

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

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Ysgol Brynhyfryd
Mold Road
Ruthin
Denbighshire
LL15 1EG**

School Number: 6634031

Date of Inspection: 3 November 2008

by

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Ysgol Brynhyfryd 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 Brynhyfryd took place between 03/11/08 and 06/11/08. 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 **short** inspection.

Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Ysgol Brynhyfryd is an 11-18 mixed, naturally bilingual school maintained by Denbighshire Unitary Authority (UA). It is a community school which is substantially used by different organisations. There are currently 1224 pupils on roll with 203 in the sixth form, compared with 1230 at the time of the last inspection in November 2002 when there were 240 students in the sixth form.
2. Two or three forms in each year-group study their courses through the medium of Welsh. There is one group for extended Welsh learners and others for those who are Welsh second language learners.
3. The school serves a wide geographical area with 50% of its pupils coming from the town of Ruthin and the remainder from the surrounding rural area. The economic, community and linguistic background of the pupils varies significantly. Some sections of the town and countryside are socially deprived, but the number of pupils in receipt of free school meals (FSM) is 5.7%, well below the national average.
4. The pupil population is relatively stable at present.
5. Pupils represent the full ability range. There are 21 pupils with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) and a further 133 have been identified as needing some support. Eleven pupils are disapplied from the National Curriculum (NC). Two pupils are "looked after" by the local authority.
6. About 74% of the pupils come from homes where the predominant language spoken is English, and 25% come from Welsh-speaking homes. Thirty-three per cent of pupils speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard within the school. Four pupils receive support teaching in English as an additional language.
7. The headteacher was appointed to the post in September 2001. The composition of the senior leadership team (SLT) includes the headteacher, two deputy headteachers, and three assistant headteachers.
8. Vocationally-based courses are available in key stage (KS) 4. Sixth-form vocational provision is very limited. The school intends to introduce a wider range of vocational courses in September 2009. The school also delivers the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) to students in the sixth form and pupils in KS4

The school's priorities and targets

9. The school's mission statement is: "Working together towards excellence". Its main aim is to create a sense of belonging to a school community. This aim is broken down into ten sub-sections which are clearly evident in the school prospectus.
10. The school has prepared a three-year implementation plan. A detailed plan for 2008/11 identifies areas for development which encompass standards, teaching and assessment, bilingualism, the curriculum, pastoral care and guidance, management and evaluation, and the learning environment, including resource

management. Seven specific areas have been identified for attention during this period. They are included in Estyn's seven key questions.

11. The school also sets numerical targets for success at the end of KS3 and KS4 that, in 2009:
- 75% of pupils should reach at least level five, in teachers' assessments in all core subjects combined, at the end of KS3 (English 84%, Welsh 88%, mathematics 85%, science 86%); and
 - in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations, 75% of pupils should gain at least five GCSE grades A*-C, and 100% gain at least five GCSE grades A*-G.

Summary

12. Ysgol Brynhyfryd is a good school with several strong features. The school has responded to most of the key issues noted in the 2002 inspection report. The inspection team agrees with three of the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report but has awarded key questions 1, 4 and 7 one grade lower. In key question 3, it has given two grades lower.

Table of Grades Awarded

Key Questions	Inspection Grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	2
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	2
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of 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?	2
6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	2
7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	2

Standards

13. Results in tests, statutory assessments and examinations are good in KS3 and KS4 and continue to improve. In the sixth form, results have been outstanding for a number of years and compare very well with those in similar schools. The school's results in WBQ in the sixth form are outstanding.

STANDARDS IN KEY SKILLS	KS3 GRADES		KS4 GRADES		SIXTH FORM GRADES	
	WELSH	ENGLISH	WELSH	ENGLISH	WELSH	ENGLISH
Speaking	1	2	1	1	1	1
Listening	1	2	1	1	1	1
Reading	2	1	1	1	1	1
Writing	2	2	2	2	1	1
Numeracy	2	2	1	1	2	2
ICT	1	1	1	1	1	1
Creative & Problem Solving	1	1	1	1	1	1
Improving Own Learning	2	2	2	2	1	1
Working With Others	2	2	2	2	1	1

14. Standards are good or outstanding in all the key skills. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are outstanding throughout the school. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection.
15. Pupils' and students' bilingual skills demonstrate good features outweighing shortcomings as they are not sufficiently developed. Pupils and students discuss issues amongst themselves and with their teachers mainly in English but in Welsh medium lessons discussions are mainly in Welsh. Strategic planning has not developed sufficiently to address how to enhance these skills.
16. Pupils with SEN and those with other learning difficulties make good progress in relation to their ability.
17. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Respect for others has a high priority within this school. Pupils are courteous both within and outside the classroom. All pupils have very positive attitudes towards their work.
18. Pupils' moral and cultural development is good. Many participate in school productions including eisteddfodau. Their social development is very good. Overall, their spiritual dimension is adequate and the majority of pupils appreciate and respect the values of others. All pupils are aware of what is expected of them.
19. Pupils strive to achieve their best and are proud to be members of the school. Attendance levels are above the attendance levels of similar schools in Wales. Most pupils are punctual to lessons.

The quality of education and training

20. Teaching is good overall. The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils is very good. Appropriate questioning techniques are used and expectations are high in most instances.
21. There is pace and challenge in most of the lessons and resources are used well. Teachers have a good grasp of their subject knowledge and key skills are developed effectively in most classrooms.
22. Not all members of staff were observed teaching. The quality of teaching inspected in all lessons visited by the inspectors is similar to the national average as reported in Estyn's annual report. The grades are shown in the grid below:

53 lessons observed	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
	17%	59%	17%	7%	0%
All-Wales 06/07	19%	57%	21%	3%	0%

23. The quality of marking is variable throughout the school and in some departments there is insufficient guidance to pupils on how to improve. The school has an effective system for tracking pupils' progress and identifying underachievement. A few departments set targets which are unrealistic.
24. The school's curriculum does not satisfy legal requirements for pupils of statutory school age in KS3. It offers a range of options, including vocational subject to its pupils in KS4. Nearly all sixth-form courses are academic and insufficient vocational subjects are on offer. The number that can be studied through the medium of Welsh is very limited. Students successfully follow the WBQ.

25. The curriculum is accessible to nearly all and provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to achieve accreditation. However, in KS3, pupils who have not been disapplied from the NC and who receive additional support in literacy and numeracy are regularly withdrawn on a whole year basis from two NC subjects in KS3. Pupils who receive additional support in Year (Y) 7 are also withdrawn from religious education. The school does not comply fully with statutory requirements.
26. There are effective curricular links which help pupils with transition from primary to secondary education.
27. Outstanding extra-curricular activities, which enrich pupils' personal development, are provided by the school. Many pupils also benefit from the wide range of cultural activities available. Assemblies are of good quality, but no collective act of worship was evident in several of the tutor groups observed. The school does not comply fully with statutory requirements for collective worship.
28. Partnerships with other organisations are strong. There are good links with parents and the school listens to their concerns. Businesses provide work-experience opportunities and outside speakers enhance the moral development of pupils and students. The Careers service contributes effectively to the options' process in Y9 and Y11.
29. The school contributes effectively to the well-being of its pupils. The canteen provides a carefully devised daily menu of healthy foods. One Vending machine provides access to water and fruit drinks. Physical activities are well supported. The school is very aware of and involved in sustainability projects.
30. The quality of care and support to all pupils by members of staff and support services is very good. There is effective liaison with external agencies.
31. Learning managers and progress managers assist form tutors to provide effective support. The authority's learning coaches have assisted in supporting and guiding pupils and students. The combined support is outstanding.
32. Good support is provided for pupils with statements of SEN. Teachers diagnose pupils' needs carefully and implement a range of effective support strategies. The needs of others on school action or action plus are not met in KS4.
33. Overall, the school's provision for equal opportunities is well developed and consistent. No discrimination or unpleasant behaviour is tolerated. The school council is an effective body and has contributed to several of the school's policies.
34. Child protection procedures are well embedded.

Leadership and management

35. The quality of leadership within the school is good. The headteacher and her SLT work as a team. Nearly all leaders and staff within the school work together for the benefit of the pupils. All members of staff are important contributors to the decision-making processes.
36. Policies and whole-school strategies are implemented, but not always consistently, by members of staff. The time-tabling of meetings between SLT and middle managers is a positive initiative.

37. Monitoring by SLT and those with management responsibilities to ensure that standards are raised is not always consistent, but is developing. Good practice evident in all aspects of school life is not shared consistently.
38. The work and expectations of senior and middle managers are clearly defined. The quality of planning for improvement is good.
39. The governing body's role as critical friend is good. The monitoring of standards and procedures is good. Governors evaluate the performance of their link departments on an annual basis.
40. The school has an adequate number of qualified staff to meet curricular and administrative needs. There are insufficient members of staff to enable courses to progress through the key stages through the medium of Welsh. The management and deployment of teaching and support staff, including resources for work-force remodelling have been used to good effect. Teachers who teach outside their own specialisms receive good support from the relevant heads of department. The professional development of administrative and technical staff is limited.
41. The quality of the accommodation is good, overall. Some accommodation, however, is in a poor state of repair. The music area is not stimulating and the learning resource centre is inadequate. The provision of ICT resources has improved significantly. Resources for teaching and learning are good.
42. Due to the quality of external tests and examination results, the provision of appropriate resources, exemplary behaviour of pupils and students, the effective implementation of the workforce restructuring and the quality of leadership and management, the school provides good value for money.
43. The education and opportunities provided by the school do not ensure fully that the needs of the range of pupils and students are met. Pupils who have not been disapplied from the NC are withdrawn from some subjects in KS3. Pupils and students are unable to continue their studies in some subjects through the medium of Welsh.
44. The provision of sixth-form education is cost-effective.

Recommendations

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

- *R1. Continue to raise standards further in the core subjects in KS3 and KS4 to ensure they contribute effectively to the core subject indicator (CSI).
- *R2. Improve the quality of written feedback given to pupils and students across the school to ensure that they are fully aware of how to improve.
- *R3. Develop learners' bilingual skills by careful planning and appointing sufficient qualified staff to teach subjects through the medium of Welsh.
- *R4. Share good and outstanding practice throughout the school to ensure that the priorities for teaching and learning are embedded in the classroom.
- R5. Ensure that all statutory requirements in relation to religious education and collective acts of worship are met.

- R6. Ensure that pupils who receive additional support for literacy and numeracy in KS3 are not withdrawn wholly from the same national curriculum subjects on a regular basis.
- R7. Develop greater consistency in departmental monitoring by the SLT and middle managers.
- R8. Review the learning needs of identified pupils on the SEN register at KS4 and ensure appropriate provision to meet their needs.
- *R9. Work with the LEA to improve accommodation further, especially the 1970's extension, the learning resource centre and the facilities available to the music department.

*** The school development plan 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 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

45. The school awarded itself a grade 1 in its self-evaluation report. The inspection team disagrees because there are issues in relation to:
- results compared with benchmarking figures over a four-year period in KS3 and KS4;
 - the way in which the school compares with similar schools in Wales in terms of value added from KS2-KS3 and KS2-KS4; and
 - trends in performance of the core subjects and how they contribute to the CSI over a four-year period.

KS3 and KS4

Pupils' success in attaining agreed learning goals

46. Overall results in teacher assessments at KS3 and external examination results in KS4 demonstrate that standards have good features and no important shortcomings.
47. Results in teacher assessments at the end of KS3 have been relatively consistent over the last three years with an improvement in 2008. The school's free school meals' indicator is below 6%. When compared with similar schools in Wales over the four-year period 2005-2008, the core subjects and the CSI varied from where nearly all indicators were in the bottom 50% in 2005 to being in the top 50% in 2008. Over a four-year period, including 2008, the CSI was not placed in the top 25% of similar schools in Wales.
48. Results at the end of KS3 have been above local and national figures for the last four years.

49. The school does not compare favourably in some indicators with similar schools when comparing value added from KS2-KS3. Teacher assessments in 2006 and 2007 at KS3 (matched to prior attainment at KS2) highlighted that the value added placed the school in the bottom 50% of similar schools in Wales for nearly all the core subjects and the CSI. Over these two years, the school had performed below what was expected. The 2008 figures are not currently available.
50. Girls outperformed boys in all the core subjects and the CSI in the end of KS3 assessments in 2007 and 2008.
51. At KS4 in the GCSE examinations in 2008, 77% of pupils achieved at least five GCSE grades at A*-C, significantly above local and national averages. However, this percentage indicates a rise in pupil achievement following a consistent decline in pupil achievement over a three-year period from 2005-2007.
52. Fifty-nine per cent of pupils achieved the level 2 threshold (at least 5 GCSE grades at A*-C including mathematics, Welsh first language or English), significantly above local and national averages and the overall pass rate of pupils in the GCSE examinations was significantly higher than local and national averages.
53. When compared with similar schools in Wales in 2008, the percentage of pupils achieving at least five GCSE grades at A*-C is in the top 50% of schools with similar free school meal entitlement. It has only been in the top 25% once in the last four years (2005).
54. Over the four-year period 2005-2008, excluding Welsh first language where less than 29% of the cohort sat this examination, not once had the core subjects and the CSI been placed in the top 25% of similar schools in Wales.
55. The results for 2008 indicate that the KS4 results have improved, especially in English and science and the CSI.
56. Over a four year period 2005-2008, excluding Welsh first language and the percentage of pupils achieving at least five GCSE grades at A*-C in 2005, no key indicator at KS4 was placed in the top 25% of similar schools in Wales.
57. The most able pupils achieve their potential. They gain the A*/A grades in the GCSE examinations. However, in 2007, over 20% of pupils in at least 11 subjects at GCSE did not achieve their potential, by half a grade or more. This position improved in 2008.
58. Pupil progress from KS3-KS4, matched to prior attainment in 2007, highlighted that the value added for pupils achieving at least five A*-C grades and the CSI were in the top 50% of similar schools. However, pupil progress from KS2-KS4 matched to prior attainment placed these two indicators in the bottom 50% of similar schools in Wales. The school had performed below what was expected. The 2008 figures are not currently available.
59. At KS4 in the GCSE examinations in 2007, the gap between the girls' and boys' performance had been eliminated in some of the indicators.

Their progress in learning

60. All key skills have standards which are at least good with no important shortcomings. Several have standards which are good with outstanding features.
61. Overall, standards are good in KS3 but outstanding in KS4. Standards are mainly outstanding in KS4 due to the success of the WBQ.
62. Pupils have good communication skills in KS3 and very good skills in KS4. Their listening skills are outstanding overall. They use extended speech confidently. Reading skills overall are outstanding. Support is given to those with reading difficulties through the medium of Welsh in KS3. In both key stages, the quality of pupils' work is good. The quality and quantity of extended writing is relative to pupil ability. Some inaccurate spelling is evident.
63. Pupils' standards in the key skills of ICT and creative and problem-solving are good with outstanding features in KS3 and KS4. This is because most pupils use their ICT skills in a range of different contexts. This also enhances their creative and problem-solving skills.
64. Pupils' skills in applying number in a range of subjects across the curriculum are good in KS3, but outstanding in KS4.
65. The key skill of improving one's own learning has standards which are good. Opportunities for developing and improving one's own learning are increasing.
66. From September 2008 all pupils follow the full Welsh first or second language GCSE course in Y10. Prior to this date, a substantial proportion sat the Welsh short course.
67. Pupils' bilingual skills are not developed fully. The Welsh language is not very evident in and around the school. Many pupils use English as a means of communication to teachers or fellow pupils. They are not able to transfer their skills from one language to the other with confidence and ease.
68. Pupils with SEN make good progress in relation to their ability. In KS3 and KS4, many pupils of low ability achieve their potential.
69. Able and talented pupils are identified and set appropriate challenging tasks to raise their academic standards. This process is developing.
70. Not all pupils are aware of what they have to do to improve. Self-assessment and peer-assessment processes are developing. The quality of written feedback advising pupils of how they need to improve is very good in some departments. It is insufficiently focused in others. This occurs within and across departments. In the books examined, the written advice given varied from being very good, where specific subject advice was given, to unsatisfactory where the advice was too general.
71. In the majority of classes and subjects, pupils make good progress towards their targets. Many pupils with learning difficulties in KS4 make good progress.

The development of their personal, social and learning skills

72. Pupils' behaviour in KS3 and KS4 is good with outstanding features. Pupils behave in an exemplary manner where courtesy and respect prevail. They understand the high expectations which the school has of them, both in terms of

work and in terms of their behaviour and attitudes. These aspects make positive contributions to pupils' learning.

73. The school is an orderly, caring and an inclusive community from which only ten pupils have been temporarily excluded. During the last academic year, no pupil was permanently excluded.
74. The attendance level for 2007-2008 is 94%. This is above the all-Wales figure of 90.9% for 2008 and above the attendance rates of similar schools in Wales taking into account their free school meal entitlement for 2007-2008. Pupils' punctuality to lessons is good.
75. Pupils make good progress in their personal, social, moral and wider development. Values at the heart of the school are evident in practice. Pupils gain much in their moral development from the good quality assemblies and the very good relationships which exist within the school. The religious education periods and the integrated personal and social education (PSE) programmes contribute further to moral and spiritual development. However, in spite of the valuable spiritual contributions gained from the morning assemblies, the contribution to pupils' spiritual development in some tutor periods is unsatisfactory.
76. Pupils' social and cultural development is very good. Pupils take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities provided in sport, clubs, visits and performances. The Welsh dimension is encouraged throughout the curriculum and enhanced by the success of the WBQ. The arts and music are all promoted and opportunities are taken up by many pupils of differing abilities.
77. Pupils demonstrate good awareness of equal opportunities issues. They are very knowledgeable about national priorities such as the importance of sustainable development and are prepared to use their very good leadership skills in the community and workplace.

Sixth form

Students' success in attaining agreed learning goals

78. Overall, standards of achievement and attainment have been consistently high over the last three years. Results in external examinations are outstanding. This is because in 2008:
 - 82% of students achieved A-C grades in two or more advanced (A) level examinations, well above the national average of 69%;
 - 99% of students achieved A-E grades in two or more A level examinations (level three threshold) above the national average of 94%: and
 - 96% of the Y13 achieved the Advanced Diploma of the WBQ.
79. In 2008, two subject studied at A level indicated that on average, candidates performed worse than their GCSE grades would predict by the equivalent of one full grade.
80. The average A level points' scores per student during 2005-2007 were above local and national averages for these three years.

81. Girls outperformed boys in 2008 at grades A-C in A level examinations. In 2008, there was a difference of 59 points in favour of the girls between the average wider points' score (AWPS) of boys and girls.
82. In September 2007, 48% of the Y11 pupils returned to the sixth form and 41% went to Further Education colleges.

Their progress in learning

83. Students achieve standards which are good with outstanding features in all their key skills except numeracy skills which have good features and no important shortcomings.
84. Most students use subject-specific terminology in discussions with one another and with their teachers. Group work is very effective in all subject areas and this is a strength of the sixth form. These qualities assist students to maintain their outstanding problem-solving skills.
85. Most students are able to apply their number skills to a high standard but not to the same standard as their other key skills. They use their ICT skill to best advantage when undertaking course or project work. Students' ICT skills have improved significantly since the last inspection.
86. All students achieve accreditation in their key skills either at levels 2 or 3 during their period of study in the sixth form. This is a direct consequence of the schools' success with the WBQ.
87. Students take responsibility for their own learning and this is consistent within the sixth form.
88. Outstanding levels of communication in both Welsh, as a subject, and English are evident in class discussion.
89. Students' bilingual skills in and around the school are not a strong feature as students communicate consistently mainly through the medium of English.
90. A more mature attitude to work prepares all students well for progression to university or the world of work. They work consistently and use their non-contact time effectively to ensure they achieve their challenging targets.
91. All students have a clear understanding of their levels of achievement and what they have to do to improve in most subjects. Their work is marked and targets for improvement are given consistently.

The development of their personal, social and learning skills

92. Students have developed very good personal, social and learning skills. Their attitude to learning is outstanding as they are determined to make the most of all opportunities available to them. Their concentration levels are high and students are thoroughly engaged with the tasks in hand. Over 90% of the students succeed in entering their first or reserve choice of universities.
93. They accept responsibility easily and have a strong social conscience.
94. They acquire greater awareness of issues relating to spiritual and cultural development through contact with a wide range of outside speakers. This is achieved as a component of the WBQ. The wide variety of opportunities for spiritual development results in good standards.

95. Students are very good role models for younger pupils and for one another. Their leadership skills are very good. This has enabled them to strengthen the relationships between senior and junior pupils.
96. Students demonstrate very responsible behaviour and respect towards one another and towards all members of the school community. They gain in maturity during their period of study in the sixth form and have a valuable experience.
97. Students are able to express views openly and honestly. They listen carefully to the view of others, appreciating, but not necessarily agreeing with what has been said.
98. The ability to work well with one another contributes significantly to the development of their problem-solving skills. Nearly all have adopted and developed skills which have prepared them well for Higher Education. Many organise their work without supervision.
99. Students have developed very good working habits. They work independently and successfully under supervision.
100. 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

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

How well does teaching and training meet the needs of learners and the curriculum or course requirements

102. The following table shows the grades awarded to the quality of teaching in the lessons observed throughout the school:

Quality of teaching	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
53 lessons observed	17%	59%	17%	7%	0%

103. The percentage of lessons awarded a grade 1 or 2, namely 76%, compares well with the national picture in 2006-2007 where 76% of lessons were awarded grades 1 and 2. Not all members of staff were observed teaching.

104. Good features outweigh shortcomings in 17% of lessons, and in 7% there are some good features to the teaching but shortcomings in important areas, particularly in KS3 and KS4. The school is not achieving the 'Vision into Action' secondary target for 2010, for the quality of teaching to be grade 2 or better in 80% of classes.

KS3 and KS4

105. The following table shows the quality of teaching and assessment in all the lessons observed in the school in KS3 and KS4.

Quality of teaching	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	17%	52%	22%	9%	0%
KS4	20%	60%	10%	10%	0%
KS3 and KS4	19%	56%	16%	9%	0%

106. Good and outstanding features were seen in the quality of teaching in a good range of subjects throughout the school. The quality of teaching is not as good in KS3 as it is in KS4. There is a higher percentage of grade 3 lessons in KS3. The 25% of lessons graded 3 and 4 in KS3 and KS4 impact upon pupil standards.
107. Across all lessons, the outstanding features of the teaching include:
- high expectations, with regard to standards of work, that motivate and challenge;
 - lessons meticulously planned so that a number of key skills are included;
 - lively presentations and penetrating questioning promoting pupils' ability to think independently and offer extended answers; and
 - effective use of the interactive whiteboard to promote learning.
108. A very good feature of the learning is the working relationship between teachers and pupils. This relationship which is based on respect, ensures that pupils, whatever their gender, race or ability, learn in a friendly and supportive environment. Teachers know their pupils well and offer guidance and praise readily.
109. Many other good features of the teaching include:
- planning and preparation for individual lessons and a series of lessons;
 - a variety of activities with definite timescales that give good pace to the lesson;
 - a range of teaching techniques that ensure pupils' active participation;
 - questioning techniques that extend pupils' comments;
 - sound subject knowledge and understanding;
 - varied and purposeful classroom organisation, including group and pair work; and
 - sound and constructive classroom management.
110. These lessons are carefully planned and lesson objectives are shared, used and reviewed at the end.
111. Pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) are taught well.
112. In the lessons where there were shortcomings observed, these include:
- over-long introductions by teachers and a lack of opportunities for pupils to participate fully in the lesson;
 - a lack of sufficient variety and challenge in the tasks set;
 - inability to maintain pupils' interest and, as a result, some low-level disruption;
 - a lack of purposeful planning to ensure appropriate work for pupils of differing ability; and
 - no definite summing up of the lesson as a result of mistiming.
113. The school meets the linguistic needs of the Welsh-medium pupils well through planning opportunities to relate, use and develop their bilingual skills within a

range of everyday situations. Activities and skills' lessons promote the bilingual skills of some groups of extended learners in the (N) group. However, planned and co-ordinated opportunities for these pupils and the second language learners to use their bilingual skills in subject areas are very limited. In Y10, for the first time this year, the full Welsh second language course was introduced to learners. This is good practice.

How rigorous is assessment and how is it used to plan and improve learning

114. The quality of assessment, recording and presenting reports is good. Procedures meet the statutory requirements with regard to assessment and reporting on NC subjects and conform to the requirements of the examination boards in KS4 and the sixth form.
115. The school conforms to the assessment requirements for pupils with ALN.
116. The school has a clear and comprehensive assessment policy that offers sound guidance to implement the assessment process. Good practice is recognised and promoted through the assessment for learning policy. However, not all departments have succeeded in responding fully to the requirements of this policy in order to raise standards.
117. The school has a good system to ensure consistency in assessing progress and effort across the school. Through the system of coloured bands, teachers are aware of each pupil's potential. The system is used to set targets and to monitor pupils' progress towards their targets.
118. Expectations with regard to quantitative targets set by subject departments for the end of key stages vary and the school does not always check these targets rigorously.
119. Effective use is made of assessment data in order to promote and raise standards. Assessment data are collated twice a year in order to monitor pupils' progress. The timetable with regard to gathering data in Y7 and Y8 has not been designed to ensure a consistent overview of pupils' progress.
120. There is good practice where progress and learning managers, jointly with the SLT, make appropriate use of the data in order to identify instances of underachievement. Effective additional support is provided to targeted groups across the school through mentoring, interviews and working with parents. This good practice has not yet been fully embedded throughout the school in order to have a significant effect on standards.
121. There are very good examples of subject departments using termly focussed assessment results and assessment data to monitor progress and to positively influence the teaching, marking and assessment. However, departmental strategies for monitoring progress and responding to underachievement are varied. Link members of the SLT do not always effectively monitor the assessment procedures of the departments for which they are responsible.
122. In KS3, procedures in a number of departments for standardising the quality of pupils' work are developing well. These assessment developments, together with the work between the school and the primary schools to moderate and discuss work in KS2 and KS3, especially in English and Welsh, are good practice and promote better understanding with regard to standards.

123. In some subjects, assessment practice is consistent, thorough and accurate. In these subjects, marking of pupils' work is diagnostic with clear comments and targets that guide the individual to make good progress. In the best examples, good use is made of assessment practices for learning. Success criteria are shared with the pupils. This increases their understanding of the expectations. However, in a number of instances, there is a lack of consistency in the quality of comments within and across departments, and the assessment does not offer sufficient feedback to pupils on how to improve their work.
124. Pupils have a good understanding of the process and purpose of assessment although they are not always fully aware of their individual subject targets. Although there are very good examples of pupils assessing their own work, this good practice has not been developed in every department in the school and self-assessment is not used consistently enough as a tool for raising standards.
125. Annual and interim reports to parents provide good information on their child's academic and personal development. They give a clear picture of pupils' progress in each subject. Where the reporting is of a good quality, comments are detailed, evaluative and give specific recommendations on how to improve. The comments do not always give pupils specific targets in order to improve their work.
126. Parents can contribute to the reports through responding in writing and annual parents' evenings are held. Pupils receive good opportunities to discuss their progress in interviews with the class tutor, recording personal and subject targets in the progress file, WBQ file and their diaries. Overall, these targets are of a good quality.

Sixth form

How well does teaching and training meet the needs of learners and the curriculum or course requirements

127. The quality of teaching is good and there are no important shortcomings in the sixth form.
128. The following table shows the grades awarded to the quality of teaching in the lessons observed in the sixth form:

Quality of teaching	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Sixth form 10 lessons observed	10%	70%	20%	0%	0%

129. Outstanding features of the teaching include:
- very good working relationships where individual students receive strong support and encouragement to develop into independent learners; and
 - very high expectations with a range of activities that enable students to develop complex subject-concepts.
130. Many of the good features in the teaching are similar to those seen in lessons in KS3 and KS4. Additional features of the good teaching are the thorough preparation for the requirements of external examinations, success criteria being shared with students in a meaningful and relevant way and an emphasis on activities that promote their key skills.

131. In the lessons where there are shortcomings, the pace of work is slow, questioning too limiting to encourage students to think and respond at length and students receiving information passively.
132. There are effective opportunities for developing the bilingual skills of the Welsh-medium students. However, there is insufficient planning to ensure opportunities for all students to develop and use these skills in lessons and within a range of everyday situations.

How rigorous is assessment and how is it used to plan and improve learning

133. There are outstanding and extremely effective systems for monitoring the progress of students in the sixth form. Sixth-form progress managers:
- make good use of data to predict target grades and challenging grades for each student in each subject;
 - analyse subject progress assessment data termly, in order to have an accurate overview of students' achievement and effort;
 - ensure students' constant clear understanding of their predicted and potential grades;
 - mentor students that are underachieving; and
 - keep effective contact with the subject teachers and personal tutors with regard to students' progress.
134. There is a close link with the class tutors who hold regular interviews with the students and discuss their targets for improvement.
135. Although there are very good examples of marking of students' work, with the best marking offering constructive feedback on how to improve, there are inconsistencies across departments. The quality of written feedback given with the marking in some subjects is less analytical.
136. The quality of links with parents and the information they receive on the progress of students in the sixth form is good. In Y12 and Y13, parents are sent annual and interim reports and have the opportunity to respond in writing. In some subjects, the quality of the subject comments is detailed and evaluative and reports provide targets for improvement.

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

137. The school awarded itself a grade 1 in its self-evaluation report. The inspection team disagrees because there are shortcomings in the way in which the school does not:
- teach two foundation subjects throughout the key stage to those pupils withdrawn for additional support in KS3;
 - fully meet statutory requirements with regard to religious education in KS3; and
 - fully meet statutory requirements with regard to a daily act of collective worship in tutorial sessions.

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

138. Despite these shortcomings, there are some good and outstanding features in the way that learning experiences meet learners' needs and interest.
139. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including a significant number of additional examination subjects outside school hours, make an outstanding contribution to broadening and enriching pupils' and students' experiences.
140. The outstanding planning, co-ordination and monitoring of key skills' provision across KS4 and the sixth form has enabled all students to gain accreditation. Students in the sixth form gain accreditation in the six key skills at either level 2 or level 3.
141. The school has broadened the range of courses available in KS4 to enable pupils choose their individual learning pathways from a developing range of academic and vocational options. The number of subjects available meets Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG's) requirements as agreed by Denbighshire Unitary Authority. The school is in the process of organising subjects into their domains. It works hard to ensure that all pupils can follow their first choice of subjects.
142. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of most pupils. It is not, however, accessible to all. In KS3, pupils who have not been disapplied from the NC, but receive additional support in literacy and numeracy, are withdrawn from statutory religious education, modern foreign languages and music for part of the key stage. This is a significant shortcoming.
143. The school has re-modelled the sixth-form curriculum to enable the WBQ to be delivered successfully. It has broadened students' experience well beyond their A level studies. It has ensured full compliance with the learning core of 14-19 Learning Pathways.
144. In KS4 and in the sixth form the school integrates religious education, careers education and guidance of good quality, health education and PSE into the carefully planned programme to meet the requirements of the learning core. Furthermore, it has identified how each subject contributes to meeting all aspects of the PSE framework. Areas not covered are developed through a well-planned and co-ordinated series of whole-day special events. The school ensures good opportunities for pupils to develop their moral, social and cultural understanding.
145. The school has good links with parents and listens to their concerns. Partnerships with a large number of primary schools are good and developing further. Through its membership of the local 14-19 network it is developing links with other secondary schools and colleges. Partnerships with the local community, employers and an initial teacher training (ITT) establishment are good.
146. At KS4 there are insufficient vocational course available at level 2.
147. Pupils who have studied subjects through the medium of Welsh in KS4 are often unable to continue their studies in these subjects in the sixth form. There is no continuity or progression to the sixth form in these subjects.
148. Vocational provision in the sixth form is inadequate. The curriculum is focused on students' academic development.

149. Even though morning assemblies and tutor periods contribute towards developing pupils' moral understanding, only some contribute to their spiritual development. Pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on a "thought for the day" but there are inconsistencies in the quality of this experience. Pupils are not challenged to reflect deeply and this inhibits their spiritual development. The school does not provide fully a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Several tutorial sessions observed did not comply with the statutory requirement. This is a significant shortcoming.

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

150. Effective work-related education is provided by the school. There is a strong partnership with Careers Wales and good links with local employers. Work-experience, both in Y10 and Y12 is well planned and managed. Pupils and students are well prepared beforehand and follow-up activities allow them to reflect on what they have learned and gain accreditation.
151. The school introduced a full Welsh second language GCSE course to all pupils in Y10 in September 2008 to improve the bilingual competence of pupils who have Welsh as a second language. The quality of the provision for 'Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig' is good.
152. However, the school fails to develop sufficiently the Welsh language skills of those pupils for whom English is their first language.
153. The school promotes equality of access but this is not achieved by some groups of pupils in KS3 who are withdrawn for additional support or students wishing to enter the sixth form without the required number of passes at GCSE grades A*-C.
154. Education for sustainable development and global citizenship is good. The school has identified how each subject contributes in this area and in Y7 has introduced specific work under the skills' agenda. Pupils have a good understanding of issues such as "fair trade" and they are actively engaged in a number of worthwhile sustainable development projects. The way in which the school behaves in a sustainable way is continuing to develop. It is making good progress in re-cycling and reducing its energy and resource usage.
155. Contacts with local employers are good in KS4 and developing in the sixth form. The business community provides good support to the school with a range of activities, including work-experience placements.
156. The school has effective arrangements for developing pupils' entrepreneurial skills. There are a number of well-focussed enterprise activities.
157. The school is making good progress in meeting several of the WAG's national priorities, in particular improving the transition from primary to secondary school and transforming its provision for 14-19 year old learners.
158. Welsh learners placed in the bridging group in KS3 make insufficient progress in developing their bilingual skills.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

159. The school awarded itself a grade 1 in its self-evaluation report. The inspection team disagrees, because it did not identify sufficient outstanding features.

The quality of care, support and guidance to learners

160. The school provides learners with care, support and guidance of good quality. Progress managers supervise arrangements for Y8, Y9, Y10, Y11 and the sixth form. Learning managers have an effective overarching role in Y7, the remainder of KS3, KS4 and the sixth form.

161. The school works closely and effectively with parents and carers. An information evening is held for Y7 parents. Systems of screening, target-setting and monitoring of progress are explained. Parents' evening are held for each year group where parents can consult subject teachers regarding progress.

162. The school works effectively with local employers and holds evenings where the employers and the school come together to reinforce the good working partnerships. The effectiveness of the partnerships is currently being evaluated by the employers.

163. There is an effective school council comprising elected representatives from each year group. The council has an annual budget which is spent on enhancing areas of the school, for example, the 'tranquillity garden'. The school welcomes the views of the council which has advised on school policy including anti-bullying and the teaching and learning.

164. The school provides outstanding subject option guidance. All the accredited learning coaches in the local authority visit the school over a four-day period. They interview all Y9 pupils and provide them with impartial advice. The very good relationship the school has with Careers Wales and its careers' adviser has also had a significant impact on the quality of advice available in both Y9 and Y11.

165. Very effective procedures are in place for transition from primary to secondary school. The transition manager and special educational needs' co-ordinator (SENCo) both visit all partner primary schools. Year 6 pupils visit at least twice prior to admission. The highly structured and effective induction process helps the new Y7 pupils settle quickly into their new school. There are also good induction procedures into the sixth form.

166. A notable strength of the school is the personal support and guidance available to all learners. Learning managers, the learning coach and the behaviour, guidance and support assistant make significant contributions to this highly effective provision.

167. All pupils have access to the effective PSE programme. A recently conducted audit ensures that all aspects of the new national framework are covered. Delivery is through NC subjects, tutorial sessions and focus days in KS3, through the learning core at KS4 and is tailored to the WBQ in the sixth form. A very wide range of guest speakers and specialists enhance this provision throughout the school.

168. The school has good procedures in place for monitoring attendance. Electronic registration identifies absentees quickly and effectively. The school operates a 'first day call system' and when there is no reply to this parents are contacted by post. Learning managers meet with the Education Schools' Welfare Officer (ESW) every week to review attendance records and discuss individual cases. The ESW makes appropriate home visits.
169. The school has an effective rewards system for behaviour, attendance, effort and achievement. This is recorded in pupils' homework diaries.
170. Pupils receive careers education and guidance of good quality. Good links with external agencies enhance this.
171. There is support of good quality for pupils' well-being and healthy development. Menus are carefully devised to ensure learners are provided with a healthy choice at lunchtime and taster days arranged to allow them to sample healthy products. A part-time school nurse/ health adviser who is employed by the Health Authority contributes significantly to pupils' well-being.
172. The school has an appropriate child protection policy. A designated senior member of staff has responsibility for child protection and members of staff are familiar with the school's referral procedures.

The quality of provision for additional learning needs

173. The school effectively identifies pupils' additional learning needs in KS3. The SENCo visits partner primary schools and attends Y6 annual review meetings. On admission, in addition to the school's general screening test, pupils' reading, spelling and numeracy skills are also tested.
174. However, some pupils in KS4 and the sixth form are identified as having special educational needs at school action plus, when there is no longer any involvement with external agencies. Some pupils at KS4, identified as having needs at school action stage, receive little provision that is different from, or additional to, that provided for other pupils.
175. Pupils in KS3 are well supported in a variety of effective ways.
176. A number of Y12 students have received training in paired reading and act as reading buddies for a large number of Y7 pupils during registration periods twice-a-week. This support is very effective and valued by these pupils.
177. Individual education plans (IEPs) are provided for all pupils who require them. These are reviewed by the SENCo and by subject teachers. However, the outcomes of reviews are not recorded on the IEPs.
178. Arrangements for the annual reviews of statements of SEN, including those where transition plans are drafted or updated, comply with requirements. The school's procedures take account of the Code of Practice and the framework for inclusive education.
179. Detailed and comprehensive pastoral support plans support pupils whose behaviour gives cause for concern and are effective in keeping the fixed-term exclusion figures low. The behaviour, guidance and support assistants ensure the smooth working of the behaviour policy. The school is well served by the local authority's behaviour support teacher.

180. Support for more able and talented pupils, whilst not always evident in lessons, is developing. Currently, each department identifies pupils in addition to the pupils identified in primary schools prior to admission. Current provision consists of enrichment and extension exercises.
181. The very small number of pupils with English as an additional language are fully integrated and well supported.

The quality of provision for equal opportunities

182. The school has an appropriate equal opportunities' policy in place. The PSE programme promotes gender equality and challenges stereotyping. This is enhanced by the partnership with Careers Wales which has promoted the 'Girls in Construction' programme.
183. The school effectively promotes good race relations through its racial equality policy and through its PSE programme and other areas of the curriculum which widen pupils' understanding of other cultures, faiths and beliefs.
184. The school has an effective anti-bullying policy. Very good strategies and procedures are in place to tackle any form of bullying, discrimination or harassment. Pupils are aware of the school's zero tolerance approach to all forms of oppressive behaviour.
185. The school secures outstanding equal treatment for disabled or sensory impaired pupils. They are fully integrated into the life of the school and very well supported. Learning support assistants (LSAs) for disabled and sensory impaired pupils are highly effective in giving support and in helping pupils develop independent living skills.
186. The school works well with the unitary authority to ensure effective support for both visually and hearing-impaired pupils. The support offered by the weekly visits of the mobility officer for the visually impaired is outstanding. It has significantly improved their mobility and enabled the pupils to gain full independent access to the whole school.
187. The school has a disability equality scheme which meets statutory requirements. It also has a three-year accessibility action plan which, although meeting requirements, does not focus sufficiently on developing strategies to allow disabled learners access to the curriculum.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

189. The aims and expectations of the school are made clear to all staff, pupils and visitors. These are reinforced in meetings and assemblies.
190. 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. The success of pupils and students in their achievements-academic, cultural, sporting and social-reflects the strength of this policy.

191. The school has successfully taken into account national priorities. In particular, the school has worked well to develop the options' menu of WAG's 14-19 Learning Pathways in KS4. The Welsh Baccalaureate has been extremely successful in the sixth form and pupils' and students' key skills are of a very high standard.
192. The headteacher is supported by two deputy headteachers and three assistant headteachers, one of whom began her new post in September 2008. Although they support one another, their effectiveness as senior managers is continuing to develop.
193. The current two-year review cycle of departments is too long. Each member of the SLT, including the headteacher, is linked to a cluster of departments. These links have not been fully embedded. The links between senior managers and the departments they line-manage are developing. There is an element of inconsistency in the degree of rigour with which the SLT assures quality and reviews the work of individual subject departments and pastoral teams.
194. There is sufficient time within the SLT to undertake regular monitoring of departments in a shorter time-scale. The recently introduced time-tabled meetings between the SLT and their link subject leaders have improved communication between senior and middle managers. There is now a greater degree of awareness of expectations.
195. Classroom observations of heads of departments have been undertaken by the SLT. The degree of rigour with which a few heads of department monitor their own departments is inconsistent.
196. There is a clear focus on teaching and learning, exemplified by detailed schemes of work and assessment, and good programmes of quality assurance in the most effective departments. Middle managers and some progress managers of high quality are committed to raising standards by monitoring work on a formal and informal basis.
197. The school's target-setting processes are good in KS3 and KS4. They are very good in the sixth form. However, some departments have set unrealistic targets for the last two years.
198. The school ensures the professional development of teaching, administrative and technical staff according to individual and school needs.
199. The school has a sound system of performance management. Targets are set for each individual teacher's professional development, for pupil progress, and a whole-school target. The process is monitored well.

How well governors or other supervisory bodies meet their responsibilities

200. The governing body includes members who have supported the school over a number of years. Those recently appointed members strengthen and widen the expertise of this body.
201. The individual expertise of many governors is used very effectively in the work of the governing body. The role of this body has become more focused towards

influencing the strategic direction of the school. They were involved as a group and in sub-committees to challenge the grades given for each question.

202. The governors clearly understand their roles and act as critical friends. They possess sound knowledge of the running of the school. They are informed on all aspects of school performance either by the headteacher or appropriate members of the SLT.
203. There are three main sub-committees of the governing body, all of which are effective in assisting the school to move forward. 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.
204. All members of the governing body have links with departments. However, governors only hold one formal meeting with their departments on an annual basis. Their role as critical friends to departments is not yet fully embedded.
205. The school prospectus contains all the necessary regulatory requirements.
206. Statutory requirements in KS3 are not fully met and neither is the daily act of corporate worship.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

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

How effectively the school's performance is monitored and evaluated

208. The findings of the inspection team agree with those of the school for three of the seven key questions. The team awarded a grade 2 for key questions 1, 4, and 7. It was felt that there were insufficient examples of outstanding features to warrant a grade 1. The team awarded a grade 3 for key question 3, two grades lower than the school's grades. Statutory requirements are not being fully met in relation to a daily act of corporate worship and all pupils do not receive adequate provision of religious education in KS3 as they are withdrawn for additional literacy and numeracy support.
209. The good features associated with this question include:
- participation of all staff in an annual, thorough, comprehensive self-evaluation process based on the seven key questions;
 - rigorous evaluation of data from a variety of sources by SLT and departmental managers;
 - self-evaluation processes directly linked to departmental and school improvement plans (SIP); and
 - designated time to members of SLT to meet fortnightly with their link departmental managers.
210. The school's self-assessment document is detailed and comprehensive, noting the strengths and areas for development. It is based on first-hand evidence of staff, parents, pupils, governors and data, and deals with the seven key questions in Estyn's Common Inspection Framework.

211. Links between departments and senior management are developing. Each department has a link member within the SLT; regular, recently introduced minuted meetings take place between the link member and heads of department where focussed discussions on aspects of departmental development and school developments occur.
212. Monitoring of departments by SLT is developing. Information on the quality of classroom experiences is obtained through classroom observation by SLT of departments once every two years and through the annual statutory performance management review. Members of SLT sample pupils' books at various times and departmental managers have an annual review with the headteacher and their link member of SLT primarily to discuss examination results.
213. These initiatives lack some coherence and hamper an integrated approach to monitoring.
214. The school takes good account of the views of parents and pupils through commissioning in-depth surveys of parental and pupils' perceptions of the school. The main recommendations have been incorporated in the SIP. The school council is effective in bringing matters to the attention of SLT.
215. The standard of departmental self-assessment reports is good. Departments follow templates and guidelines for completing a departmental self-assessment based on the seven key questions. Most departments produce a thorough self-evaluation, with priorities for improvement where appropriate. A few lack qualitative evaluation.
216. The evaluation of the wealth of data provided by the school to departments is thorough and it is used well by most departments. It enables departments to reach sound judgements regarding standards attained by their pupils and to identify areas for improvement.
217. The monitoring system of standards of teaching and learning within the departments' self-assessment system is developing. All heads of department sample pupils' books. In the best examples, such as in the Welsh, geography, history, and modern foreign languages' departments, sharing of good practice such as peer observation, and marking standardisation occurs regularly. However, in some instances, monitoring within and between departments relies on the enthusiasm of individual members of staff.

The effectiveness of planning for improvement

218. The quality of the SIP is good. The good features include:
- the inclusion of national and local priorities as well as issues prioritised within the school;
 - detailed action plans with clear time-scales; and
 - success criteria.
219. The quality of departmental improvement plans is good. Departments are given a template to follow which requires action plans, time-scales and success criteria to be noted. Departments embody in their plans the priorities for improvement noted in their self-evaluation. However, a minority of the action plans and the monitoring systems linked to them lack rigour.

220. Support and ancillary staff plan well for improvement and set out targets with appropriate time-scales.
221. The SIP provides costings for its priorities.
222. Progress on the main recommendations of the previous inspection report has been appropriate. This has been achieved by:
- closing the gap between the attainment of boys and girls in KS3 and KS4;
 - revising the roles of middle managers;
 - improving attendance;
 - developing self-evaluation procedures;
 - improving the school buildings significantly; and
 - addressing all health and safety issues noted in the previous report.
223. However, the school has not paid appropriate attention to the statutory requirement relating to the curriculum of ensuring that all pupils receive their entitlement to the NC.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

224. The school awarded itself a grade 1 in its self-evaluation report. The inspection team disagrees because there are insufficient outstanding features. There are good features and no important shortcomings.

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

225. Members of teaching staff are suitably qualified and knowledgeable to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum effectively to all pupils. There is a good balance between experienced teachers and those new to the profession. Nearly all are deployed to teach within their own subject specialism. Members of staff delivering lessons outside their subject are provided with the appropriate support from the relevant head of department.
226. The pupil/teacher and contact ratios are better than the national average allowing the creation of smaller groups for practical subjects. The necessity to provide the curriculum through the medium of both English and Welsh is reflected in the staffing allocation.
227. The workforce remodelling agreement has had a positive impact on standards through the expansion of support and guidance available to pupils and teachers. This support is provided by a team of effective support staff who include:
- two full-time cover supervisors;
 - a pastoral support worker and more recently a learning coach;
 - appropriately qualified LSAs who work effectively with individuals and small groups within the classroom and in the SEN department;
 - technical and administrative support staff; and
 - a dedicated translation unit to support the provision of bilingual resources.
228. The school has invested heavily in ICT equipment since the last inspection. The number of interactive whiteboards and data projectors has increased with a

planned programme for provision in 80% of classrooms by the end of 2008. Improved access to computer technology and the use of the information technology centre at Middle Lane, Denbigh, for the completion of coursework, have a positive impact on standards.

229. Overall, the number and size of classrooms are adequate to accommodate the number of pupils on roll. Since the last inspection there has been significant investment in the school buildings. This has facilitated the clustering of departmental suites leading to improved communication and use of resources. The good features in the accommodation include the:

- provision of a 20-classroom block reducing the number of mobile classrooms;
- refurbished food technology and textiles rooms;
- improved gymnasium and changing rooms;
- new dining facility providing seating accommodation for 360 pupils;
- displays of pupils' work and published material in classrooms and along most corridor areas; and
- community learning centre providing two classrooms and two tutorial rooms along with a video conferencing facility.

230. Nevertheless, there are some shortcomings in the quality of the accommodation.

231. The extension to the school built in the 1970's is in a poor state of repair showing signs of water ingress and general wear and tear. The music department's accommodation does not provide a stimulating learning environment to promote the raising of standards in all aspects of the department's formal curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

232. The school learning resource centre is inadequate for the number of pupils on roll. It is not used effectively to support and develop learners' independent learning skills across the curriculum. Its lack of impact on learners' standards is a shortcoming.

233. The resources for teaching and learning are good with most departments adequately provided for in terms of books and equipment. The available resources are sufficient to support the delivery of the prescribed schemes of work within departments.

234. However, despite the provision of a dedicated cross-curricular computer suite, departments still experience difficulty in accessing computer facilities.

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

235. The school has benefited from additional funding by Denbighshire County Council in the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 financial years. This has enabled the school to invest in ICT resources, maintenance work and to plan and secure an element of contingency funding.

236. The management of resources closely matches the identified priorities in the SIP. The priorities are accurately costed and appropriate funding allocated.

237. The business manager works closely with senior managers, members of the governing body's finance sub-committee and the authority's local management

of schools' team to review expenditure and assess value for money. This is a strength of the school.

238. The school pursues numerous avenues for raising additional funds and has successfully obtained specific grants and bursaries. The parent-teacher association contributes approximately £10,000 per annum for the purchase of essential learning resources and to fund the school's minibus. This additional funding is used to good effect to maximise the opportunities available for all learners.
239. The internal audit review of the school's financial practices in 2006 found all aspects to be sound. The recommendations made have been fully addressed.
240. There are many good features in the management, deployment and development of both teaching and support staff. These are the:
- effective performance management systems for teaching and non-teaching staff;
 - identification and implementation of a training programme for all teaching and non-teaching staff in accordance with the priorities identified in the school's improvement plan;
 - acquisition of group bursaries for cross-curricular developments; and
 - effective use of General Teaching Council of Wales (GTCW) grants to access staff professional development.
241. A robust programme of support and training is provided for all newly qualified staff. A detailed programme of meetings, lesson observation and feedback is prepared to support and guide newly qualified staff and the early professional development of staff.
242. However, the monitoring of the impact of the training courses on the teaching within the classroom is not rigorously pursued. The professional development of technical and office support staff is restricted by limited opportunities and the availability of suitable courses.
243. There is insufficient expertise within the staffing complement to deliver aspects of the curriculum through the medium of Welsh. This prevents the progression of courses from one key stage to another. An inconsistency exists in the allocation of non-contact time for teachers, which has an adverse effect on the ability of some teachers, notably progress managers, to deliver effectively the requirements of their job descriptions.
244. The school has responded well to all the requirements of the workload agreement. It has remodelled the workforce and enlarged the team of support staff to provide the appropriate support for the teaching staff and learners.
245. An allocation of 10% of teaching time has been made available for staff planning, preparation and assessment. This time is used effectively.
246. Criminal Records Bureau checks have been successfully completed for all teaching and support staff working at the school. The governing body members are presently undergoing the process.
247. The school conducts an effective annual review of the use of its resources. It ensures good value for money by the:

- provision of appropriate resources to meet the curricular needs of all learners;
- achievement of good external examination results in KS4 and very good in the sixth form; and
- implementation of the workforce restructuring exercise releasing teaching staff from many of their administrative burdens.

248. The carefully planned sixth-form curriculum offering a range of academic courses, viable classes in terms of student numbers and the general contribution of sixth-form students to the life of the school ensures good value for money.

School's response to the inspection

The staff and Governors are pleased that this inspection report recognises and highlights so many good and outstanding features in the work of our school. We are particularly proud of the very positive comments made about the behaviour and attitudes of pupils, the relationship between pupils and teachers and the nature of the school community.

We are very pleased that the report highlights the outstanding provision in the Sixth Form, commenting on the outstanding results in external examinations and the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification and the students' outstanding key skills. Whilst standards are good and improving in Key Stages 3 and 4 the school is committed to ensuring that the excellent standards evident in the Sixth Form are replicated throughout the school.

The inspection team confirmed many of the school's priorities for improvement. Many of the recommendations are addressed in the current School Improvement Plan and we will give due consideration to the other recommendations. We will continue to strive for excellence in all aspects of the work of the school.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Ysgol Brynhyfryd
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Mold Road Ruthin Denbighshire
Postcode	LL15 1EG
Telephone number	01824 703933

Headteacher	Eleri Jones
Date of appointment	September 2001
Chair of governors	Cynghorydd David Smith
Reporting inspector	W Gwyn Thomas
Dates of inspection	3–6 November 2008

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	208	214	198	203	198	115	88	1224

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	66	20	76.7

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	
Average teaching group size	20.25
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	79%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	96.1	95	95	94.1	94.2	93.6	89.3	94.4
Term 2	95.6	94.6	94.1	94	92.4	92.4	82.5	93.2
Term 3	94.6	93.4	92.8	91.6	95.6	90.8	89.8	93.1

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	5.7%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	10 pupils temporarily excluded

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results 2008															
Total number of pupils in Y9:202															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School							3.5	16.3	37.6	29.2	12.9	0.5	
		National	0.1		0.6	0.5	0.4	1.5	6.1	21.3	37.1	24.2	7.9	0.3	
Welsh	Teacher assessment	School								1.8	42.1	52.6	3.5		
		National			0.3	0.1	0.1	0.6	5.7	20.9	37.2	26.2	8.7	0.2	
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School								12.9	33.7	27.7	25.7		
		National	0.1		0.5	0.5	0.4	1.3	6.7	18.1	28.9	27.5	14.8	1.3	
Science	Teacher assessment	School							3	12.9	42.6	38.6	3		
		National	0.1		0.6	0.5	0.2	0.7	5.1	19	35.6	27.2	10.8	0.1	

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

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language) by teacher assessment			
In the school	75	In Wales	55.4

Public Examination Results:

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ	
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2008	190
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	412

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2008:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	95	-	-
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	77	51	56
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	92	84	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	59	40	46
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	97	99	98
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	91	-	-
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	95	-	-
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	2.1	1.8	2.6
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	0	4.3	2.6
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	0	-	-
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	-	-	-

For pupils aged 17, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs	
Number of pupils aged 17 in January 2008	82
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2008	76
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2008	6

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	82	65	69
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	99	91	94
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	783	564	631
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	0	-	-
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	0	-	-

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Inspectors spent a total of 34 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:

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

Members of the inspection team met with:

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

The team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- 255 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 senior managers and governors.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
William Gwyn Thomas Registered Inspector	Context, summary and recommendations. Appendices, key questions 1 and 5
Dylan Jones Lay Inspector	Lay Inspector, contributing to all key questions.
Manon Wyn Sion	Key question 2
David Hughes	Key question 3
Paul Donovan	Key question 4
Bethan Whittal	Key question 6
Huw Llewelyn	Key question 7
Peredur Francis	Support Key question 5
Delyth Willians	Support Key question 3
Peter Rees	Peer Assessor contributing to lesson observations, key questions and judgements.
Eryl Evans	Nominee

Acknowledgement

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

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