

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

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

**St Martin's School  
Hillside  
Caerphilly  
CF83 1UW**

**School Number: 6764070**

**Date of Inspection: 21 April 2008**

**by**

**Peter Harris  
78673**

**Date of Publication: 25 June 2008**

**Under Estyn contract number: 1203407**

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

The inspection of St Martin's School took place between 21/04/08 and 24/04/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by Edward Aneurin Peter Harris 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:

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

There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a **standard** inspection.

## Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

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

Secondary phase:

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

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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## Context

### The nature of the provider

1. St Martin's School is an English medium, mixed 11-19 comprehensive school in Caerphilly County Borough. There are 1037 pupils on roll, of whom 148 are in the sixth form. In 2002, when the school was last inspected, there were 1083 pupils on roll, 143 of whom were in the sixth form.
2. The school occupies a large site located near to Caerphilly town centre. The school serves Caerphilly as well as the surrounding rural communities. In recent years, parents living outside the catchment area have chosen to send their children to the school. In 2007, pupil numbers increased slightly as a result of the closure of a local comprehensive school.
3. Seventeen per cent of pupils are in receipt of free school meals. This figure is 3% below the average for the Unitary Authority (UA). The school reports that the socio-economic background of pupils is comprehensive. While around a half of pupils come from homes that have some features of economic disadvantage, the remainder come from homes that are neither disadvantaged nor affluent.
4. The attainment of pupils on entry reflects the full range of ability. A very small minority of pupils come from different ethnic backgrounds. The vast majority of pupils come from homes where English is the first language.
5. The headteacher has been in post since September 2002. All other members of the senior leadership team (SLT) were appointed to their present posts before 2002.

### The school's priorities and targets

6. The school's main aims are as follows:
  - to inspire each child to reach his/her own potential;
  - to provide a curriculum that meets pupils' needs;
  - to develop self-confidence and motivation; and
  - to prepare pupils for later life.
7. The school's self-evaluation report is based on the seven key questions of the Common Inspection Framework.
8. Numerical targets are set, that in 2008:
  - 72% of pupils should reach at least level 5 in all three subjects combined in national curriculum (NC) assessments at the end of key stage (KS) 3; and
  - 64% of pupils should achieve at least 5 grades A\*-C, and 97% at least 5 grades A\*-G in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination.

## Summary

9. St Martin's is a good school that continues to improve. Since 2002 there have been improvements in the following areas:
- examination results at KS3, KS4 and Advanced (A) Level;
  - the quality of teaching and assessment;
  - the curricular provision;
  - the support and guidance for learners;
  - leadership, self-evaluation, and planning; and
  - accommodation and resources.
10. However, there are inconsistencies in the way whole school policy and targets are monitored by leaders and managers.

### Table of grades awarded

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

11. The grades for key questions 1, 3, 5 and 7 match those of the school in its self-evaluation report. While inspectors identified good practice in key questions 2, 4 and 6 they awarded grade 2 because the good practice was not judged to be sufficiently outstanding.

### Standards achieved

12. The team inspected the standards that pupils and students achieve in six subjects. The following table shows the grades awarded at KS3, KS4 and in the sixth form.

Subject	KS3	KS4	Sixth Form
English	2	2	1
Mathematics	2	2	2
Information technology	2	2	1
Design technology	2	2	2
Physical education	2	3	3
Religious education	1	1	1

13. The following table shows the percentages of grades awarded at each stage 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>
KS3	9%	79%	9%	3%	0%
KS4	9%	74%	8%	9%	0%
Sixth form	30%	50%	20%	0%	0%
Whole school	12%	72%	11%	5%	0%
<b>These grades are based on observations of 65 lessons</b>					

14. In almost three quarters of the lessons observed, learners achieved standards which have good features and no important shortcomings. In over one lesson in ten, standards achieved had outstanding features. In all other lessons, standards had good features which outweighed shortcomings, except for a small number of lessons in mathematics and physical education.
15. At KS3, in the NC teachers' assessments in 2007, results were above local averages and the averages for similar schools. Apart from English, where results were equal to the national average, results in mathematics, science and all three core subjects combined were above the averages for Wales. Achievement in English, mathematics and science was in line with what was expected, based on prior attainment.
16. While the gap in relative performance has narrowed in recent years, at KS3, girls outperform boys.
17. At KS4, the percentage of pupils the school enters for GCSE exceeds the average for Wales as a whole as well as that for the unitary authority (UA). Pass rates at five or more grades A\*-C exceed local averages. They are broadly in line with national averages. Pass rates at five or more grades A\*-G exceed both local and national figures.
18. When compared with similar schools, GCSE pass rates are in line with the average.
19. In 2007, girls outperformed boys at five or more grades A\*-C, in English, mathematics and in all three core subjects combined. However, in science boys outperformed girls.
20. Results at A Level are outstanding. In 2007, results at grades A-C and A-E exceeded both local and national averages. Eighty-three percent of the cohort passed at grades A-C and 100% with grades A-E.
21. Pupils and students acquire new knowledge and skills as they progress through the key stages. They have good levels of skill in communication, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT).
22. On the whole, learners have a good understanding of how well they are progressing and what they have to do in order to make good progress. However, with a small minority, this understanding is not secure.
23. While bilingual skills are developed through Welsh lessons, there is limited use made of incidental Welsh throughout the school.
24. Standards among pupils with additional learning needs are very good.

25. Pupils and students adopt very positive attitudes towards learning. They work hard in lessons, engage in asking and answering questions and maintain appropriate levels of concentration.
26. Learners enjoy very good relationships with staff. On the whole, pupils and students are well behaved and courteous.
27. Levels of attendance have improved since 2002. They meet UA averages and are just short of the average for Wales.
28. The way learners progress personally and show respect for peers, adults and diversity in society is good.
29. Pupils and students respond well to the opportunities the school provides to work with other partners and to individual opportunities for involvement in the school's life. The way they are prepared for higher education and employment is good.

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

30. Teachers use an outstanding range of methods and resources to engage pupils in their learning. Teachers:
  - use questions well to further learners' understanding;
  - make very good use of ICT to support their teaching; and
  - seek to ensure that pupils are clear about the task in hand.

31. The following grades were awarded for teaching in the 92 lessons observed:

<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Grade 4</b>	<b>Grade 5</b>
24%	54%	21%	1%	0%

32. Seventy-eight percent of lessons were graded 1 and 2 compared to 76% in all inspections in Wales 2006-2007. This figure almost the Welsh Assembly government (WAG) target for 2010, that 80% of lessons be judged to be grade 2 or better.
33. Ninety-nine percent of lessons were graded 3 and above which is 2% higher than the all-Wales figure for 2006-2007. The 24% of lessons judged to have outstanding features exceeds the all Wales figure of 19% for 2006-2007. The 1% of lessons judged to have shortcomings is less than the corresponding figure for the same period.
34. Although the size and nature of the sample are different from those of the last inspection, these grades show that teaching has improved even further from that time. Six years ago, 97% of lessons were graded 3 and above, and 67% graded 1 and 2.
35. There is a significant amount of teaching that has outstanding aspects. Just under a quarter of lessons observed were outstanding in terms of teachers' planning, questioning technique and the variety of task provided. However, there are inconsistencies within and between departments in the way teachers assess progress.
36. The school meets statutory requirements for assessment.

37. There are shortcomings in teachers' plans to provide appropriate opportunities for learners to develop and apply bilingual skills.
38. The curriculum provided is broadly based and balanced and meets the needs of pupils and students. It has coherence and progression and enables learners to develop their basic and key skills.
39. The ways in which the school works in partnership with other schools and provides work-related education are outstanding aspects of its provision.
40. The support and guidance of pupils have several outstanding aspects. They are in the way the school:
  - manages its care, guidance and support;
  - promotes healthy eating;
  - promotes good race relations; and
  - seeks to prevent oppressive behaviour.
41. The school has a caring ethos. Pupils feel valued and their voice is heard effectively. Guidance and advice on vocational and academic choices are of good quality and impartial.
42. There are good links with partner primary and secondary schools which help pupils and students settle in to school and experience continuity in their learning.
43. There is a good provision for Personal and Social Education (PSE) which takes account of health education and careers education and guidance, is well co-ordinated and makes effective use of outside providers.
44. The school takes appropriate steps to safe-guard pupils' welfare. Attendance is carefully monitored and child protection procedures are robust.
45. Strategies are in place to identify pupils with additional learning needs and the provision to meet their needs is carefully managed and reviewed. Pupils whose behaviour impedes their progress are well supported.
46. The school makes good provision for equal opportunities. It has put in place strategies that have been effective in narrowing the gap between boys' and girls' levels of performance.
47. The school takes reasonable action to avoid putting disabled pupils at a disadvantage and recognises and respects diversity.

### **Leadership and management**

48. The headteacher communicates effectively a strong vision which provides a clear direction for the school. Her aims and values are known and shared by all members of the school community and are reflected in their work.
49. The school has drawn up a suitable range of policies which reflect these aims and in the majority of cases, these policies are implemented effectively. The school operates well on a day-to-day basis and is a stable environment for learning.
50. Good account is taken of UA and national priorities. Working relationships with local providers at primary, secondary and further education levels are good. The arrangements for setting whole-school targets are effective.

51. In the majority of cases, teams and departments are well managed and led. However, there are inconsistencies in the way whole-school policy and targets are monitored.
52. The governing body is committed to the WAG priorities and meets all regulatory and legal requirements.
53. The arrangements to monitor and evaluate the school's performance are good. Leaders and managers gain first-hand knowledge of standards of provision and of pupils' work. The views of pupils, parents, staff and governors are actively sought.
54. Governors receive regular reports from leaders and managers in the school. They have a clear understanding of their role and work efficiently through a range of appropriate committees. Governors are aware of the main challenges the school faces and its priorities in addressing them.
55. The school uses its resources well. All staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Performance management arrangements for teaching staff are in line with national requirements. The quality and range of training of both teaching and support staff is good.
56. The access pupils and students have to appropriate learning resources, and the way in which the resources are used and reviewed are, on the whole, good.
57. The school has invested heavily in ICT facilities in line with a growing demand.
58. The quality of display in the classrooms and around the school is good and makes for a stimulating working environment for pupils and staff.
59. However, there are shortcomings in the accommodation for physical education and design technology. The drainage of the playing fields is inadequate in wet weather.
60. While the school carries a small overspend, it monitors its budget very well and has put in place appropriate strategies to address the deficit.
61. The school provides good value for money.
62. With regard to the key issues of the previous inspection, the school has made good progress in raising standards in design technology, physical education, and in the achievement of pupils of average to lower ability. The school monitors standards achieved in key skills.
63. The school complies with statutory requirements for:
  - collective worship;
  - religious education in the sixth-form; and
  - the content of the governing body's annual report to parents.
64. While the school has established procedures to set and review subject specific targets, develop consistency in assessing learners' standards of work and monitor teaching, these procedures are not robust.

## Recommendations

In order to build on current achievement, the school should focus on the following priorities.

- R1. Continue to raise standards, particularly at KS4.
- R2. Ensure greater consistency within and between departments in target setting, assessment policy and practice.
- R3. Ensure that staff accountability for the implementation of school policy is clearly understood, agreed, monitored and evaluated.
- R4. Continue to work with the UA to improve accommodation for physical education, design technology, and to improve the drainage of the playing surfaces.

The school's planning already recognises the issues identified in recommendations one, two and four.

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

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

### KS3 and KS4

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

66. The following table shows the standards that pupils achieved at KS3 and KS4 in the six subjects inspected.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
KS3	9%	79%	9%	3%	0%
KS4	9%	74%	8%	9%	0%
KS3 & KS4	9%	77%	9%	5%	0%

**These grades are based on observations of 55 lessons**

- 67. These figures fall just short of the 2010 national target of 98% of standards of achievement to be judged grade three or above. They exceed by 21 percentage points the target that 65% of lessons be awarded Grade two or above.
- 68. The 9% of lessons awarded grade one falls short of the 13% of lessons awarded grade one for all secondary schools inspected in Wales in 2006-2007. However, the 77% of lessons awarded grade two exceeds the comparable average figure by 20 percentage points.
- 69. While the proportions of lessons judged to be good with outstanding features, and of lessons judged to have shortcomings in important areas, are broadly in line with judgements made at the last inspection, the percentage of lessons

judged to have good features with no important shortcomings is 22% higher. This denotes a significant improvement.

70. Results at KS3 exceed national averages for Wales. Sixty-five per cent of pupils reached at least level five in the core subjects combined, compared to 57% nationally. Results in English were above average. In mathematics and science, results were significantly above average.
71. These results denote an improvement since the previous inspection.
72. In English, results were above average when compared to similar schools. In mathematics, science and the three core subjects combined, results were higher than the top 25% of similar schools.
73. Achievement in English, mathematics and science was in line with what was expected, based on prior attainment. In the three core subjects combined, attainment was slightly above what was expected.
74. At KS4 results are in line with those of similar schools.
75. In 2007, results at KS4 exceeded local averages and were in line with national averages. Fifty-three percent of pupils gained five or more passes at grades A\*-C compared to 47% locally and 54% nationally.
76. Eighty-seven percent of pupils gained five or more passes at grades A\*-G compared to 84% locally and 86% nationally.
77. The average points score at GCSE exceeded local and national figures as well as those of similar schools.
78. The percentage of pupils gaining grade C or above in English, mathematics and in the core subjects combined, was in line with the average for similar schools. The percentage of pupils gaining grade C and above in science was above average, when compared to similar schools.
79. At KS4, the school met its target that 53% of pupils pass five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C. Passes at grades A\*-G were 3% short of the target of 90%.
80. At KS3 and KS4, while girls continue to outperform boys, the gap in relative performance is less than that locally and nationally.
81. Standards in the key skills of communication, use of number and ICT have good features and no important shortcomings. Pupils read fluently and with expression. The more able have good note-taking skills. Pupils write well in a variety of forms and style. The more able re-draft their work confidently so as to produce good levels of extended writing.
82. The majority of pupils are confident speakers and use an appropriate range of subject vocabulary. They are ready to offer ideas in class and develop their understanding through discussion. They listen well to one another and to their teachers.
83. Pupils with additional learning needs develop their skills well.
84. Standards in numeracy and ICT have improved since the school was last inspected. Across a range of subjects pupils apply numbers confidently.
85. There are examples of good practice in the use of ICT, for example in English, where desk-top publishing is used to good effect.

86. Pupils work well together in pairs and in groups, in creative and problem-solving opportunities.
87. While all pupils at KS4 follow courses leading to recognised qualifications in Welsh second language, bilingual skills are not well developed outside Welsh lessons.

### **Their progress in learning**

88. The vast majority of pupils are able to recall previous work and relate it to their current study in a relevant way. They work well together to clarify and solve problems.
89. In comparison with attainment on entry to the school, pupils make good progress. They respond well to the encouragement provided and are effectively prepared for the next stage of education and training.
90. At KS3, pupils make very good progress. They acquire knowledge, understanding and skills which they apply effectively in new and unfamiliar contexts.
91. While there is some variation within and between subjects in terms of the benefits pupils get from peer and self-assessment, on the whole, pupils have a good understanding of how well they are progressing and what they have to do in order to improve their work.
92. Pupils with additional learning needs respond well to in-class support and make good progress over both key stages. They respond to challenge and the encouragement to work hard. They are aware of the key skills and exercise them at a level appropriate to their ability

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

93. The vast majority of pupils behave well and adopt very positive attitudes to learning. There is an orderly atmosphere in the school and pupils understand the high expectations the school has of them.
94. They join in the activities provided and work hard in lessons. The praise and support, which the school offers, motivate pupils to give of their best.
95. Pupils are courteous and tolerant. There are very few incidents of bullying and aggressive behaviour.
96. The overall attendance rate for the three terms prior to the inspection was 90.3%. While this figure is in line with school trends and UA averages, it falls below the national average, and fails to meet the WAG target of 93%. Punctuality at the start of the school day and at the start of lessons is good.
97. Pupils' moral, social, cultural and wider development is good. Most pupils take part in sport and in a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities.
98. Relationships with adults in the school enable pupils to express their views openly and honestly. Pupils have an appropriate understanding of diversity in society. The knowledge and skills they acquire through assemblies, PSE and religious education help them to approach social and personal issues rationally.
99. Careers guidance and work-related education of good quality prepares pupils extremely well for the world of work. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards life-long learning.

## **Sixth Form**

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

100. Standards in the sixth form are good with outstanding features.
101. Results at A level have improved since the last inspection. They now exceed local and national averages for passes at grades A-C, A-E and in terms of average points per candidate. An increasing number of students gain higher grades at Advanced Supplementary (AS) and A2 levels. Girls outperform boys at A level.
102. As at KS3 and KS4, standards in the key skills of communication, use of number and ICT have good features and no important shortcomings.
103. Students speak and listen well to the teacher and to one another. The questions they pose are probing. They express their views with confidence and clarity. The more able students engage in extended discussion with their teachers and one another.
104. Students write at length, using subject specific vocabulary fluently and accurately. They write critically and justify their opinions with relevant argument.
105. Students engage in problem-solving activity and use ICT well to support their research and present their work. They handle files and folders confidently. Many use data bases, "power-point" and spreadsheets to good effect. .
106. As at KS3 and KS4, students' bilingual skills are not well developed.

### **Their progress in learning**

107. Participation in the local 14-19 partnership has enabled students to benefit from a broad range of AS and A2 courses including an increasing range of vocationally-based courses.
108. The school provides very good support to all sixth formers, particularly to those who wish to proceed to Higher Education.
109. Students have a good understanding of how well they are doing. Their work is marked and commented upon in detail and targets for improvement are clearly set.

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

110. Students enjoy very good relationships with staff and develop a sense of maturity and independence as they respond to the many opportunities they have to take a leading role in the school. They take seriously their responsibility for supporting younger pupils.
111. Sixth-form students develop very good personal, social and learning skills. They are confident and articulate young adults who relate well to pupils, their peers, teachers and other adults in the school.
112. They have good levels of attendance and punctuality.
113. Sixth-form students have an appropriate programme of work-related education that enables them to become mature young people who are aware of, and respond to, the needs of others.

## The quality of education and training

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

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

114. This is one grade lower than the school's self-evaluation grade. This is because the team considered the outstanding features identified by the school to be good, rather than outstanding.

#### Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

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

115. The following table shows the quality of teaching and assessment in the 55 lessons observed in the six subjects and 20 lessons in other subjects, at KS3 and KS4.

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6 Subjects	22%	62%	15%	1%	0%
Other subjects	20%	50%	30%	0%	0%
Total	21%	59%	19%	1%	0%

116. In 21% of the lessons observed across both key stages there were outstanding features in the quality of the teaching. There was slightly more outstanding teaching in KS4. Teaching had good features and no important shortcomings in 59% of lessons and there was no significant difference between the figures for KS3 and KS4.

117. Good features outweighed shortcomings in 99% of lessons at both key stages. In 1% of lessons there were shortcomings in important areas.

118. The percentage of lessons graded 1 and the percentage of lessons graded 1 and 2 exceed the average figures for Wales in 2006-2007. Furthermore, at 80%, the percentage of lessons graded 1 and 2 matches the WAG target for 2010.

119. In lessons where teaching is outstanding, teachers:

- use an outstanding range of teaching methods and activities to motivate pupils;
- establish a good rapport and relationship with pupils;
- manage the classroom effectively;
- ask questions that draw out pupils' understanding; and
- deliver lessons with a brisk pace.

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

121. The teaching and learning group provides a very effective forum in which teachers can discuss and share good practice. Many draw on the knowledge they have gained from this group when planning their lessons. They show good subject knowledge and apply their understanding of how children learn.

122. Almost all teachers set clear learning objectives that they share with pupils. Most have high expectations and plan lessons that are appropriately challenging and motivating. These contain a number of different, well-timed, pupil activities that follow a clear sequence. Teachers often use ICT effectively to present their lessons.
123. Most lessons proceed at a brisk pace and teachers are effective in engaging pupils' interest. Relationships are good and teachers know their pupils well. This allows them to offer individual support when required. Many teachers monitor pupils' progress in class very effectively and use their observations to modify their approaches so that all pupils can master the work in hand.
124. Most teachers exercise their authority well so that pupils behave appropriately and apply themselves to their work.
125. Where there are shortcomings they are associated with too much direction by the teacher. In these cases pupils are given insufficient opportunities to develop their ideas and understanding. These lessons are less well-planned, lack pace and challenge. In some cases behaviour is not well managed and pupils drift off task and fail to complete sufficient work.
126. In a majority of lessons, homework is not used sufficiently to extend pupils' understanding. In others there is insufficient explicit identification of the key skills to be developed during the lesson. Teachers do not plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their bilingual skills in lessons, neither is there sufficient reference to Welsh culture.

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

127. There are elements of good practice in the monitoring and assessment of pupils' work. Where this is evident, teachers:
- assess pupils' work carefully and regularly;
  - provide useful oral and written feedback to pupils;
  - make effective use of self and peer assessment ; and
  - use this information to help pupils reflect on their achievement and plan for improvement.
128. However the quality of the assessment of pupils' work varies too much across the school. A majority of teachers do not mark their pupils' work sufficiently often, or with sufficient rigour. Feedback is often superficial and fails to give pupils worthwhile guidance on how to improve.
129. The school meets the statutory requirement for assessment and reporting and satisfies examination board requirements. It participates in standardisation and moderation activities at the end of KS3 and so is making good progress in improving the rigour of teacher assessments.
130. The school sets targets for pupil achievement and these are recorded on the school's management information system. Teachers assess and record their pupils' progress towards meeting these targets twice each year. These data are used effectively by heads of learning to diagnose and tackle underachievement. Nevertheless there is too much inconsistency in the ways that teachers assess pupils against their targets.

131. Annual reports to parents are comprehensive and provide a useful overview of pupils' progress. The school gives parents the opportunity to comment on the reports. Nevertheless, in many cases the language used is too complex and pupils' targets for improvement are too general and insufficiently subject specific.

## Sixth Form

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

132. In the 10 lessons observed in the six subjects and the 7 lessons observed in the other subjects the grades awarded for teaching and assessment were:

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
6 Subjects	30%	50%	20%	0%	0%
Other subjects	43%	14%	43%	0%	0%
Total	35%	35%	30%	0%	0%

133. The sample size however was small and so comparisons with other key stages or national figures are not reliable.

134. In 35% of lessons observed, teaching was good with outstanding features. In a further 35% of lessons teaching was good with no important shortcomings. Good features outweighed shortcomings in 30% of lessons. The number of lessons graded 1 comfortably exceeds the national average for 2006-2007, but the number of grade 2 lessons is significantly lower. The percentage of grade 3 lessons is also higher than the 2006-2007 all Wales figure. No lessons had shortcomings in important areas.

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

- very carefully planned lessons, with clear objectives and containing a variety of suitably challenging tasks;
- effective teacher explanations and questioning;
- strong supportive relationships;
- brisk pace;
- excellent subject knowledge; and
- good use of resources including ICT.

136. In the best lessons there were ample opportunities for individual, pair and group work. In lessons where there were shortcomings, there was excessive direction by the teacher. Students were given insufficient opportunities to develop their ideas and understanding.

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

137. In many lessons, teachers mark and assess students' work well. They provide useful feedback that gives students clear guidance on how to improve. Some teachers use self and peer assessment to good effect.

138. In a minority of classes, marking is superficial and there are examples of uncorrected work. In these cases, feedback is inadequate, students are unsure of how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.
139. Reports for sixth-form students are comprehensive and provide a useful overview of progress. Nevertheless, as at KS3 and KS4, the language used is often complex and targets for improvement are too general and insufficiently subject specific.

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

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

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

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

141. The school curriculum complies with current statutory and regulatory requirements.
142. At KS3, all the national curriculum subjects are taught to pupils. In addition, all pupils receive a good programme of discrete ICT lessons, although cross-curricular ICT provision is less strongly developed. In Y7, pupils also have lessons in thinking skills and in Y8, the most able linguists have the opportunity to learn a second foreign language.
143. At KS4, the school offers a good range of entry level, GCSE and vocational qualifications. Some of these are delivered as part of learning pathways (14-19), in partnership with other providers. A few pupils follow a modified curriculum which combines study in school with attendance at college, an independent provider, and a work placement, on different days each week.
144. The school ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to gain accreditation in Welsh second language, religious education and ICT by following either the short or the long course GCSE.
145. Within a few individual subjects there are some curriculum limitations. In design technology, the curriculum includes no provision for either textiles or graphics. In physical education, the curriculum is constrained by the facilities available.
146. Sixth-form students' access to over 40 accredited academic and vocational courses is an outstanding aspect of provision. This is achieved through effective consortium working within the Caerphilly Basin Schools Partnership.
147. Provision for pupils with additional learning needs and for gifted and talented pupils is good. All pupils have the opportunity to secure accreditation at an appropriate level. In mathematics, most able pupils study for GCSE in Y9 and begin A level studies in Y11.
148. The school was awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark in 2005. The school co-ordinates basic skills in English, mathematics and science though provision in the remaining subjects is less well developed.

149. The school provides a good variety of enriching experiences for its pupils and students which includes:
- a range of sports, leisure, music and creative activities;
  - visits to places of historical, cultural and scientific interest at home and abroad;
  - participation in a range of enterprise and business exploration activities; and
  - regular entries into local and national competitions.
150. Pupils' personal development is enhanced through the provision of a comprehensive PSE programme at KS3 and KS4 and a religious education conference in the sixth form. Pupils and students take part in a daily act of worship which, although variable in quality, helps them develop their spiritual and moral values.
151. Pupils learn responsibility towards others also through a range of charitable activities including Comic Relief, Macmillan Cancer Appeal, support for St. David's Hospice and a Christmas "Shoe Box" appeal.
152. Pupils develop an awareness of their own and other cultures.
153. The school's positive attitude to multi-cultural education is shown by the awards presented to a number of pupils throughout the school celebrating the integration and achievements of those from black and minority ethnic communities.
154. The school maintains a good partnership with parents. Termly newsletters supplement the prospectus and parents are consulted on school policies. There are good links with the local community, and school premises are regularly used as a community resource.
155. Curricular links with partner schools are good. Links with primary schools help develop programmes of study that ensure progression and continuity between Y6 and Y7.
156. The school has good links with the University of Glamorgan, the University of Newport and UWIC to help prepare learners for higher studies. It also values the enrichment provided to pupils through links with Initial Teacher Training (ITT) establishments.

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

157. Careers education and work-related education feature prominently from Y8. A well-organized programme is delivered thanks in part to close, positive links with Careers Wales and the Education Business Partnership. Links with employers in the community are very good. The school holds the quality marks for both work-related education and careers education and guidance.
158. Through units in PSE, the modified curriculum at KS4, and good pastoral provision, the school tackles social disadvantage and stereotyping successfully. In 2007, the percentage of pupils who did not secure accreditation at GCSE level was below the average for Wales, and the attainment of boys according to many indicators was above LEA and Wales averages.

159. The curriculum contributes to pupils' good awareness and understanding of sustainable development. The school has carried out an energy audit, uses a variety of energy-saving devices and regularly stresses the use of its many recycling facilities. It has a thriving Eco-club which is currently seeking to achieve Eco-school status. While the aspect of global citizenship is less markedly developed, there is constructive input from subjects such as geography and English on issues relating to the Amazonian rainforests, for example.
160. There are good opportunities for learners to develop entrepreneurial skills, notably through activities such as Project Dynamo, and competitions sponsored by local businesses. Sixth-form students planned and costed a recent fashion show before running it themselves to raise funds successfully for charity.
161. Although all pupils at KS3 and KS4 study Welsh, opportunities to promote bilingualism in the school are limited. The quality of provision for *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is inconsistent.
162. In other respects, the curriculum takes good account of WAG priorities. The school encourages the development of independent learners. It gives particular attention to the promotion of healthy lifestyles and ensures that pupils are prepared well for adult life.

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

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

163. While the school awarded itself grade 1 for this key question, the inspection team disagreed. Although outstanding aspects were identified, inspectors awarded the school grade 2 because the good practice was not judged to be sufficiently outstanding.

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

164. The school provides learners with care, support and guidance of good quality. The way it plans and manages its arrangements and works with outside agencies is outstanding.
165. The school works closely with parents and carers. The views of pupils and students are taken into account via an effective school council which involves them in decision making and gives them a sense of responsibility.
166. Pupils are given impartial advice when choosing subject and career options. Each pupil has an annual academic interview with a form tutor to discuss progress and negotiate targets for improvement. Parents are welcomed to discuss their child either informally or at specially arranged evenings such as, the Y9 options evening held in the spring term.
167. Transition arrangements with partner primary schools are good and ensure that pupils, particularly those with identified learning needs, are well known to the school before their arrival. Communication with parents of Y7 pupils is good.
168. Pupils receive careers education and guidance of good quality which takes account of the national framework. Good links with outside agencies enhance this provision.

169. Attendance and punctuality are closely monitored. Electronic registration has improved the tracking of pupils throughout the day and pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality causes concern are followed up effectively.
170. The school's monitoring of behaviour is effective. Good behaviour, attendance and punctuality are rewarded appropriately.
171. Pupils are regularly reminded of the benefits of healthy living. The way the school caters for the provision of healthy food options is outstanding.
172. There is a designated senior member of staff with responsibility for child protection and staff are familiar with the school's referral procedure.

### **The Quality of Provision for Additional Learning Needs**

173. The quality of provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good.
174. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and her team ensure that all pupils on the special educational needs (SEN) register are given every opportunity to fulfil their potential and join in every aspect of school life, as required by the SEN Code of Practice.
175. There are some aspects of this provision that are very good. Close links with partner primary schools ensure early identification of pupils' needs. Individual Educational Plans and Individual Behavioural Plans are realistic and achievable. Targets are carefully negotiated with parents and pupils.
176. Planning is of good quality. Learning support assistants (LSAs) are highly effective in the support they offer. The arrangements for monitoring pupil progress are appropriate.
177. Teachers provide a good range of innovative lessons and adapt the curriculum to enable pupils of all abilities to succeed. Pupils within the autistic spectrum are given the support needed to sit examinations that lead to external qualifications. At KS4, GCSE and entry level examinations are available to all pupils on the SEN register.
178. A newly-formed nurture group offers a high level of support to pupils in Y7 with identified emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The Student Assistance Programme (SAP) provides a similar level of support for older pupils. A part-time youth worker provides individual counselling for older pupils.

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

179. The school is committed to providing equal opportunities for boys and girls and has put in place an appropriate range of policies and procedures that are effective in promoting gender equality.
180. The school recognises and respects diversity and racial equality within society and works successfully to widen pupils' understanding and knowledge of other cultures and religions through the curriculum and assemblies.
181. There are effective strategies to discourage any form of bullying, discrimination or harassment within the school.
182. The school has a Disability Equality Scheme and action plan. However, while the school has taken reasonable action to ensure that disabled pupils do not suffer from less favourable treatment, wheel-chair access into and through the school building is inadequate.

## Leadership and management

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

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

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

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

184. The headteacher provides clear vision and effective leadership. Her commitment to the success of every pupil and student lies at the heart of the school's aims. Her aims and values are known and shared by all members of the school community.
185. Leaders and senior and middle managers have drawn up a suitable range of policies which reflect the school's aims. School policy promotes equality for all successfully and data is used to good effect to produce realistic and challenging targets. In the majority of cases, these are well understood and implemented to good effect. The school functions smoothly in its day-to-day routines.
186. The school pays close attention to the WAG priorities and initiatives, particularly the 14-19 learning pathways where it works well with other educational providers and with local businesses. However, while the school is fully committed towards Eco-school status, the promotion of bilingualism is less firmly developed.
187. The SLT has been reduced in size since the time of the last inspection and greater autonomy has been delegated to heads of department. However, a small minority of middle managers are not rigorous enough in monitoring aspects of their teams' work. Where this happens, senior colleagues' line management is insufficiently critical.
188. The school has developed systems of monitoring and appraisal that are helping the school to move forward. However, variations in response to information gathered means that, in a few cases, improvement is not as rapid as the school would prefer, and shortcomings in teaching and learning are not addressed as fully as possible.
189. Performance management is well established for staff at all levels. There are good systems for the induction of newly qualified teachers and staff new to the school. The school has secured the Investors in People (IIP) award.

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

190. Governors contribute well to the strategic management of the school. They bring a wide range of expertise and experience to their role and are committed to the aims and values of the school.
191. Governors monitor the quality of education provided by the school and the standards achieved. They work through a suitable range of committees and receive regular reports from the headteacher. They know the school well and hold it to account for many aspects of its performance.
192. Governors fulfil their regulatory and legal requirements.

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

<b>Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
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193. While the school awarded itself grade 1 for this question, the inspection team disagreed because the good practice was not judged to be sufficiently outstanding.

### **How effectively the provider's performance is monitored and evaluated**

194. Leaders and managers are well informed about the areas for which they have responsibility and use this information well to develop plans for improvement.

195. The school's self-evaluation report provides a clear analysis of the school's performance. It notes its strengths and areas for development. The grades awarded by the inspection team for each of the seven key questions match those of the school except for key questions two, four and six, where the team awarded one grade lower because the good features were not deemed to be outstanding.

196. There are suitable arrangements for self-evaluation based on first-hand evidence of learning and teaching. The school uses, to good effect, a variety of assessment data provided by the UA and its own internal systems. The outcomes of regular lesson observations which focus on aspects of teaching and learning identified for development, inform the process of self-evaluation.

197. The views of staff at all levels are considered as well as those of parents and other partners in the community that the school serves. The views of pupils and students are sought through the work of the school council.

198. There is a regular cycle of departmental review conducted by the SLT. Most leaders and managers have a good understanding of the importance of self-evaluation in improving standards and provision at the school and use the outcomes of reviews to set priorities for further development.

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

199. Clear targets for improvement are set for the whole school.

200. Whole-school targets for improvement are clear. The school development plan is of good quality and identifies areas for improvement that emerge from the self-evaluation process as well as local and national priorities.

201. There is a suitable match between school and departmental priorities. All plans contain appropriate levels of detail on action, timescales and success criteria. They clearly identify staff responsible as well as developmental costs.

202. Since the last inspection development planning has resulted in a number of measurable improvements.

203. The school has made good progress in raising standards in design technology, physical education, and in the achievement of pupils of average to lower ability. The school monitors standards achieved in key skills.

204. The school complies with statutory requirements for:

- collective worship;

- religious education in the sixth-form;
- the content of the governing body's annual report to parents.

205. While the school has established procedures to set and review subject specific targets, develop consistency in assessing learners' standards of work and monitor teaching, these procedures are not robust.

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

<b>Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings</b>
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206. This grade matches the school's self-evaluation grade.

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

207. Teaching staff are well qualified, have very good subject knowledge and are highly committed. There is a good balance of experienced teachers with those who are relatively new to the profession.
208. The number of teachers is sufficient to ensure that the curriculum is delivered effectively and efficiently. Classroom support staff work very effectively with teachers in planning and teaching and pupils with additional learning needs have access to a wide range of professionals with appropriate expertise.
209. The school has implemented successfully workforce remodelling. The school is in receipt of the IIP award.
210. All learners have access to appropriate learning resources that enhance their work. The Library Resource Centre is well stocked and provides a useful base at break and lunchtime for pupils to access books, DVDs, computers and a colour printer. It is used well by pupils at KS3 and the sixth-form.
211. Since the last inspection, there has been substantial investment in the provision of ICT facilities. This has contributed to a rise in standards, especially within the ICT department.
212. The accommodation provides a generally suitable working environment for staff and pupils. The number and size of classrooms are adequate for the number of pupils on roll, although some rooms are small. The buildings and grounds are well maintained and free of litter.
213. The quality of display in the classrooms and around the school is good and makes for a stimulating working environment for pupils and staff.
214. Facilities in the sixth form, physical education, dance and drama have improved considerably since the last inspection. The school has invested in a new dance/drama studio, a fitness suite and an all-weather pitch. Toilet facilities are good throughout and changing facilities are adequate. Safety issues have been addressed by the addition of the new car park and balustrades.
215. However, there are a few shortcomings. There is limited accessibility for those with problems of mobility. In the design technology department, there is no laser cutter and computer aided design and manufacture equipment is out of date. In the physical education department, there is inadequate drainage of the pitches and the redgras surface is poor.

### **How efficiently resources are managed to achieve value for money**

216. The management of resources is linked closely to the school's priorities for development. Subject departments are given an annual basic capitation allowance and bid for further development funding.
217. Spending is closely scrutinised by the deputy head and the governing body. The budget is scrutinised carefully to ensure cost-effectiveness, to search for areas for savings and to ensure all monies are accounted for.
218. While the school has a deficit budget, a number of initiatives, which are having a beneficial effect, have been put into place to work towards alleviating this situation.
219. All members of staff have job descriptions and are deployed efficiently. There is good provision in the timetable for teachers' planning, preparation and assessment, which is monitored carefully.
220. The post-16 partnership arrangement with nearby schools represents a highly effective and efficient means of rationalising sixth-form provision while offering more choices and opportunities for students. This is in line with the government's recommendations for 14-19 learning pathways and provides good value for money.
221. There is an induction programme to support all teaching and non-teaching staff new to the school. The arrangements for ITT students are comprehensive.
222. Arrangements for performance management and appraisal are effective. Objectives for professional development are set clearly in the context of school and department priorities.
223. The school has set up a teaching and learning group where teachers have been able to share good practice.
224. The governing body plays a full and responsible role in the review of spending and, overall, the school makes very good use of all its available resources.
225. The school provides good value for money.

## **Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning**

### **English**

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

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

226. Examination results in English at GCSE are broadly in line with local and national averages. When compared with similar schools results are above average.

### **Key Stage 3**

#### **Good Features**

227. Pupils are well motivated and enthusiastic and most make good progress in line with ability. This is reflected in their attainment at the end of the key stage. More able pupils make very good progress.
228. Pupils listen purposefully to the teacher and to their peers. They use thinking time effectively to order their ideas. They engage confidently in role play and drama activities and they show mature empathy for character in fiction texts.
229. They collaborate effectively, work well in groups and pairs and know how to adapt speech for different purposes and audiences.
230. All pupils read a range of fiction and non-fiction, including texts that reflect the culture of Wales. They display confidence in employing a range of strategies such as paired reading and text marking to make meaning clear in text, so that most have a good understanding of what they read. When reading aloud, most pupils read accurately, fluently and with appropriate expression.
231. Most pupils write effectively in a range of forms and for different audiences and purposes. They use processes for writing such as concept maps, brainstorming, plans and drafts with confidence. Most pupils present sustained writing carefully and appropriately, sometimes using information technology.

#### **Shortcomings**

232. The written work of a minority of pupils lacks accuracy.
233. The progress of a minority of middle ability pupils is not as secure as it is for other groups.

### **Key Stage 4**

#### **Good features**

234. Pupils build effectively on the skills acquired at KS3. This is reflected in their English Language results in GCSE and Entry Level, which are above both the UA and Wales.
235. Most pupils listen carefully and respond effectively to the teacher and to their peers. More able pupils sustain discussion and can advocate mature points of view about a range of issues.
236. All pupils respond effectively to character in literature texts. They show insightful understanding and clear empathy in, for example, their study of Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet and An Inspector Calls.
237. They read and respond to a range of texts in both language and literature and they employ appropriate strategies to support their reading.
238. Written responses to text are purposeful and sustained and show sometimes insightful understanding. Written coursework is well presented and pupils can revise and re-draft their work appropriately.
239. Pupils with additional learning needs achieve good standards relative to their ability.

## **Shortcomings**

240. A minority of pupils of lower ability make limited contributions to discussions.

241. As at KS3, the written work of a minority of pupils lacks accuracy.

## **Sixth Form**

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

#### **Outstanding features**

242. Relative to ability, students make very good progress and they attain good results in AS and A level.

243. All students work together confidently and collaboratively. They explore complex themes and concepts with insight.

244. In their writing, they show mature understanding of implicit meanings and they present their work accurately and purposefully.

#### **Good features**

245. In discussions, most students speak with clarity and confidence. They have clear ideas and they know how to justify opinions using appropriate literary devices and terminology.

246. They read a wide range of demanding texts and they employ good strategies for ensuring detailed textual analysis..

<b>Mathematics</b>
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### **Key Stage 3: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

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

247. Examination results in mathematics at GCSE are in line with local averages but fall below national averages for the higher grades. When compared with similar schools, results are below average.

#### **Key Stage 3**

#### **Good features**

248. Good standards are achieved consistently in pupils' written work in almost all classes across the key stage. All pupils, almost without exception, make good progress over time. Particularly good progress is made in those lessons where pupils' time is well used in sustained mathematical activity.

249. Standards in pupils' written computational skills are generally good. Pupils of all abilities can perform basic written calculations accurately. Pupils' knowledge and use of number in solving simple problems is generally of a good standard.

250. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of shape is developing well. Some able pupils in Y7 achieve particularly good standards in sustained work with angles and triangles. They know important facts about angles and can apply them with understanding to different shapes.

251. Pupils with additional learning needs in Y9 achieve good standards in their written work in a range of topics. They have, for example, explored and ordered the probabilities of various events and successfully found the volumes of different shapes.

252. Pupils' skills in investigative work are developing well within a departmental programme of activities. Good standards are achieved when pupils use their literacy skills to state their hypotheses, explain their thinking and draw conclusions; more generally, literacy skills are less evident and standards more modest. Particularly good standards were achieved by Y7 pupils when analysing different ways of packing chocolates into boxes. They explored numerical patterns and graphed their results for different sizes of boxes. They deployed their speaking skills well in group and whole-class discussion.

### **Shortcomings**

253. The mental number skills of many pupils of middle and lower abilities are not sufficiently well developed. For example, knowledge of the links between fractions, decimals and percentages and between multiplication, division and fractions are not sufficiently secure. Their mental ability to work accurately with numbers up to 100 is too limited.

254. Many able pupils in Y9 make good progress in solving simultaneous equations but, across the key stage, pupils' algebraic skills, particularly in solving equations, could be better.

### **Key Stage 4**

#### **Good features**

255. Good standards are consistently achieved in pupils' written work across the key stage. Pupils of all abilities make good progress over time. Particularly good progress is made in those lessons where there is a well-judged balance between whole-class teaching and pupils working as individuals or pairs and where misunderstandings are corrected as they arise.

256. Most able pupils have a good understanding of how to use trigonometry to solve a variety of problems, although a few pupils are still hesitant in its use.

257. Pupils with additional learning needs achieve good standards in a wide range of topics, some of which are of a particularly challenging nature. For example, they know appropriate angle facts and use them successfully to find angles in shapes. Their written computational skills are generally good.

#### **Shortcomings**

258. Some pupils of middle and lower abilities have too low a competence with mental number skills. Their lack of understanding of the interrelationships between numerical operations and their limited knowledge of number bonds has a lowering effect on standards generally.

### **Sixth Form**

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

#### **Good features**

259. Students make good progress and achieve good standards in most aspects of their work. They can explain their thinking with a good degree of understanding. They work well to support each other.

260. In Y12, most students exhibit good standards in pure mathematics when working with definite integrals. In Y13, work on the study of parametric equations of

curves has been undertaken to a good standard. Overall standards in pure mathematics are good.

261. In mechanics, many students show a good knowledge and understanding of the basic concepts involved in the study of the motion of connected particles and of impact between moving objects.

### **Shortcomings**

262. With a minority of students an undue degree of weakness exists at times when they manipulate algebraic expressions.

263. A minority of Y13 students are not yet confident in drawing accurate force diagrams in their study of mechanics.

## **Design technology**

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

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

264. The percentage of pupils attaining an A\* to C grade in 2007 was much higher than the average for the LEA and slightly higher than the average for Wales. Girls attain significantly higher A\*/A grades than the average for the unitary authority and Wales. Also boys achieve higher A\* grades than the averages which is a significant feature. Although results fluctuate slightly they are improving year on year and reflect good achievement for these pupils.

### **Key Stage 3**

#### **Good features**

265. Most pupils develop a good understanding of the design process and apply the associated principles well in their project work.

266. Almost all pupils plan effectively for the making stage of their work and can work accurately and methodically when using tools to shape and process materials.

267. Well over two thirds of pupils produce well-crafted and finished products in all design areas and show a good understanding of the materials or ingredients used.

268. At least two thirds of pupils make good use of computers for some aspects of their design work. They make good progress in their knowledge, understanding and use of computer aided design software.

269. Most pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the functions of food materials and recognise the importance of the five senses when designing their food products.

270. Pupils of lower ability and those with additional learning needs respond well to in-class support. They make good progress in their designing and making skills. The product outcomes produced by almost all of these pupils are good and shows that they achieve to their potential.

#### **Shortcomings**

271. Pupils' presentation skills vary widely. In a minority of design folders they are poor.

272. Too many pupils' knowledge, understanding and use of computer aided manufacturing equipment is at a very basic level.

#### **Key Stage 4**

##### **Good features**

273. Well over two thirds of pupils have a good understanding of the principles of design work and make good use of a design process to guide their project work.

274. The most able investigate original designs well and collect the relevant material that helps them finalise their design solutions. They use computer aided design software effectively to enhance and support their presentations.

275. Almost all pupils have good practical making skills in a range of materials. The most able have very good skills as seen for example in some storage design outcomes.

276. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress in response to a good level of support.

##### **Shortcomings**

277. Spatial awareness skill is the weaker element in the work of a small number of pupils. The annotation of design work is sometimes untidy and tends to spoil what in essence is good graphical communication work.

278. Computer aided manufacturing techniques do not feature in pupils' work and results in product outcomes that lack a degree of creativity, imagination and innovation that such processes can offer.

#### **Sixth Form**

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

279. Over the last two years the percentages of students who have gained grades A to C at AS and A level has been well above the average for the local education authority (LEA) and Wales. This is a considerable improvement on to the results reported in the previous report. However, the numbers of students involved were very small, so judgements based on these results do not carry much weight. They do however reflect good achievement for these students.

##### **Good features**

280. Students have a good understanding of the principles of design. They all produce original, creative and appropriate design solutions within the resources and equipment available to them.

281. All students carry out thorough research work using a range of sources. Existing products are analysed well and in great detail.

282. Students deal with contemporary concepts with confidence and show a good awareness of this in their design ideas. They generally use multi materials in their products well.

283. All students make good use of ICT, including computer aided design software, to produce, present and develop design outcomes of a good standard.

284. Practical skills are good overall and very good in the work of the best students. Work is well crafted and well finished using a range of processes.

## **Shortcomings**

285. The development of design ideas through quick freehand drawing techniques is limited in the work of a small number of students.
286. Students' knowledge, understanding and use of computer aided manufacturing equipment is at a very basic level.

## **Information technology**

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

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

287. In 2007, the percentage of pupils achieving A\* to C were much higher than those for the UA and broadly similar to the average for Wales. Most pupils achieve above their predicted target grades and is a significant feature since all Key Stage 4 pupils are entered for examinations in ICT. These results reflect good achievement for these pupils.

### **Key Stage 3**

#### **Good features**

288. Pupils' confidence and competence skills in handling the computer are universally good.
289. Most pupils are able to find and use information from a variety of sources including the internet without having to ask for help from their teachers.
290. The most able have a very good understanding of the theoretical aspects of their tasks and are able to explain and discuss their work well using a good level of technical vocabulary.
291. Almost all pupils communicate information well using word processing and desktop publishing applications. Spreadsheet work and database skills are good.
292. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress and produce work of a good standard in line with their potential.

#### **Shortcomings**

293. A small minority of pupils are unsure of terminology and technical vocabulary when describing their work.

### **Key Stage 4**

#### **Good features**

294. Every pupil has a good knowledge and understanding of computer systems including the range of input devices for human interaction and data capture.
295. Almost all pupils can readily select and use a range of software packages appropriate to the required task.
296. All pupils plan their work thoroughly and show good problem-solving and evaluation skills.

297. Most pupils have a good understanding of the theoretical aspects of their tasks and can explain and discuss their work using a good level of technical vocabulary.
298. Pupils have a good understanding of moral and ethical issues relating to the expansion of computer usage in society.
299. In final project work, well over two thirds of pupils readily establish a range of business applications that are required to run a business of their choice. They create a sophisticated database and set up effective and efficient queries to search their data and model information.
300. Pupils with additional learning needs make good progress and achieve well and most certainly to their potential.

### **Shortcomings**

301. A small number of pupils fail to complete some aspects of their projects to the required standard.
302. In some folios, hand written design of a data capture form is insufficiently developed and detailed.

### **Sixth Form**

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

303. Last year the percentage of students achieving A to C grades in both AS and A level was significantly higher than the average for the LEA and Wales. The percentage achieving an A or B grade at A level was also significantly higher than those for the unitary authority and for Wales. This represents significant achievement for these students many of whom considerably exceeded their predicted target grades.

### **Outstanding features**

304. AS and A level results are outstanding in the subject being significantly higher than the average for the LEA and Wales and notably so at the highest grades.
305. A significant number show an outstanding level of practical competence and computer skills in their course work. They can construct and use very complex systems to meet the needs of business applications.

### **Good features**

306. When constructing databases, all students, collect a wide range of data relevant to their project, test their validity and evaluate their solutions to a very good standard.
307. In their AS level projects, and even more so in their A level projects, students display the ability to apply their computing skills to problem solving in the real world very well.
308. The standard of work in most students' project files is very high.
309. Students have a good understanding and knowledge of the theory relating to computer systems.

### **Shortcomings**

310. There are no significant shortcomings.

## Physical education

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

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

311. Examination results at GCSE are in line with local and national averages.

### Key Stage 3

#### Good features

312. Most pupils make good progress as they move through the key stage. They show enthusiasm, follow instructions carefully and, by Y9, demonstrate good understanding of the techniques involved in athletics and rounders.

313. In athletics, both boys and girls work hard to improve their technique in sprinting and jumping. The most capable athletes move efficiently and fluently, using their arms to good effect in driving the body forward or to gain lift.

314. All pupils compete fairly and are often very supportive of one another. There are numerous examples of celebrating achievements and praising each others efforts at all levels.

315. Most pupils can apply simple rules consistently and show good knowledge of positional play in rounders.

316. Most pupils work very effectively in small groups or with a partner. They follow all safety procedures, concentrate on tasks, share ideas and motivate one another. Some of the most capable pupils observe and correct one another's technique using accurate terminology.

#### Shortcomings

317. A minority of performers of middle and lower ability do not respond well to a focus on technical skill and competition.

318. Knowledge of the health related exercise requirements of the NC is uneven across the key stage.

319. All pupils have to be very careful in their use of the unsatisfactory facilities and uneven surfaces which limit performance.

### Key Stage 4

320. A significant proportion of pupils taking the GCSE course gain the higher A\*-C grades. This is a steadily improving trend over recent years and represents good progress. The course is well structured enabling pupils to build on their skills, knowledge and understanding.

#### Good features

321. Some pupils show considerable knowledge of examination topics through oral responses, written answers and in their use of relevant, technical vocabulary. Within the core PE programme, most pupils can name the major muscle groups and demonstrate appropriate warm up stretches in preparation for activity.

322. With practice, boys are successful in devising their own training ideas, can demonstrate and explain clearly when sharing these with others in the group. The most able girls in a lower ability group direct and organize others in their rounders team to good effect.

323. Most pupils can sustain activity throughout the whole lesson working with concentration and confidence. They make considerable progress when they are engaged in, and take some responsibility for their learning.

### **Shortcomings**

324. A minority of pupils lack confidence and under-achieve when they are not motivated and when there are too few opportunities for them to think for themselves or to learn at their own pace.

325. Evaluating skills are unevenly developed. There is an over-reliance on teachers to provide all comment, to organize and to officiate all activities.

326. Attendance and participation in lessons is uneven in some groups.

327. Written work for GCSE is under-developed. Folders are not always well presented and there is too much reliance on worksheets and very short answers.

### **Sixth Form**

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

328. A very small group of students follow the AS and A2 examination courses. Grades have improved overall with some significant gains through AS resits by the current Y13 students.

#### **Good features**

329. In discussion, students recognize their shortcomings and work hard to focus on issues raised through tutorials with their teacher.

330. Students try hard to draw together relevant points from different aspects of the course and to use current sports issues as examples in support of their thinking.

#### **Shortcomings**

331. Students' abilities to discuss their progress are limited.

332. Written work in Y12 is of variable quality. Many do not demonstrate wider use of ICT, independence of thinking or the range of technical vocabulary expected in A level study.

### **Religious education (including religious studies)**

333. In 2007, full-course GCSE, pupils attained 78.4% A\*-C and 99.1% A\*-G. The percentage attaining A\*/A was 44.1%. This was exceptional.

334. In the short-course GCSE, 63% pupils attained A\*-C and 94% attained A\*-G. 26.6% of the entry attained grades A\*/A.

335. The number entered for the full course was 57% of the cohort, which is significantly higher than local (26%) or all Wales figures.

**Key Stage 3: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

**Key Stage 4: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

**Key Stage 3**

**Good features**

336. Nearly all pupils have an outstanding recall of a wide range of religious terms in Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism.
337. Many offer perceptive answers in class and have the confidence to offer personal opinions both in groups and in whole class about religious and moral issues, for example, pollution.
338. Pupils work together very well and are engaged in accurate self-evaluation. The way they regularly offer suggestions for improvement when peer marking is outstanding.
339. Pupils with SEN achieve very well and are fully involved in group and class discussions on the topics studied. Most write carefully and accurately.
340. A few pupils produce work of outstanding quality using ICT for research, illustrations and word processing.
341. Many pupils in Y7 have detailed knowledge of the significance of the bread and wine in the Christian Eucharist. They have a basic understanding of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. They know the fundamentals of church architecture and the significance of the pulpit, altar and font.
342. Many pupils in Y8 have a good understanding of Hindu gods and puja (worship). They have detailed knowledge of Hindu customs at weddings. Pupils with SEN have an understanding of the Hindu belief in re-incarnation appropriate to their ability.
343. Many pupils in Y9 have detailed knowledge of the problems of pollution and the concept of Christian stewardship. They have very good basic knowledge of Jewish Torah, the food laws, the festival Shabbat and customs of the synagogue. They produce very good accounts on some Jewish rites of passage such as the Bar Mitzvah.

**Key Stage 4**

**Good features**

344. Nearly all pupils can verbally recall details of religions rites and customs of both Christianity and Judaism and use appropriate religious terminology accurately.
345. Nearly all have strong thinking skills and make confident and insightful individual verbal contributions in class.
346. Pupils have an outstanding understanding of examination techniques including how to make good use of time.
347. Year 10 pupils explore the concept of fairness in some depth. They appreciate the role played by Christian charities and make discerning evaluations of the effectiveness of TV charity adverts seeking funds.
348. The way pupils enhance the quality and depth of their work through effective pair and group discussions is outstanding.

349. Year 11, explore the problem of racism with sensitivity and have a very good knowledge of the role of Martin Luther King in helping to eradicate the problem in the USA.

### **Sixth Form**

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

##### **Religious Education**

##### **Good features**

350. Students' recall of some principal aspects on Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism is outstanding.

351. The way students express and justify their personal standpoints on moral issues such as euthanasia, justification for war, racial intolerance is outstanding.

352. Most can explain the links between religious extremism and terrorism in contemporary society.

353. Most appreciate the consequences for believers of holding particular religious stances whether they be their own or those of others.

##### **Religious Studies (external examinations)**

354. At A level in 2007, there were some outstanding results: 77.8% achieved grades A-C. This is in line with the national average and is above the LEA average.

355. 100% of the students attained grades A-E. This figure is above national and local averages.

356. Almost all students have a sound basic understanding of Augustine's theodicy and the problems of evil and suffering.

357. The way students express their views confidently, and some time with profundity, is outstanding.

358. They assist their recall of facts and their understanding by analysing their topics into positive, negative and interesting elements.

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

The Inspection findings recognise that St Martin's is a good school that continues to improve and acknowledges the many improvements that have been made in every area of the school's work.

We are particularly pleased the inspectors recognised the significant improvements made in the standards pupils attain in their lessons and in the results they attain especially at KS3 and in the Sixth form, which consistently exceed local and national averages. In the Sixth form, results were described as outstanding. The percentage of lessons where standards were graded 1 or 2 exceeds by 21% the WAG's target for 2010.

This recognises the initiatives the school has been working on over the last few years and reflects our commitment to continuous improvement.

We are very proud of the quality of teaching in the school. In almost a quarter of the lessons inspectors observed, the quality of teaching was judged to be outstanding. At 80%, the percentage of lessons graded 1 and 2 exceeded the average figures for Wales last year and already meets the WAG target for 2010.

It is very rewarding that inspectors recognised the caring ethos of the school and described the support and guidance we provide for our pupils as having several outstanding aspects. This is very important to us as a school because it lies at the heart of our values. We are proud of our positive relationships with pupils and parents and welcome the inspection team's recognition of our commitment to equal opportunities, respect for diversity and racial equality and the effective strategies we have in place to discourage any form of bullying, discrimination or harassment.

The report recognises that the success of every pupil lies at the heart of our school aims. Because this is known and shared by all members of the school community, it is central to the way in which we work.

Our planning already recognises recommendations one, two and four of the inspection report and the improvement plan we are developing to respond to the report will help us improve on our previous best.

## Appendix 1

### Basic information about the school

Name of school	St Martin Comprehensive School
School type	Secondary
Age range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Hillside,
Postcode	CF83 1UW
Telephone number	02920858051
Headteacher	Mrs Liz Norman
Date of appointment	September 2002
Chair of governors / Appropriate authority	Mr David Fletcher
Reporting inspector	Mr Peter Harris
Dates of inspection	April 21 – 25 2008

## Appendix 2

### School data and indicators

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	180	186	166	177	180	82	66	1037

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	59	8	64

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16.2:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	-
Average teaching group size	24.4
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	81.02%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	92.5	89.3	88.8	90.2	85.3	87	84.3	88.7
Term 2	90.8	87.6	87.4	87.4	94	84.4	92.7	89.4
Term 3	93.3	91.2	89.6	88	90.9	91.6	86.6	90.6

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	17%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	62(T) 1(P)

## Appendix 3

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

The year of the Assessment must be completed in all tables used below.

			N	D	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	6	25	33	21	15	0	0
		National	1	0	0	0	2	7	22	36	24	8	0	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	7	16	34	24	19	0	0
		National	1	0	0	0	1	7	18	25	30	16	1	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	5	19	36	26	14	0	0
		National	1	0	0	0	1	6	19	34	28	12	0	0

N Pupils not awarded a level for reasons other than disapplication

D Disapplied under Section 364 or 365 of the Education Act 1996

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	64.07	In Wales 58.2

**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	194
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	42

<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	89	86	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	53	47	54
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	87	84	86
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	37	33	40
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	96	95	96
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	75	72	77
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	95	93	93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	4	6	5
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	1	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	148
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2007	63
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2007	10

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	83	65	68
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	100	96	94
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	24	19	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 45 inspection 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:

- 92 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;
- 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
Peter Harris	Rgl, KQ1, KQ5
Helen Adams	Lay Inspector
David Hughes	KQ2
Martyn Williams	KQ3
David Thomas	KQ4 inc SEN
Sue Gwyer Roberts	KQ6
Delyth Williams	KQ7
Jenny Williams	English
Mike Haylings	Mathematics
Keith Hopkins	Design Technology and Information Technology
Debra Makin	Physical Education
Dafydd Treharne	Religious Education
Kay Lien	Peer Assessor
Nolan Morgan	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