

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

A report on the quality of education in

**St Christopher's School
Stockwell Grove, Wrexham
LL13 7BW**

School Number: 6657005

Date of Inspection: 4-7 March 2008

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for
Education and Training in Wales**

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The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- ▲ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities (LAs);
- ▲ primary schools;
- ▲ secondary schools;
- ▲ special schools;
- ▲ pupil referral units;
- ▲ independent schools;
- ▲ further education;
- ▲ adult community-based learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ LAs;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies;
- ▲ offender learning; and
- ▲ the education, guidance and training elements of the Department for Work and Pensions funded training programmes.

Estyn also:

- ▲ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- ▲ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

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Copies of this report have been provided to the school for members of staff. A copy of the summary report is sent to every family with a child at the school. The school is not required to provide copies of the full report to parents or members of the public but may do so on request. Also, on request, the school must make arrangements for parents to have access to the full report.

Introduction

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

The inspection of St Christopher's School took place between 4 March 2008 and 7 March 2008. An independent team of inspectors, led by Mike Munting HMI undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

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

There are three types of inspection.

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

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

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

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

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

This school received a **full** inspection.

Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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Context

The nature of the provider

- 1 St Christopher's is a day special school educating pupils aged from six to 19 years of age who display a variety of special educational needs (SEN). The school was officially opened on its present site in April 2001. It is a large site with extensive well-cared for grounds in the middle of a residential area.
- 2 Many pupils attending St Christopher's have complex difficulties and in the main their primary SEN is located with either Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) or Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). St Christopher's has a Behaviour Support Unit which caters for pupils with complex emotional and behavioural difficulties or a disorder on the Autistic Spectrum (ASD). There is also a smaller group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and many pupils have speech and language difficulties. The majority of pupils have a Statement of SEN. A very small number of pupils are undergoing formal assessment with the view of producing a Statement of SEN.
- 3 The school serves the whole of Wrexham County Borough; most pupils live in Wrexham, with additional children from Denbighshire, Flintshire, Shropshire and Cheshire. There are currently 223 pupils on roll: 63 girls and 160 boys. Seventeen pupils are in the care of the local authority.
- 4 Pupils come from a range of backgrounds and 40% are eligible for free school meals. This is above the average for Wales and Wrexham County Borough and is an indicator of pupils' prior learning and attainment levels. Many pupils attending St Christopher's have been extremely poor attenders in previous schools, often arriving with low self esteem and appearing disaffected. The majority of pupils have English as their first language, and there are a very small number of pupils from ethnic backgrounds for whom English or Welsh is not their first language.
- 5 The school is organised into five departments: juniors, middle school, seniors and Curriculum Enrichment, the Independent Living Department (IDL) and the Behaviour Support Unit. At the time of the inspection there were no key stage 1 pupils. The school is a community focused school with a hair and beauty salon, café, car valeting business and an eco centre, which all offer integral elements of the school curriculum. The school incorporates the 14-19 Learning Pathways programme for all pupils and co-ordinates the Learning Pathways Enrichment Programme for all secondary schools in Wrexham. In addition, the school supports other schools with enrichment activities.

The school's priorities and targets

- 6 The school's mission is to 'build a future' by way of the provision of a rich environment that stimulates the pupils to explore and discover whilst consolidating on facts learnt, which will enable them to become active citizens, involved in their community.

- 7 The school promotes inclusive learning for all pupils by:
- maintaining a school which promotes the improvement of confidence and the self esteem of all pupils;
 - encouraging and supporting pupils to reach their full potential both academically and socially; and
 - creating a culture of school improvement in a happy and friendly environment.
- 8 Targets in the current school development plan (SDP) are mainly focused on school improvement and consolidation on where the school has previously been successful. These targets include:
- implementing the Raise School Improvement Action Plan with an emphasis for 2008 on basics skills and numeracy, whilst also reviewing community focused activities and accreditation;
 - pupil participation and active citizenship are areas to be maintained whilst further embedding pupil entitlement, environmental sustainability and global citizenship;
 - developing information and communications technology (ICT) and the school website; and
 - support to mainstream schools through the Unlocking Potential initiative for special schools.

Summary

- 9 St Christopher's School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents information about the performance of their child's school.
- 10 St. Christopher's School is a good school which meets the needs of its pupils effectively. The school has many good features, a substantial number of which are outstanding, and only a few shortcomings. The school has made very good improvement since the previous inspection.

Table of grades awarded

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

Standards of achievement

- 11 Overall, pupils' standards of achievement in the lessons inspected are as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
17%	75%	8%	0%	0%

- 12 These standards exceed the target set by the Welsh Assembly Government for 2010 for maintained schools, that 98% of classes should achieve grade 3 or better.
- 13 Learners of all abilities make good progress in meeting targets set in their individual education plans.

Grades for standards in subjects inspected:

Inspection area	KS2	KS3	KS4	Post-16
English	2	2	2	2
Welsh second language	2	2	2	n/a
Mathematics	2	3	3	2
Science	2	2	2	2
Information technology	2	2	2	2
Design technology	2	2	2	2
Modern foreign languages	n/a	2	2	n/a
History	2	2	2	2
Geography	2	2	2	2
Art	1	2	1	1
Music	2	2	2	n/a
Physical education	2	2	1	2
Religious education	1	2	2	2

- 14 Pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding in all subjects across the curriculum. In physical education in key stage 4, religious education in key stage 2 and art in key stages 2 and 4 and at post-16, pupils make outstanding progress.
- 15 Pupils, overall, make good progress in key skills. They achieve good standards in speaking and listening at all stages and good standards were observed in pupils' use of reading and writing skills. As pupils progress through the school, good problem-solving and creative skills and very good personal and social skills are increasingly developed.
- 16 Pupils in all key stages show high levels of motivation and are eager to learn. They listen carefully to their teachers and co-operate well with both adults and their peers.
- 17 Across the school, pupils' development of personal, social and learning skills is a strong feature. Standards in personal and social education (PSE) are very good overall, and these have a significant impact on pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
- 18 Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is good. Pupils make good progress in achieving targets that are set with them in their individual behaviour plans.
- 19 Pupils understand and respect the fact that people have different beliefs and values. They have positive attitudes to diversity and are supportive and accepting of those who are different from themselves.
- 20 The average rate of attendance for the three terms prior to the inspection was 88%. There are a number of poor attendees and some pupils who have not previously attended a school for some time continue to have poor attendance when they are placed on the roll of this school. Attendance figures are below the national average. There has, however, been an improvement since the last inspection.

The quality of education and training

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
16%	69%	15%	0%	0%

- 21 Overall, the quality of teaching is grade 2 or better in over 85% of lessons. This percentage is higher than the Welsh Assembly Government target for teaching to be graded at 2 or better in 80% of classes in maintained schools in Wales by 2010.
- 22 Lesson planning is effective and based on clear learning and assessment objectives that take account of schemes of work and of learners' individual needs. Learning objectives are explained to pupils at the start of lessons and are also addressed during plenary sessions at the end.
- 23 Across the school, a strength is the high quality of relationships between teaching and support staff and pupils. Members of staff have created a caring ethos based on mutual trust and respect. This has enabled excellent relationships to develop amongst the pupils themselves.
- 24 The school has recently implemented 'Assessment for Learning' across all subjects of the curriculum. Pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve and there are good examples of self and peer-assessment. Assessment for Learning is more securely embedded in some subjects than others as there are some inconsistencies between subjects.
- 25 The curriculum is a major strength of the school, with many outstanding features. It is highly appropriate for the pupils and includes a good range of external accreditation. The school enriches pupils' experiences by offering a very wide range of off-site activities. These activities make a positive contribution to pupils' learning in many curriculum areas.
- 26 The quality of care, support and guidance of pupils is outstanding. The school is a happy community in which the pupils are valued and willing to learn. Members of staff know the pupils very well. They show an understanding of their personal and social needs. The school provides suitable support in both curricular and non-curricular matters.

Leadership and management

- 27 The headteacher and other senior staff are totally committed to the education and welfare of all pupils. They form a highly effective leadership group, focussing on improving the quality of provision and the raising of standards.
- 28 Arrangements for appraising and supporting the performance of all staff are secure. These arrangements ensure that the performance of individual staff and staff teams are effective in meeting the needs of all pupils in the school.
- 29 School governors make a full and valuable contribution to setting the strategic direction for school development. They actively monitor the quality of education and ensure that initiatives are effectively managed within the school budget. They meet all legal and regulatory requirements.

- 30 Classroom practice is monitored consistently and the achievements and progress of pupils are effectively tracked. The analysis of the progress of pupils with different needs provides an important indication of the effectiveness of provision. This is an outstanding feature.
- 31 The school employs sufficient, well-qualified teaching staff to enable the curriculum to be taught effectively. Their deployment is planned carefully to meet the range of pupils' needs and staff responsibilities are carefully considered and allocated equitably.
- 32 Robust systems are in place for matching resources to the school's priority for development. This operates at all levels within the school. The school provides value for money.

Recommendations

- 33 In order to improve the school further, the governors and staff need to:
- R1 continue efforts to improve attendance and reduce the rate of unauthorised absence;
 - R2 continue to ensure that assessment practices are consistently applied across the school;
 - R3 extend the range of teaching strategies to match the learning styles of all pupils;
 - R4 develop the use of information and communications technology across the curriculum; and
 - R5 further develop the use of diagnostic marking to ensure consistency across the school.
- 34 The governing body is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the recommendations within 45 working days of receiving the report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. This plan, or a summary of it, will be circulated to all parents at the school.

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: Good features with no important shortcomings

35 In its self-evaluation report, the school awarded this key question grade 1. The findings of the inspection team do not match the judgement made by the school because although there are many good features there are not enough outstanding features in pupils' progress and achievement.

36 Pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding in all subjects across the curriculum. In physical education in key stage 4, religious education in key stage 2 and art in key stages 2 and 4 and at post-16, pupils make outstanding progress.

37 Pupils' standards of achievement in the lessons inspected are as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
17%	75%	8%	0%	0%

38 These standards exceed the target set by the Welsh Assembly Government for 2010 for maintained schools, that 98% of classes should achieve grade 3 or better.

39 The majority of pupils make consistently good progress year-on-year. Data from the statutory assessment and the increasing range, quality and levels of accreditation achieved at the end of key stage 4 and post-16 demonstrate that standards in many subjects are improving at an accelerating rate.

40 It is not appropriate to compare the levels of learners' attainment in end of key stage tests and examinations with local or national averages, since the school caters for learners whose ability and particular special educational needs are not easily comparable.

41 Pupils make good progress in developing their basic skills. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark in both primary and secondary phases.

42 Pupils, overall, make good progress in key skills. Pupils make regular use of their skills in numeracy and literacy across the curriculum. They achieve good standards in speaking and listening at all stages and good standards were observed in pupils' use of reading and writing skills. Good problem-solving and creative skills and very good personal and social skills are increasingly developed as pupils progress through the school. Although pupils' achievement in information technology is often very good, they have insufficient opportunities to use these skills in support of learning in most curriculum subjects.

43 Pupils make good progress towards the targets in the individual education plans (IEPs) and other targets set for them and have a developing awareness of their progress. There are no differences in attainment between girls and boys and all pupils with a range of differing SEN in each key stage make good progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

- 44 Pupils are increasingly involved in assessing their own work and many can outline their own learning targets. They can recall what they need to do to improve and what would make a piece of work better.
- 45 Pupils in all key stages show high levels of motivation and are eager to learn. They listen carefully to their teachers and co-operate well with both adults and their peers. Pupils persevere with their work and take pleasure in their achievements, which they readily share with others.
- 46 The development of personal, social and learning skills is a strong feature of the school. Standards in personal and social education (PSE) are very good overall and these have a significant impact on pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.
- 47 Pupils understand and respect the fact that people have different beliefs and values. They have positive attitudes to diversity and are supportive and accepting of those who are different from themselves, including other pupils in the school with more severe needs.
- 48 Behaviour in and around the school is good. Pupils make good progress in achieving targets that are set with them in their individual behaviour plans. Some pupils who display more complex behavioural difficulties are educated within the behavioural support unit. Their behaviour shows good improvement over time.
- 49 Within lessons and in their involvement in the well-organised school council, pupils demonstrate good problem solving skills and contribute well to the decision-making processes within the school.
- 50 Pupils arrive punctually and settle quickly into their class routines. Registration is carried out at the start of both sessions and meets the National Assembly for Wales requirements.
- 51 The average rate of attendance for the three terms prior to the inspection was 88%. Although this is below the target set for all schools by the Welsh Assembly Government, this figure is affected by a number of poor attendees, and some pupils who have not previously attended a school for some time continue to have poor attendance when they are placed on the roll of this school. Attendance figures are below the national average. There has, however, been an improvement since the last inspection. The school is very aware of this shortcoming and continues its efforts to raise overall attendance levels.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features with no important shortcomings

52 In its self-evaluation report, the school awarded this key question grade 2. The findings of the inspection team match the judgements made by the school.

53 The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
16%	69%	15%	0%	0%

54 Overall, the quality of teaching is grade 2 or better in over 85% of lessons. This percentage is higher than the Welsh Assembly Government target for teaching to be graded at 2 or better in 80% of classes in maintained schools in Wales by 2010.

55 A strength of the school is the high quality of relationships between teaching and support staff and pupils. Members of staff have created a caring ethos based on mutual trust and respect. This has enabled excellent relationships to develop amongst the pupils themselves.

56 Teachers generally have very good subject knowledge and keep abreast of recent developments in their subjects through training.

57 Lesson planning is effective and based on clear learning and assessment objectives that take account of schemes of work and of learners' individual needs. Learning objectives are explained to pupils at the start of lessons, and are also addressed during plenary sessions at the end.

58 Teachers show good awareness of gender, race and disability issues and promote equality of opportunity effectively. Stereotypes are effectively addressed and actively challenged; this is evident throughout the school but addressed particularly well at post-16.

59 Teachers and support staff are very effective in meeting pupils' language needs. For those pupils with language and communication difficulties there is very good use of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and of Makaton signing. There is wide use of incidental Welsh in lessons, making a good contribution to the development of bilingual skills.

60 Planning to meet pupils' individual needs is consistently good and takes account of pupils' IEPs. This ensures that work set matches pupils' abilities with an appropriate degree of challenge. Where necessary, tasks and approaches to teaching are differentiated to address IEP targets and meet individual needs. Progress is continuously monitored and informs each pupil's annual review process.

- 61 Support staff have a very good understanding of pupils' individual needs and of subjects and contribute significantly to pupils progress in their learning and in the development of personal and social skills. Teachers and support staff work well as a team and teachers' mid-term planning shows how support staff are to be used in lessons, giving their work direction and a good focus.
- 62 Arrangements for the development and extension of key skills are generally good. Teachers emphasise key skills at the beginning of lessons and refer to them throughout. This is especially true of communication skills, numeracy and the wider key skills. However, in the lessons observed there was insufficient use of ICT.
- 63 In lessons where there were shortcomings, these often related to:
- the pace of teaching being too slow to motivate pupils;
 - an over-reliance on worksheets; and
 - some tasks being inappropriate for meeting the lessons' objectives.
- 64 The school has invested in an electronic curriculum, monitoring and assessment tool. This is a recent initiative and there is, currently insufficient data on which to base its effectiveness in tracking pupils' progress. However, other rigorous procedures are in place for assessing pupil progress.
- 65 For pupils working at levels below the national curriculum (NC), the school uses an in-depth assessment scale. For pupils working within the NC, progress is tracked against detailed assessment criteria linked to NC level descriptors for each subject. Work is moderated to ensure consistency within subjects.
- 66 Assessment data is rigorously analysed by subject and for differing groups of pupils. This ensures that any underperformance is immediately identified and then addressed. The analysis also informs future planning and target setting. Examination data is analysed in a similar way.
- 67 All pupils have IEPs and targets relate to communication, numeracy and behaviour. Both teachers and pupils know the targets; they are referred to in lessons and used effectively to denote progress in these areas.
- 68 The school has recently implemented 'Assessment for Learning' across all subjects of the curriculum. Pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve and there are good examples of self and peer-assessment. Assessment for Learning is more securely embedded in some subjects than others as there are some inconsistencies between subjects, such as the extent to which some subjects use diagnostic marking.
- 69 The school complies with the requirements of regulatory bodies responsible for accrediting pupils' achievements.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

- 70 In its self-evaluation report, the school awarded this key question grade 1. The findings of the inspection team match the judgements made by the school.
- 71 The quality and range of educational experiences available to all pupils, irrespective of their individual learning needs, is an outstanding feature of the school.
- 72 Basic and key skills are an outstanding feature of the school. The school year begins with a key skills week, which is devoted entirely to the development of these skills. At the beginning of each lesson, teachers discuss the key skills that will be covered with their pupils and review their use at the end of the lesson.
- 73 The school enriches pupils' experiences by offering a very wide range of off-site activities. These activities make a positive contribution to pupils' learning in many curriculum areas. For example, the outstanding provision for extra curricular PE enables pupils to achieve high standards in this subject. This is exemplified by the football teams of the school. The three teams not only achieve excellent results but all pupils are encouraged to take part in the games, and they achieve consistently high standards. The school has a very high representation on the Wales special football team.
- 74 The outstanding nature of the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strongly reflected in the respect and care for others shown by pupils. Other representative features of this provision are:
- the Faith Garden, which has been identified as a national example of excellence and used as a model by Liverpool Cathedral;
 - the very strong links with local churches along with regular visits by a church minister;
 - the quality of multi-cultural education; and
 - the appropriate class based daily acts of worship for which all teachers have been trained.
- 75 The school is successful in meeting learners' personal, social and academic needs. The school is divided into discrete areas, each with its own curricula emphasis. Older students have a genuine choice from the very diverse range of options for key stage 4 and post-16.
- 76 Schemes of work adequately address the range of material within NC programmes of study and the PSE framework, whilst adapting learning experiences appropriately to the needs of pupils.

- 77 All learners in key stages 3 and 4 follow accredited courses. There is a wide range of such courses available to pupils. The school has designed and implemented a continuum of accreditation, meaning that every pupil can be accredited at a level appropriate to their ability. For example, at key stage 4, pupils have access to an impressive range of accreditation pathways that include GCSE, Entry Level, N.V.Q. and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards.
- 78 The school provides a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. Shortcomings in the breadth of the curriculum, identified in the last inspection, have been satisfactorily addressed.
- 79 There is an extensive and highly effective range of partnerships with other providers. Local further education (FE) colleges provide a number of vocationally based courses for pupils from St Christopher's. The school co-ordinates the provision of these courses for its own pupils and for learners from all of Wrexham's secondary schools.
- 80 There are no disapplications from the NC and the curriculum meets statutory requirements.
- 81 Work related education is a significant strength of the school. Access to work experience is overseen and monitored by two work experience co-ordinators. Through involvement in the outstanding community focused activities developed by the school such as the café, hair and beauty salon, fair-trade shop and eco-centre, pupils achieve a very good understanding of the world of work.
- 82 All pupils in key stages 3 and 4 are offered work experience for at least a week. Some pupils in the behaviour support unit (BSU) are provided with work experience for one day each week.
- 83 The school offers a number of on-site opportunities to further pupils' work related experiences. These include 'The Hair and Beauty Salon', 'The Stockwell Café' and 'Stockwell Car Cleaning and Valeting'. These opportunities support pupils to develop their entrepreneurial skills.
- 84 Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is integral to the school's schemes of work and programmes of study. Use of the Welsh language is promoted throughout the school. This is reflected through wall displays and signage and by use of incidental Welsh by staff. The school holds an annual Eisteddfod and takes part in European projects such as the Celtic Connection.
- 85 There is a strong commitment to ensuring equal curriculum access to all pupils. This is evident in all aspects of the curriculum. Examples of this include:
- RAISE project funding being used to target the achievement of children from the most economically disadvantaged families;
 - the school being awarded the School Diversity Award for Wales in 2007; and
 - the school liaison officer supporting parents in applying for financial support grants.

- 86 The school has a written policy for education for sustainable development and effectively promotes pupils' awareness of sustainable development and global citizenship. This is a major area of strength for the school.
- 87 The exceptional quality of the school's Millennium Eco Centre is nationally recognised. At the centre, pupils take part in recycling paper, computers, ink cartridges, cardboard, metal, wood and florescent tubes.
- 88 The school has permanent Eco School status. It provides many environmental learning opportunities across the curriculum such as the sensory garden and the Japanese garden. The pupils make full use of the school grounds and are actively engaged in learning practical environmental skills.
- 89 The Environmental Task Force is an outstanding feature of St Christopher's School. Most pupils in key stage 4 and post-16 belong to this task force. The Task Force has a significant impact on the social, vocational and educational development of the pupils.
- 90 The school takes account of employers' needs for the benefit of both employers and pupils. Business links are a very strong feature of the school and the school actively supports pupils to find employment or vocational training after school. The headteacher belongs to the Wrexham Regeneration Committee, which identifies future workforce needs for the area. This information is then used by the school to inform curriculum planning.
- 91 The provision made available for pupils via Learning Pathways 14-19 is outstanding. The school plays a central role in the local 14-19 network and has been very influential in its development. All pupils in key stage 4 and post-16 have an individual learning pathway identified for them.
- 92 Pupils at key stage 4 and post-16 have access to a genuinely rich, stimulating and varied curriculum. They are encouraged to select, from the very wide range of choices available to them. The school employs two learning coaches who offer very effective support to pupils.
- 93 The Curriculum Enrichment programme is also an important part of the role the school has in extending its capacity and expertise to Wrexham's mainstream schools. Pupils in secondary schools with additional learning needs have access to all of the enrichment courses the school offers. This service is very highly valued by the local schools.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

- 94 In its self-evaluation report, the school awarded this key question grade 1. The findings of the inspection team match the judgements made by the school.
- 95 The quality of care, support and guidance of pupils is outstanding. The school is a happy community in which the pupils are valued and willing to learn. Members of staff know the pupils very well. They show an understanding of their personal and social needs. The school provides very good support in both curricular and non-curricular matters.

- 96 The partnership with parents and carers is strong. The responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show that parents and carers were almost unanimous in their support for the school and its efforts. Parents and carers make positive contributions to annual reviews and IEPs. Comments made at the pre-inspection meeting with parents and carers were largely very positive and supportive of the school.
- 97 There is a very active pupil council where the opinions of pupils are valued and they are given the opportunity to voice their own thoughts. There is considerable mutual respect between all staff and pupils. Pupils communicate confidently and effectively within the council and with adults and other bodies. The pupil council recently took a leading role in an all-Wales conference on pupil participation. The council led sections of the conference and ran workshops. This was an outstanding achievement and reflects the work done in school.
- 98 Pupils are admitted to the school following direction from the local authority (LA). Most of the pupils have Statements of Special Educational Needs. The school's induction programme ensures that pupils settle in successfully. The induction programme is understood and appreciated by all pupils. Parents state that their children are happy at the school. Information on opportunities available and impartial guidance are good and can be exemplified by the very good transition plans.
- 99 There is a high level of personal support and guidance for the pupils. Tutor periods and registration times are successfully used to support the needs of the pupils. Careers education begins at key stage 2 and develops as the pupils progress through the school. All pupils attend periods of work experience in key stage 3 and key stage 4. The procedures and practices follow the requirements of the Framework for Personal and Social Education and for Careers Education and Guidance.
- 100 There are effective links with external agencies. A learning disabilities nurse works in response to the needs of the pupils. The school's Environmental Taskforce makes an outstanding contribution to the support and guidance of the pupils as well as being a community link. This raises the profile of the school in the local community and does valuable local work. Pupils benefit from the work experience and this also helps to develop their confidence and skills.
- 101 Clear policies are in place in relation to behaviour and anti-bullying. The headteacher oversees the incident book and ensures that all noted cases are followed through to a successful end.
- 102 There is an effective and thorough care structure in place. The policies and procedures are well documented. All members of staff are familiar with pupils' personal needs and are actively involved in the assessment of pupils' attainment and care needs.
- 103 There are appropriate arrangements in place to ensure the healthy development, safety and well-being of all the pupils. A clear health and safety policy is in place and there are qualified first-aiders, with a rolling programme of training in place for staff. Risk assessments and safety inspections are rigorously carried out.

- 104 The school has achieved the Healthy School award for several years. There is a strong emphasis this year on fair-trade and healthy eating.
- 105 The school has an appropriate child protection policy in place and follows sound procedures. The headteacher is the designated member of staff and all staff are aware of the procedures and responsibilities. Staff are fully trained in line with local and national guidelines. Pupils feel safe and secure and if they have any concerns they are encouraged to talk to a member of staff. There are links with external agencies such as the NSPCC. Records kept are clear, secure and confidential.
- 106 The quality and provision of individual learning needs for all pupils is very good. Individual learning needs are effectively diagnosed and target setting across the school is a strength.
- 107 Each pupil has targets within subjects and pupils are involved in setting and reviewing these targets. All the IEPs of the pupils are reviewed regularly. This includes the input of outside agencies, such as LA support services and professionals from health and social services.
- 108 The support offered to learners whose behaviour impedes their progress, or that of others, is another strength of the school. The Behaviour Support Unit (BSU) plays a major role in the work of the school, not only for those pupils who stay there for the majority of their timetable, but also for those who use this resource less frequently. There are integration programmes for pupils to work within the main body of the school and also with mainstream schools in the community.
- 109 Overall, the quality of provision for equal opportunities is good. The school recognises diversity of pupils' backgrounds and all pupils are treated equally and with dignity and respect.
- 110 The school has effective policies and procedures in place to promote diversity across the school. Differences of social background, education, ethnicity and linguistic background are celebrated. Those pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are welcomed and embraced by all. Assemblies are used as focal points to promote good race relations. Learning programmes such as women in construction promote gender equality and challenge stereotypes.
- 111 The school had a full access audit completed by an independent outside body and does have an accessibility plan designed to meet the needs of disabled pupils. In its current form it concentrates on physical access issues. Access to the curriculum and to information is mainly located within other policy documents.
- 112 The school has strong links with schools in other areas of the world and trips and exchanges have taken place. Displays around the school also show respect for the lives and needs of people from different backgrounds.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

- 113 In its self-evaluation report, the school awarded this key question grade 1. The findings of the inspection team match the judgements made by the school.
- 114 The headteacher, senior staff and governors have well developed systems to ensure that all aspects of school life are regularly evaluated and improved so that:
- national priorities are embraced and addressed effectively;
 - the values, aims and objectives of the school are fully understood by all and contribute to the very positive school ethos;
 - partnerships with other providers, parents and community groups are very effective and make a significant contribution to the overall provision; and
 - governors play a full and active part in the life of the school.
- 115 The headteacher and other senior staff are totally committed to the education and welfare of all pupils. They form a highly effective leadership group focussing on improving the quality of provision and the raising of standards.
- 116 Curriculum and pastoral leaders have developed their roles well. The management of the curriculum ensures that priorities are identified and suitable targets for improvement are set. These targets are reviewed regularly.
- 117 The values, aims, objectives and targets of the school are fully understood and shared by all. Staff work as a team to ensure that aspects such as improving pupils' behaviour and their personal, social and emotional development are well managed. There are high expectations and commitment to pupil achievement in all areas of school life.
- 118 Arrangements for appraising and supporting the performance of all staff are secure. These arrangements ensure that the performance of individual staff and staff teams are effective in meeting the needs of all pupils in the school.
- 119 The school has very good policies and strategies to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. All pupils are treated as valued members of the school community and are encouraged to take an active part in the life of the school.
- 120 The school has embraced key national priorities focussing on environmental issues. The work of the school in this area is exemplary and the whole community shows a strong commitment to this area of work. The school is fully committed to the national initiative to 'unlock the potential' of special schools by working in partnership with the LA and mainstream schools in sharing and developing expertise in meeting pupils' special educational needs. These partnerships are highly effective and mutually beneficial.

121 School governors make a full and valuable contribution to setting the strategic direction for school development. They actively monitor the quality of education and ensure that initiatives are effectively managed within the school budget. They meet all legal and regulatory requirements.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

- 122 In its self-evaluation report, the school awarded this key question grade 2. The inspection team awarded a higher grade because the school had many outstanding features in evaluating and improving quality and standards.
- 123 The culture of self-evaluation is fully embedded within the school. The school based review is a detailed process that addresses thoroughly and objectively the seven key questions in the Estyn inspection framework. It clearly identifies the school's strengths, priorities for improvement and the evidence base on which the self-evaluation is based.
- 124 The headteacher, senior management team and governing body know the school very well. Governors monitor and evaluate progress and make a strong contribution to the self-evaluation process.
- 125 Across the school a wide range of data and evidence at all levels is scrutinised, evaluated and used effectively. Members of the senior management team monitor standards and provision and develop their roles within the school. All staff are aware of their responsibilities and work closely with the LA advisory team.
- 126 Subject self-evaluations concentrate on improving standards and developing subject areas. Middle managers are familiar with strategies used to acquire relevant information.
- 127 Staff attend Quality Circle Time meetings to discuss school based review documentation. Almost all departmental and subject specific self-evaluations are detailed. However, a small number are less well developed than others and tend to be descriptive in content.
- 128 Subject co-ordinators evaluate progress which leads to an annual subject evaluation and the drafting of subject development plans. These are scrutinised by the governing body to ensure the school delivers value for money.
- 129 Classroom practice is monitored consistently through a programme of lesson observations by senior staff, and the achievements and progress of pupils are effectively tracked. The analysis of the progress of pupils with different needs provides an important indication of the effectiveness of provision. This is an outstanding feature.
- 130 Parents are indirectly involved in the self-evaluation process during pupil reviews.

- 131 The comprehensive and detailed governors' report keeps parents informed of school developments, and parents' opinions are actively sought. Parent representatives on the governing body are given an individual insight into the self-evaluation process by the headteacher.
- 132 The school takes account of the views of pupils during the self-evaluation process through the School Council and the Eco Council.
- 133 There is a clear link between the self-evaluation processes at all levels and the priorities highlighted in the School Development Plan (SDP). The plan provides strategic direction and identifies priorities and targets over a two year period. The SDP is comprehensively detailed and of very good quality. It is effectively reviewed annually.
- 134 Planned improvement initiatives have identified success criteria and can be measured for improvement. They are carefully evaluated and monitored as part of an action plan.
- 135 The school has made very good progress in fully addressing all but one of the key issues outlined in the previous inspection report. This includes:
- a full broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils and the effective development of key skills within the school;
 - an effective analysis of school performance with clear measurable targets being undertaken regularly; and
 - improved management of the curriculum.
- 136 Management of the curriculum has been significantly strengthened through the development of middle managers and a detailed SDP is now in place.
- 137 Improvements in attendance in some areas of the school continue to be less well developed.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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- 138 In its self-evaluation report, the school awarded this key question grade 2. The inspection team awarded a higher grade because the school had many outstanding features in this area.
- 139 The school employs sufficient, well-qualified teaching staff to enable the curriculum to be taught effectively. Their development and deployment is planned carefully to meet the diverse range of pupils' needs and their responsibilities are carefully considered and allocated equitably.

- 140 The large number of learning support staff are deployed effectively and provide a range of learning and behavioural support in the classroom and during a range of off-site activities. They generally make an outstanding contribution to teaching and learning and pupils' well-being.
- 141 The range and quality of the learning resources is exceptional. All subjects and all classrooms have sufficient good quality resources which enhance the quality of the pupils' work. The library and learning resource centre is well-stocked and is bright and inviting. It is an outstanding resource. The information technology department is well-resourced and fit for purpose.
- 142 An outstanding feature of the school is its development of the Millennium Eco Centre. An impressive range of partnerships, a strong vision and committed staff has resulted in a resource which is unique in its scale and ambition. It has a positive impact on all of the pupils who attend.
- 143 The quality and range of the accommodation is outstanding. Purpose built, specialist classrooms provide a positive learning environment. The behaviour support unit and the independent learning department are appropriately designed and encourage inclusion with the rest of the school. Examples of high quality provision include a gymnasium and fitness room, craft rooms, a music and sound recording studio, soft play and sensory rooms.
- 144 The grounds are exceptional. There are two sports fields, an all-weather pitch, an adventure playground, an orchard, a sensory garden and a multi-faith garden. These are all accessible, inclusive and maintained to the highest standards.
- 145 Administrative support is good. All staff are welcoming and efficient.
- 146 The school fully meets the statutory requirements with regard to workload remodelling. Planning, preparation and assessment time is well co-ordinated. This has a positive impact on teaching and learning.
- 147 A range of therapists and multi agency staff support the work of the school. They advise and liaise effectively with the school staff in order to support pupils with sensory, physical and communication difficulties. This service has a positive impact on pupils and their families.
- 148 The hair and beauty salon, car valeting service and café are open to the public and provide a quality training and social skills learning environment for the pupils.
- 149 Effective and efficient use is made of all available resources. Good self-review systems are in place to identify resource needs of curriculum leaders. Senior managers meet regularly with the governing body to ensure that resource allocation is directed appropriately with the aim of raising standards.
- 150 Staff are employed economically and efficiently. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, engage in a performance management process and benefit from well-planned continuous professional development.

151 Robust systems are in place for matching resources to the school's priority for development. This operates at all levels within the school. The finance sub-committee meet regularly to plan, monitor and manage financial expenditure. Senior managers and teaching staff clearly understand the process of resource allocation and its link to school improvement. They monitor and review provision regularly. The success in raising funds from external sources to support school improvement is an outstanding feature.

152 Overall the school provides value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English

Key stage 2: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

Post-16: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

153 Pupils of all key stages:

- listen attentively to teachers, support staff and each other and make good progress in acquiring new vocabulary; and
- speak clearly and with confidence, responding well to teachers' questioning.

154 Pupils with little or no speech make good use of PECS and Makaton signing to augment their communication. More able pupils at all key stages read aloud accurately with confidence, some with very good expression.

155 Older and more able pupils speak well in class discussions; they justify their opinions with well thought out arguments.

156 All pupils respond well to texts, including those with more complex needs. More able pupils show a good understanding of what they have read.

157 At key stage 2:

- pupils can recall the main points of stories in the correct sequence; and
- more able pupils use a variety of strategies to support their writing, including writing frames and close procedures.

158 Pupils at key stage 3:

- are able to recall the main events of both stories and poems and sequence them correctly;
- develop and structure their writing and are starting to write for a variety of purposes and a range of audiences;
- have a good understanding of plot, and are able to discuss what has happened and predict what they think will happen; and

- have a good understanding of character and accurately describe the main features of a character using adjectives well.

159 At key stage 4:

- pupils develop a deeper appreciation of plot and character; and
- more able pupils prepare coursework for external examinations with many very good examples of sustained writing.

160 Pupils at post-16:

- make good use of presentation software to support their work;
- have developed very good discussion skills which they use to very good effect in a module on racism; and
- read with confidence and write with a degree of developing sophistication in their examination coursework.

Shortcomings

161 A small number of pupils in the IDL department who are unable to copy-write do not over-write.

162 A few pupils in the Behaviour Support Unit do not sufficiently sustain their writing.

Welsh second language

Key stage 2: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

Good features

163 Pupils at key stage 2:

- recognise familiar words and phrases and show some understanding of spoken words;
- know basic colours and a range of songs and rhymes in Welsh; and
- can respond with support to familiar question patterns such as 'Beth wyt ti'n hoffi?', 'Ble mae?'

164 At key stage 3:

- pupils identify familiar objects such as food items, different pastimes and numbers 1 – 20; and

- pupils build a range of everyday vocabulary and simple sentence patterns, reinforced by the school's vocabulary booklet, 'Llyfr Geirfa'.

165 Pupils with SLD who have limited or no speech learn to respond in a variety of ways.

166 At key stage 4, pupils:

- write with reasonable accuracy using familiar patterns;
- understand short sentences using familiar words; and
- develop good pronunciation.

Shortcomings

167 There are no important shortcomings.

Mathematics

Key stage 2: Grade 2 - Good features with no important shortcomings

Key stage 3: Grade 3 - Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key stage 4: Grade 3 - Good features outweigh shortcomings

Post-16: Grade 2 - Good features with no important shortcomings

Good features

168 In all key stages, pupils of all abilities:

- are identifying the key numerical skills they will be using within the lesson;
- use correct mathematical terms appropriately;
- use prior knowledge to solve new mathematical problems;
- are developing good portfolios of work illustrating progress made in developing mathematical skills and knowledge; and
- are gaining the mathematical principles to underpin the techniques they use.

169 In key stage 2:

- pupils with autistic spectrum disorder demonstrate good levels of concentration, recall the meaning of a perimeter, measure using a ruler and count the number of sides on a given shape; some pupils develop the concept of area and are counting the centimetre squares within a shape;
- pupils make progress in meeting individual targets with support, including a range of practical investigations that build on their learning; and

- most pupils are able to use simple fractions to describe proportions of a whole identifying halves and quarters, use practical approaches to learning, and grasp the principle of sharing a pizza equally.

170 In key stage 3:

- most pupils make good progress towards achieving a broad range of basic mathematical skills and concepts;
- most pupils apply their mathematical knowledge and previously acquired skills, developing their understanding of fractions and the principle and meaning of the numerator and denominator; and
- a minority of pupils show a good basic knowledge of place value and decimal notation, understanding that a decimal point separates a whole number from tenths.

171 In key stage 4:

- pupils make good progress in acquiring the knowledge and skills required to achieve qualifications at a level appropriate to their ability;
- pupils develop a good level of confidence in selecting the mathematical operations required to deal with particular problems, many able to use their times tables when learning to calculate square roots;
- pupils increasingly use correct mathematical vocabulary;
- those pupils with complex difficulties make very good progress in developing an understanding of money and time, using real money, identifying coins and knowing which are worth most and least; and
- pupils have good recall of shopping activities and use well known items in role play.

172 In post-16, most pupils:

- work towards entry level qualification in mathematics and learn to manage a financial account;
- understand 'income expenditure' and make mental calculations; and
- consolidate their knowledge and understanding of decimal placement by solving money problems using banking advice slips.

Shortcomings

- 173 Pupils across the key stages do not always have the opportunity to acquire the skills required for independent learning.
- 174 The behaviour of a minority of pupils at key stages 3 and 4 disrupts the flow of the lesson.

Science

Key stage 2: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

Post-16: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

175 In key stage 2, pupils:

- begin to acquire a good awareness of science, using predictive skills to identify materials that are soluble and insoluble and recording the results correctly; and
- demonstrate good communication skills, using simple scientific terms appropriately.

176 In key stage 3, pupils:

- acquire a good awareness of science through practical investigations and are able to record their findings correctly using simple charts;
- use indicator paper to find the pH of different solutions and predict which crops will grow best in a soil of that pH;
- demonstrate good communication, problem solving and collaborative skills; and
- carry out a test to determine if fabrics are waterproof and record the results in a simple table.

177 Pupils with autism show good understanding that a sound is produced when an object vibrates.

178 In key stage 4, pupils:

- follow the entry level and GCSE courses depending on their ability;
- make good progress in science demonstrating an understanding of the properties of solids and liquids and the differences between physical and chemical changes; and
- demonstrate an understanding of changing conditions in relation to temperature, pressure and particle size.

179 Pupils with more complex learning difficulties show awareness of science. They use simple predictive skills and are able to use correct terminology from previous lessons, such as dissolve and melt.

Shortcomings

180 Pupils do not develop skills required for practical work enough.

Information technology

Key stage 2: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

Post-16: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

181 At all key stages, pupils in ICT lessons:

- are attentive, show good listening skills and make appropriate responses to teacher prompts and questions;
- achieve the specific goals set for them in each lesson; and
- show increasing competence in using a wide range of applications including word processing, data handling and knowing how to activate and provide input to a logo robot.

182 Pupils at key stage 2 are able to use many basic keys such as 'shift', 'tab' and the directional arrows. They can highlight using a mouse, move shapes around the screen and change their size and colour. Pupils use drawing tools to create their own designs.

183 Pupils at key stage 3 show an increasing familiarity with, and ability to use, the main functions of word processing and simple computer design. They select different fonts and font sizes and edit text. Most pupils are able to translate teacher instructions into appropriate responses on their computers.

184 Pupils at key stage 4 and post-16 develop increasingly more sophisticated keyboard skills. One group of pupils has successfully completed two modules of the European Computer Driving Licence.

Shortcomings

185 There are no important shortcomings.

Design technology

Key stage 2: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

Post-16: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

186 Pupils in all key stages:

- respond well to the work, which is well matched to their capabilities and builds upon their achievements.
- approach their work with care, precision and application making increasingly effective use of a wide range of tools and developing good skills in designing and making;
- demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of hygiene;
- learn and follow appropriate health and safety procedures;
- select appropriate tools for the task, wear protective clothing and take particular care when working with hot surfaces or power tools; and
- work well with others, showing respect, care and concern and taking responsibility for their work and actions.

187 Pupils in key stage 2 demonstrate a good understanding of the design process. They investigate designs in detail, evaluate their work with care and make appropriate improvements to their plans.

188 Pupils in key stage 3:

- prepare and cook a range of ingredients in food technology;
- progress from preparing simple snacks to producing whole meals and develop a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy and balanced diet;
- when making bread and butter pudding, combine ingredients using a range of simple hand tools; and

- learn the names of the ingredients and demonstrate an understanding of how the cooking process changes their characteristics.

189 Pupils in key stage 4:

- use a range of equipment with confidence, identify materials and cut, shape and drill resistant materials using a variety of tools.

190 Post-16 students:

- extend the range of products and increase their skill in designing, realising and finishing artefacts and food products;
- select from design alternatives to create a wooden storage box; and
- communicate their ideas and consider how they could have improved their work.

Shortcomings

191 There are no important shortcomings.

French

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

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

Good features

192 Most pupils at key stage 3

- recognise basic patterns including the recognition of number;
- initiate and respond to questions about time, such as 'Quelle heure est-il?';
- improve their cultural awareness through activities such as singing in French and discussing what French people do at lunchtime; and
- use their previous learning to say their names and ask each other and Rolf, the puppet dog, his name.

193 Pupils at key stage 4:

- are able to order food from a menu in a café situation, for example: 'Je voudrais un croque monsieur';
- achieve external accreditation, including the OCR entry level examination;
- use spoken French more and more in the classroom situation; and
- listen and responded orally and in writing in French.

Shortcomings

194 There are no important shortcomings.

History

Key stage 2: Grade 2 - Good with no important shortcomings

Key stage 3: Grade 2 - Good with no important shortcomings

Key stage 4: Grade 2 - Good with no important shortcomings

Post-16: Grade 2 - Good with no important shortcomings

Good features

195 Pupils in all key stages:

- develop a good awareness of the sequence and passage of time; and
- use key vocabulary appropriately.

196 Pupils in key stage 2:

- demonstrate an understanding of what life was like in the past when studying the Great Fire of London; and
- develop a good understanding that the past is different from the present.

197 Pupils at key stages 3 and 4:

- make good progress when studying the history of the twentieth century; and
- use information technology effectively to record the results of their investigations.

198 Post-16 students study local history and produce good quality individual studies as a result of their work.

Shortcomings

199 There are no important shortcomings.

Geography

Key stage 2: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

Post-16: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

200 Pupils in key stage 2:

- understand how the water cycle operates and can explain how rain is formed; and
- recognise how water is depicted on a map.

201 Pupils at key stage 3:

- develop a good understanding of how people selected sites for settlement;
- communicate their understanding using text and pictures; and
- discuss their ideas and give reasons for their answers.

202 At key stage 4:

- pupils can identify weather symbols and place them correctly on a map; and
- more able pupils have an understanding of the factors that influence climate.

203 Post-16 students:

- demonstrate a good understanding of the different features of a river; and
- use correct geographical terms to describe the journey of a river from its source to the mouth.

204 Almost all pupils in key stage 3, key stage 4 and post-16 have a good appreciation of simple environmental issues. When undertaking field trips, they further develop their knowledge and understanding of the impact people have on the environment.

205 Throughout the key stages, pupils increase their subject vocabulary and develop their knowledge and understanding of the use of appropriate terminology.

206 Map work skills are well developed across the school as the many visits undertaken by the pupils include opportunities to develop and use basic geographical skills.

Shortcomings

207 There are no important shortcomings.

Art

Key stage 2: Grade 1 - Good with outstanding features

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

Key stage 4: Grade 1 - Good with outstanding features

Post-16: Grade 1 - Good with outstanding features

Outstanding features

208 Pupils in all key stages demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the work of artists, their techniques and media from a variety of periods, cultures and contexts. This includes a strong Welsh element, such as Kyffin Williams, as well as other artists including Matisse, Picasso, Stubbs and Turner.

209 Standards achieved in art are consistently good or better in all key stages. At key stage 4, pupils achieve external accreditation, including the WJEC Entry Level examination and OCN units.

210 Pupils are encouraged to use their imagination and practise skills to create outstanding pieces of work, especially in key stage 2, key stage 4 and post-16.

211 At key stage 4 and post-16, pupils create some outstanding work, such as the paintings and photographs for the Arbor Day competition.

Good features

212 Pupils at key stage 2:

- demonstrate their abilities to create some outstanding examples of work, including interpretations of the work of Van Gogh; and
- discuss colour blending and then used appropriate techniques to produce their own versions of paintings using a range of processes and materials.

213 Pupils at key stage 3:

- create their own very good interpretations of the patterns, textures and shapes, based on the work artists such as Van Gogh; and
- discuss their work confidently in an appropriate manner, using an increasing range of art vocabulary.

214 Pupils at key stage 4:

- create ceramic faces and artifacts on the theme of a party as well as large scale three dimensional figures for external examinations; and
- use ICT for research and to help produce their art work.

215 Post-16 students:

- create cartoons in pencil, pen and colour showing an understanding of various techniques and discuss them at a very good standard;
- show increasing control, precision and accuracy and are confident when attempting new skills and techniques; and
- use ICT as an aid to their studies.

Shortcomings

216 There are no important shortcomings.

Music

Key stage 2: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

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

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

Good features

217 Pupils in key stage 2:

- use a variety of strategies to help their compositions and perform well both vocally and instrumentally;
- clap in time to a 12 bar blues rhythm and use untuned percussion to similar effect; and
- can sing both loudly and softly to reflect different moods.

218 A few pupils are very effective at playing the drums to accompany the singing.

219 Pupils at key stage 3

- identify and recognise orchestral instruments from pictures;
- listen to the sound each instrument makes and classify each instrument according to its family, for example woodwind or string; and
- know the bigger the instrument in a family is, the lower the pitch.

220 At key stage 4:

- more able pupils understand a wide range of musical vocabulary to describe different musical styles; and
- pupils listen appreciatively to a wide range of music and describe the mood and common themes, for example the common elements of film scores from science fiction films.

221 Some pupils in the IDL department can clap in time whilst counting. They show a sense of rhythm and can demonstrate this on a tambourine or drum. They are very enthusiastic when using untuned percussion and accurately repeat the rhythm. They can appreciate the mood of music, listening to a selection and signifying with a card if they think the music is sad or happy. More able pupils can say why they think the music was sad or happy and they can sing Happy Birthday and Penblwydd Hapus in tune.

Shortcomings

222 There are no important shortcomings.

Physical education

Key stage 2: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

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

Key stage 4: Grade 1 - Good with outstanding features

Post 16: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

223 As well as lessons observed, interviews, photographs and documentation were used to make judgements in this subject.

Outstanding features

224 The swimming scheme facilitates very good progression for all pupils of all abilities. Pupils make very good progress in learning strokes.

225 Key stage 4 pupils develop a range of outdoor activity skills when attending the Nantyr Education Centre. They participate in a wide range of activities which include rock climbing, bush craft and orienteering. These and other character building activities significantly enhance their self confidence and self esteem.

226 Almost all pupils enthusiastically participate in a wide range of different sports and physical activities.

Good features

227 Pupils at key stage 2:

- make good progress by working hard to improve individual performance; and
- show good knowledge and understanding of different activities.

228 Pupils at key stage 3:

- understand the importance of warming up as well as the beneficial effects of exercise;
- are usually well behaved and enthusiastic and listen well to instructions, dress appropriately for their physical education sessions; and
- develop team spirit during indoor football sessions.

229 Pupils at key stage 4:

- develop the relevant skills in cricket as part of their entry level course; and
- learn to observe the rules and fair play.

- 230 Horse riding lessons at the Llanfynydd Riding Centre provide valued courses in horse riding and vaulting. These sessions make a significant contribution to the self-confidence and self-esteem of the pupils.
- 231 Pupils who have severe physical and learning difficulties benefit greatly from individual programmes and make good progress in acquiring a range of skills carefully matched to their individual needs.
- 232 Pupils make effective use of the soft play area as well as the new fitness suite.

Shortcomings

- 233 There are no important shortcomings.

Religious education

Key stage 2: Grade 1 - Good with outstanding features

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

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

Post-16: Grade 2 - Good features and no important shortcomings

Outstanding features

- 234 Pupils in key stage 2 make outstanding progress. They understand the significance of religious festivals, describe religious artefacts used in Hindu festivals and say what their significance is to people of that religion.

Good features

- 235 Pupils in key stage 2 understand the importance of celebration and know how some different religions celebrate festivals.
- 236 Pupils in key stage 3:
- further develop their understanding of world religions; and
 - become increasingly aware of a variety of religions and the part religion plays in many people's lives.
- 237 Pupils in key stage 4 and post-16 discuss, at the appropriate level, their own and others' responses to questions about life. Pupils describe their own feelings and know the importance of tolerance when judging others.

Shortcomings

- 238 There are no important shortcomings.

School's response to the inspection

The headteacher, staff, pupils and governors of St Christopher's welcome the Estyn Report following the inspection undertaken in March 2008; which indicates that St Christopher's is a good school which meets the needs of its pupils effectively and provides value for money. The school is noted as: 'Having many good features a substantial number of which being outstanding'. The awarding of the highest grade - Grade 1- in five of the key questions and Grade 2 in two other key questions is testimony to the effectiveness of the strategies implemented following our last Inspection in March 2002.

In particular, the school is thrilled to note the recognition given by the inspectors to the quality of the curriculum, which was highlighted as a major strength of the school with many outstanding features. It is also pleasing to see reference to the effectiveness of our headteacher and management team and the work of the governing body. We are pleased to receive recognition for the quality of care and the support and guidance given to pupils, which the inspectors noted as outstanding. Furthermore, our self evaluation procedures, our tracking systems, the high quality of relationships between teaching, support staff and pupils and the schools provision of equality of opportunity for all its pupils were similarly deemed of high quality.

The school attaches considerable importance to the quality of teaching and learning and therefore it was gratifying that overall 85% of the teaching observed was judged to be good or better than the intended targets set by the Welsh Assembly Government for 2010, which aims for 80% of teaching to be good or better.

We were particularly pleased that pupil standards achieved in lessons inspected were good or better in 92% of lessons observed. These standards exceed the Welsh Assembly Target for 2010. Our aim will be to now ensure that all our teaching and learning improves across the whole school.

In recent years the school has focused on improving Key and Basic Skills and it was rewarding to receive recognition for the work it has been doing in this area. Additionally, a high priority has been given to the development of our 14-19 curriculum and our Community Focused Activities; to have these areas highlighted as being strengths is very gratifying.

The endorsement of the work of the Behaviour Support Unit as a strength of the school was especially well received, as was the team's endorsement of the Unit's work with the Unlocking Potential Initiative.

The outcome of the inspection endorses the importance of Assessment for Learning and has rightly indicated the need to ensure that it is further embedded in all subject areas. We must now develop diagnostic marking throughout the school.

The Governing Body was encouraged by the recognition that the training and performance management programme has enabled the staff and pupils to further succeed and develop. The hardwork of the governors in making a full and valuable contribution to the setting of strategic directions for school development has enabled them to govern the school with greater confidence. The governors recognise that there is further work to do to build on the many outstanding features which are highlighted in the report for even further improvement and success.

The school is exceptionally pleased by the report and the recognition of the work of the late Mr Pittaway; who was instrumental in initiating in the areas of Environmental Education, Sustainable Development, Global Citizenship and Pupil Participation, and to have these areas highlighted as outstanding and strengths of the school is testament to his hard work, dedication and enthusiasm.

The headteacher, governors, staff and pupils are greatly reassured by this thorough assessment of the school. This inspection will aid the school in moving forward with our aim to become a recognised centre of excellence for pupils with special educational needs.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	St Christopher's School
School type	Community Special
Age-range of pupils	7-19
Address of school	Stockwell Grove Wrexham
Postcode	LL13 7BW
Telephone number	01978 346910

Headteacher	Mrs Maxine Grant
Date of appointment	1993
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Mr Viv Russell
Registered inspector	Mr Mike Munting HMI
Dates of inspection	4-7 March 2008

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Number of pupils in each year group								
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Number of pupils	0	0	0	0	1	4	4	7

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Y 14	Total
Number of pupils	18	19	32	28	38	23	29	17	220

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	28	1	28.6

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery)	7.9
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	n/a
Average class size, excluding nursery classes	10
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1.1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection			
	N	R	Y1 – Y6 (16 pupils)
Term 1	n/a	n/a	96.86%
Term 2	n/a	n/a	90.93%
Term 3	n/a	n/a	92.70%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection				
	K/S3	K/S4	K/S5	Whole Senior School (207 pupils)
Term 1	91.39%	83.82%	84.36%	86.52%
Term 2	87.37%	79.47%	80.67%	82.5%
Term 3	90.0%	83.02%	90.01%	87.8%

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	40%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	7

Appendix 3

Statutory assessments are undertaken where appropriate and reported to parents. The nature of the school makes it inappropriate to compare results with those of other schools nationally.

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Nine inspectors, a peer assessor and the school nominee spent a total of 43 inspector days at the school, and met as a team before the inspection.

The inspectors and peer assessor visited:

- 79 lessons or part lessons;
- assemblies and acts of collective worship; and
- partner colleges of further education.

Members of the team had meetings with:

- the headteacher, governing body, parents and staff before the week of the inspection;
- members of the senior management team, representatives of the local authority, a wide range of teachers, support staff, care staff and visiting therapists; and
- pupils from each key stage.

The team also considered:

- documents provided by the school, including the school's self-evaluation report;
- a wide selection of pupils' work in all subjects; and
- responses to a parents' questionnaire.

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Mike Munting HMI	Key Question 5 History Religious education
Liz Halls	Lay Inspector Contributions to Key Questions 1 and 4
Trevor Payne AI	Key Question 3 Information technology 14-19 Pathways
Sue Gilbert AI	Contributions to Key Questions 1, 3 and 7 Mathematics
Brian Brayford	Key Question 1 Geography Design technology
Andrew Fordham	Key Question 4 Art French
Gwyn Griffiths	Key Question 6 Welsh second language PE
Paul Donovan	Key Question 2 English Music
Mike Farrell	Key Question 7 Science
Peter Tudor	Peer Assessor
Maxine Grant	Nominee

The inspectors express their sincere thanks to the headteacher, governors, staff, parents and pupils of St. Christopher's School for their help and courtesy throughout the inspection.