



120. Other outstanding features include:

- teachers' reference to their own experiences to add weight to an argument or to bring further relevance to a topic being taught;
- direct and very good guidance on examination technique; and
- inspirational teaching that challenges students to think deeply about various issues and to come to considered opinions, judgements or conclusions.

121. Teachers are well qualified and up to date in their teaching and assessment strategies. They have a very good knowledge of their subject and motivate students by appropriate and well-considered tasks. Students are encouraged to work independently and co-operatively with other students. They all receive very good individual support and guidance.

122. The range of teaching and assessment strategies are broad and teachers' very good use of resources, particularly ICT, adds considerably to students' quality of education. In one or two lessons teachers talk for too long and do not test students sufficiently well through questioning to ensure their understanding.

123. Students are assessed rigorously and receive good, and often outstanding, quality feedback, both orally and in writing that helps them to attain well. Teachers monitor their progress closely. Students are involved very well in evaluating their work and in planning improvements to it.

124. Reports are generally of good quality and helpful to students in knowing how to improve their work. There is, however, a little inconsistency in the breadth and depth of targets for improvement across subjects.

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

**Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

125. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade awarded by the school in its own evaluation.

**Outstanding feature**

126. As part of the Caerphilly Basin Schools' Partnership (CBSP), the school works very effectively with five other educational institutions to provide outstanding curricular provision for post-16 students in the Caerphilly area. At present students can choose from 22 A level courses and 8 vocational courses, or a combination of both, and plans are well advanced to increase this provision in the future. Students from the various institutions speak very highly of the arrangements, both from an academic and social perspective. The partnership works well due to the strong commitment of the various management groups to collaborative arrangements such as transport and common timetabling. The arrangements provide very good and far reaching opportunities for students of all abilities enabling them to progress successfully to employment or appropriate courses in further and higher education.



127. There are many outstanding features in the way in which the school provides learning experiences that enables all pupils and students to progress.
128. The school's curriculum meets the needs of all learners and enables them to achieve appropriate accreditation. This includes:
  - exceptional provision for pupils with special educational needs and pupils with disabilities which contributes vastly to the social development of all pupils; and
  - the extensive curricular provision for post 16 students through the CBSP.
129. Pupils and students have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities which includes visits to Europe and many other countries throughout the world. These experiences are celebrated, shared and contribute exceptionally well to pupils' cultural development.
130. A particularly outstanding feature is the way in which learners show great respect to each other, visitors and their teachers. This generates an excellent working environment in which all are valued and prosper.
131. Assemblies and form tutorials are of very high quality. These are used very effectively to enrich pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils also raise large amounts of money for a variety of charitable causes.
132. Partnerships with parents, the community and other providers of education and in particular teacher education institutions are exemplary.
133. Learning experiences meet legal and course requirements. These include religious education in the sixth form and daily acts of collective worship which were key issues in the last inspection report.
134. Another good feature of the school's provision is the success of strategies to improve key skills. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection in the development of pupils' key skills.
135. There is insufficient time to deliver in-depth coverage of the programme of study in design and technology at KS3. This is a shortcoming.
136. There are also outstanding features in the way the school responds to the needs of employers and the wider community.
137. Work Related Education (WRE) and careers guidance at all transition stages are very high quality. All pupils are registered with Careers Wales. Pupils benefit enormously from very well attended careers conventions which gives them access to a range of employers and higher education providers.
138. The provision for equal opportunities for all learners is exceptional. In particular pupils with physical disabilities have access to all learning experiences. Support for pupils with additional learning needs is outstanding.



139. Systems for transition at different key stages are excellent. Particularly outstanding features are:
- the very well-established links with local primary schools that enables pupils in Y7 to settle quickly into their new school;
  - the extent to which many subject departments have established coherent links with local primary schools;
  - the way in which information about pupils academic ability and the specific support they require is shared between schools; and
  - the support and advice provided to pupils and students as they progress through the school and on to higher education or the world of work.
140. The introduction of different learning pathways at 14 to 19 and the successful promotion of sustainable development issues equip pupils well for lifelong learning and community regeneration.
141. Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship is embedded strongly in the culture of the school. The school has achieved the silver level of the ECO schools award and is pursuing currently the Green Dragon Award.
142. The School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) has proved extremely successful in convincing the majority of pupils to adopt healthy eating options.
143. There is a good range of activities which contributes successfully to developing pupils' and students' bilingual competence. All pupils study Welsh in the curriculum. Bilingual signs and posters are used to good effect as is the increasing use of incidental Welsh.
144. Other good features include:
- experiences which promote Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig through subject provision, eisteddfodau, residential courses and the very successful involvement in the Welsh Heritage Award scheme;
  - the school's response to the needs of learners and employers through the introduction of appropriate vocational courses in KS4 and in the sixth form;
  - effective involvement with Careers Wales and with local business partnerships which provides visiting speakers and successful enterprise activities; and
  - effective strategies which reflect national priorities.

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

**Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

145. The grade awarded by the inspection team matches the grade awarded by the school in its own evaluation.
146. There is outstanding practice in the quality of the
- care, support and guidance to learners;
  - provision for pupils with additional learning needs; and
  - provision for equal opportunities.

- use their background knowledge, independent reading and information drawn from primary and secondary sources to make considered and informed judgements.
317. In class discussion, students engage in debate, ask pertinent questions and express their views with confidence. When challenged, they defend viewpoints and substantiate their judgements with reference to relevant examples.
318. Students continue to develop the ability to evaluate the reliability and utility of a range of primary and secondary sources. They demonstrate skill in cross-referencing, recognize omissions and make inferences.
319. They develop good knowledge and understanding of historical debates and can successfully synthesise the views of historians as demonstrated in the work undertaken on the 'intentionalist' and 'revisionist' interpretations of the Terror under Stalin's regime.

### **Shortcomings**

320. There are no important shortcomings.

<b>Religious education (including religious studies)</b>
--

**KS3 - Grade 1: Good with outstanding features**

**KS4 - Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

### **KS3**

#### **Outstanding features**

321. Pupils deal with issues such as circumcision and arranged marriages in a balanced and informed manner. The way in which they consider a range of perspectives in a knowledgeable and sensitive fashion is very often of outstanding quality.
322. They successfully evaluate, redraft and improve their work after considering the views of others.

#### **Good features**

323. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism. They accurately recall key information about these religions using religious terms in context, such as 'dharma', 'moksha', 'baptism' and 'bar mitzvah'.
324. Pupils engage in good quality research into, for example, individual and class knowledge of the Christian religion. They put together good quality presentations based on their research, for example 'Welcome to the Synagogue'.



325. Pupils are able to use the Bible to find information on topics such as the Last Supper and show a good understanding of the symbolism associated with the event. They understand how religions often express themselves through symbolism.
326. They effectively involve themselves in class discussions and in doing so draw on their own experiences of, for example, infant and believers baptism. They ask appropriate and sometimes searching questions and are aware of how beliefs affect lifestyles.

### **Shortcomings**

327. There are no important shortcomings.

### **KS 4**

#### **Good features**

328. In the GCSE religious studies short course, pupils show a good knowledge and understanding of the units they study covering contemporary moral and ethical issues from religious and secular perspectives.
329. They have a good recall of factual information and are able to make connections between the topics they study successfully.
330. They are able to use religious language appropriately when discussing and writing about topics such as marriage and divorce in Christianity and Judaism.
331. They engage productively in these controversial topics in a positive way and respond thoughtfully to questions, often drawing on their own experiences and knowledge of the world.
332. In the religious studies full course pupils display very good problem solving and questioning skills. In dealing with the perennial problem of suffering they often ask challenging and sophisticated questions. They engage with and address topics sympathetically.
333. They express, consider and reconsider their own views in the light of religious teachings, teacher information and their own research.

### **Shortcomings**

334. There are no important shortcomings.

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

**Good features**

- 335. Students have a good knowledge and understanding of the content of their course. They are able to highlight the main features of the philosophical movements and ethical theories they cover.
- 336. In lessons they regularly use key philosophical, religious and ethical terms correctly, such as logical positivism. Most are able to consider the merits and drawbacks of the propositions and theories they encounter effectively.
- 337. They structure their responses according to set criteria successfully and apply their learning to both real and imagined situations.
- 338. They articulate their views and refine these in the light of listening to others.

**Shortcomings**

- 339. A minority of students have difficulty fully appreciating the complexity of the topics they encounter, such as the nature of freedom.
- 340. Some students do not develop their evaluative comments in their written work sufficiently.