are able to complete work on fractions and decimals accurately. Pupils have a good understanding of the BODMAS rule to enable them use the correct order to find the answers to any question set. They are able to work out some answers without recourse to calculators. The more able pupils can deal effectively with complex numerical problems to good effect.
302. The pupils have a good grasp of probability and realise that its value must be between 0 and 1. They write their fractional answers in the lowest form with very few exceptions.
303. They can deal appropriately with all equations and find the correct value for x or y according to their ability. They are able to apply formulae correctly to solve problems and can change the subject of a given formula as required.
304. The graph work completed is accurate and pupils can suggest the trend in scatter graphs, or in the form of the graph showing positive or negative correlation. The axes are usually labelled as required and pupils can read graphs accurately to determine values, given one piece of information.
305. The pupils deal effectively with angles and can name angles of different sizes be they acute, obtuse, a right angle or a reflex angle. They can determine the size of any missing angle whether it is on a straight line or part of a full turn. They deal effectively with angles associated with a circle such as the angle in a semi circle or those involving a tangent to the circle.
306. Pupils are generally confident in suggesting answers by estimating the answer from a given set of data. In some cases, this can be done without recourse to a calculator.
307. Pupils can determine area and volume of different shapes using the correct formulae. With few exceptions, they include units in their answers.
308. Work on symmetry is understood and all lines are included when the shape has more than one line of symmetry. When appropriate, rotational symmetry is dealt with correctly. Pupils are aware of which type of symmetry applies in a given situation.
309. Pupils factorise accurately, whatever the highest power of x, and this leads to their being able to deal effectively with all equations. Answers are given to one or two decimal places.
310. At KS4, the more able pupils complete a substantial amount of work to a good standard. This is reflected, especially amongst those studying the higher level GCSE examination, in the quality of their investigative work. The amount of work completed by some pupils and their ability to suggest hypothesis to test prior to further investigation in greater detail, is good.

### **Shortcomings**

311. Pupils at KS3 do not use the protractor effectively to ensure accuracy. Neither do they draw angles regularly with an error of less than two degrees.
312. There is a tendency with some pupils to resort to the use of a calculator to determine the answer to relatively simple questions even though they have the ability to determine the answer mentally.

313. The standard of work produced by some pupils in KS4 is poorly presented and this makes it more difficult to understand.
314. Work produced by some pupils at KS4 is incomplete. In some instances, there has been no attempt to complete homework to an acceptable standard.
315. Some pupils have difficulty with some of the algebraic concepts. They do not understand the formulae associated with the subject matter.
316. The units are not always included in the answer by some pupils when dealing with area or volume.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Good features**

317. Students are able to integrate and differentiate expressions using the appropriate formulae. They can apply this knowledge to solve problems such as determining minimum and maximum points of any curved graph.
318. Students are able to apply the Normal and Poisson distributions correctly in work on probability and use the given tables effectively to test any hypothesis made.
319. They factorise more complex algebraic expressions accurately and determine the correct factors for a given expression. They are able to work out the equation of a circle using the standard formulae, given appropriate coordinates.

#### **Shortcomings**

320. Standards achieved by the students vary annually. The mathematical standards of the students following the course are also variable.

<b>Science</b>
----------------

<b>Key Stage 3:</b>	<b>Grade 2:</b>	<b>Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
<b>Key Stage 4:</b>	<b>Grade 3:</b>	<b>Good features outweigh shortcomings</b>
<b>Sixth Form:</b>	<b>Grade 2:</b>	<b>Good features and no important shortcomings</b>

321. The examination results A\*-C at GCSE in 2006 were above national and local averages but in 2007, were significantly below national and local averages.
322. Advanced level results in biology, chemistry and physics cannot meaningfully be compared with national averages because of the small number of entries.

### **KS3 and KS4**

#### **Good features**

323. Many pupils are attentive and interested in their work. They are able to recall recent work when questioned and they have a good knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas and concepts. They are able to use their knowledge to explain scientific observations.
324. When undertaking practical activities, most pupils follow written instructions, work enthusiastically and purposefully and cooperate well with other pupils and with the teacher. They make scientific observations carefully and record and analyse measurements appropriately. They present their results well and make effective use of tables and graphs.
325. The majority of pupils engage effectively with their work. All are eager to answer questions. They behave responsibly and show respect to the teacher and each

other. They communicate and co-operate well with each other during group work.

326. Pupils with additional and special learning needs are integrated into the mainstream science classes and make good progress relative to their ability.
327. Overall, the majority of pupils use scientific terms accurately in many problem solving activities and responses to questions. They have opportunities to develop their ICT skills when making whole class presentations, analysing data and producing work for classroom display.
328. Pupils' thinking skills are developed through appropriately planned activities which enable them to recall and apply concepts well to solve a range of scientific problems.
329. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of the topics included in the GCSE course and make good progress. They use scientific terms well, both orally and in writing. Pupils display a wide range of skills. They are adept in questioning to clarify their understanding of scientific principles.

### **Shortcomings**

330. In some classes, a small minority of pupils misbehave and this has an adverse effect on the standards they achieve.
331. A minority of pupils' work is incomplete. They fail to copy up or complete missing work.
332. Some of the more able pupils do not make enough progress in the time available.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Good features**

333. In general, students have a good understanding of previous work and a ready recall of many concepts and principles. They are sufficiently confident to ask questions in order to test and extend their understanding. Students follow instructions well and understand what is required of them.
334. Most students show an interest in their work and their approach to learning is mature and enthusiastic. In practical work, they show good understanding of the work, and carry out procedures safely and systematically.
335. Most students further their understanding during lessons and make good progress by asking challenging questions.

#### **Shortcomings**

336. A small minority of students have an insecure recall and understanding of current and previous work.
337. Students' independent learning skills are underdeveloped.

## History

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

338. Examination results at GCSE in the last two years have been above the national averages for passes at A\*-C in one year, and below the national averages in the other year.

339. Examination results at A level in the last two years have been above the national averages for passes at A/B.

### KS3 and KS4

#### Good features

340. Pupils across both key stages show that they are aware of chronology. They can place events within the correct historical time scale, and understand the importance of chronology in history.

341. Pupils show sound knowledge and understanding of the period studied. The more able are confident in asking searching questions to build upon their grasp of a topic. Pupils in all classes display a lively interest in the topics studied.

342. The majority of learners across both key stages are able to make comparisons and connections between the main events and developments studied. They are able to assess the significance of historical events, and are confident in recalling historical information previously learnt to support their assessment. The more able can differentiate between long and short-term causal factors.

343. Pupils across the key stages and ability levels are aware of the importance of evidence and its reliability. They demonstrate skill in extracting accurate and relevant information from a variety of historical sources through independent investigation. They can evaluate the importance to historians of different sources, and are confident in detecting bias and propaganda. They are able to make informed judgements on the basis of the historical evidence before them. The more able can appreciate that studying sources can lead to several interpretations of the past.

344. The more able pupils in KS4 show they understand that events and issues in the past would not have been viewed then as they are now.

345. The work of pupils with SEN across the key stages meets the various needs of these pupils.

346. Pupils demonstrate a very sound knowledge of historical terminology and can make effective use of them in both oral and written work. They can also define terms and concepts well.

347. With very few exceptions, pupils in KS4 deal with historical set tasks in a well-informed way and are confident in their ability to complete them. Pupils across the ability range in both key stages complete a wide range of written activities in their books, in line with their age and ability. Their presentation is good. The majority of learners communicate effectively, in both oral and written work.

## Shortcomings

348. In a very small minority of lessons, the standards achieved by a few learners are affected by the pace of the lesson.
349. The disruptive and challenging behaviour of a very few pupils affects the standard of work achieved.

## Sixth form

### Good features

350. In Y12 and Y13 students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the topics being studied. .
351. They are able to analyse and evaluate a range of historical interpretations, and demonstrate their ability to pass judgement on the strengths and weaknesses of sources under scrutiny using their depth of knowledge. Whilst doing so, they are very comfortable in their use of historical terms and concepts.
352. They are able to recall work previously studied to inform topics being discussed.
353. Essay work and course work demonstrate that students are able to construct sound historical arguments. Many students provide examples of very well constructed, well-balanced and well argued answers in their written work. The published work of professional historians is studied in the individual research undertaken by the pupils. The more able students produce written work of a high standard.

## Music

**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**

354. Examination results at GCSE in the last two years have been well above national averages for passes at A\*-C and for A\*/A. These results represent very good achievement for these pupils.
355. Examination results at A level in the last two years have been well above national averages for passes at A/B and this represents very good achievement.

## KS3 and KS4

### Outstanding features

356. Pupils make very good progress in lessons as they have regular opportunities to engage in developing their musical skills in a variety of different styles and activities.
357. Pupils make very good progress in composition tasks as they are very well supported by the creative and imaginative use of computers.
358. Very good use is made of pupils' thinking skills and wider key skills to enhance their understanding and learning in music.

### Good features

359. At KS3, pupils sing in tune and with good tone in a number of different parts showing awareness of others in an ensemble.

360. They perform confidently on instruments showing accuracy and expression as soloists or as members of a group. Pupils' improvisatory skills are well developed and many are able to improvise question and answer phrases within the 12 bar blues structure fluently.
361. Pupils' compositions show awareness of musical elements such as structure, instrumentation and texture when composing film music or descriptive programmatic pieces.
362. Most pupils can identify the musical elements when discussing their own or others' music and they can also recognise features such as how many beats in each bar, ostinato and instrumentation.
363. At KS4, pupils' vocal and instrumental performances show a wide variety of styles and genres. They are often of a high standard displaying a real sense of musicianship, accuracy, expression and sensitivity to style and occasion.
364. Compositions show confident treatment of a range of musical styles ranging from traditional Welsh forms such as *Cerdd Dant* to programmatic music and more experimental forms skilfully enhanced by using computers.
365. Pupils can describe instrumentation, structure and genres confidently and point out compositional devices such as sequence, repetition and contrast when listening to music from a broad range of styles and cultures.
366. Pupils with ALN achieve well in music at both key stages as work is well matched to individual needs in lessons.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Outstanding features**

367. Students perform both instrumentally and vocally to high standards showing a sense of style and occasion.
368. Students make very good progress in music as they have regular opportunities to develop their musical skills in lessons.
369. Musically imaginative work, particularly in composition, is achieved through creative use of music technology.

#### **Good features**

370. Students have a good understanding of musical styles and they can describe compositional techniques accurately when discussing music drawn from a wide range of styles and genres.
371. Musically interesting compositional work is produced by imaginative re-interpretation of older musical forms which is enhanced by music technology.

<b>Physical education</b>
---------------------------

<b>Key Stage 3:</b>	<b>Grade 2:</b>	<b>Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
<b>Key Stage 4:</b>	<b>Grade 2:</b>	<b>Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
<b>Sixth Form:</b>	<b>Grade 3:</b>	<b>Good features outweigh shortcomings</b>

372. Examination results at GCSE in the last three years have been well above national averages for passes at A\* - C. These results represent very good achievement for these pupils and are in line with their ability.

373. Exam results at A level in the last two years have been above national averages for passes at A/B. These results are lower than would be expected for pupils of similar ability.

### **KS3**

#### **Good features**

374. Pupils are prompt, enthusiastic and work hard to produce good standard. Warm up drills are applied correctly and their purpose is understood by most pupils.

375. Pupils can name and identify the components of fitness in a variety of activities.

376. Girls and boys pass and receive accurately especially in netball and football where they can move into space quickly to support attacking play. In most instances, the timing and the weight of the pass is effective.

377. Pupils show a good knowledge of the rules in netball, rugby and football and have a good understanding of the importance of safety across a wide range of activities.

378. The use of key skills is well developed and assists in raising pupil standards in physical activities. Pupils communicate effectively when working together to solve problems. Boys use visual prompts well when evaluating their peers and use correct terminology when evaluating.

379. Standards in dance are good. Pupils show high level of control, clarity of shape and flow in time to music. Girls show an understanding of compositional principles and apply them effectively.

#### **Shortcomings**

380. In a competitive game situation, some pupils are unable to perform the skills learnt when under pressure.

381. A small number of boys needed constant support to remain on task.

### **KS4**

#### **Good features**

382. A large number of pupils are examined at GCSE which promotes pupil participation and the level of skill.

383. Pupils benefit from small groups and some outstanding teaching which lead to good standard across a range of activities. There are very good relationships between members of staff and pupils.

384. A wide range of team games is established and in netball and basketball, attacking skills and strategies are applied effectively. All pupils show a good knowledge of the rules and the risks associated with playing a full game in the above activities.

385. Boys communicate confidently within the game and are keen to help one another improve.

386. At GCSE level, boys work well together and show a good understanding of how oxygen is used in the body. They apply relevant technical terms correctly when explaining. Boys and girls of lower ability are developing an understanding of the components of fitness and training methods.

387. Written work for GCSE is neatly presented and shows differing levels of understanding in line with pupil ability. All pupils can link theory concepts to the practical work that they are doing.

### **Shortcomings**

388. Defending skills in netball have not been fully developed.

389. A number of boys are unwilling to acknowledge that they understand the work.

### **Sixth form**

#### **Good features**

390. A level students demonstrate an understanding of maximum lung capacity (VO<sub>2</sub> Max) and can apply numerical calculations correctly using subject specific terminology. Students can recall and apply information to new topics. They frequently ask questions to consolidate their understanding.

391. Most students were able to present an effective argument for and against the use of ergogenic aids (performance enhancement substances). All students showed a willingness to learn and most used a variety of resources to produce homework of good standards

### **Shortcomings**

392. There is a significant fall in student achievement in the A level examination when compared with other subjects in the school.

393. Two pupils found it difficult to apply scientific principles and technical knowledge correctly.

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

Governors and staff at Ysgol Bro Ddyfi welcome this report which shows that good progress has been made since the previous inspection. We will act to ensure that this progress is maintained so that we make the best possible provision for our pupils and for the community.

We are proud that the inspection recognizes the high quality of leadership and teaching in the school, and the effective support and guidance given to pupils. We are particularly proud that the development of pupils' personal, social and moral skills, and their good behaviour, are seen as strong features of the school.

The recommendations provide us with an agenda for further improvement, and an action plan will be produced to address matters raised in the report.

We wish to express our gratitude to the Registered Inspector and all members of the team for their attitude of professional cooperation throughout the inspection process.

## Appendix 1

### Basic information about the school

Name of school	Ysgol Bro Ddyfi
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Machynlleth Powys
Postcode	SY20 8DR
Telephone number	01654-702012

Headteacher	Mrs Lis Puw
Date of appointment	January 2005
Chair of governors	Mrs Glenda Davies
Reporting inspector	Mr William Gwyn Thomas
Dates of inspection	21-24 April 2008

## Appendix 2

### School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	48	61	41	56	52	21	31	310

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	27	2	28.2

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	10.9:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	-
Average teaching group size	10.6
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	76.4%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	91.1	92.6	92.5	89.6	89.6	75.2	85.1	88.6
Term 2	91.8	89.5	92.5	92.1	97.3	72.4	97.7	90.5
Term 3	93.5	94	92.1	94	90	87	77.9	91.1

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	14.68%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	13 Temporary 1 Permanent

## Appendix 3

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

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2007															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 41															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	26	40	23	8	0	0
		National	0	0	0	0	0	2	7	22	36	24	8	0	0
Welsh	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	29	29	17	0	0
		National	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	20	37	27	9	0	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	19	26	36	17	0	0
		National	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	18	25	30	16	1	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28	34	26	11	0	0
		National	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	19	34	28	12	0	0

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

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language) by teacher assessment			
In Wales	57	In the school	58

## Public Examination Results:

<b>For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ</b>	
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2007	40
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	45

<b>The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2007:</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>UA</b>	<b>Wales</b>
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	98	93	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	43	62	54
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	98	92	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	30	48	40
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	98	98	96
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	85	85	77
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	98	96	93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	2	4	7
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	0	1	2
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	n/a	n/a	n/a
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	n/a	n/a	n/a

<b>For pupils aged 17, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs</b>	
Number of pupils aged 17 in January 2007	11
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2007	10
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2007	1

	<b>School</b>	<b>UA</b>	<b>Wales</b>
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	55	70	68
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	91	96	94
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	20	21	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	n/a	n/a	n/a
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	n/a	n/a	n/a

## Appendix 4

### **Evidence base of the inspection**

Inspectors spent a total of 37 days in the school and were joined by the school's deputy headteacher as nominee. They held a meeting before the inspection.

During the inspection, inspectors visited:

- 84 lessons, 67 lessons in the six subjects inspected and 17 lessons in all other subjects;
- registrations and assemblies; and
- some extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team met with:

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

The team also considered:

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

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

## Appendix 5

### Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
W Gwyn Thomas Registered Inspector	Context, summary recommendations. Appendix Key Questions 1 and 5
Dylan Jones Lay Inspector	Contributions to Key Questions 1, 3, 4 and 7
Dylan Gwyer-Roberts	Key Question 2 and Music
Peredur W Francis	Key Question 3 and Mathematics
Glyn Griffiths	Key Question 4 and SEN
Anna Williams	Key Question 6 and Science
Gwilym Williams	Key Question 7
Manon Wyn Sion	Welsh first language
Bethan Whittal	History
Iola Davies	Physical Education
Dafydd Jones	Nominee

### *Acknowledgement*

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

**Contractor:** EPPC-Severn Crossing Ltd  
Suite H  
Britannic House  
Llandarcy  
Neath  
SA10 6JQ