

REPORT

on the

**INSPECTION UNDER SECTION 10 OF
THE SCHOOL INSPECTION ACT 1996**

**LLANTWIT MAJOR SCHOOL
HAM LANE EAST
LLANTWIT MAJOR
VALE OF GLAMORGAN
CARDIFF
CF61 1TQ**

School Number: 673/4060

Date of Inspection: 19 – 23 January 2004

By

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Registered Inspector W253/3508

Under Estyn contract number: T/31/03

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CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES

A new nomenclature to describe pupils' progress through school was introduced in 1989. This system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to age 18 is intended to ease communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and UAs and emphasise the importance of continuity.

The term "Reception" (R) is applied to the year group of pupils in a primary school (not a nursery class) who attain the age of 5 during the academic year "Year 1" (Y1) is applied to the year group of pupils who attain the age of 6 during the academic year and so on to Y13 the year group who attain the age of 18 during the academic year:

{PRI VAT E }	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Years	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

Key stage 1 of the national curriculum consists of Y1 and Y2; KS2 of Y3 to Y6; KS3 of Y7 to Y9; KS4 of Y10 and Y11 (which is the final year of compulsory education).

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

The five-point grading scale used to represent the main judgements in this report is as follows:

1. Very good: many good features, some of them outstanding.
2. Good: good features and no major shortcomings.
3. Satisfactory: good features outweigh shortcomings.
4. Unsatisfactory: some satisfactory work but shortcomings in important areas.
5. Poor: many shortcomings.

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1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

Llantwit Major School is an 11 – 18 mixed comprehensive school (established as such in 1973), situated in the centre of the town of Llantwit Major. There are 1316 pupils on roll (compared with 1191 in 1997), of whom 192 are in the sixth form. The annual intake varies between 200 and 250 pupils with a standard admission number of 225.

The most obvious feature of the school is poor exterior state of a considerable proportion of the accommodation. The good facilities provided by the new building are in stark contrast to those available in the rest of the school's buildings.

Most pupils come from 5 main contributory primary schools in Llantwit and surrounding villages. Additionally, a good number of pupils from Barry and Rhoose attend, as a result of parental preference. The school's catchment can be described as 50 percent relatively prosperous and 50 percent average, with the intake being neither advantaged nor disadvantaged. No pupils speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard. Very few pupils (around 1 percent) come from minority ethnic heritages. One pupil receives support teaching in English as an additional language. 7 percent of the pupils are registered as being entitled to free school meals, below the unitary authority's (UA) figure of 12 percent.

Because of its proximity to St Athan Royal Air Force base, the school experiences a considerable amount of pupil mobility – around 100 pupils join and leave the school each year.

The school's intake represents the full range of ability, with almost equal groups of able and less able. There are 20 pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN) (12 boys and 8 girls) There are an additional 300 pupils (around 23 percent of the school's population) on the school's SEN register who are registered as needing School Action (SA) or School Action Plus (SA+) of the Code of Practice for SEN. Very few pupils are disapplied from aspects of the National Curriculum (NC).

Welsh is taught and examined only as a second language.

In its vision statement, the school states that it believes that: people are its greatest asset; all people, regardless of their race, colour or religious views are of equal value in the school; everyone is entitled to an education in which they are given the opportunities to achieve the highest standards; learning is for life; everyone can make a positive contribution to the social, economic and cultural growth of local, national and worldwide communities.

The school development plan (SDP) is a comprehensive, well-organised programme that seeks to move the school forward so that it can achieve its aims. Departmental development plans (DDPs) are appropriately cross-referenced to the SDP.

The headteacher, one of the two deputies, the head of KS4 and the head of the sixth form have been appointed since the time of the previous inspection, and the senior management team (SMT) has been restructured.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

Notwithstanding the poor condition of areas of the accommodation, Llantwit Major School provides a good quality of education for pupils of all ages and abilities; particularly so for students in the sixth form. The school has the potential for further improvement and the will to succeed. It has been recognised by several national bodies for its activities and success in a range of aspects.

It provides pupils and students with a supportive and challenging learning environment in which they achieve success in many areas of the curriculum. Teachers, support staff, pupils and students often work together with determination to achieve high standards.

Since the previous inspection in 1997, the school has made satisfactory progress in addressing the key issues for action highlighted in the report at that time.

Educational standards achieved by the pupils

Since the previous inspection, the school has improved its standards of achievement. As can be seen in the tables below, standards in many subjects and in the key skills are at least good – especially in the sixth form. These standards are reflected in the school's achievements in external national tests and examinations.

In the 2003 KS3 national tests the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or above in English matched the national average. In mathematics and science, the proportions exceeded the respective national averages by a substantial margin.

Examination success at the end of KS4 in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more grades A* to C has increased from 44 to 55 percent, and the corresponding figure for 5 or more grades A* to G, from 78 to 83 percent. The 2003 figure for 5 or more grades A* to C exceeds the national average, whilst that for 5 or more A* to G grades is below the corresponding national figure. In 2002, 59 percent of pupils achieved 5 or more grades A* to C, and 93 percent gained 5 or more A* to G grades.

When the 2003 GCSE results and those from the KS3 national tests are compared with outcomes in schools with similar proportions of pupils entitled to free school meals nationally, they are well below average.

In 2003, the proportions of sixth form students gaining success in 2 or more subjects at grades A to C and at grades A to E in the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level or equivalent examinations were better than those achieved at the time of the previous inspection. They were, however, below UA and national averages.

STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS

Subject	KS3	KS4	Sixth Form
English	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Mathematics	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Science	Good	Good	Good
Welsh (Second Language)	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
Design and Technology (DT)	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Information Technology (IT)	Good	Good	Very Good
History	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Geography	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Modern Foreign Languages	Good	Good	Satisfactory
Art	Good	Very Good	Very Good
Music	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
Religious Education	Good	Unsatisfactory **	n/a
Religious Studies	n/a	Good	Very Good
Physical Education	Good	Good	Very Good
Drama	n/a	Very Good	Very Good
Home Economics (textiles)	n/a	n/a	Good
Home Economics (food)	n/a	n/a	Good
Catering	n/a	Good	n/a
Child Development	n/a	Good	n/a
Health and Social Care	n/a	n/a	Good
Personal, Social and Health Education	Very Good	Very Good	n/a
Business Studies	n/a	Good	Good
Business Studies [GNVQ intermediate]	n/a	n/a	Good
Sociology	n/a	Good	Good
Electronics	n/a	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory

** Standards in religious education in KS4 are unsatisfactory because statutory requirements are not satisfied.

STANDARDS IN KEY SKILLS

	KS3	KS4	Sixth Form
Listening	Good	Good	Good
Speaking	Good	Good	Good
Reading	Good	Good	Good
Writing	Good	Good	Good
Numeracy	Good	Good	Good
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
Working with others	Good	Good	Very Good
Improving own learning and performance	Good	Good	Good
Problem solving	Good	Good	Good

Good features:

- Standards were good or very good in 68 percent of classes observed including 17 percent graded as very good.

- Standards in sixth form classes in most subjects were at least good. 80 percent of classes observed were judged as achieving good or better standards, including 30 percent as very good.
- Most pupils with SEN make good progress and achieve well.
- The most able pupils are suitably challenged in most subjects and gain good grades in external examinations.
- Most pupils listen attentively, read well, speak clearly and articulately, write to good effect and work well with their classmates. They use their mathematical skills effectively in many other subjects. They also review their own progress at regular intervals and make decisions about how to improve.
- In a number of subjects pupils use information and communication technology advantageously to enhance their learning. In several cases they undertake independent research using the Internet well as a valuable source of information.
- Standards in design and technology are very good throughout the school.
- High standards are achieved in personal and social education, drama and art.

Shortcomings

- Although information and communication technology is used effectively in some areas of the curriculum, not all pupils can access computing equipment often enough to raise standards to the expected level.
- Across a number of subjects, less able pupils in particular make basic grammatical and punctuation errors in their writing. Progress is also hindered on occasions by unsatisfactory recall of previous work.
- In a very small minority of classes, pupils' inattentiveness, lack of concentration or disruptive behaviour impedes their progress and that of others.

Quality of Education

The quality of teaching is predominantly good throughout the school. It is very good overall in the sixth form. Teachers generally have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. They care about their pupils' welfare and progress, and often plan well to meet learners' needs. They regularly provide extra help in their own time to support pupils' learning and they often provide a good range of other experiences to extend and broaden their pupils' education. Additionally, they do much to improve the otherwise deleterious state of areas of the accommodation.

Good features

- Teaching was good or very good in 71 percent of classes observed, including 20 percent that were very good. This figure exceeds the national expectation for 2002 of 50 percent good or better by a considerable amount.
- Teaching in the sixth form was good or better in 82 percent of classes and very good in 32 percent.
- Teaching is very good throughout in design and technology, PSE and drama. It is also very good in art in KS4 and the sixth form, and in English, religious studies, computing and physical education in the sixth form.
- Teachers and the few support staff available provide appropriate and sensitive support to help pupils with SEN to achieve well.
- The KS3, KS4 and sixth form curricula are good overall. The school offers a wide and appropriate range of subjects and courses to allow pupils of all abilities to achieve well.

The whole curriculum ensures that all pupils have equal access to good learning opportunities.

- There is good planning for and implementation of arrangements for the development of essential (key) skills in KS3, KS4 and the sixth form. The school is seeking recognition of its provision through the Quality Mark award of the Basic Skills Agency.
- There are good arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' achievements and progress in the vast majority of subjects. Pupils' work, including homework, is often carefully marked and commented upon constructively.
- Pupils have many opportunities to benefit from a good programme of extra-curricular activities, and participation is good.
- Links with partner primary schools are very good and allow for a smooth transition to secondary education for most pupils.
- The provision for careers education and guidance, and work related education, is very good.

Shortcomings

- Across the curriculum, there are a few instances where the pace of lessons is inappropriately slow, or the work is not matched well to pupils' learning needs.
- Teachers' exposition is occasionally too long and opportunities are missed to engage pupils in thought provoking exercises or active learning situations.

The Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

The school's curricular provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils respond well to the provision.

Good features

- Many subjects contribute well to pupils' spiritual development. Religious education makes a particularly strong contribution.
- Creativity is developed well in art, music and drama.
- Pupils' moral development is good. The school's simple and clear code of conduct is displayed in all classrooms and most pupils behave well, in accordance with the code. Their frequent movement between the scattered buildings is orderly and considerate of others.
- Pupils' good social development is fostered in the many lessons that make extensive and effective use of group and pair work. Pupils listen well to each other and respect each other's opinions.
- Large numbers of sixth-form students help younger pupils in paired reading and paired numeracy schemes that assist all parties' social development as well as improving the youngsters' skills.
- Pupils' cultural development is good. Many pupils participate in musical and sporting activities, including drama. There are regular visits to theatres, museums and other places of cultural and historical significance.
- Many subjects make a useful contribution to pupils' understanding of multi-cultural issues including world music and art.
- Charity work is a very significant feature of the school's activities.
- Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is well established in the school and examples drawn from Wales are used in every subject.

Shortcomings

- The school does not satisfy statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.
- The provision made for religious education in KS4 and the sixth form does not meet statutory requirements.
- Pupils do not always show concern for the school environment and there is considerable litter in the school grounds.

Leadership, Management and Efficiency

Following the reorganisation of the school's management structure, during which the headteacher and governing body made good appointments to key posts, many aspects of provision have improved considerably since the previous inspection. The deputy headteachers and other senior managers fulfil their pivotal roles very well. There is not, however, a shared sense of purpose in the school; neither is there a strong team spirit uniting all the staff.

Good features

- The school operates very good and effective procedures for evaluating its standards of achievement and the quality of its provision.
- The school's development plans are very good. Targets are realistic and achievable.
- The quality of departmental leadership and management is good. A good team spirit is evident in many departments.
- The school manages its budget satisfactorily. Financial decisions are taken in accordance with the school's educational priorities as identified in its school development plan and efforts are made to obtain best value for money. The recommendations of the latest auditors' report have been considered and implemented as appropriate.
- The day-to-day administration of the school is efficient and effective. Administrative and other support staff in all areas make valuable contributions to the smooth operation of the school.
- The governing body plays an active and supportive role in the school. They are well informed about the school's work and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and shortcomings.
- Teachers' qualifications and experience match the requirements of the national and wider curricula. In most subjects, deployment of staff ensures that individual teachers' knowledge and skills are used most effectively to the benefit of pupils.
- A well-managed programme of continuing professional development, informed by the school's development plan, helps staff focus upon ways of raising standards in all aspects of school life.

Shortcomings

- There are many areas of the school's accommodation that still require refurbishment or replacement. The library resource centre is too small and contains too few books.
- The behaviour support base that was developed in order to reduce the number of fixed term exclusions and support disaffected pupils is failing to achieve its aims.
- Individual Education Plans have been developed for pupils with statements of SEN but are not in place for all other pupils with SEN as required by the Code of Practice.
- Not all middle managers understand the rationales behind a number of decisions.

The effectiveness with which the issues identified in the previous report have been addressed

Seven key points for action were identified in the previous inspection report. Overall, satisfactory progress has been made in addressing them.

- The school has done much to become a self-evaluating school. Monitoring, evaluating and target setting are now well established and effective. Very good progress.
- Procedures for assessment, recording and reporting have improved considerably. Good progress.
- The programme of assemblies and registration periods has been revised and is now more efficient. Pupils have opportunities for a meaningful range of activities. Satisfactory progress.
- The computer networks have been improved considerably and many pupils benefit from this improvement. However, access to facilities is still problematic in a number of subjects. Satisfactory progress.
- The school has done a great deal to improve the environment, but with so many buildings on site in need of refurbishment or replacement, there is still much to do. Unsatisfactory progress.
- Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and for religious education in KS4 and in the sixth form are still not satisfied. Unsatisfactory progress.
- The school has done its best to address issues of concern with respect to the potential safety hazards identified at the time of the previous inspection, but more exist because of the state of the buildings. Satisfactory progress.

Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

The school's intake represents the full range of ability and overall is about average.

Standards were at least satisfactory in 97 percent of the classes observed. They were good or better in 64 percent including 14 percent that were very good. Standards were slightly higher in KS4 than in KS3. In KS4, 66 percent were judged as good or better, with 17 percent very good, whilst in KS3, 62 percent were judged as good or better, with 11 percent very good. These statistics are a substantial improvement on those recorded at the time of the previous inspection.

In the NC tests at the end of KS3 in 2003, 54.2 percent of pupils gained at least level 5 in each of the three core subjects, English, mathematics and science, (the core subject indicator), compared with the all Wales figure of 50 percent. The proportion in English for level 5 or above equalled the national average, whilst in mathematics and science the results were above the respective national figures. The percentage of pupils achieving at the higher levels of 6 and 7 was in excess of national figures for all three subjects.

Over recent years, in comparison with national averages, the school has maintained a good level of success in the GCSE examinations. Since the previous inspection, there has been a steady increase in the percentage of pupils gaining five GCSE grades A* to C. The 2003 score of 55 percent represents a significant improvement on the figure of 44 percent at the time of the previous inspection.

For pupils gaining five grades A* to G, the school's figures are usually in excess of the comparator for the principality and below that for the UA. In 2003, however, the school's figure of 83 percent was below both the UA and national averages of 90 percent and 85 percent respectively. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C in each of the three subjects, English, mathematics and science (core subject indicator) in 2003 was 39 percent. This figure is just greater than the national average of 38 percent, but below the UA average of 44 percent. It must be noted that these data do not take into account the transient nature of a significant proportion of the school's population.

When the KS3 and KS4 test and examination results are compared with those achieved in other schools in Wales having ten percent or fewer pupils entitled to free school meals, outcomes are well below average. Other meaningful comparisons, however, such as measuring progress made during a key stage indicate that many pupils are making at least satisfactory progress. It must be noted that in comparison with many schools having similar free school meal entitlements, Llantwit Major has an above average proportion of pupils with SEN.

The difference between boys' and girls' performances in the 2003 GCSE examinations was more marked than the national difference. Sixty-six percent of the girls gained 5 or more grades A* to C, and 46 percent of the boys achieved this standard. Nationally, the figures were 57 and 45 percent respectively. This difference was also reflected in the core subject indicator, where the boys' result of 34 percent matched exactly the national boys' figure and the girls' score of 45 percent exceeded the national average of 43 percent.

The achievement of the most able pupils is predominantly good and in a few subjects it is very good. The proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades in the KS3 national tests is above the average for Wales. In GCSE examinations, too, the most able pupils achieve well.

Pupils with above average ability make good progress and achieve well in almost every subject. This is particularly so in design and technology, information technology and PSE in both key stages, and in religious studies, art and drama in KS4, where they achieve very good standards.

Where standards are very good, as in design and technology, abler pupils demonstrate a good depth of understanding of the design process and they have very good knowledge and understanding of materials and components. They often produce innovative outcomes as a result of their well-developed making skills and their ability to use computer-aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) processes. In information technology, abler pupils are competent when communicating, handling and modelling data. Across many subjects, abler pupils are articulate and give cogent reasons for their views. They also use a good range of vocabulary in their written and oral work. Examples of good achievement by above average pupils are evident in many areas of the curriculum. For example, in music they perform confidently and accurately, produce imaginative compositions and appraise well. In art, these

and other pupils develop good observational skill, use a range of media and techniques in their work and critically use the work of other artists to influence their own. Able pupils in history apply secure investigative techniques to historical problems, have good recall of background information, and they can identify and explain the causes and effects of events. In modern foreign languages, pupils respond enthusiastically to a range of activities, read well with comprehension and select texts and/or magazines to read independently. In physical education, they are able to judge their own performance and use this information to improve the quality of their work. They also understand the key principles of health related education.

Only in Welsh in KS3 and electronics in KS4 were standards for above average pupils adjudged to have significant shortcomings. In Welsh, they rely too heavily upon worksheets and booklets when required to respond in discussions on a range of topics, and in electronics the work does not allow them to realise their potential. In a range of other subjects, too, shortcomings are evident. Work is not always completed as required; some pupils are insufficiently confident in their oral work in French; they do not achieve as many A* and A grades GCSE grades as they should, for example in mathematics; boys in particular are reluctant to contribute orally in class.

Most pupils of average ability also achieve good standards across the curriculum. They achieve very good standards in design and technology and PSE in KS3 and KS4, also in art and drama in KS4. In history, for example, pupils extract relevant information accurately from a variety of sources and texts, and they can often detect bias in their supply of data. In design and technology, they draw well with good relevant annotation, produce accurate, well-made products and obviously understand the design process. In their modern foreign languages classes, average pupils develop their writing skills well, progressing from short sentences to extended paragraphs, and in KS4, to extended writing covering a range of topics. Many are keen to make progress in lessons by answering teachers' questions, working conscientiously in class and through completing homework tasks.

Although average pupils achieve well overall, there are a few shortcomings. In Welsh, they seldom read Welsh literature for pleasure to extend their vocabulary and knowledge of the language, neither do they link sentences well to produce extended writing. When appraising in music, their comments are often brief and superficial, and their ensemble performances are insecure. In history, there are instances when average pupils' responses are too brief and they do not explain their meaning. In science, a minority of pupils' recall of previous work is insecure and they have difficulty with some of the more difficult applications in the subject. Work in mathematics is occasionally incomplete and/or presented incorrectly. On occasions their work in physical education lacks motivation and they do not respond to the tasks set with an appropriate degree of accuracy.

In the majority of subjects, less able pupils achieve satisfactory standards. They achieve good standards in English, information technology, and physical education and art in KS3. Very good standards are achieved in design and technology and PSE, also in art in KS4. In a number of subjects, less able pupils' writing lacks accuracy, their work is occasionally left incomplete or unsatisfactory behaviour hinders progress in lessons. In music, these pupils generally perform well, but their ensemble work lacks confidence. In geography, pupils are generally confident in oral activities, but their writing has several shortcomings. They occasionally become inattentive, lack concentration, and find recall of other than the most

recent work difficult. In physical education, although pupils acquire a range of skills in gymnastics and swimming, and they work well and co-operatively, they have limited understanding of the benefits of health related education and the skills they require for games activities are underdeveloped.

The majority of pupils with SEN achieve good standards in the core subjects in most classes, and in many other subjects across the curriculum. They achieve very good standards in drama, design and technology, PSE, and in art in KS4. In design and technology, for instance, with appropriate support, they utilise the design process well and produce well-made, interesting practical products. They cope well with design and practical tasks in all areas. In information technology, pupils with SEN often produce a standard of work that exceeds expectations based upon their prior attainment. They practise to improve their performances in physical education and acquire a range of skills, but they have limited understanding of the benefits of regular exercise and they find it difficult to make judgements about their own and others' performances. In modern foreign languages, despite limited time being available, pupils make progress in all language skills throughout KS3. In a few subjects, spasmodic attendance precludes appropriate progress being made. In a Y7 religious education class, behavioural difficulties cause some underachievement, and many of the pupils have very poor recall and answer questions by guessing rather than thinking about them.

Reflecting the difference in boys' and girls' GCSE examination performances, in class, girls are often more conscientious, better motivated and better organised than boys, and more systematic in their approach to investigative work.

3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum

Across the curriculum, standards in literacy and numeracy are good. Standards in the use of information and communication technology are satisfactory. Pupils are good at working with each other, improving their own learning and performance, and solving problems.

Co-ordinators are in post to promote literacy and numeracy developments throughout the curriculum and to see that the school's Essential Skills Policy is firmly embedded in practice. The school is seeking the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark. There has been professional training for the whole staff and a programme of training for subject departments, covering both literacy and numeracy, in order to obtain a good measure of consistency in such practices.

A number of individual strategies are in use and there are examples of good practice, but there is inconsistency in application. A number of subjects display and emphasise specific vocabulary and there is a limited use of writing and speaking frameworks to help pupils organise their ideas. There is a concern for spelling, but no standardised approach to correction. A well-organised programme of paired reading involving sixth formers helps pupils with poor reading skills on entry to the school. Wide reading for pleasure is encouraged by the use of book boxes during tutor time but there is no monitoring of pupils' progress. The library also encourages reading for study and pleasure but it is too small and under resourced for the number of pupils on roll.

Listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Most pupils are attentive in lessons and listen actively. They rarely need to be reminded of the need to focus their attention, or to have instructions repeated. Most pupils listen courteously to their classmates' contributions, in whole class activities and in pair and group work.

Generally, pupils are willing and at times enthusiastic speakers though they are rather hesitant in modern foreign languages. A minority of pupils has difficulty in expressing ideas at length and answers can be brief. At all levels a minority of pupils is reluctant to make contributions unless specifically called upon.

Standards in reading across the curriculum are good. Pupils are generally able to respond to the wide range of reading material they are given and can extract information to support their answers. Many pupils take advantage of opportunities to read aloud. Many pupils, particularly in KS4 and the sixth form, make good use of independent reading and Internet research to supplement their knowledge.

Standards in writing are generally good. Pupils are required to write for a range of purposes and produce increasingly extended pieces as they move up the school. The practice of drafting and revising is not, however, consistent across the curriculum. A minority of pupils is not confident in writing at length and there are weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and sentence structure.

Numeracy

Standards in numeracy across the curriculum are good overall, but in a number of subjects, there are some shortcomings and in these, standards are satisfactory only. Standards are good in mathematics, as expected. Elsewhere, good practice occurs in many subjects. In Welsh, for example, pupils deal with money, time, percentages and fractions when dealing with a range of topics such as surveys about attitudes to smoking. Art supports the application of mathematics well through the appreciation of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes, pattern, scale, proportion and measuring for a purpose. In history, pupils develop their numerical skills through activities involving timescales, handling data such as census information, and research with other statistical records. Many opportunities exist in design and technology for pupils to carry out calculations, measurements, costings and analyses. They do so with accuracy, on many occasions. In geography and business studies, pupils are often required to undertake a variety of statistical tasks and to represent their findings in a number of different styles. Tasks in science often involve pupils in a range of mathematical activities such as transforming formulae, and in KS4, pupils' graphical work is good. There are shortcomings in the use of mathematics in electronics. Sixth form students support younger pupils well in developing their numerical skills, through a paired scheme, similar to that operated for reading.

Information and communication technology

Standards across the curriculum are very good in design and technology in both KS3 and KS4, where pupils apply a wide range of researching, designing, modelling and CAD/CAM applications. In both key stages, standards are good in geography for communicating and handling information. Information and communication technology applications are unsatisfactory in mathematics and RE in both key stages. In the remaining subjects,

applications are satisfactory. The use of information and communication technology to help pupils with SEN is satisfactory at KS3 but unsatisfactory at KS4.

Across the school, planning for the use of information and communication technology varies from satisfactory to very good. Pupils have access to information and communication technology facilities at lunchtime and after school, but their use of computers at these times is often insufficiently directed and lacks impact on standards. Access to computers for some subjects during lessons is restricted by timetabled IT lessons.

Working with others

Pupils' ability to work with others is good overall, and very good in religious education, physical education and drama. In physical education, pupils work well together in teams or small groups, and evaluate and refine activities effectively. In many subjects, pair and group work are major features of lessons, and pupils participate confidently and willingly. In music, pupils often compose co-operatively and perform in groups, but occasionally, some individuals choose not to contribute. In geography, pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively in problem-solving exercises requiring the application of reasoning and decision-making skills. In classes of pupils with SEN, pair and group work is not a strong feature. These pupils sometimes find it difficult to work with others, and they occasionally resort to arguing with each other along with some disruptive physical activity.

Improving own learning and performance

Pupils are good at reviewing their own progress, when provided with sufficient relevant information, as is often the case, such as in art, where pupils are developing a good critical vocabulary. Within many classes across the curriculum, pupils are involved at regular intervals in reviewing their achievement and progress. Through a variety of strategies, including good feedback on performance and self-assessment sheets, pupils make informed decisions about the next steps to take. In many cases, pupils seek to improve their own learning by making use of the information and communication technology facilities when they are able to access them.

Problem solving

Pupils' problem solving skills are good. Good examples occur in many subjects, such as in modern foreign languages where pupils use grammatical rules to adapt language. In art, many projects focus entirely upon solving problems in KS4, and pupils respond well. In geography, history and sociology, an investigative approach to learning is employed and this engages pupils in many tasks where they have to solve problems. In many other subjects too, such as in mathematics GCSE coursework, pupils work well and persevere when presented with a range of problems.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The school's curricular provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils respond well to the provision. Teachers have created attractive learning environments for pupils in their classrooms, many of which are in temporary accommodation. However, the poor maintenance of the buildings and lack of attention to their external environment does not create the ordered, secure and happy environment that the school intends in its vision statement.

Many subjects contribute well to pupils' spiritual development. Religious education makes a particularly strong contribution, through lessons in which pupils consider life's fundamental questions, reflect on their own beliefs and values and learn to understand and respect the beliefs of others. Much of the history curriculum reflects on the importance of the spiritual dimension of the past. Ethical issues such as the need to maintain balance in the natural environment are considered in science and the use of advertising and the use of cheap labour are discussed in business studies. Creativity is developed well in art, music and drama, and pupils' examination of the work of visual artists and poets allows pupils to reflect upon the mystery of human achievement.

The school does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship. Pupils attend three assemblies a week but only those in the main hall, very capably organised and delivered by the head of department of RE, take the form of acts of worship. There is no worship or reflection in other assemblies or in tutor group sessions.

Pupils' moral development is good. The school's simple and clear code of conduct is displayed in all classrooms and most pupils behave well, in accordance with the code. Their frequent movement between the scattered buildings is orderly and considerate of others. They treat equipment within classrooms with respect. However, pupils do not always show concern for the school environment and there is considerable litter in the school grounds. In many lessons they have opportunities to develop their understanding of ethical issues and to make a reasoned response to moral dilemmas. In RE they consider ethical issues in human fertility, in history the events of the Holocaust, and in geography, the outcomes of the unequal distribution of natural resources. Pupils show concern for others through their support for a wide range of charities, for which they raise large sums of money.

Pupils' good social development is fostered in the many lessons that make extensive and effective use of group and pair work. Pupils listen well to each other and respect each other's opinions. On three mornings a week large numbers of sixth-form students help younger pupils in a paired reading scheme that assists their social development as well as improving their reading skills. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good. The concept of social responsibility is particularly encouraged in history, which develops ideas of citizenship.

Pupils' cultural development is good. Many pupils participate in musical and sporting activities, including drama. There are regular visits to theatres, museums and other places of cultural and historical significance. Many subjects make a useful contribution to pupils' understanding of multi-cultural issues including world music and art. Annual visits are made to France and Germany and a European Day is organised for pupils in Y9. The attractive display of religious artefacts by the RE department emphasises the cultural significance of Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. The Cwricwlwm Cymreig is well established in the school and examples drawn from Wales are used in every subject, including the use of Welsh data in

mathematics and information and communication technology, Welsh music, the work of Welsh artists and writers and visits in history, geography and RE to local places of significance. There is a successful annual Eisteddfod and visits by pupils to Llangrannog and Glan Llyn.

4.2 Behaviour and attitudes

The overall quality of behaviour in school is good. The large majority of pupils are polite and courteous, respectful of one another and of their teachers. They move around the school sensibly, in a comradely and orderly fashion. A very small minority are occasionally unruly in class but good management usually prevents disruption of the lesson. Pupils' behaviour makes a positive contribution to the quality of life in school.

In lessons pupils' attitudes to learning are good, with all but a small minority keen to engage with the set tasks and working with sustained concentration. Occasionally the pace and content of a lesson is insufficiently challenging to maintain good focus by all pupils.

The school's high expectation of pupils' conduct is well publicised and clearly understood by all. Teachers apply the recently revised rewards and sanctions scheme fairly and equitably; pupils and teachers throughout the school hold the points scheme in high regard. House and between-class competition generates a useful level of peer pressure and good behaviour is effectively promoted. There is a reliable and secure procedure for removing disruptive pupils from lessons thus safeguarding the educational progress of others but it is expensive in staff time and not yet reliably achieving its aims of motivating offending pupils and securing compliant re-integration to lessons.

No instances of bullying were recorded during the inspection but teachers and pupils acknowledge that a small amount of bullying occurs in school. Pupils affirm that instances are swiftly and effectively dealt with. The school is actively involved with 'Childline in Partnership with Schools' (ChIPS) to reduce bullying in schools, and its practice has been recognised nationally as an example of good practice.

School policies and procedures effectively eliminate sexism, racism and other forms of discrimination.

4.3 Attendance

Overall attendance at school is satisfactory. The average over the last three terms was over 91 percent, and over 92 percent in the weeks preceding the inspection. The school has maintained attendance at these levels over the past few years and has set itself a target to achieve 94 percent. For many classes the level of unauthorised absence is low but some years at some times present levels in excess of 4 percent which is unsatisfactory, and some way short of the school's target of 0.9 percent.

Regular absenteeism by a small cohort of disaffected pupils, many with socio-medical problems, together with outbreaks of childhood sickness and holidays taken in term-time constitute the great majority of absence.

The school has appropriate and effective procedures in place to promote regular attendance and to pursue absentees; there is a very good, supportive working relationship with an Educational Welfare Officer. Registration procedures on arrival at school and to individual lessons securely monitor pupils' presence and diligent contacting of the parents of absentees maintains pressure to attend and elicits reasons for absence. Home/school agreements are in place. Effective initiatives, including good focus on employment requirements and provision of a broad, appropriate and supportive curriculum, prevent a decline in attendance in KS4.

Punctuality to school and to individual lessons is good. Brisk but orderly movement between lessons, effectively encouraged by staff on duty in corridors, ensures no delay to the start of lessons.

The school fully complies with the requirements of Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) Circular 3/99.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 98 percent of classes observed. It was good or better in 68 percent of classes, including 16 percent that were graded as very good. These figures are well in excess of national expectations for 2002: 95 percent satisfactory or better with 50 percent good or better. The quality was higher in KS4, where it was good or better in 71 percent of classes and very good in 17 percent. In KS3, 65 percent of the teaching was graded as good or better with 16 percent very good. These figures represent a considerable improvement since the previous inspection.

Predominantly good quality teaching is a strong feature of the school. It is the primary contributor to the good standards achieved by many pupils. Teachers positively influence pupils' learning and attitudes in classrooms.

Teachers are generally well qualified and they have good, and often very good, knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. This secure base of knowledge, along with up-to-date expertise and knowledge, acquired through continuing professional development, enables them to prepare well for lessons and for coverage of the curriculum over time. Relationships between most teachers and pupils are good and expectations of good behaviour are made clear to pupils. On the whole, they respond well and learning occurs in a good, but challenging environment. Often teachers' enthusiasm for their chosen subjects motivates and encourages pupils to enjoy their learning.

In most cases, teachers provide a good range of activities to cater for the learning needs of all pupils and to use the time available to best effect. They complement these with appropriate assessment procedures to measure progress and to provide feedback to pupils on how to improve.

Teachers generally organise and manage their classes well, and in most classes they use a good range of teaching methods and strategies that are successful in maintaining pupils'

interest in their work and in ensuring that they make good progress. In many classes, teachers share learning and assessment objectives with pupils at the beginning of the lesson and spend time at the end reviewing what has been learned. Such practice has a positive impact upon pupils' learning. Often, based upon teachers' high expectations of success, work in class is challenging and a good pace of activity is maintained in lessons. To keep pupils engaged, teachers frequently use carefully worded questions to determine the depth of pupils' knowledge and to encourage them to think about their answers before responding, thus extending their understanding.

In many subjects, teachers prepare good materials for learning and support, in addition to published texts and other items. In this way they cater for the needs of all pupils. All these resources and others, such as information and communication technology and visual aids equipment, are used effectively and efficiently to provide good learning opportunities. This is particularly so in design and technology, and in art.

Teachers generally help pupils consolidate and extend their learning by setting homework of appropriate challenge and interest. This often includes work to develop pupils' creative and investigative skills as well as to extend their knowledge and understanding. In many subjects, teachers help pupils to make progress through the use of constructive marking that shows them how to improve. They also encourage pupils to review their own progress and achievement, and to set targets for further success. There are, however, instances of inappropriate or too little homework being set across a few subjects, with a few occurrences of uninformative, cursory marking.

Notwithstanding the high proportion of good or better teaching, there are a few shortcomings across the curriculum. Not least amongst these is the tendency for teachers to dominate lessons by over long exposition. By doing this they fail to engage pupils in more meaningful learning activities and pupils lose interest. Other shortcomings that occur occasionally include: incidences of inappropriately challenging work; slow pace of lessons; lack of subject expertise precluding in-depth discussions; narrow range of teaching techniques.

Many teachers give generously of their time outside lessons to help individuals and to offer extra-curricular activities to extend and broaden pupils' learning.

5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting

The procedures for the assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' achievement are good.

A whole-school policy clearly identifies principles and practices and provides good guidance to subject departments to shape their individual policies. The processes of recording pupils' achievements, relating them to national standards and analysing their significance are well established. Very good use is made of computerised data collection to inform the analysis of results and target setting. Data on pupils' achievement are augmented by assessments of effort and behaviour, producing a very comprehensive package of information to inform the monitoring of pupils and the reports on their progress. Monitoring is undertaken at subject level as well as across tutor and year groups, enabling good understanding of and rapid response to individual needs.

Pupils' work, including homework, is generally regularly and conscientiously marked. Accurate assessments are made in relation to the criteria of NC levels and GCSE and GCE examination standards. There is some inconsistency across the curriculum in marking practice, however, and the use of NC levels in the day-to-day assessment of work is limited, though the school is working towards greater consistency. Marking is monitored within subjects to ensure consistency of assessment between teachers and assessment data is now being used by senior management to ensure accurate correlation with national standards. In some subjects, pupils are given opportunities for self-assessment. Pupils with SEN are additionally assessed in line with the requirements of the Code of Practice.

Parents are kept well informed of pupils' progress through an interim and an end of year report and they are able to consult with staff about their children at annual parents' evenings for each year group. The school reports are clear and helpful, giving summary comments by form teachers and heads of year. For each subject, there are assessments of attainment, effort, behaviour and quality of homework, and targets for future success are identified. In KS3 school grades are given although the school gives KS3 NC levels at the end of Y9 as required. Reports for KS4 and the sixth form give similarly helpful general and subject specific assessments, expressed as examination grades. Pupils also receive a performance points report and give an assessment of their own strengths and areas for development. In their personal, social and health education lessons pupils in Y11 are involved in the process of compiling their National Record of Achievement (NRA), which is a comprehensive record of their time in school. This is the last year of the NRA and the school has now embarked upon the compilation of progress files for pupils in Y 9 and Y10.

In the previous inspection, the improvement of procedures for assessment, recording and reporting so as to achieve more consistently effective target setting and better information for parents was a key issue. Progress since then is good – extensive use is now made of data for target setting, the format of reports has been revised and subjects are moving towards greater consistency of practice in assessment.

5.3 Curriculum

The quality, breadth and balance of the curriculum for pupils of all abilities in KS3 and KS4 are good overall. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements for the NC and religious education in KS3, however in KS4 there is insufficient time to meet the requirement of the Agreed Syllabus in religious education and the timetable arrangements in physical education limit access to some experiences identified in the NC. The curricular provision is effective and pupils of all abilities have good access to the NC and the wide range of subjects made available in KS4. Pupils with SEN have access to the full curriculum, and enjoy good support for integration into the life of the school. Seven pupils are disapplied from the NC in Welsh. The school meets the recommended 25-hour teaching week.

In KS3, pupils follow a curriculum that includes all subjects of the NC, religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Classes are arranged in either mixed ability or setted groups, with the vast majority of subjects being allocated an appropriate number of lessons; standards in Welsh are affected by the mixed ability groupings throughout the key stage. From Y7 pupils study either French or German as their main foreign language with a pilot scheme in Y9 where all pupils except the lowest group study both languages. All pupils study information technology as a discrete subject throughout the key stage; there is no

provision for drama. A small number of pupils with SEN in each year are withdrawn from some Welsh and foreign language lessons to provide support for the rest of the curriculum.

In KS4, the organisation of the common core curriculum ensures that pupils have access to English, mathematics, a range of science courses, Welsh, physical education, religious education, and PSHE. Pupils can choose from four option columns and the introduction of electronics, business studies, sociology and child development in addition to the subjects studied at KS3 widens their choice of subjects. At present no vocational courses are available in the curriculum in KS4, however about thirty pupils in Y10 follow an Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) course. In both Y10 and Y11 a small number of pupils follow an alternative curriculum that includes placement either at college or work experience with part of the week in school to ensure that their curriculum meets NC requirements. It is of note that the vast majority of pupils pursue a full GCSE course in Welsh, rather than a short course.

Personal, social and health education, including careers education and guidance, is provided for Y7 to Y11 through timetabled lessons. These are a single lesson each week in Y7 and Y8 and a double lesson for half the year in Y9 to Y11. Contributions to PSHE are identified in other subjects across the curriculum, as well as in form tutor time, particularly in the compilation of the National Record of Achievement in Y11 and the development of pupil progress files in Y9 and Y10. The programme of study is very good. It closely follows national guidelines and has won both local and national awards. Careers education begins in Y7 and all pupils have two weeks of work experience at the beginning of Y11. There are very good longstanding relationships with local employers which help pupils find work placements. The PSHE course is enriched by contributions from a range of outside speakers and the very good support from Careers Wales.

Planning for the development of key skills, known as essential skills in the school, is good overall. Significant progress has been made in literacy and numeracy in recent years, and this is reflected in schemes of work. Information and communication technology is also planned in schemes of work for most subjects; the impact of this key skill across the curriculum is not as well developed. Planning for the development of Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is good in many subjects, and there are good features of multi-cultural education in a majority of subjects.

In all subjects, schemes of work are suitably detailed, cover the requirements of the NC and provide good guidance for teaching and learning and continuity and progression between key stages. Curricular links with primary schools are developing, and are good in French, Welsh and mathematics. Homework of suitable quality and quantity is set regularly in the majority of subjects. All pupils have a homework diary, this is used effectively by a small majority of pupils; the impact of this document to manage learning and record targets is reduced by insufficient monitoring.

Extra-curricular provision is good in many subjects. In addition to a wide range of clubs that meet during the lunch-hour and after-school, there are many visits off-site for fieldwork, to places of interest, and to venues such as theatres and galleries. A considerable number of pupils represent the school in musical and sporting activities with considerable success. Many visits abroad take place for a range of valuable curricular and social purposes. Pupils benefit from the range of activities available, which broaden their experiences and promote their personal and social development.

5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

The quality of support and guidance and the procedures for promoting pupils' welfare are good. The school's pastoral system is effective and plays an important role in ensuring that the school is a community and a secure environment where hard work and mutual support are valued. Academic and personal progress are carefully monitored and pupils are helped to achieve their full potential. Pupils appreciate the support they receive.

The pastoral organisation is effectively led by an assistant head and heads of key stages. Each year group has a leader and an assistant who effectively manage a team of form tutors. Communication between members of the pastoral teams is good and there are regular meetings of all concerned. A house system offers an incentive for pupils across the year groups to collaborate and compete in sporting and cultural events.

On entry to the lower school, pupils are placed in mixed ability tutor groups and remain, as far as possible, with the same form tutor until the end of KS4. Good liaison arrangements exist to support the transition from Y6 to Y7. Form tutors meet their forms each morning and afternoon for registration and on two days each week for an extended tutor period. Tutor periods are used to check attendance, monitor homework diaries, complete pupils' self-evaluation, progress and record of achievement (RoA) files, and to carry out day-to-day administration. In most, but not all, instances this time is used effectively. Relationships between form tutors and their pupils are very good. The use made of homework diaries is generally effective but parental cooperation with monitoring is not always forthcoming.

Pupils in Y7 and Y8 work on school-based self-evaluation files that will eventually feed into pupil progress files in Y9. These will supersede the RoA system still being used in KS4 and the sixth form. The school's positive performance system effectively rewards achievement, good behaviour, attendance and punctuality. Pupils value the half-termly rewards and commendations. The system also effectively monitors underachievement and poor behaviour, attendance and punctuality. However, a very small minority of pupils behave badly and strategies to resolve this are not yet entirely successful.

Staff give their own time generously during lunch breaks and after school to support those who need additional subject teaching, and pupils appreciate this help. Through the monitoring system from Y7 onwards, the school also has good arrangements for mentoring pupils identified as in need. Members of staff, sixth formers and mentors from outside agencies all provide valuable support. Pupils concerned find this mentoring helpful. The school has a strong focus on social inclusion and clearly addresses SEN and the needs of pupils from the nearby airbase, who join the school for fixed periods.

The PSE programme, which is a strength of the school, is taught throughout KS3 and KS4 by specialist teachers and external providers in a variety of ways. In addition to regular timetabled sessions in KS3 and KS4, PSE is delivered during tutor periods, through appropriate subjects of the curriculum and through the use of RoA/progress files. A group of sixth form students has been externally trained to provide guidance and counselling on bullying. The students recently gained a national award for this voluntary work. Schemes of work are detailed and comprehensive, and the programme is fully in line with the ACCAC Framework. The quality of the programme is very good.

Careers education and guidance is very good. The programme is well planned to develop pupils' skills and understanding and to provide relevant information and objective advice. Beginning in Y7, it is well integrated into PSE and work experience. The programme includes activities that enhance self-awareness and personal development, and increase knowledge of career planning and opportunities. The staff and careers advisor also conduct mock interviews. Pupils and parents value a programme that has gained national accreditation, and almost all pupils have a good understanding of potential job opportunities and their requirements.

Partnerships are good with external agencies including social workers, the EWO and the educational psychology service, which contribute to the PSE programme. Pupils looked after by the local authority have appropriate care and personal education plans. The school's arrangements for child protection fully meet statutory requirements.

A comprehensive review of health and safety is part of the school development plan. Whilst health and safety procedures are clearly established, their refinement and implementation is ongoing and areas of concern were identified to the head teacher during the inspection. First-aid is effectively administered by a number of qualified support and teaching staff.

5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)

The school's provision for pupils with SEN is good.

Twenty pupils have statements of SEN and a further 300 pupils are recorded on the school's register for SEN. This is above the average for Wales. Half the pupils on the register are recorded as having emotional and behavioural difficulties, a proportion that is well in excess of the national average and unsupported by evidence of unsatisfactory pupil behaviour in the school.

The needs of most pupils have been identified and provided for before they join the school and the school's close and effective links with the primary schools ensures that appropriate provision can be made as soon as they join the school. The school subsequently carries out an extensive screening process to identify specific needs and pupils' progress is tracked through the school's good assessment and recording procedures.

In KS3 and KS4 the standards of achievement of pupils with SEN are good. Most pupils achieve level 3 at the end of KS3 and some attain level 4. What the school describes as its ambitious aim for all pupils to leave with a qualification was achieved in 2002 and was very nearly attained in 2003, through pupils' good results in the Entry Level Qualification in a wide range of subjects.

The achievement of gifted and talented pupils in lessons is good but not markedly better than that of their peers. At GCSE gifted and talented pupils achieve well in many subjects. At GCSE up to a dozen pupils achieve the highest grades in all their subjects. The school has recently developed a register of gifted and talented pupils and some enrichment activities have been arranged for them. However, the numbers on the register are low and the school has not yet developed nor implemented a policy to ensure that their needs are met.

Teaching arrangements meet pupils' needs well. All pupils with SEN are registered in tutor groups so that they have good opportunities to socialise with other pupils. In KS3 subject teachers teach those with the greatest learning difficulties in special small classes and for most lessons in English and mathematics their teachers also have a specialism in SEN. They enjoy access to the same full curriculum as their peers and are integrated with them for lessons in physical education, PSE and design and technology. Specialist teachers of SEN continue to teach English and mathematics in KS4 and the school's recent development of the complementary curriculum offers an appropriate course for many pupils with SEN. The needs of other pupils whose learning needs are not so acute are met through the school's organisation of pupils into ability sets.

Pupils are taught well. Tasks and materials for pupils with SEN are appropriately modified to make them accessible. There are one full time and two part time teaching assistants who work with a very small number of pupils, whom they support well. However, the vast majority of pupils with SEN are not supported in their learning or their behaviour by teaching assistants.

There is some effective additional curricular provision, mainly in KS3. Some pupils are withdrawn in small groups for intensive work in literacy with a specialist teacher from within the school; a specialist teacher from the UA works with dyslexic pupils. A large team of committed sixth form students run a paired reading scheme during tutor time for three mornings a week, and some Y11 pupils who have found mathematics difficult operate a similar programme for numeracy. Pupils' progress in these activities is carefully monitored and recorded. Their progress is good and the numbers involved diminish markedly through KS3.

Individual Education Plans have been developed for pupils with statements of SEN but are not in place for all other pupils with SEN as required by the Code of Practice. The profiles that the school has developed are not an acceptable substitute. The potentially useful strategy of posting much information about pupils with SEN on the staff room notice board is in practice of very limited value as the staff room is relatively little used.

The SEN department works hard and successfully to develop and maintain regular and close contact with parents of pupils with SEN. All parents attend the annual reviews of their children's statements.

The behaviour support base was developed in order to reduce the number of fixed term exclusions and support disaffected pupils, but it is failing to achieve its aims. It is located in a small and poorly maintained demountable building. The school has developed an internal exclusion area in a different room of the same building. A timetabled member of staff, other than the support base manager, supervises this facility. A varying number of pupils, which should not exceed nine, may be sent to the exclusion room. However, the substantial numbers of pupils who are sent there daily has overwhelmed the resources and philosophy of the support base.

The committed SENCO has developed a comprehensive and helpful handbook of guidance for staff. She has delivered training to all staff on the modification of work to meet pupils' individual needs and has helped to develop such work with some departments. She has

observed some lessons at the request of teachers to offer advice, but no one has a formal role in the school for monitoring the provision for all pupils with SEN.

The department is well resourced, except for the provision of information and communication technology, and much of the specialist teaching takes place in attractive accommodation in three dedicated classrooms. Provision of teaching staff is good with four specialist teachers.

All statutory requirements, other than the provision of individual education plans, including the annual report of governors to parents and the provision of a well-written and comprehensive policy for pupils with SEN are well met. The school is well supported by a range of external agencies.

Progress since the previous inspection is just satisfactory. Modification of work for pupils in lessons has improved, withdrawal arrangements have been amended, and there is some use of information and communication technology for literacy support. However, in class support has not increased, and the behaviour modification programme and in-house unit have not succeeded in realising their original purpose.

5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions

Parents receive good information about the school. A clearly written prospectus gives a comprehensive guide to the curriculum and pastoral organisation. Parents are kept up-to-date on school activities by detailed newsletters and are well informed about school achievements and aspirations in the annual report from the governors. Parents benefit from constructive reports on their children and informative discussion at parent evenings.

Parents become involved in school management as parent governors. They can participate in the Friends of Llantwit Major Association but very few take up this opportunity; nevertheless the parent association is very active, both as a successful fund-raiser and in providing catering and host/hostess support at school functions.

In the response to the parent questionnaire a large minority of the small number of replies received expressed dissatisfaction with several aspects of the links with school, particularly communication, parent involvement and pupils' behaviour. The inspection evidence does not reveal any basis for the misgivings of those parents.

The school has good mutually beneficial links with its local community. The school is a member of the town steering committee and many groups from the community make good use of school premises for education classes and other meetings. Several departments use the locality in support of the curriculum and the school benefits from sponsorship for its activities. Pupils make substantial and much appreciated contributions to local charities.

Links with other schools and institutions are very good. Regular discussion with head-teachers of feeder primary schools, visits by staff and taster days for prospective pupils ensure good pastoral support for the new intake. Developing cross-phase projects in some subjects assist with curriculum continuity. There are good supportive links with further education colleges which, in addition to providing an extended range of option choices for

school leavers, have been profitably utilised to provide an effective, more vocational, curriculum for the less academic pupils in Y10 and Y11.

The school has well-established links with initial teacher training institutes, and many departments regularly provide training opportunities for students. These bring fresh perspectives to the classroom and effectively broaden experiences for school pupils.

5.7 Partnership with industry

The school has an effective policy and very good strategies for work-related education. Careers education is constructively linked to personal attributes and to curriculum option choices. It is introduced in Y7 and developed throughout the pupils' time in school. A careers advisor assists in the classroom in Y7 to Y9 and provides individual guidance thereafter. Opportunities are taken by several departments to reinforce the curriculum links by use of visiting speakers from local businesses and by participation in schemes such as a Saturday Engineering Club or industry sponsored competitions. Pupils' personal development is enhanced by a Compact scheme. Representatives from the workplace assist in the provision of mentoring schemes and mock interviews for Y10 and Y11. The school has recently been awarded the Wales Quality Award for Careers Education.

Pupils in Y11 receive a beneficial and well-organised work experience. They are well informed beforehand, are encouraged to keep an objective and focused diary of their experience and benefit from constructive personal de-briefing and whole class discussion afterwards. The school maintains a substantial database which pupils are expected to research in order to properly target their work placement. Several departments base work modules on their logged experiences.

The school has very good, supportive relationships with an Education Business Partnership and Career Advice Company, through which the work experience programme, mentoring schemes and staff placements in industry are brokered. A few staff have benefited from work-placement experiences and this facility is positively exploited where benefits to the school can be expected.

Work-related education provides good stimulus for pupils, highlighting the relevance of curriculum studies and providing focus for the development of good personal skills and attributes.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement

The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is very good across the school as a whole.

The school has very good, clearly defined, procedures for evaluating its performance and planning for improvement. Self-evaluation is a strong feature of the school. The consistent application of the school's planned procedures in most subjects has enabled it to make good

progress since the previous inspection in a number of important areas, not least the improvement in standards achieved by pupils. The school is far from complacent about its success and is seeking to achieve greater success, despite the problems presented by its accommodation.

The school places due emphasis upon analyses of a wealth of data about pupils' performances. Pupils' achievement is reviewed at regular intervals using analyses of public examination results, comparative and value added data, along with evaluations made in relation to national and local figures.

The school has refined its evaluative and monitoring procedures over time, and it still seeks improvements, such as using information and communication technology to best effect in measuring, recording and monitoring pupils' progress in all areas of development. Measures already used, including detailed and informative analyses of a wide range of data, have proven to be effective in moving the school forwards. Each senior member of staff has a management responsibility for a number of departments and/or other areas of school life. These relationships vary in effectiveness, but overall they are good and, in most cases, appreciated and valued by the departments concerned. Senior staff have a number of responsibilities within the evaluation structure. They include: observing lessons and assessing teaching and learning; monitoring the process of departmental self-evaluation; helping to formulate and to monitor departmental development plans; undertaking formal reviews of performance. Overall, most aspects of the school are evaluated rigorously and effectively.

Heads of department are charged with analysing and evaluating data as it applies to their subjects, along with planning to meet the needs of all pupils. Departmental self-evaluation is well established and positively influences departmental and school development planning. Aspects include monitoring of teaching, lesson observations, sharing good practice, ensuring professional development is pertinent to the school's needs and setting targets for future success. Practice is good or better in the majority of departments. It is very good in English, modern foreign languages, design and technology, PSHE and drama. Systems are detailed and constructive, leading to challenging but achievable targets for improvement. There are a few shortcomings, however, in mathematics, science, Welsh, music, business studies and electronics.

As a result of the above practices, the range and nature of the objectives for improvement in the school's development plan, and its targets are appropriate for improving the quality of education further. Departmental planning and continuing professional development are linked very closely to the school's main priorities for improvement.

Governors are well informed, actively involved and supportive. They regularly review the school's performance, have close links with many departments and have a good awareness of the school's strengths and shortcomings.

6.2 Leadership and efficiency

Following the reorganisation of the school's management structure, during which the headteacher and governing body made very good appointments to key posts, many aspects of provision have improved considerably since the previous inspection. The deputy headteachers and other senior managers fulfil their pivotal roles very well. There is not,

however, a clear vision and sense of purpose shared by all in the school, neither is there a strong team spirit uniting all the staff. Nevertheless, there are defined management roles for all senior staff and individuals' strengths are used to best effect in running the school.

Communication is not always effective insofar as some members of senior and middle management are sometimes unaware of decisions taken and of procedures that are functioning. Notwithstanding this, the school is an orderly community.

Although the school does not have a clear vision and sense of direction, teachers work hard individually, and in departmental and pastoral teams, to provide for all pupils' academic and personal development in a challenging yet supportive atmosphere. The school encourages pupils to have positive attitudes towards their work, to behave well, to take part in a good range of curricular and extra-curricular activities, and to have confidence in themselves. To a good extent it achieves well in most of these aspects.

The quality of departmental leadership and management is good overall and very good in about one-third of curricular areas. Departmental handbooks and schemes of work are at least good overall, and they provide a firm foundation for work within departments. Heads of department often collaborate well with their teams to determine clear guidelines for teaching methodologies, organisation of lessons, assessment and raising standards. Delegation of responsibilities is, in most cases, effective and efficient. Overall, in departments, resources are managed well, financial management is good and routine organisation is efficient.

As indicated in the section above, very good monitoring of departmental work is a strong feature of the school. Often there is very good liaison between teachers in departments, and a willingness to share good practice with a view to raising pupils' standards of achievement further. Planning for progress and continuity within the curriculum is good in most departments.

Governors carry out their duties well. They are supportive in all areas of the school's life and work. They have valuable expertise, which they use well to the school's advantage. They are involved in all aspects of planning, monitoring and evaluating the school's performance, especially through the work of a range of appropriate committees. Consequently they are aware of the school's strengths and shortcomings, and the strategies to be employed for improvement, as seen within the good development plan. The annual report of governors to parents is detailed and informative.

All staff seek to raise standards; they set achievable but challenging targets to maintain progress and they use resources effectively in most cases. Appropriately there is a strong emphasis upon continuing professional development, so that pupils can benefit from the best teaching available. The school operates a performance management system and it has been awarded Investor in People status.

Financial planning and management are satisfactory. Governors and senior staff work well together to set the budget and to oversee its use. The school handles its income of almost £4 million carefully. The budget is set by correct reference to the planned curriculum and its consequent staffing, accommodation and learning resource requirements. The governing body exercises oversight of the school's finances, staffing provision and appointments. Daily management of finances is very efficient. Spending decisions are taken only after

consideration of the school's agreed priorities for development, and then the personnel concerned take care to ensure that best value for money is obtained. The latest auditors' report received by the school contained a few recommendations. The school responded positively to these. The school usually maintains a small surplus year on year, and on occasions this is adjusted to reflect the changing school population.

Staffing costs per pupil and the school's pupil to teacher ratio are just above the national averages. Its average class size is less than the UA's average figure, but greater than the Welsh average. Expenditure per pupil on books and equipment is above the national figure. Refurbishment and maintenance costs make a disproportionate demand on the school's finances.

Capitation is awarded to departments following departmental requests for funding under two major headings: maintenance and development. The headteacher makes decisions as to the apportionment of available funds, based upon the school and departmental development plans. This system sometimes leads to what appears to be an inequitable allocation of funds since middle managers are unaware of other departments' allocations and the rationale underlying their distribution.

Day-to-day organisation and administration are efficient and effective. Support staff in all areas make a positive and valuable contribution to the smooth running of the school.

The school meets most statutory requirements relating to pupils' entitlement to subjects in the curriculum and other aspects. Requirements, however, for religious education in KS4 and in the sixth form, and for a daily act of collective worship are not met. Not all aspects of the Code of Practice for pupils with SEN are implemented fully. IEPs have been developed for pupils with statements of SEN but are not in place for all other pupils with SEN.

The school follows the guidelines of the Wales Assembly Government's (WAG) circulars and takes due note of advice received from the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC).

6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing

The school is staffed well with the equivalent of 77.4 teachers. This allows the school to benefit from a pupil to teacher ratio of 17 to 1, which is close to the UA average and slightly higher than the national figure. Overall there is a fair balance of age and experience within the staff and teachers' expertise generally matches the requirements of the national and other curricula. In most subjects, deployment of staff ensures that individual teachers' knowledge and skills are used to best effect. In a few subjects though, where teachers are required to teach a subject other than their specialist area, in-class discussions lack depth and there is an over reliance on information from textbooks. The appointment of new staff, including newly qualified teachers (NQTs) has ensured a beneficial flow of new ideas and practices into the school. The school has very good links with teacher training institutions and many students benefit from the training they receive at the school. This arrangement is often beneficial to all concerned parties.

In recent months the school has had to employ an unusually high number of temporary supply staff, because of an unfortunately unavoidable high incidence of ill health (resulting in hospitalisation) amongst the permanent members of staff. In a number of subjects, this situation has had an adverse effect on continuity and progression of provision. In normal circumstances, the school's staff attendance figures compare favourably with those achieved in many other schools.

Responsibility allowances are distributed for a variety of academic and managerial posts. In many instances, their distribution is equitable, but anomalies occur and the relationship between allowances and accountability is unclear.

The school is understaffed in terms of learning support assistants, and the absence of such staff causes problems in classes where there is a preponderance of pupils with SEN and/or behavioural problems.

In modern foreign languages, there are no foreign language assistants to support the teaching of the languages. This means that pupils have insufficient opportunities to hear and emulate fluent native language speakers.

The school is also well staffed in the areas of site maintenance and administration. The facilities manager, maintenance and cleaning staff work hard in difficult circumstances to provide, what is at best, an unsatisfactory environment overall for pupils and staff. Administrative personnel undertake their duties very well, and they willingly respond to other demands on their time, as they occur, to provide the school with an effective and efficient support system. Technical support is good overall and the personnel concerned help teaching staff provide good learning opportunities for pupils to make progress and achieve well.

The induction programme for all staff new to the school is good. There is a strong supportive programme for newly-qualified teachers (NQT)s. This, along with other aspects of support for staff, such as monitoring of teaching and learning, do much to provide an ongoing structure for professional development.

The school operates a very effective and well-managed continuing professional development (CPD) programme, the beneficial outcomes of which are reflected in the subject sections in this report. The school's development plan and departmental plans inform the staff training programme. Most teachers take advantage of a good range of in-house and externally provided programmes to extend their expertise. The school has taken advantage of the financial support available through the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) to train all teachers in use of information and communication technology to support the whole curriculum. Additionally, a significant number of staff have pursued or are pursuing higher degree courses in education. This research is beneficial to the individuals concerned and to the school.

Accommodation

The school has responded in many ways to the key issue in the previous report concerning its accommodation, but the beneficial effect of all the work is still overshadowed by the poor state of many areas of the site and buildings. Even where buildings and rooms are otherwise

unsatisfactory, teachers make every effort to ameliorate the situation and they improve the learning environment by adding good displays of pupils' work and/or other material.

However, there are still many shortcomings. For example, the appalling accommodation used by the music department inhibits progress and depresses standards. Large classes are taught in small, ill equipped rooms. In art, at least good standards are achieved in very adverse conditions. The recent loss of a covered outdoor area for physical education has placed considerable impositions on the department, and the school as a whole. The school lost a canteen following fire damage in 1991 and the construction of a new building in 1994, and since then the pupil population has increased considerably. Consequently, the remaining canteen is too small to cope with the demands made upon it, and pupils have few opportunities to eat at leisure. This canteen is also used as a teaching base for physical education – a most unsatisfactory arrangement.

The school has arranged for departments to have suites of rooms as far as possible. Where this arrangement occurs, it enables effective communication and the sharing of resources to take place. In other cases, as in history, the distance between rooms on such a site causes problems for staff having to move resources around. A number of geography lessons are taught in rooms having no subject identity or ethos.

Since information technology is such a popular subject, there are too few rooms available for teachers in other subjects to make use of information and communication technology in their lessons. Additionally, most information technology rooms cannot accommodate sufficient computers to cope with the many large classes in the school.

Many classrooms throughout the school are enhanced by interesting displays, which create subject identities and provide stimulating environments for learning. Most corridors in the school also contain good quality displays, celebrating the efforts and achievements of pupils in curricular and extra-curricular activities.

There is a great deal of litter around the school especially after breaks and lunchtimes. There is a noticeable lack of graffiti.

Resources for learning

The quantity of resources is good overall, and the quality is good in most subjects. The school spends an above average proportion of its budget on teaching and learning materials.

Resources support the curriculum well, and many subjects make good use of the information and communication technology facilities when they are available to them. On the whole, the pupil to computer ratio is about average for the principality. The introduction of interactive whiteboards to the school is most beneficial. Many members of staff make use of these to provide very good learning opportunities.

There are good supplies of up-to-date textbooks available for most pupils and students in most subjects, and well-prepared worksheets and other materials to enhance learning often supplement these.

The library functions well as a learning resource centre, but there are serious deficiencies. The number of books in there is less than half that recommended by the Schools' Library Association.

There are, however, some shortages. In music, there are too few tuned percussion instruments and the range available is too narrow. In mathematics, there are insufficient textbooks. In sociology, resources overall are inadequate for the number of pupils choosing to study the subject.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

English

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS3 and good in KS4

Good features

KS3

- In the national tests at the end of KS3 the percentage of pupils achieving level 5 and above in 2003 was broadly in line with the national percentage.
- Standards of speaking and listening are good. Most pupils listen quietly and attentively in lessons and respond to questions confidently and willingly.
- Reading standards are equal to the demands of a good variety of material. Pupils can scan texts to find information to support oral and written answers.
- Most pupils are able to respond to their reading by explaining and justifying their opinions both orally and in writing.
- Pupils undertake a good range of writing for different purposes, showing the capacity to respond imaginatively and write factually.
- Pupils with SEN make similar progress to that of their peers by following a suitably modified programme of study in small separate classes.
- Pupils mostly take pride in the presentation of their work.

KS4

- Results in GCSE English in 2003 were above the national average.
- Very few pupils, including those with SEN, do not achieve a GCSE or entry-level qualification in English. All pupils who sat the entry-level certificate in 2003 passed with a good grade.
- Most pupils listen attentively to teachers and their classmates and many are confident speakers who offer good contributions in class.
- Pupils show good reading skills and respond perceptively to set texts and lesson materials.
- Pupils build up a body of extended writing, mostly correctly expressed and carefully presented as a result of conscientious redrafting.

- Many pupils of higher ability make good use of information and communication technology to word-process coursework pieces.

Shortcomings

KS3

- In the national tests at the end of Y9 in 2003, boys did less well than girls.
- In writing, pupils, particularly those of lower ability, show uncertainty in spelling and the use of punctuation.
- Pupils are competent in the use of information and communication technology but many only complete a limited range of tasks.

KS4

- Results in GCSE English Literature in 2003 at grades A* to C were below the national average.
- Boys do less well than girls in the GCSE examinations.
- Though most pupils work conscientiously, a small number is reluctant to contribute to discussion unless specifically called upon to do so.

There has been good improvement in standards by the end of Y11 since the previous inspection.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and satisfactory in KS4.

Good features

KS3

- In the national test results in 2003, 70 per cent of Y9 pupils achieved level 5 or better. This represents good progress for these pupils.
- Many pupils across the ability range answer questions with clarity, understanding and accuracy.
- They have a good understanding of whole numbers, vulgar fractions, decimal fractions and percentages, and the relationship between them.
- They have a sound knowledge of angles on straight lines, about a point and in regular polygons. Most pupils can apply this knowledge to calculate angles in appropriate diagrams.
- The more able pupils have a good knowledge of the representation of data using graphs and can draw and interpret distance / time graphs.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress.

KS4

- When the 2003 GCSE results are compared with pupils' KS3 test scores, it is evident that most pupils have made at least satisfactory progress.
- Pupils understand the basic concept of probability and the more able pupils can extend this knowledge to answer more complex problems.
- Many pupils provide reasoned answers to questions that indicate a good depth of understanding of the topics involved.
- More able pupils have a good knowledge of coordinate geometry and can use graphs to solve equations.
- Less able pupils and those with SEN make good progress answering questions that deal with numerical situations that occur in day-to-day living.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- Higher ability pupils in a small minority of classes underachieve.
- Pupils' investigative skills are developed insufficiently.
- Pupils do not enhance their knowledge and understanding by using information and communication technology.
- A small minority of disruptive pupils in some lower ability classes have an adverse effect on achievement.
- On occasions, calculators are not used appropriately.

KS4

- The 2003 GCSE results are only in line with national average and are below the UA average.

Since the last inspection progress has been satisfactory.

Science

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and KS4.

Good features

KS3

- In the last two years, the percentage of pupils obtaining level 5 and above in the KS3 tests has been above national averages.
- More able and a majority of average ability pupils have a good understanding of a wide range of topics covering all aspects of the NC.
- They have a good recall of key concepts and ideas and can apply them to a range of problems and applications in everyday life.
- The majority of pupils demonstrate good progress in designated homeworks and end of module tests.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress in relation to their abilities. They often use scientific terminology well to explain basic principles.
- Experimental skills are developed throughout the key stage. Pupils are able to follow instructions and carry out experiments effectively.

KS4

- In the last two years, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations have been above national averages.
- More able and a majority of average ability pupils have a good understanding of the more complex principles developed in the key stage in life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical properties.
- They have a good recall of previous work when applied to a range of problems and applications, homework tasks and tests.
- They have a good understanding of everyday applications of science, many related to health issues, the environment and industrial processes.
- The majority of pupils with SEN make good progress.
- The quality of investigations is good overall. In a majority of investigations all skill areas are developed to a good standard. In a minority of investigations, extended writing is well developed, and information and communication technology is used effectively to represent observations and improve presentation.
- In both key stages, the majority of pupils make good use of mathematical skills in a range of problem solving applications in scientific contexts.
- In both key stages, pupils work safely and collaborate well in practical work.

Shortcomings

KS3

- A minority of average ability pupils and a more significant number of lower ability pupils has a less secure recall of previous work, and has difficulty in applying a number of scientific principles to a range of tasks and applications in everyday life.
- The development of investigative skills throughout the key stage is satisfactory overall.

KS4

- The standard of work of a minority of average and lower ability pupils is satisfactory. Progress is hindered by a less secure recall of previous work, and for a small minority of pupils there is a significant amount of incomplete work.
- The quality of a significant minority of investigations is satisfactory. In these investigations there is insufficient detail in the skill areas of planning, analysing and evaluating.
- In both key stages, the development of information and communication technology is satisfactory. Pupils have opportunities to use the facility to research for data and scientific information; the use of information and communication technology for measurement is not sufficiently developed.

Standards have been maintained in the subject since the last inspection.

Welsh second language

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS3 and KS4.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils respond well in the oral sessions at the beginning of lessons. They listen well to their teachers when they speak in Welsh; they understand short items read by the teacher, and on videos and cassettes.
- They select relevant information to answer basic questions orally and in written form. The majority of pupils have satisfactory listening skills and their confidence is developing well.
- Pupils generally enjoy oral work, they are keen to volunteer answers and co-operate well in pair and group work. The majority are confident when speaking as individuals and in paired work when talking about familiar topics, like myself, the area, hobbies, and leisure time.
- Most pupils ask and answer a range of questions with developing confidence and accuracy. They confidently use basic patterns like 'achos ..' to give explanations. Able pupils when expressing opinions give reasons for their standpoints.
- Able pupils speak Welsh with a fair degree of accuracy using a range of constructions and vocabulary.
- Average and lower ability pupils make sound progress.
- Pupils read aloud to a good standard in class, they pronounce most words correctly and generally use appropriate expression.
- The majority of pupils understand short passages on familiar topics and respond well by answering questions both orally and in written form. Able pupils cope with more difficult passages quite well.
- Pupils generally respond well in writing to structured work, using grammar presented in the lesson correctly on the whole.
- They write short paragraphs and short dialogues with developing accuracy and express what they like and dislike well using simple constructions.

- More able pupils use a greater variety of sentence patterns with a fair degree of accuracy and make good progress within the key stage.

KS4

- In KS4 the vast majority of the pupils sit the full course GCSE examination and the A* - C results are below the national average. The abler pupils' results are good and exam results have improved over the last two years. Pupils following the entry-level examination have achieved a 100 percent pass rate over the last two years.
- The vast majority of pupils are entered for the GCSE Full Course and in general the top sets make good progress. They enjoy using the language and on the whole they have a positive attitude to the language.
- Pupils work well in pairs and groups, following set tasks, and discuss topics, like leisure time, keeping fit and GCSE higher band topics like 'contemporary society' in a meaningful way.
- They express opinions and occasionally use evidence. Only the abler pupils, however, talk freely on a variety of topics without using their work sheets.
- Abler pupils read to a good standard. When reading aloud, pupils' expression is clear and meaningful. Pupils in the top sets use evidence from reading passages well to argue points when responding to topics such as 'Smoking'.
- The abler pupils write well producing work that has a good degree of accuracy and is interesting to read. They produce extended course work tasks, such as formal letters and articles expressing opinions to a good standard.
- Abler pupils in the top sets make good progress from KS3 to KS4 and achieve good grades in the GCSE examinations.

Shortcomings

KS3

- All but the most able pupils find it difficult to use Welsh spontaneously and expanding on one word answers.
- Most pupils do not read independently from a sufficient wide range of materials. They do not respond to stories by expressing opinions about the stories and discussing the content and characters.
- Average and lower ability pupils make basic grammatical and punctuation errors when writing extended passages when the focus is not on grammar. A number of these errors are repeated in their work later on.

KS4

- Average and lower ability pupils are restricted in the number of topics that they can discuss confidently and their standards of accuracy, when writing is low.

In general the department is striving to raise standards but the wide range of ability in Y7, Y8 and Y9 mixed ability classes is hampering this progress. Since the last inspection some progress has been made in improving examination results.

Design and technology

Standards of achievement are very good in KS3 and KS4.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils have a sound understanding of a design process and apply it well. In project work, all pupils understand and develop specifications to guide their designing and most understand and apply the link between design specifications and evaluation.
- The generation and development of ideas varies across modules but is very good overall.
- Making skills are very good. Pupils work with a wide range of materials and components in the production of products that are accurate and well finished.
- Knowledge and understanding of materials and components and their use is very good.
- In project work the application of mechanical, electronic and microprocessor control principles is good.
- In most modules very good use is made of a wide range of information and communication technology skills in CAD/CAM, design applications, research, and general applications.
- Pupils have a sound understanding of structures and are able to apply structural principles in their designs and conduct basic stress calculations.

KS4

- GCSE examination results in 2003 were well above national averages for grades A*-C and in many instances pupils achieved their highest grades in DT.
- Standards at GCSE are very good in resistant materials, textiles technology, systems and control, graphic products and Y10 food technology.
- Most elements of pupils' design work are good and often very good.
- In their project work, pupils apply a wide range of presentation techniques to a high standard.
- Making skills are very good. Pupils work accurately and finish their work well. They have a sound understanding of manufacturing techniques.
- Very good use is made of information and communication technology in research, designing, CAD/CAM, modelling and presentation.
- Project work is often innovative.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Since the previous inspection, standards have improved considerably.

Information technology

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and KS4.

Good features

KS3

- In Y7, Y8 and Y9 pupils make good progress in their development of IT competencies.
- In Y7 pupils manage computers effectively. They confidently conduct fundamental computer operations such as logging on, calling up and saving their work, and accessing appropriate applications including the Internet.
- Standards of communicating information are good. Pupils confidently combine text and images, and change and arrange fonts and layouts in appropriate combinations according to their designs.
- Design work is often good and results from the use of a wide range of communicating information techniques.
- Pupils confidently import information and graphics from secondary sources or the Internet to resolve design problems.
- Pupils are able to set up databases, understand terminology and carry out simple and more complex interrogations.
- Pupils understand the function of a spreadsheet and are able to set up basic spreadsheets, conduct calculations and model number using appropriate formulae.

KS4

- Pupils develop a comprehensive range of IT skills in the portfolio component of the GCSE course. They communicate confidently, handle and model information for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Pupils' project work displays confidence in handling and modelling information using databases and spreadsheets.
- Research, analysis and problem solving skills are often well developed. Pupils make appropriate use of the Internet to support their research.
- Pupils present their work well and are able to explain why they have chosen specific IT applications.
- Pupils have a good understanding of theory.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Pupils consider social, economic, ethical and moral issues related to the use of information and communication technology insufficiently well.
- Large groups in some classes necessitate shared computers, resulting in slower progress for some pupils.

KS4

- Projects that are not based on real-life contexts are weaker in research and evaluation.

Since the previous inspection standards overall remain essentially the same. However, numbers pursuing the subject at GCSE have increased considerably.

History

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS3 and good in KS4.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils have sound levels of knowledge and understanding; most pupils are secure in their recall of previous learning and they have good chronological awareness.
- Above average and many average ability pupils have sound oral skills; they can provide extended responses to class discussions when required, using subject-specific vocabulary accurately.
- Pupils have good listening skills, overall. In most lessons, they listen carefully to their teachers and to each other when they work in groups and pairs.
- KS3 pupils develop a sound ability to identify changes that occur over time; most provide valid explanations for the causes of change and they trace its effects successfully.
- Pupils are generally confident in adopting investigative approaches when presented with historical problems; they read and evaluate sources of evidence accurately and can apply their background knowledge to the information that they extract from a wide range of sources. The strong focus upon developing pupils' problem-solving skills is having a positive impact upon their standards.
- Written work is well presented and thorough, especially that of above average and most average ability pupils. They record their learning in a variety of styles and there is a good focus upon writing in different formats for a range of purposes and audiences.

KS4

- In 2003, 49 percent of the pupils who opted to study history at GCSE gained grades A* to C. This is an improvement in standards reached in 2002. Although these results are below the UA's and the Welsh national averages, they represent positive progress being made by candidates.
- Pupils successfully build upon the skills that they acquired in KS3. The depth of their response to tasks and challenges reflects their growing maturity and ability to interrogate and evaluate the sources critically.
- Above average ability pupils develop good oral skills when working together in groups. They advance fluent, articulate and well-informed oral arguments to explain their points of view.
- Pupils' work shows a growing understanding of the motivation and attitudes of people in the past because they ask more complex questions of the sources of evidence and learn to compare life in the past with their own experiences.
- Pupils continue to develop their investigative approaches when examining historical problems. They make good use of more complex sources of evidence, including statistical and numerical data and they draw reasonable and sensible conclusions from the sources.
- They make good progress in testing their sources of evidence for bias, reliability and usefulness. They evaluate the sources carefully and use them well to form logical and convincing arguments.
- Pupils achieve good standards in selecting, organising and communicating information through a wide variety of written tasks, including extended writing. Above average and many average ability pupils achieve a good balance between narrative and analysis in their

essay work. Note-taking skills are developing well and pupils become more confident in summarising their learning, using a variety of strategies.

- Pupils' knowledge of the history and culture of Wales is well developed in both key stages. A good range of visits to sites of historical importance enhances it.
- Pupils effectively apply their knowledge and understanding from other curricular areas, such as literacy and numeracy, to extend their research and problem-solving skills.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- Standards of written work vary widely; the writing of some average and many below average ability pupils in both key stages lack adequate detail and there is some evidence of unfinished work in books. Spelling, presentation and depth of evaluation and response are areas that require further development. The situation is, however, better in KS4 than in KS3.
- The oral contributions to discussions made by a significant minority of pupils are too brief and infrequent to enable them to display their knowledge and understanding.
- Although many pupils make good use of information and communication technology tools to enhance the presentation of their written work and to develop their research and enquiry skills, the use of information and communication technology in lessons is limited by problems of access to hardware and software.

The department has made significant progress in the last year in addressing those areas that were judged to require further improvement in the last inspection report. Standards continue to improve.

Geography

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS3 and good in KS4.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils make good progress in acquiring the skills of geographical enquiry; they make good use of atlases and maps of varying scales and types and of other source materials, both primary and secondary, gained during fieldwork.
- They have a secure knowledge of the local area and increase their understanding of the character and identity of Wales and the physical and human factors that influence them; they are able to apply the information to a global context in their study of the migration of peoples.
- They use appropriate methods of investigation to research a range of environmental issues; they show good standards in explaining the cause and effects of the deforestation of tropical rain forests and of the dangers of acid rain.
- Across the key stage, they extend their subject vocabulary and use geographical terms with increasing precision and accuracy.

KS4

- In recent years, results in the external GCSE examination have been below UA and national averages at the higher A*-C grades but parallel to them at A*-G grades.
- Pupils apply their understanding of patterns and processes in physical geography to a wide selection of places and features; they are keenly aware of the causes and distribution of natural hazards such as volcanic eruptions and hurricanes and of the dangers they pose to local inhabitants
- They achieve good standards in selecting and communicating information accessed from a wide range of sources including information and communication technology.
- Pupils successfully build upon the techniques acquired in KS3 and consolidate their Ordnance Survey mapping skills in identifying settlement types found in the local area.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- In both key stages, but predominantly in KS3, the breadth and depth of knowledge of a minority of pupils are limited and progress in a classroom situation is affected by inattention, a failure to heed instructions and work that is incomplete.
- Lower achievers reflect a failure to recall information and an uncertainty in the use and meaning of more complex terminology; they are often more confident orally than in writing and have a limited understanding of patterns such as the distribution of volcanoes.

The department has made good progress and has succeeded in dealing with the main issues identified in the previous inspection report.

Modern foreign languages

Standards of achievement in KS3 and KS4 are good in French and in German.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils listen attentively, understand their teacher speaking the foreign language and identify the main points of language recorded on cassette.
- They respond with enthusiasm to the variety of language activities, are keen to answer questions and recall vocabulary well.
- They work well together and take part confidently in prepared dialogues.
- They note the main points from written texts and select books and magazines to read independently.
- In Y7 and Y8, pupils across the ability range carry out written tasks successfully, including extended writing.
- By Y9 they use past, present and future tenses effectively.
- Pupils with SEN make progress appropriate to their abilities throughout KS3.

KS4

- In German, results in GCSE examinations have improved. In 2003 results at grades A*-C were above national averages.
- Pupils continue to listen well in both languages and identify detail in recorded language.

- Most answer well on topics prepared for GCSE examinations.
- Reading skills continue to be good; pupils pick out relevant detail in reading passages.
- Most pupils write at length and with increasing accuracy on a range of topics; they produce formal and informal letters, articles and descriptions.
- They use an appropriate range of vocabulary and idiom.
- Most pupils have a good grasp of the relevant grammar.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Most pupils do not use the foreign language in normal classroom exchanges with the teacher.
- In Y9 there is insufficient extended writing.

KS4

- Examination results in French at grades A* - C are below national averages.
- Many pupils lack the confidence to speak at length and do not use the foreign language to ask for information or explanation.

Since the last inspection the department has made good progress; standards have improved in KS3 and in KS4.

Art

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and very good in KS4.

Good features

KS3

- From Y7 onwards, pupils apply a developing understanding of the visual elements of art, such as line, tone, pattern, texture, colour, shape and space, with growing success as they proceed through the key stage.
- Good observational and drawing skills are established from the start, giving pupils a firm foundation throughout in developing their visual awareness.
- Pupils use the work of other artists, craftworkers and designers imaginatively to stimulate ideas and influence their own work.
- By the end of Y9, pupils have a clear appreciation of the purpose of sketchbooks, many of which contain substantial investigations and research. Of particular note is the vibrant work based on Georgia O'Keefe.

KS4

- GCSE examination results have improved considerably in recent years and compare favourably with Welsh averages.
- Pupils build upon their experiences in KS3, applying their skills, knowledge and understanding creatively, with increasing assurance.
- They show a developing maturity in their appreciation of the characteristics of a variety of media and techniques, including very good quality painting and 3-D work.

- Pupils continue to study the works of other artists and cultures effectively to enrich their own work; here the very good standards achieved are clearly influenced by a stimulating diet of first-hand experiences, including high quality visual resources and cultural visits.
- Pupils work confidently on a variety of scales.
- Sketchbooks show continuity from KS3 and further progress from Y10 through to Y11; they demonstrate a considerable commitment of time spent in investigations, observations and the development of ideas.
- Pupils make very good progress across the key stage.

Shortcomings

KS3

- No major shortcomings, but in a small minority of cases pupils find it difficult to remain on task for any length of time, and sometimes disrupt the progress of others.

The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Continuity and the transition from KS2 to KS3 are now successfully addressed in schemes of work and links with primary schools. Information and communication technology is stronger, with some interesting examples of its use. Craft and design elements are strong and appropriately balance the fine art aspects of the course to achieve a very well balanced curriculum.

Music

Standards in KS3 and KS4 are satisfactory.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils, in certain classes, sing with enthusiasm and give suitable attention to tone, quality and clarity of diction.
- Pupils perform numerous pieces, including their own arrangements of well-known melodies, on keyboards and classroom instruments. Most are able to play individual lines with a good degree of accuracy. More able pupils maintain good ensemble when performing with others in pairs or small groups.
- Pupils, in general, understand the techniques of “Raga” compositions and devices used to create variations. A few compositions are rhythmically and melodically interesting and have a good sense of structure.
- Many pupils can identify instruments and basic features in recorded extracts of music from different styles. Some more able pupils make perceptive comments when appraising their own music making.

KS4

- Most pupils make suitable progress in individual and group performing and achieve good standards, overall.
- A few completed compositions and some work in progress by more able pupils display interesting treatment of ideas and good understanding of style and structure. Good use is made of information and communication technology to enhance the quality of the work.

- More able pupils are able to discern technical and expressive features well in music from different styles and periods.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Singing is not always adequately refined in some classes.
- A significant minority of average and lower ability pupils are unable to play in time with others in group performance.
- Progress by certain pupils when composing is slow and limited without teacher support. In general, the ability and experience of pupils of exploring and combining sounds imaginatively is limited.
- Evaluations by certain pupils when appraising are brief and superficial.

KS4

- Results at GCSE in recent years have been well below UA and national averages.
- A few pupils are less confident and experienced in performing.
- Many pupils find composing difficult and need support. Some compositions by average and lower ability pupils are limited in musical interest with initial ideas not yet adequately developed.
- The appraising skills of average and lower ability pupils are uneven across different musical contexts. They are good in certain tasks but responses are not always secure or detailed enough in others.

No significant progress has been made in KS3 and KS4 since the last inspection.

Religious education

Standards of achievement are good in KS3. The school has not allocated sufficient time to RE in KS4 to allow the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus to be met so standards are unsatisfactory.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of significant features of belief and practice in Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism.
- They understand such broad religious concepts as faith, prayer and festivals, and appreciate how widely they are experienced. They treat such concepts with respect.
- Pupils have a good awareness of events in the world and in their own lives that raise fundamental questions and recognise how those questions cannot be answered simply. They use their own experiences to reflect upon the experience of others.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the nature of prejudice and discrimination in a range of forms, from the experience of Jews in Hitler's Germany to racial prejudice in Britain today. They respond to the outcome of prejudice with empathy and sensitivity.
- Pupils develop a good religious vocabulary that they use effectively in their oral and written work.

- Pupils make effective use of a variety of forms of writing – poetry, story telling, imaginative writing, play writing – to show their understanding and express their response to religious issues and experience. They are able to represent two sides of a debate.

KS4

- Pupils have a good understanding of some of the central tenets of belief and practice of Buddhism. They can make the early steps to practising meditation.
- They are able to write sensitively about such matters as the religious view of death, some making a thoughtful and personal response in relation to their own beliefs and fears of death and of their own experience of bereavement.
- In their study of religion and the media pupils can apply their understanding of religious issues well. They make sensitive evaluations of the portrayal of Christianity in film, recognise Islamophobia in much present press coverage and can identify how breaches of the Ten Commandments support the plot lines of many television programmes.
- Most pupils recall learning from KS3 and continue to develop and use their good religious vocabulary.

Shortcomings

KS3

- The work of many pupils of lower ability is less carefully and less fully completed than that of most pupils of higher ability.
- Some pupils with SEN have very poor recall of facts. They resort to guessing answers instead of thinking and confuse their knowledge and understanding still further.

KS4

- Some pupils are reluctant to participate in lessons and do not explore their thinking in discussions or complete their written work.
- Some pupils with SEN are not able to complete written work in class as it is too difficult for them, or they need more time to complete it.
- As the result of the short time allocated to religious education, significant areas of study are not covered. Pupils do not meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus in the breadth of study required.

Religious Studies

Standards of achievement are good in this KS4 subject.

Good features

- Large numbers of pupils follow the GCSE course. Girls' results are much better than those for boys and in 2002 were above the national average for Wales.
- Pupils have a good, accurate and detailed knowledge and understanding of the main elements of Christian and Islamic belief and religious practice. They can compare the responses of the two religious groups to moral issues.
- The most able pupils write cogent, detailed accounts that present a situation from two points of view. For instance, they can identify and clarify the strengths and weaknesses to

be found in extended families and in nuclear families and justify their own views on the desirability of each. They can offer reasoned opinions as to whether biblical teaching about family life is out of date.

- Less able pupils can write independently and accurately and make empathetic personal responses when appropriate, for instance in considering the nature of prejudice.
- More able pupils have considerable insight into some experiences and can recognise the generosity of a surrogate mother and the deprivation felt by the grandparents of a surrogate child.

Shortcomings

- The achievement of boys at GCSE is weaker than that of girls and is below the national average.
- Less able pupils often write briefly, with less detail, so they do not demonstrate their understanding sufficiently.
- Some pupils, especially boys in Y11, do not take their work sufficiently seriously, so they do not complete much of their work and write thoughtless answers.

Physical education

Standards of achievement are good in KS3, in the core entitlement at KS4 and in the GCSE course.

Good features

KS3

- In games, for example in rugby and soccer, boys select and apply their skills and tactics and demonstrate a sound understanding of the game. They play consistently and demonstrate good levels of fitness.
- In aerobics, girls work rhythmically and enthusiastically in group situations. Their sequence work increases in intensity and pupils understand the short term effects of exercise on the body.
- In gymnastics, boys work to the task set improving performance through practising and refining their actions. In partner work they demonstrate good body tension and body management skills.
- In swimming, pupils are competent performers demonstrating their ability across a range of strokes.
- Evaluation skills are developed with pupils able to comment on their own and others' performance across a range of activities. They are able to identify features that will improve performance.

KS4 Core

- In swimming, pupils work consistently throughout the lesson. Stroke technique is efficient and pupils adapt to new challenges when they work on lifesaving skills.
- Pupils understand the benefits of regular and safe exercise and are able to select appropriate activities to warm up at the start of a lesson.

GCSE

- Examination results are very good and are well above the averages for the UA and Wales.
- Swimming is a strength; pupils are competent swimmers.
- Pupils analyse the performance of others and are knowledgeable when giving advice to improve performance.
- In gymnastics, in their apparatus sequences, pupils demonstrate fluency in their ability to link actions together showing clarity of shape.
- Pupils use correct terminology in their written work and demonstrate a good understanding of the theory.

Shortcomings

KS3

- In netball, the pupils are not able to use the skills practiced previously at the appropriate time in the games situation.
- Pupils' understanding of health related principles are not fully developed.

KS4 Core

- In hockey pupils lack motivation and basic skills. They repeat actions and make little attempt to improve performance.
- In badminton some pupils lack the ability to select the correct shot in the game situation.

GCSE

- In dance pupils' observational skills are not developed and pupils make slow progress.
- In their evaluations in gymnastics pupils are slow to identify the actions that will improve performance.

Since the last inspection standards have been maintained at KS3 and KS4, and GCSE results have improved with a very high standard being achieved.

A range of extra-curricular activities is available to all pupils. These activities enrich the curriculum offered to pupils and help improve standards. Many pupils achieve national honours and there are some remarkable achievements.

Drama

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were above the national average.
- All pupils, including those with special educational needs, participate fully, with enjoyment and without inhibition, working very cooperatively in groups to devise, rehearse and present a good variety of drama.
- Presentations show imagination, skills in the use of voice and movement, awareness of grouping, the use of stage space and technical resources.

- Thorough research into the history and conventions of theatre is reflected in detailed writing, showing knowledge, understanding, a good capacity for critical analysis and self-awareness.
- Relationships in the classroom are good and pupils are attentive and appreciative audiences to each other's work.
- Pupils take good advantage of opportunities to participate in the school drama club and productions, which make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and to the life of the school.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings but pupils enter the course lacking basic skills that have to be developed before they can make progress because drama is not offered in KS3.

At the time of the previous inspection, drama had only just been introduced in KS4 and was not reported on separately.

Catering

Standards of achievement in this KS4 subject are good.

Good features

- Examination results are good with pupils achieving well above national figures in 2003.
- Pupils develop sound knowledge and understanding of the structure, practices and technical language relating to the Catering industry.
- Making skills are good and very good products are made. Pupils use tools and equipment confidently and safely. A number successfully gain a basic food hygiene certificate.
- Pupils acquire good organisational and team skills when they experience preparing food on a large scale for school and charity events.
- They have a secure knowledge of nutrition and healthy eating. For class and assignment purposes they choose relevant food items, prepare work plans, cost outcomes and evaluate using sensory and dietary analysis.
- Those pupils who complete a related work placement gain firsthand experiences of industrial methods. They record their observations well in coursework studies.
- Information and communication technology is used at times to improve the presentation of project work.

Shortcomings

- The depth and quality of coursework assignments and projects are variable. Choices and outcomes are not always fully justified.
- A small minority of pupils do not follow strict hygiene procedures.

Progress since the last inspection is good.

Child development

Standards of achievement in this KS4 subject are good.

Good features

- 2003 examination results are in line with national figures and pupils often exceed expectations.
- Pupils have good recall of previous work and display sound knowledge and understanding of the care and development of babies and young children including dietary requirements.
- They research issues relating to family life and parenting, and develop an awareness of cultural and lifestyle issues.
- In class, many pupils focus well and share ideas and opinions confidently in group tasks.
- They are able to extract relevant information from resource material and record their own notes in class and coursework tasks.
- There is good evidence of extended writing in child study folders. Here perceptive observations are made of individual children and more able pupils are able to make meaningful comparisons to statistical norms.
- Information and communication technology is used well for a variety of purposes.

Shortcomings

- A minority of child studies are descriptive rather than analytical.
- A minority of Y10 pupils are passive, content to sit and listen and oral responses are brief.

Progress since the last inspection is good.

Personal, social and health education

Standards of achievement are very good in KS3 and KS4.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils learn to work cooperatively in pairs, groups and whole class activities.
- They gain very good knowledge and understanding of their own physical and emotional development, personal relationships and matters of health and safety.
- Pupils learn about the problems in society such as racism, bullying and other aspects of anti-social behaviour, and begin to understand cultural differences and the place of the individual in society.
- They develop a very good understanding of the economic reality of the world of work and explore their own aptitudes and interests, using computer programs.
- Relationships in the classroom are very good. Pupils participate very well, contributing enthusiastically to discussion, expressing themselves very articulately and listening actively.

KS4

- Pupils learn to cope with the demands of life in school and prepare for the future, including the completion of their records of achievement.
- They develop very good knowledge and understanding of the process of applying for jobs, preparing curricula vitae, writing letters and completing reports.
- Pupils are very well prepared for the world of work by identifying their own inclinations and ambitions, making career choices, participating in a well-planned two week work experience placement and getting careers advice.
- Relationships in the classroom are very good. Very good contributions are made in whole-class discussion and in group work – pupils make good progress in speaking and listening, and work very cooperatively.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Personal, social and health education was not inspected as a separate subject in the previous inspection.

Business studies

Standards of achievement are good in this KS4 subject.

Good features

- In the 2002 and 2003 GCSE examinations, the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C grades was close to national averages.
- A small majority of pupils have a good understanding of business terminology and can apply a range of business principles to a cross-section of tasks.
- In Y10, a majority of pupils had a good understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of entering into a franchise agreement.
- In Y11, a majority of pupils were able to complete a cash flow diagram linked to the development of their coursework assignment.
- The quality of coursework is good overall. Pupils carried out detailed research to identify competitors in the retail area identified.

Shortcomings

- A minority of pupils have a less secure recall of key concepts, and have difficulty applying them to a range of tasks.
- A minority of pupils in Y11 are not sufficiently focused on the tasks set in class and for homework.

Standards have improved in the subject since the last inspection.

Sociology

Standards of achievement are good in KS4.

Good features

KS4

- Pupils have good levels of knowledge and understanding of subject matter and their recall skills are secure. They make good links with relevant contemporary attitudes and social developments.
- They have a good command of the methodology and conceptual basis of the subject. Pupils use sociological terminology accurately and in the correct context.
- They successfully use a variety of methods of sociological enquiry and research. They can identify and analyse the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of data collection, such as questionnaires and interviews, and know how open or closed questions can alter the outcome of their enquiries.
- Pupils are increasingly confident in extracting relevant information from a wide range of complex sources.
- By the end of KS4, pupils have developed a good ability to apply their knowledge and understanding to new situations and sociological trends and problems, such as crime and deviancy.

Shortcomings

KS4

- A minority of pupils do not have a secure understanding of the need to expand upon the significance of relevant case studies. Their essays do not provide sufficient detail in expanding fully upon points made.
- The written work of a minority of pupils provides evidence of insecure spelling and presentational skills.
- Many pupils use information and communication technology tools to extend their research, enquiry and presentational skills. However, pupils have insufficient access to information and communication technology facilities to enable them to consolidate their sociological and IT skills on a secure base.

Electronics

Standards of achievement in this KS4 subject are unsatisfactory.

Good features

- A small minority of pupils is developing a good understanding of key concepts.
- These pupils have a good understanding of the properties of a range of components and their functions in different circuits.
- A small minority of pupils has produced a detailed specification for the coursework element of the course.
- A small minority has completed assignment tasks to a good standard.

Shortcomings

- A majority of pupils have a limited understanding of key concepts and have considerable difficulty in applying information regarding the properties of different components and their function in different circuits.
- A majority of pupils do not submit homework assignments and project briefs by deadline dates, and there is evidence of a substantial amount of incomplete work.
- With a significant number of pupils, they have difficulty following the structure of the course; with the result they make little progress.

There was no report on the subject in the last inspection.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress since the last inspection

1. Continue efforts to improve departments' evaluation of their work and continue to support it through the programme of central monitoring.

Since the previous inspection, the monitoring and evaluation of departmental work has improved greatly and there is a stronger emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning. One deputy now has the responsibility for quality assurance and supports middle managers in carrying out their leadership and management functions. Very good progress.

2. Continue to improve procedures for assessment, recording and reporting so as to achieve more consistency effective target setting and improve the quality of information to parents.

The issue has been addressed by appointing an assessment, recording and reporting co-ordinator and incorporating this aspect into the whole issue of Positive Performance. There are suggested models for writing reports, involving identifying strengths, weaknesses and strategies for remediation. Staff are also encouraged to involve the pupils in self-evaluation. Good progress.

3. Review the use of the time given to registrations and assemblies so as to enhance the quality of pupils' experiences and to ensure efficiency.

There is a rota of assemblies in the main hall. The dining room is used for year assemblies on a set rota. Sixth form assemblies are held in the common room. When not in assembly, pupils are involved in: checking homework diaries; reading from reading boxes; PSE topics; Progress Files and Progress Records; review of Positive Performance points. Satisfactory progress.

4. Review the location and use of computing facilities so as to enhance teaching and learning in those curricular areas in which deficiencies were identified.

There has been a continuous programme to update both the computer network, and the hardware and software it supports. Most staff are information and communication technology literate having undertaken information and communication technology training or having been involved in interactive white board training. Nevertheless, too few departments use information and communication technology effectively. Satisfactory progress.

- 5. Improve the accommodation and the external environment of the school by devising a comprehensive plan for further development of the site; this would need, as circumstances permit, to address the case for enlarging the library resource centre and improving the arrangements for dining.**

Despite the efforts made to address this issue, the state of the accommodation is still unsatisfactory and a major cause for concern. Unsatisfactory progress.

- 6. Comply with statutory requirements for teaching religious education at KS4 and in the sixth form and for a daily act of collective worship.**

Statutory requirements not fulfilled. Unsatisfactory progress.

- 7. Take action in respect of the potential safety hazards to which attention was drawn during the inspection.**

The school has done its best to address the highlighted items, but many more are present. Satisfactory progress.

8.2 Key issues for action

1. Continue to raise standards in all subjects and information and communication technology across the curriculum, but particularly in those curricular areas where standards of achievement are satisfactory or worse.
2. Comply with statutory requirements for: teaching religious education at KS4 and in the sixth form; a daily act of collective worship; IEPs as defined in the Code of Practice for pupils with SEN.
3. Working together with the UA, improve the accommodation and the external environment of the school overall by devising and implementing a comprehensive plan for further development of the site. This should incorporate, as a minimum: enlargement of the library resource centre; improved arrangements for dining; reduction of the amount of litter on site.
4. Develop and implement a strategic plan for improving the rationale, facilities, staffing and accommodation of the behaviour support base.
5. Take action in respect of the potential safety hazards to which attention was drawn during the inspection.

APPENDIX

A. Basic information about the school

Name of School	Llantwit Major School
School type	County
Age -range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Ham Lane East Llantwit Major Vale of Glamorgan Cardiff
Post-Code	CF61 1TQ
Telephone Number	01446 793301

Headteacher	Dr Michael C Norton
Date of appointment	April 2000
Chair of Governors/ Appropriate Authority	Mr Derek Mutlow
Registered Inspector	Mr B Medhurst
Dates of inspection	19 – 23 January 2004

B. School data and indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>								
Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	199	248	239	205	232	118	74	1316

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	73	7	77.44

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	17.0:1
Pupil:adult (fte) ratio in special classes	-
Average teaching group size	21.9
Overall contact ratio	77.5%

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	92.6	92.8	89.8	91.5	85.2	92.1	90.0	90.6
Term 2	91.7	89.3	87.2	89.3	93.4	93.7	95.2	90.0
Term 3	95.2	93.5	91.2	92.3	92.8	92.7	93.0	93.1

<i>Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection.</i>	52
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C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2003											
Total number of pupils in Y9: 203											
Percentage of pupils at each level											

			1	2	N	3	4	5	6	7	8/EP
EN	Teacher	School	0.0	0.0	5.4	6.4	15.8	38.9	22.2	10.3	0.5
	assessment	National	0	2	1	9	22	34	21	9	0
	Test	School	n/a	n/a	3.0	10.8	23.6	26.1	22.7	11.8	n/a
		National	n/a	n/a	8	8	23	31	21	9	n/a
MA	Teacher	School	0.0	0.0	2.5	2.5	13.3	35.0	29.1	15.3	1.5
	assessment	National	0	1	1	9	22	26	27	13	1
	Test	School	n/a	n/a	1.5	8.4	15.3	29.1	26.1	15.8	n/a
		National	n/a	n/a	8	8	22	23	27	12	n/a
SC	Teacher	School	0.0	0.0	1.5	2.0	16.3	32.5	27.1	20.7	0.0
	assessment	National	0	1	1	9	22	32	24	10	0
	Test	School	n/a	n/a	0.5	4.9	17.7	29.1	26.1	19.2	n/a
		National	n/a	n/a	5	7	20	32	24	11	n/a

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school:	62.1	In the school:	54.2
In Wales:	51.0	In Wales:	50.0

N – Pupils who failed to reach a level for reasons other than absence.

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, ELQ and equivalent achievements			
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2003: 207			
The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2003			
	School	UA	Wales
were entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	85	92	87
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C or equivalent	55	62	51
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-G or equivalent	83	90	85
achieved GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science and English or Welsh first language	39	44	38
entered at least one ELQ, GCSE short course or GCSE equiv	97	98	97
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-C	73	82	74
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-G	91	95	93
achieved no graded GCSE	9	5	7
achieved one or more ELQonly	4	2	3

For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A level/AVCE or AS level ASVCE equivalent achievements			
Number of pupils aged 17 in January 2003: 98			
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level and AS level examinations or equivalent in 2003: 85			
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2003: 13			
	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	55	75	68
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	89	96	94
Average points score per candidate	18	23	20

D. The evidence base of the inspection

- 17 inspectors spent the equivalent of 59 days at the school.
- 278 lessons, including full and part time sessions were observed covering all curricular areas and, additionally, a sample of PSE lessons was inspected.
- Inspectors attended assemblies, tutorial sessions, registrations, and observed a range of extra-curricular activities.
- Inspectors held many discussions with the headteacher, members of the school's management team, heads of departments, some heads of year, staff with whole-school responsibilities, and members of support staff.
- The registered inspector and a colleague inspector met with the governing body prior to the inspection week and reported the main findings to them following the inspection.
- Work across the curriculum, from representative pupils from each year group was examined. Pupils' work was also scrutinised during lesson observations.
- Inspectors held formal discussions with groups of pupils selected from Y7 to Y13. They also talked with many pupils informally.
- The registered inspector met the staff and some students prior to the inspection.
- 19 parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. 69 replies to the questionnaire were received and analysed. Some parents also wrote to the registered inspector.
- Comprehensive documentation provided by the school was scrutinised before and during the inspection.

E. Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr B W Medhurst Registered Inspector		Context, Main findings, Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning, Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum, Quality of teaching, Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement, Leadership and efficiency, Staffing, accommodation and learning resources, Progress since the previous inspection, Key issues for action.
Dr M H L Snow Lay Inspector		Behaviour and attitudes, Attendance, Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions, Partnership with industry.
Mr G Davies	Science (chemistry)	Curriculum, Sixth form co-ordinator
Mr G W Leech	English, Personal and social education, Drama	Assessment, recording and reporting.
Miss P M Rourke	Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)
Mr S Gale	Design and technology, Information technology	Support and guidance
Mr E Bowyer	Geography	
Mr T Lewis	Welsh	
Mrs M Herbert	Design and technology, Health & social care	
Mr A Edwards	Mathematics	
Mr D Jones	Science (biology)	
Dr K Davies	Science (physics)	
Mrs G Holland	Modern foreign languages	
Mrs A Newman	History, Sociology	
Mrs G Figg	Art	
Mr A Wynne Jones	Music	
Mrs S Steer	Physical education	

ANNEX: The Sixth Form

CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

Llantwit Major School is an 11 – 18 mixed comprehensive school (established as such in 1973), situated in the centre of the town of Llantwit Major. There are 1316 pupils on roll (compared with 1191 in 1997), of whom 192 are in the sixth form. The annual intake varies between 200 and 250 pupils with a standard admission number of 225.

The most obvious feature of the school is poor exterior state of a considerable proportion of the accommodation. The good facilities provided by the new building are in stark contrast to those available in the rest of the school's buildings.

Most pupils come from 5 main contributory primary schools in Llantwit and surrounding villages. Additionally, a good number of pupils from Barry and Rhoose attend, as a result of parental preference. The school's catchment can be described as 50 percent relatively prosperous and 50 percent average, with the intake being neither advantaged nor disadvantaged. No pupils speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard. Very few pupils (around 1 percent) come from minority ethnic heritages. One pupil receives support teaching in English as an additional language. 7 percent of the pupils are registered as being entitled to free school meals, below the unitary authority's (UA) figure of 12 percent.

Because of its proximity to St Athan RAF base, the school experiences a considerable amount of pupil mobility – around 100 pupils join and leave the school each year.

The school's intake represents the full range of ability, with almost equal groups of able and less able. There are 20 pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN) (12 boys and 8 girls) There are an additional 300 pupils (around 23 percent of the school's population) on the school's SEN register who are registered as needing School Action (SA) or School Action Plus (SA+) of the Code of Practice for SEN. Very few pupils are disapplied from aspects of the National Curriculum (NC).

Welsh is taught and examined only as a second language.

In its vision statement, the school states that it believes that: people are its greatest asset; all people, regardless of their race, colour or religious views are of equal value in the school; everyone is entitled to an education in which they are given the opportunities to achieve the highest standards; learning is for life; everyone can make a positive contribution to the social, economic and cultural growth of local, national and worldwide communities.

The school development plan (SDP) is a comprehensive, well-organised programme that seeks to move the school forward so that it can achieve its aims. Departmental development plans (DDPs) are appropriately cross-referenced to the SDP.

The headteacher, one of the two deputies, the head of KS4 and the head of the sixth form have been appointed since the time of the previous inspection, and the senior management team (SMT) has been restructured.

MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

Within a school that provides a good quality of education overall, the sixth form of Llantwit Major School is very good. It provides students with a structured, supportive environment in which they and their teachers work together purposefully to achieve good or better standards.

It is an efficient and effective organisation that is led and managed very well by the newly appointed head of the sixth form, who works well, as an occasional member of the school's senior management team, with her senior colleagues and the headteacher. Every effort is made to satisfy the school's aim to provide an education in which students are given the opportunities to achieve the highest standards.

Sixth form students are particularly active in the school and all concerned parties value their participation. They are developing into mature and responsible adults and are good role models for younger pupils. They have very good moral and social values and they display respect, care and concern for others. Students accept and exercise responsibility with maturity, work well together and show good initiative.

Educational standards achieved by the students

As indicated in the tables below, standards of achievement in most subjects and in the key skills are good.

Success in the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level or equivalent examinations has improved in line with the national trend since the previous inspection. From class observations, scrutiny of work and from interviews, inspectors found that in most cases, sixth form students were making good progress and achieving well in relation to their ability.

STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS

Subject	Sixth Form
English	Good
Mathematics	Satisfactory
Science	Good
Welsh (Second Language)	Good
Design and Technology (DT)	Very Good
Computing	Very Good
History	Good
Geography	Good
Modern Foreign Languages (French)	Satisfactory
Modern Foreign Languages (German)	Good
Art	Very Good
Music	Good
Religious Studies	Very Good
Physical Education	Very Good

Drama	Very Good
Home Economics (textiles)	Good
Home Economics (food)	Good
Health and Social Care	Good
Business Studies	Good
Business Studies [GNVQ intermediate]	Good
Sociology	Good
Electronics	Satisfactory

STANDARDS IN KEY SKILLS

Listening	Good
Speaking	Good
Reading	Good
Writing	Good
Numeracy	Good
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	Good
Working with others	Very Good
Improving own learning and performance	Good
Problem solving	Good

Good features

- Standards in most subjects are good. Students in 80 percent of classes were judged as achieving good or better standards, and in 30 percent they were judged as achieving very good standards.
- Students listen attentively, speak clearly, read well, write to good effect and work very well with their colleagues, often taking the initiative to extend their own learning.
- Most students have good information and communication technology skills, and use them advantageously on many occasions for research purposes and to enhance the presentation of their work.
- Students generally have good problem solving skills that they use to good effect in a number of subjects.
- They are well organised and this enables them to access learning opportunities efficiently and thus to make good progress.
- Students are good at reviewing and evaluating their own progress and achievement, and this helps them set realistic targets for further accomplishments.
- Most students complete the courses they choose to study and fulfil their potential for success. Completion rates are high.

Shortcomings

- Standards in electronics do not match the higher standards achieved in other areas of the curriculum.
- The average points scored in two-thirds of the subjects in the 2003 A level examinations were below national averages.

Quality of Education

Students benefit from good quality teaching within a well-planned and inclusive sixth form curriculum. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and they plan well to meet the needs of all their students. Students benefit from a good range of challenging learning experiences and often take the initiative to extend their knowledge and understanding through independent research and wider reading.

Good features

- Teaching in the sixth form was good or better in 82 percent of classes observed. This figure includes 32 percent judged as very good.
- Teaching is very good in English, drama, religious studies, art, design and technology, computing and physical education.
- The school offers a wide and appropriate range of subjects and courses to allow students of all abilities to achieve well.
- There is good planning for and implementation of arrangements for the development of key skills.
- The arrangements made for personal and educational guidance, including that for higher education, and careers education and guidance, are very good. Students receive good advice in Y11 about the sixth form, to help them make informed choices.
- The school makes very good use of analyses of data to assist in setting targets for future progress and higher standards.
- There are good arrangements for assessing, monitoring and recording students' achievements and progress. There is a full programme of academic monitoring involving regular personal interviews between students and tutors.
- The school provides regular, informative reports to students and parents.
- Students have many opportunities to benefit from a good programme of extra-curricular activities and participation is high.
- A very good work experience programme enhances students' education.

Shortcomings

- The provision made for religious education is unsatisfactory.
- The provision made for physical education is unsatisfactory.

Leadership and management

The newly appointed head of the sixth form manages the sixth form very well. She fulfils her role successfully, along with a team of tutors who work hard to give all students opportunities and support to achieve their potential for personal and academic success. Overall, the sixth form is an effective and efficient unit.

Good features

- A good team spirit is evident within the sixth form organisation.
- Many new and effective strategies have been introduced in a short period of time.
- The school operates an open entry sixth form and works hard to cater for all students' needs.
- The school manages its sixth form budget allocation very well. Financial decisions are taken in accordance with the school's educational priorities as identified in its school development plan and strenuous efforts are made to obtain best value for money.

- The day-to-day administration of the sixth form is very efficient and effective.
- The governors play an active and supportive role in the school. They are well informed about the sixth form's work and have a very good understanding of its strengths and shortcomings.
- Teachers' qualifications and experience match the requirements of the sixth form curriculum. Deployment of staff ensures that individual teachers' knowledge and skills are used most effectively to the students' benefit.
- Students have opportunities for private study. The school provides adequately for them in this respect, including access to information and communication technology facilities.

Shortcomings

- Dedicated sixth form accommodation is currently very limited.

The effectiveness with which the issues identified in the previous report have been addressed

The school has made satisfactory progress overall in addressing the issues highlighted in the previous report.

Of the seven key issues for action highlighted in the previous inspection's report, five had immediate application in the sixth form.

- Assessment procedures have improved considerably.
- Sixth form assemblies are held and tutorial time is used effectively in most instances.
- Computing facilities are available to sixth form students and are used frequently.
- Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and religious education are still not satisfied.
- Accommodation remains an ongoing problem.

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Standards were at least satisfactory in 100 percent of the classes observed. They were good or better in 80 percent and very good in 30 percent. These statistics represent a substantial improvement on the standards recorded at the time of the previous inspection.

Success in the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level or equivalent examinations has improved in line with the national trend since the previous inspection. Nevertheless, in 2003 the proportion of students achieving success at levels A to C in 2 or more subjects was below UA and national averages. The school achieved a figure of 55 percent, compared with the UA's 75 percent and the national 68 percent. The average points score achieved by students in the school (18) was below the national score of 20 and the UA figure of 23. Students achieved an 89 percent success for 2 or more subjects at grades A to E; again below the UA and national averages. From class observations, scrutiny of work and from interviews, however, inspectors found that in most cases, sixth form students were making good progress and achieving well in relation to their ability.

Most students make good progress from KS4 and many of them subscribe autonomously to this progress through independent research and wider reading in and around their chosen subjects. This is particularly the case in computing and in English. In a number of subjects, such as history, students' skills of analysis and evaluation are developed well. Elsewhere, students' learning is improved through links with outside organisations and/or other educational establishments. All students benefit well from a very good programme of work experience placements. Geography students, for example, benefit from fieldwork in the local community, and from theoretical industrial situations and trips that help consolidate their knowledge.

There are shortcomings in a number of areas and these are highlighted in the subject reports that follow. A common theme across a range of subjects would seem to be that a number of students lack confidence when required to expand viewpoints orally and/or in writing.

Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum

Standards in literacy are good, particularly so in religious education, art, and physical education where they are very good. Standards in numeracy are good overall, and very good in computing. Information and communication technology standards are generally good, with very good examples being found in design and technology and computing. Students' capacity for improving their own learning and performance is good and they are good at solving problems. There are essential skills lessons in the curriculum, which promote good standards. In many lessons, pupils work together in small groups or whole class situations and in these their collaborative work is very good.

Students' skills in speaking and listening are good. Working mainly in small class groups, students are attentive to presentations by teachers and their peers. They often exchange ideas freely and articulately, contributing usefully to lessons. However, some students are hesitant orally in French and history. Students studying Welsh do not take opportunities to speak the language beyond the classroom.

Reading skills are good. Students meet the demands of the texts they study and obtain information from a very wide range of sources, including the Internet, to inform their work.

Students' writing skills are good, enabling them to take extensive notes and produce some admirable project and course work, informed by good research. Many word-process their work, which aids the practice of drafting and revising. In English, for example, students make perceptive and sensitive responses to texts in detailed essays.

Supported by the information and communication technology provision in the school, most students choose to use a range of applications in their work. They often access the Internet for information, use word processing to draft and re-draft essays and/or coursework, or create presentations.

Most students are confident when handling number or calculating when required to do so. Examples of numeracy across the curriculum include: analysing graphs and other information in science, accurate calculations in design and technology, project work in computing, and graphs and percentages in Welsh. Geography, in particular, requires students to undertake a wide range of mathematical activities. They encounter, with success, such topics as data analysis and presentation to exemplify answers, measuring and recording, analysing patterns, and map work with a number of scales.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Teaching and Assessment

Good or better teaching is a major strength of the sixth form. Comments made by students during interviews confirmed this. They mentioned how much they appreciated being constantly encouraged to succeed. In consequence, they said that they enjoyed learning in the sixth form. Additionally, it was highlighted that the smaller teaching groups encountered in the sixth form enabled students to benefit from individual attention more often than would be the case in larger classes.

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 100 percent of the classes observed, and it was good or very good in 82 percent of classes, including 32 percent that were graded as very good. These figures represent a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. In over one-third of subjects, teaching was judged to be very good throughout.

Sixth form teachers are suitably well qualified, and they have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. This secure base of knowledge, along with up-to-date expertise they acquire through continuing professional development, enables them to prepare work that is well matched to their students' abilities and needs. Relationships between teachers and students are very good overall, allowing learning to occur in a relaxed yet challenging atmosphere of mutual respect.

Based upon teachers' high expectations of success, work is often very challenging and a good pace of progress is maintained in class. Teachers' exposition is usually clear and their probing questions prompt students to think deeply about their answers. A good range of teaching and learning techniques are employed to good effect, from a simple lecture, through pair and group work, to a full-scale whole class debate.

Many teachers encourage students to take it upon themselves to work independently on research projects to extend their knowledge and understanding. In this way not only do they achieve higher standards, but also they become well prepared for life and learning in further or higher education. Where this is not the case, as in mathematics, students are insufficiently challenged and they underachieve.

Teachers generally give generously of their time outside lessons to help individuals and to offer extra-curricular activities to extend and broaden students' learning.

The quality of procedures for the assessment, recording and reporting of students' achievements is as good in the sixth form as it is in the main school, informed and supported by the same policies and procedures. There is a full programme of academic monitoring involving regular personal interviews between students and tutors.

The processes of recording students' achievements, relating them to national standards and analysing their significance are well established. Monitoring is undertaken at subject level as well as across tutor and year groups, enabling good understanding of and rapid response to individual needs.

Students' work, including homework, is generally regularly and conscientiously marked. Accurate assessments are made in relation to the criteria of GCE and other examination standards. In all subjects, students are given opportunities for self-assessment.

Parents are kept well informed of students' progress through an interim and an end of year report and they are able to consult with staff about their children at annual parents' evenings. Reports issued in the sixth form give helpful general and subject specific assessments, expressed as examination grades.

Learning Experiences

The quality of the sixth form curriculum is good overall.

The school offers a wide choice of twenty-three AS and A2 courses to General Certificate of Education (GCE) level. There is continuity of subjects from KS4 as well as a new course in psychology, which is offered as an evening class. A modest vocational programme is available with General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate courses available in business, and health and social care, which attract small numbers. Students are able to choose from the full range of subjects; considerable effort is made to accommodate all requests.

The planning for the development of key skills in Y12 is good. This is developed through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Universities Award Programme which offers a choice of challenges which includes active citizenship, career planning, work related activities, international relations and additional interests and skill development. Key skills are also developed in subject areas, a timetabled lesson and in a Year assembly. In addition to the ASDAN programme, all students are expected to study for a qualification in information technology, and if they have not gained a C grade at GCSE, to study the subject to level 2 in the key skill accreditation procedure.

The arrangements for PSHE in the sixth form are good. The programme includes a variety of experiences for all students and includes careers education and guidance and advice on entry into higher education. PSE is organised during two tutorial sessions each week and includes modules on study skills, driver awareness and citizenship in addition to opportunities to assist in reading and mentoring programmes with younger pupils. The programme is enriched by contributions from visiting speakers. Work experience is compulsory for all students in Y12 and they have the opportunity of an interview with the school's careers adviser.

There is no provision for religious education in the sixth form, therefore the school does not meet statutory requirements. There are no timetabled lessons for physical recreation. However, facilities are available in the local leisure centre on payment of a fee by students.

Extra-curricular provision is good in many subjects. There are a number of visits off-site to further studies and to venues such as theatres and galleries. Many students help to organise events in the school and in the community. Students benefit from the range of activities available, which broaden their experience and promote their personal and educational development.

Support and Guidance

Support for sixth form students is very good. The monitoring of students' academic progress by head of sixth form, form tutors and subject teachers is thorough and regular, leading to the setting of effective individual targets for improvement. Teachers provide very good support in individual subjects and students make good use of the study and leisure facilities available. They respond well to opportunities to gain accreditation in key skills. The school encourages students to assume responsibilities by mentoring younger pupils, charity fundraising, and participating in a wide range of community services, which are elements of the ASDAN course followed by all students in Y12. Y13 students take on further responsibilities as prefects and work closely with staff at breaks and lunch times in the supervision of younger pupils. Sixth form students carry out these roles with enthusiasm and commitment, providing a role model for younger pupils and developing social skills, self-confidence and increasing independence. They are well prepared for life in the wider world. Effective careers guidance and work experience is part of the Y12 programme. The contribution made by the sixth form to school life is significant and represents a strength of the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

General responsibility for oversight of the sixth form rests with the newly appointed head of the sixth form. She fulfils this demanding role very successfully in the time available to her, heading a team of tutors who work hard to give all students opportunities to achieve their potential for academic and personal success. She has a thorough understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the sixth form. Overall, the sixth form is an effective and efficient unit. Many recently introduced initiatives have done much to improve the provision made for sixth form students.

The school's aims, which seek to give students the opportunities to achieve the highest standards in all areas of life, are driven forward by the good development plan, and in consequence there is a clear vision and sense of direction in the sixth form. It is noteworthy that students willingly help others in the school and support charities well. Within the school, they help less able pupils in a reading club, provide a 'buddy' system for youngsters and support other pupils and staff in many other areas too. There is a long list of charities that have benefited considerably from students' efforts and generosity.

With average class sizes of 19.6 in Y12 and 14.7 in Y13, and a good curriculum, the sixth form is cost effective and does not make undue demands on the school's budget. Financial planning and management are good. Governors and senior staff work well together to achieve this. The school handles its income of around £3.9 million prudently and efficiently and maintains an appropriate surplus year on year. The budget is set by correct reference to the agreed curricular, staffing, accommodation and learning resource needs. Daily management of finances is very efficient. Spending decisions are taken only after proper consideration of the school's agreed priorities for improvement, and then the personnel concerned take particular care to ensure that best value for money is obtained. The governing body also exercises careful oversight of the school's finances, staffing provision and appointments.

The school has very good procedures for evaluating its performance and planning future developments, and these naturally extend into the sixth form. Here, the regular and rigorous application of these measures has enabled it to make good progress since its previous inspection in a number of important areas, not least in the quality of teaching and learning,

and the consequent standards achieved by its students. The views of students are taken into account and acted upon.

Overall there is a good balance of age and experience within the staff who teach sixth form students, and their expertise matches the requirements of the sixth form curriculum. Technical support is good throughout the school and the personnel concerned help teaching staff provide meaningful learning opportunities for students to make progress and achieve well. Most lessons are conducted in specialist teaching rooms used by the main school, and in common with the rest of the school, some areas are in a poor condition. In addition to an adequate supply of appropriate textbooks, many teachers provide students with useful well-produced in-house documentation.

Students are provided with a comfortable social area and a workroom, but otherwise dedicated sixth form accommodation is currently very limited. Students are able to avail themselves of facilities, such as information and communication technology equipment, in other areas of the school, and many take advantage of these opportunities. The site maintenance staff and the students themselves do much to ensure that the sixth form areas are kept in good repair, clean and as safe as possible for students.

SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

English

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Results at A level are broadly in line with the national average, with all candidates achieving a pass.
- English is a very successful subject in the sixth form, attracting more students to the AS and A2 courses than other subjects.
- Relationships in lessons are good. Students work well together, cooperating in and contributing confidently to discussion, sharing ideas maturely and showing familiarity with the language of literary analysis.
- Students research conscientiously and make assured presentations to their classmates, using information and communication technology very capably.
- In their writing, students show the capacity to read and respond to a good variety of texts, making perceptive points in extended and well-supported critical essays.

Shortcomings

- A few students are reluctant to volunteer contributions to class discussion.

The good standards of achievement reported in the previous inspection have been maintained.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement in the sixth form are satisfactory.

Good features

- Results at A level are satisfactory overall with some students achieving the highest grades.
- Students in Y13 have a good knowledge of basic techniques and can use them confidently in a range of topics in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics.
- Y12 students are making sound progress understanding aspects of pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics.

Shortcomings

- Students have little practice in enhancing their learning through discussion and individual research.
- They have limited opportunity to enhance their knowledge using information and communication technology.

Since the last inspection progress has been satisfactory.

Science

Standards of achievement are good in biology and chemistry; they are satisfactory in physics.

Good features

- In the last two years, the majority of students gained grades A-E at A-level, with a minority gaining grades in the A/B category.
- The majority of students have a good understanding of key concepts. They can apply more complex scientific principles and theory to a wide range of problems and applications.
- In practical work seen, students achieve good standards. They are able to apply their theoretical understanding in a range of practical applications and are developing good skills of analysing and evaluation.
- The majority of students demonstrate confidence when asked to explain their answers to problems and in analysing results in investigations.
- A majority of students have well organised files of work and are developing good independent learning skills.

Shortcomings

- A minority of students have a less secure knowledge and understanding of certain topics and has difficulty in applying more complex principles to past questions and applications of science, particularly so in physics.
- A small minority of students lack confidence when being asked to offer explanations to questions posed during class discussions and in interpreting data and experimental results.

Overall, standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

Welsh (second language)

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features.

- The examination results at AS and A2 level are commensurate with the ability of the pupils.
- In Y13, pupils express themselves quite fluently and have the confidence to back their opinions with evidence from their set books.
- They discuss short stories and poetry well using appropriate vocabulary, phrases and terms associated with the appreciation of literature.
- Y12 pupils have successfully bridged the wide gap between GCSE and AS level and cope quite well with the demands of the literature aspects of the AS course.
- They enjoy discussing the content and style of the set poems.
- Writing standards are developing well, both in Y12 and Y13, and pupils produce both extended creative tasks and tasks to respond to specific areas of AS and A2 course to a good standard of accuracy.

Shortcomings

- When discussing ideas and other people's viewpoints, some pupils are reluctant to respond in an extended way without referring to their notes.

Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

Design and technology

Standards are very good in GCE product design.

Good features

- Students' design work is very good. They research, analyse and produce effective design specifications to guide their product development.
- Project folios display very good standards of idea development and presentation. Project work is innovative.
- Students' evaluation of commercial products and of those that they design and make is good.
- Modelling and making of design solutions is very good.
- Very effective use is made of information and communication technology for research, designing, CAD/CAM, modelling and presentation.
- Students' work demonstrates good making skills in a wide range of materials.
- Theoretical understanding is sound.
- Case studies display a good awareness of commercial and industrial technology developments.
- The department has had many notable successes in national competitions.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Since the last inspection, standards have improved.

Computing

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- Examination results in 2003 were well above national averages for grades A-C and A-E, displaying evidence of good progress from performance at GCSE.
- Project work is often innovative, displaying evidence of effective analysis, investigation and problem solving.
- Project work displays a very good understanding of programming skills in the solution to problems that students have identified.
- Students confidently use advanced database work in the solution of real-life problems that they have identified.
- Problem solving skills are often very good.
- Implementation, evaluation and testing of computing solutions is well developed.
- Students have a good understanding of theory and present their work well.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Standards overall remain essentially the same; however, numbers pursuing the subject at A level have increased considerably.

History

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- In the AS examinations held in 2003, all of the students entered gained grades B and C. In the 2003 A-level examinations, 63 percent of the students entered gained grades A-C.
- Y12 and Y13 students have a good ability to select and organise appropriate material to develop a logical and satisfying argument that is firmly based upon relevant evidence.
- Students show a good ability to synthesise the views of the major professional historians with expertise in the periods they are studying. They use their analytical skills effectively to explain the differences in interpretations found in their arguments.
- Students develop an increasingly analytical and evaluative approach to the wide variety of source material they consider. Their files provide good evidence of well-organised note-taking skills. Good use is made of the Internet to extend learning and develop research skills.
- Students have a good ability to use their knowledge and the evidence from the sources to construct opposing and balanced arguments when considering historical problems. Most written work is of good quality. Essays and evidential work are carefully researched and thoughtfully planned and drafted.

Shortcomings

- A minority of average and below average ability students do not develop and fully explain the points that they make in their written work. They are sometimes insecure in linking their ideas and in detecting patterns in the historical process.

Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Geography

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- More recent A level examination results have been good with a 100 percent pass rate at A-E grades.
- Students have a good command of relevant information and the purposeful and detailed use of it; they are resourceful when using investigative skills and their assignments demonstrate their ability to analyse, interpret and evaluate evidence critically.
- Their proficiency in communication and problem solving is well applied; they work productively in small groups to present their findings using computer technology.
- They make very good use of contrasting case studies to exemplify their theoretical knowledge and are increasingly aware of the relevance of the subject to current social and environmental issues on a global scale.

Shortcomings

- A very small minority of students appear reluctant to contribute to class discussions but make a valued input to group presentations.

Good progress has been made since the last inspection and issues such as competence in graphic skills have been successfully addressed.

Modern foreign languages

Standards of achievement in German (Y12) are good. In French (Y13) they are satisfactory.

Good features

- In 2003, all students entered for A level examinations in French and German gained a pass grade.
- In Y12, students have made a rapid and successful transition from GCSE to AS level work in German.
- They understand their teacher speaking at a natural pace.
- They respond appropriately and most are able to give extended answers on AS level topics.
- They understand a wide range of written material.
- They have a good grasp of the relevant grammar and adapt the language they know to differing contexts.
- Most write with increasing accuracy.
- In French (Y13), students identify detail in complex written and spoken language..
- They write in differing registers on a variety of topics.
- They access the Internet for up to date information.

Shortcomings

- Almost all students lack confidence when speaking in unrehearsed situations.
- In Y13 they are very hesitant, give short answers and are reluctant to express opinions or discuss topics at length.
- The written work of some students is marred by basic grammatical errors.

Since the last inspection examination results have improved.

Art

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- A-level examination results show an improvement on last year. Mean grades at A/AS level compare favourably with those for Wales.
- The sound basis of fundamental art skills, knowledge and understanding gained in previous years is successfully built upon further in this key stage and students work with great confidence, often being prepared to take risks and show other characteristics of creative thinking.
- Many students work at a high level of technical skill, demonstrating a very mature appreciation of media; for example, in large scale portrait painting, depicting mood and feelings, showing expressive, vigorous brushwork.
- Students show a sophisticated knowledge and understanding of the work of other artists, both in very well written essays and also in more practical, visual responses.
- Information and communication technology is used creatively with the manipulation of photographed images to give ideas for students' own work, particularly in painting.

- Students' sketchbooks are an exciting, exuberant repository of ideas, images and experimentation, supporting personal work very effectively.

Good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

Music (including Music Technology)

Standards in music in Y12, and in music technology in Y12 and Y13 are good. There is no class in music in Y13.

Good features

- Results at A level in music and music technology in recent years have been above the national averages. Current Y13 music technology students gained better results in music technology than in their other AS subjects.
- Music students in Y12 are able and experienced performers. They perform with confidence and a good sense of style.
- Most are acquiring a good understanding of harmony and part-writing.
- Suitable progress is being made in their knowledge and understanding of the main features and characteristics of their set-works.
- Aural skills, though uneven are satisfactory overall.
- Music technology students have good knowledge and understanding of different recording techniques including sequencing and midi editing.
- One completed personal arrangement task by one Y12 student and free compositions by Y13 students are musically interesting and have a good sense of style.

Shortcomings

- A few music students are not always totally secure in their harmony work.
- Aural work in both courses is uneven and not always secure.

Religious studies

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- AS exam results improved from 2002 to 2003 to reach the national average. In relation to their ability students achieve well in both AS and A level.
- Large numbers of pupils choose to study religious studies in the sixth form, including a number of able students who have not previously studied it to examination level.
- Students have a very mature approach to their work and to their relationships with their teachers. They are thoughtful and reflective, are able to expose uncertainties in their understanding and to seek clarification.
- They have a good knowledge and understanding of ethical theories and of the diversity of ethical views. They can compare and evaluate the views of scholars and schools of thought and reflect upon their own experience to deepen their understanding.
- Students use difficult technical vocabulary accurately in their essays and in discussion. They develop and sustain arguments well, making judicious use of quotations and effective use of other evidence.

- Students recognise the relationship of their studies to the world in which they currently live. They make thoughtful and sensitive responses to such challenging concepts as to why there is evil in the world, whether everyone has a right to have a child and when it may be right to lie to your family.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

Physical education

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- A level results are good and represent the very good progress made by students.
- Students demonstrate good analytical skills in the work in their Personal Performance Portfolio.
- Students show good application of the theory to the practice.
- Well-developed information and communication technology skills enhance the presentation of their work.
- They work productively as a small group and discuss issues in a methodical way showing understanding of the information processing system.

Good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

Drama

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- Results in the GCE examinations in 2003 were above the national average.
- Students' drama skills are well developed, enabling them to create instant improvisations. They are vocally confident, project well, and move comfortably with a good sense of the use of space.
- They plan, rehearse and perform with energy and enjoyment, responding thoughtfully to demanding texts and showing imagination in preparing responses to set themes.
- Relationships in lessons are very good. Students work very cooperatively and appreciate each other's work. They have a good capacity for analysis and self-evaluation.
- Students research extensively and develop a very good understanding of theatre, which is reflected in detailed and well organised written work.
- They take good advantage of opportunities to participate in drama lessons for pupils in KS4, in the drama club and in school productions. These contribute significantly to their own personal development and to the life of the school.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

There was no drama course in the sixth form at the time of the previous inspection.

Home Economics

Students are able to opt for either textiles or food. Standards in both material areas are good.

Good features

- Students gain very creditable examination results. In 2003 twelve out of the thirteen students gained B-E grades.
- Students at both AS and A level demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of theoretical and practical issues relating to their area of study.
- Many take responsibility for their own learning and display good skills of problem solving and decision-making when they prepare and discuss consumer topics.
- Coursework projects and case studies show good research skills; scientific testing; creative, innovative ideas and reflective evaluation.
- Students understand the importance and relevance of technological developments and apply these well in the planning and making of their own products. They produce practical outcomes of good to very good quality.
- Competent information and communication technology skills are used effectively for CAD/CAM; analysing data, accessing current Internet information and to enhance the quality of presentation.

Shortcomings

- Not all written work is fully developed and analysed.
- Erratic attendance by a small number of students inhibits progress.

Progress since the last inspection is good.

Health and Social Care –Intermediate

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Knowledge and understanding of health, social care and early years service and organisations are secure.
- Work covered in lessons is related well to realistic settings by drawing on personal experiences gained on work placements and visits.
- Assignments are completed successfully showing sound awareness of the influences on an individual client's health and lifestyle.
- Independent research on potential risks to health is undertaken effectively and meaningful targets for improvement are set.
- The identification and recording of a range of factors that affect personal development at different life stages including dietary needs is done effectively.
- Information and communication technology is used well to access website information, analyse nutritional data and to improve the quality and presentation of portfolio work.

Shortcomings

- Heavy reliance upon teacher's guidance and teacher's resources are common features of lessons.
- Oral skills are weaker than written skills.

Progress has been good since the last inspection; however, numbers opting for the course have reduced in recent years.

Business Studies

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- In the 2002 and 2003 AS and A2 examinations, the majority of students gained A-E grades. The percentage gaining these grades was close to national averages.
- The majority of students are able to apply more complex business principles to a range of tasks and applications.
- In Y12, a small majority of students were able to identify business issues during the consideration of price discrimination in the sale of different services.
- In Y13, students are able to complete more complex ratio analysis exercises and evaluate the performance of a company.

Shortcomings

- A minority of students have a less secure understanding of some business principles when applying them to more demanding tasks.
- A small minority of students have difficulty in extracting relevant information to be used in calculations on ratio analysis.

Standards have been maintained in the subject since the last inspection.

Business Studies GNVQ (Intermediate)

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- The majority of students have made good progress in the components of the units already completed.
- The majority of students have a good understanding of the different structures within organisations and the roles played by employees at different levels of management.
- The majority of students have a good understanding of basic business principles when considering the development of their enterprise activity.
- Students use information and communication technology well to present their data and their findings.

Shortcomings

- A small minority of students have difficulty understanding some of the business principles, and identifying key factors in the development of their enterprise project.

Standards have been maintained in the subject since the last inspection.

Sociology

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- In the AS examinations held in 2003, 33 percent of the sizeable cohort of students entered gained grades A-C. 52 percent of the students entered gained grades A-C in the A-level examinations in 2003. A-level grades show a significant improvement from the 2002 examination results. Sociology is successful in attracting a large cohort of pupils of all abilities at both AS and A-levels.
- Students develop their analytical and evaluative skills confidently when considering a wide range of sociological problems and issues, such as the importance of status, nature versus nurture and gender upon human behaviour and social attitudes.
- Most Y12 and Y13 students produce good quality essays, surveys and investigations. The written work of the majority of students is well planned, well organised and logically argued; it is securely based upon a wide range of sociological data and relevant source material. Most students make good use of available evidence to support and justify their conclusions and judgements.
- Y13 students successfully recognise the important differences that are required in the depth of their understanding and the more rigorous analytical approach necessary when compared to their work at AS level.
- Most written work is well presented and it is thoroughly and informatively marked according to clearly understood criteria. Good use of information and communication technology tools enables students to enhance the presentation of their written work and to extend their research skills.

Shortcomings

- A minority of students find difficulty in expressing their ideas during oral class discussions.

- The written work of a number of below average ability students does not contain sufficient detail or reference to relevant case studies to provide evidence of secure knowledge and understanding.
- Access to computer resources is inconsistent and does not enable students to reinforce and extend their research and enquiry skills.

The department continues to make significant progress; sociology has become an increasingly popular option at AS and A level. It enriches and enhances the sixth form curriculum.

Electronics

Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

Good features

- In the 2002 examinations the majority of students gained grades in the A/B category. No students were entered in 2003.
- A minority of students are developing a good understanding of the more complex principles considered in the programme of study.
- They can apply to a range of applications their knowledge and understanding of the properties of components, their function in sub-systems and how systems are designed.

Shortcomings

- A significant number of students do not have a secure recall of key principles, their application in a range of sub-systems and how they are used in specifications for more complex systems.

There was no report on the subject in the last inspection.

Personal, social and health education

Although sixth form students have a timetabled lesson each week of careers education and guidance, none of the lessons could be observed, so no judgement can be made on standards. A well constructed programme of personal, social and health education is, however, delivered in form tutor time and those sessions were observed.

Good features

- Relationships in the classroom are very good. Students undertake the tutorial activities - both oral work and completing work booklets - in a mature and conscientious manner.
- Students work very cooperatively in groups discussing aspects of citizenship and show awareness of their rights and responsibilities.
- They are articulate in their contributions to discussion and express themselves clearly and sensibly in evaluating their own achievement and progress.
- The involvement in paired reading with pupils in Y7 during tutor time makes a valuable contribution to students' personal development.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Personal, social and health education in the sixth form was not inspected as a separate subject in the previous inspection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to improve the standards achieved in all subjects in the curriculum, by eliminating the shortcomings highlighted in the report.
2. Satisfy the statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form and for a daily act of collective worship.
3. Improve the provision for physical education in the sixth form.

Acknowledgement

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