

**INSPECTION UNDER SECTION 10
OF
THE EDUCATION (SCHOOLS) ACT 1996**

ABERTAF PRIMARY

**Troedpennar Terrace
Abercynon
Mountain Ash
MID GLAMORGAN
CF45 4TS**

School Number: 674/2057

Date of Inspection: 10 to 12 February 2003

**Registered Inspector: Dr. Eric Peagam
W/200/14943**

Under ESTYN contract number: T/165/02P

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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 LEAs 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:

	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 (KS) 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 some 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

Abertâf Primary School, which lies on the edge of the small town of Abercynon, provides for up to 175 boys and girls aged from 3-11, who mainly live in the immediate neighbourhood. At present, there are 90 pupils, with 16 children attending full-time in the Nursery. All levels of socio-economic background are represented and there is a full range of attainment on entry although this is above average overall. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is about average, and there are no pupils being looked after by a Local Authority. Almost all pupils have English as their first language with no Welsh-speaking homes; almost all pupils are of white ethnicity, but there are a few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds including a small number receiving support in English as an additional language. About one-fifth of the pupils have special educational needs (SEN), including six junior pupils placed in a Special Needs class attached to the school. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes, with a combined Nursery/Reception class.

The school's aims relate to the development of pupils' full potential, through high expectations and implementation of the National Curriculum. They emphasise producing a caring community, including a sense of ownership of the school. Current targets in the school development plan (SDP) relate to improving literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) skills as part of a focus on communication in Key Skills development. Other targets include developing the role of core subject curriculum leaders, improved accommodation for under-fives, including storage for large outdoor toys, and replacing the main gates.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

Abertâf is an effective school that delivers a satisfactory and improving quality of education that is resulting in rising standards. Staff are committed and work together successfully within an improving management structure to meet the diverse needs of the pupils.

- Children in the early years make good progress overall to achieve well in all areas of learning appropriate to this age group. Standards in the six areas of learning are as follows:

	Nursery	Reception
Language, Literacy and Communication Skills	Good	Good
Personal and Social Development	Very good	Very good
Mathematical Development	Good	Good
Knowledge and Understanding of the World	Good	Good
Physical Development	Good	Good
Creative Development	Good	Good

- In KS1 pupils make at least satisfactory progress in all subjects. In KS2, it is at least satisfactory in most subjects. Standards of achievement in the different subjects of the National Curriculum are as follows:

Subject	KS1	KS2
English	Good	Satisfactory
Mathematics	Good	Good
Science	Good	Satisfactory
Welsh	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Design and technology	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Information technology	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
History	Good	Satisfactory
Geography	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Art	Good	Satisfactory
Music	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Physical education	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Religious education	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory

- Comparison of the school's results with previous years and with other benchmarks, including national averages, need to be treated with caution because of the size of the year groups and the effect of SEN on overall figures. Overall, results are improving and, in national tests and teacher assessments, improvement is at least in line with and often better than the national trend.
- Teacher assessment in KS1 in 2002 indicated that overall performance in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science was above the national average. It was above average in English and science, but in line with the average in mathematics. When compared with schools judged to be similar, the school is ranked in the upper 25% for English and science, while for mathematics the school is in the lowest 40%.
- In national tests at KS2, performance was significantly above the national average. It was above average in English and science and well above it in mathematics. When compared with schools judged to be similar, the school is ranked in the upper 25% for mathematics, while for English and science, the school is on the median.
- The school exceeded targets set in 2001, but did not meet those for 2002 at KS2. Differences between the performances of girls and boys are not significant.
- In lessons observed, pupils were almost always achieving satisfactorily and in over 60% of lessons, they were achieving well. At times, achievement was very good. In subjects where pupils do not reach the levels they should in KS2, this results from a lack of consistent promotion and development of the subjects in the past, so that pupils have not covered them insufficient depth.
- Pupils achieve satisfactory standards in the use of the Key Skills of communication, literacy, numeracy and ICT in subjects across the curriculum. They make good use of their good reading skills to gain access to written materials in a range of subjects.
- The school makes good provision for pupils with SEN, both those in the specialist class and those in the main body of the school. As a result, they make good progress towards the targets in their individual educational plans (IEPs) and achieve good standards.
- Arrangements to support pupils' all-round personal development are satisfactory overall. Moral and social development are promoted well and successfully and are well supported by the good personal and social education (PSE) curriculum. There is insufficient emphasis on pupils' cultural development and spiritual development, while satisfactory, is not consistently planned or promoted in lessons. Behaviour in class and around the school is good. Pupils are polite and friendly to staff, each other and visitors. Older pupils support younger ones and show good levels of initiative and responsibility within the school. Attendance is satisfactory overall, with most pupils attending well. Punctuality is good and lessons start on time.
- The quality of teaching is good overall. It is usually at least good and is very good at times. Very good teaching was seen in all classes. It is only ever unsatisfactory when a teacher lacks confidence in the subject and disruptive behaviour is not sufficiently well managed. Assessment arrangements have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory overall. In core subjects, assessment

is good and well used in planning, but it is less well established in foundation subjects. Assessment information is recorded appropriately and is used effectively in satisfactory reports to parents, which they find useful. The school has an appropriate curriculum, which is planned to meet National Curriculum requirements. Provision for extra-curricular activities, especially sports is good and these extend learning opportunities well. However, schemes of work take insufficient account of the fact that there are mixed-age classes and planning for coverage in some subjects is insecure. The school does not meet the requirement for weekly religious education lessons throughout the year. The school provides good advice and guidance for pupils and strongly promotes their health, safety and well-being. Appropriate arrangements are in place for child protection and these are securely understood.

- Relationships with parents, the local education authority (LEA) and the community are strong and provide a clear focus for much of the school's work. Effective links with parents ensure that the school is well supported by parents in fundraising and other areas. There are effective community links that are well used to extend learning opportunities for pupils. The school has a good relationship with the LEA and makes effective use of a range of its services. The school works well with the other schools in the Mountain Ash cluster and ensures good transition arrangements for pupils. Although there is no formal policy, links with industry are being developed through the Education Business Partnership (EBP) and pupils are given appropriate insights into the world of work.
- The school is in the process of developing and improving the arrangements for self-evaluation and school development planning. At present, these arrangements are satisfactory, but significant improvements are planned for the near future. Management is effective, but there is, as yet, insufficient monitoring of the curriculum to ensure that the intended breadth and balance are achieved. There are also a number of statutory requirements that are not met, mainly relating to required policies or the content of the prospectus and the Governors' annual report to parents. The leadership of the school is satisfactory and improving as it becomes more coherent and unified. Resources are effectively and efficiently used to promote the school's budget objectives. There are sufficient teachers for the numbers of pupils and they are appropriately qualified and experienced. The resources for learning are satisfactory overall, although the range in some subjects is limited. The accommodation is sufficiently spacious and in good repair so that it supports learning well. However, there is no covered outdoor play area for early years children to use large wheeled toys when the weather is inclement or the sun is hot.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Standards are nearly always at least satisfactory and in over 60% of the lessons observed they were good.

- Standards of achievement of the under-fives are good overall and the majority of the children make good progress towards the desirable outcomes in the six areas of learning appropriate to the early years. Standards in personal and social development are very good. In all other areas, that is knowledge and understanding of the world, physical, mathematical and creative development and in language and literacy skills, standards are good.
- Comparison of the school's results with previous years and with other, including national, performance is not a reliable indicator of the school's performance as a result of the small numbers of pupils in each year group and the number of pupils with SEN who may be in a particular year group. However, over the last five years, there has been an upward trend, reflecting that occurring nationally.
- The percentage of pupils attaining at the expected standard (NC level 2) or higher in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science by teacher assessment in KS1 in 2002 was above the national average. It was above average in English and science, but in line with the average in mathematics. Within English, it was above average in reading and writing, but slightly below average in speaking and listening.

- When pupils attaining above the expected standard are considered, the school achieves a slightly higher than average performance in mathematics, but below average in English and well below average in science.
- When compared with schools judged to be similar, the school is ranked in the upper 25% for English and science, while for mathematics the school is in the lowest 40%.
- In national tests at KS2, the proportion of pupils attaining the national standard (NC level 4) or higher in all three core subjects was significantly above the national average. It was above average in English and science and well above it in science.
- When pupils attaining above the expected standard are considered, the school achieves an average performance in English and science and well above average in mathematics.
- When compared with schools judged to be similar, the school is ranked in the upper 25% for mathematics, while for English and science the school is on the median.
- The trend over the previous five years has been markedly upward in all subjects, as well as in overall performance. There are some differences between the performance of girls and boys, but these are not consistent and, given the small number of pupils involved, not significant.
- The school sets annual targets based on forward projection from actual assessments and, as such, they fluctuate from year to year. They were exceeded in 2001 in all subjects, but missed at KS2 in 2002.
- Standards observed in the inspection were at least in line with those achieved last year in all core subjects in KS2, but higher in mathematics in KS1. Standards were good in all three subjects in KS1 and in mathematics at KS2. In English and science, they were satisfactory at KS2. In the non-core (foundation) subjects, standards were satisfactory in both key stages in Welsh, ICT, geography, music and physical education. In art and history, standards were good in KS1 and satisfactory in KS2. However, in design and technology and religious education, while standards were satisfactory in KS1, they were unsatisfactory in KS2. These unsatisfactory standards result at least in part from a lack of consistent promotion and development of the subjects, so that pupils have not covered the subject in the depth planned.
- Pupils with SEN, including those in the LEA resourced class, make good progress in the targets in their individual educational plans (IEPs). Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress along with their peers as result of the support they receive, including specialist support from the LEA Service for any who are at an early stage of learning English.

3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum

- The overall standards achieved in the use of the key skills of speaking, listening, writing, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum are satisfactory. In reading, they are good.
- Throughout the school, pupils participate appropriately in oral work in class and older pupils, in particular, describe their work in a range of subjects clearly and talk about what they know and understand, using appropriate vocabulary. Nevertheless, the limited contexts in which they can develop extended speaking skills through discussion and debate hampers the development of these skills.
- Pupils generally listen attentively to teachers and to each other. They follow instructions carefully and accurately. They have a clear understanding of what they hear and follow reasoned arguments, so that they understand explanations well. At times, however, they show a limited attention span and teachers find it hard to keep them engaged throughout the oral part of a lesson.
- Pupils use their well developed reading skills to access material to support their learning in a variety of subjects and they follow written instructions successfully. They make good use of opportunities to research information for themselves from a range of texts and other written sources.
- Pupils write satisfactorily in a range of forms across the curriculum. Presentation is often neat and pupils communicate effectively through their writing. However, there is limited evidence of extended writing in other subjects.
- Pupils use their numeracy skills appropriately in other subjects, when they collect and represent data, using line and block graphs, and measure the results of investigations in science. They show

confidence in using mathematical shapes as symbols in graphic scores in music. However, there is limited use of higher-order mathematical skills to support learning across the curriculum.

- The use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory. KS1 pupils use an integrated learning system confidently and well to develop and practise basic literacy and numeracy skills. They use a simple word-processing program to write simple accounts. KS2 pupils extract information from CD-ROMs and use the Internet to support learning in other subjects. They use simple data-handling programs to display the results of investigations and learn to interrogate a database. However, in a number of subjects, they lack the knowledge and experience to make more effective use of ICT.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Arrangements to support pupils' all-round personal development are satisfactory overall. The school's provision for promoting moral and social development is good and reflects the positive and caring ethos of the school. There is, however, insufficient emphasis on pupils' cultural development and spiritual development, while satisfactory, is not consistently planned or promoted in lessons.

- The school meets its statutory obligation to provide a daily act of worship, by means of a whole school assembly or class service. Collective worship makes a satisfactory contribution to spiritual and moral development, but there are limited opportunities to reflect or to celebrate cultural differences and diversity.
- Religious education makes an insufficient contribution to pupils' spiritual development although in KS1, pupils from other faiths are well supported and are provided with opportunities to talk about their religious practices during class discussion.
- Clear moral values are expressed and promoted throughout all aspects of school life. The school makes regular contributions to a range of charities, and pupils are encouraged to consider the moral aspects of their own and others' behaviour. The result is that pupils are confident in their judgement of right and wrong and are increasingly enabled to consider moral dilemmas and competing interests.
- Social development is well supported throughout the school. Pupils are given opportunities to take responsibility and respond very well, showing maturity and initiative.
- Social relations in the school are very good and are demonstrated in the way pupils cooperate well in work and play. They are courteous, confident and they treat each other and the environment with respect. Adults in the school provide good role models and there is a true sense of belonging in the school community.
- The provision for extra-curriculum activities, which includes after-school clubs, is developing well. These activities, which include participation in sporting contests, provide good opportunities for social development.
- Provision for pupils' cultural development is insecure and variable. Although there are opportunities to explore cultural elements in art and music, these are inconsistently promoted and neither the awareness of their own culture nor the range of diversity of lifestyles, customs and beliefs in society are explored in any depth. The Cwricwlwm Cymreig make an inconsistent but overall satisfactory contribution to pupils' sense of cultural identity.

4.2 Behaviour

Overall, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are good. The school functions well as a caring and orderly community.

- The school has an effective policy and set of procedures to promote positive behaviour that are implemented fairly and consistently by staff.
- A clear code of conduct exists and most pupils understand what is expected of them. Pupils appreciate the rewards system and are keen to gain team points for good behaviour and effort. They are aware of the sanctions imposed for inappropriate behaviour.

- Pupils' relationships with teachers and support staff are mutually respectful and friendly. Most pupils are courteous, polite and relate well to each other, to staff and to visitors.
- The majority of pupils have good attitudes towards learning. They listen to their teachers, co-operate willingly with adults and their fellow pupils, settle quickly to task and sustain concentration. They are interested in their work and are keen to do their best.
- A few pupils sometimes find it difficult to behave well for any length of time in lessons. They become restless and sometimes disturb the learning of other pupils. Teachers work diligently with these pupils to promote understanding and acceptance of school rules and conventions but the flow and pace of lessons are sometimes impeded.
- The headteacher has established effective procedures to deal with pupils whose behaviour is giving cause for concern and who might be at risk of exclusion. Pupils are counselled, parents are involved, and support is sought from the behaviour support unit of the LEA when necessary.
- The school promotes the values of tolerance, kindness and fairness. The headteacher and staff take the issues of bullying, racism and sexism seriously. Procedures are in place to deal with any incidents that are brought to the attention of staff. No incidents of bullying, racism, sexism or aggressive behaviour were observed during the inspection.
- Overall, pupils' positive behaviour and attitudes to learning contribute to the efficient functioning of the school, to the standards pupils achieve and to their personal development.

4.3 Attendance

Attendance rates are satisfactory and instances of unauthorised absence are minimal.

- Attendance rates for the past three terms average 92%. Pupils are punctual and keen to attend school. Registration sessions and lessons start promptly. Registration is conducted efficiently and in accordance with statutory requirements.
- The headteacher monitors attendance and punctuality carefully. Effective procedures are in place to encourage good attendance and punctuality, to ensure pupils' absence is adequately explained and to follow up situations where necessary.
- Regular and effective liaison takes place with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).
- The school has set no formal targets for the continued improvement of attendance rates, but the high priority given to attendance and punctuality is frequently made known to pupils and parents.
- The school complies fully with attendance requirements set out in the National Assembly for Wales Circular 3/99, *Pupil Support and Social Inclusion*.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Quality of teaching.

The quality of teaching is good overall. The uniform, high quality of teaching is a particular strength of the school. It is usually at least good, and very good at times. Very good teaching is seen in both key stages and in work with under-fives. It is unsatisfactory on occasion when a teacher lacks confidence in the subject and disruptive behaviour is not well managed.

- Overall, teachers' subject knowledge is always secure and skills are good. Expectations of work and behaviour are appropriately high and generally very high. On a very few occasions, expectations are insufficient to stretch higher attainers in lessons in KS2, especially where mixed-age classes are taught as a whole.
- Teachers' planning is habitually of high quality, appropriate to pupils' needs and stages of development and well matched to curriculum aims. Good planning to meet the needs of all pupils ensures that lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well catered for.

- Pupil management, class control and discipline are good. Teachers use time and resources well. Lessons have a good pace and pupils are imbued with a sense of urgency. Management of behaviour in general is not an issue as a result of the good relationships that exist.
- Day-to-day assessment is effective, both formal and informal. Teachers know the pupils well and look out for signs of progress or difficulty. They use this knowledge to ensure a good future match of work to progress particularly in core subjects. Setting, collecting and marking of homework is variable, but satisfactory overall.
- At its best, teaching is based on a high level of subject expertise, very detailed lesson planning and careful selection of resources linked to excellent strategies for promoting independent learning. This enables pupils, for example, those in a KS1 history lesson, to develop and display research skills and make very good progress in knowledge of the past based on observation of the buildings in Abercynon.
- At other times, as in drama in KS2, very lucid and detailed instructions ensure that pupils are very clear about what is required. A good focus on the progressive nature of the conditions imposed in the practice activity helps to keep pupils alert. Awareness of non-verbal communication and body language is well promoted through well chosen games activities.
- The very effective use of well targeted questioning, with good use of references to previous work ensures that pupils remain very interested when looking at character description in a KS2 English lesson. Very well chosen resources ensure that pupils can progress confidently step by step to writing their own characterisations.
- For early years children, very good understanding of the needs of this age group as seen in a very well prepared musical activity, enables children to feel confident, while excellent use of praise and positive encouragement helps them to achieve at a higher than expected level. Staff are alert to any children being passive and ensure that all are actively engaged in the learning activities.
- For lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, very good knowledge of their attainment and needs, allied to very good use of praise and support generates security. Very good relationships enable them to make good progress as was evident when they were seen being supported in developing their reading skills.
- Although teaching is good overall, and strengths outweigh weaknesses in nearly every lesson, occasionally the quality of teaching falls below the high standard generally maintained. When adequate account is not taken of pupils' prior knowledge and experience, or new work is not supported by secure teaching of the vocabulary required, teaching is less good. On occasion, teaching is unsatisfactory when an otherwise satisfactory lesson loses its momentum when the teacher is unable to deal effectively with disruptive behaviour from a small group of boys.
- All teachers are very self-critical and reflect on their teaching so that they quickly become aware of any shortcomings and take steps to address them. The result is that teaching makes a very powerful contribution to the improving attainment and good progress seen throughout the school.

5.2 Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Assessment arrangements have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory overall. In core subjects, assessment is good and well used in planning. Assessment information is recorded appropriately and is used effectively in satisfactory reports to parents, which they find useful.

- A policy for assessment, which clearly states procedures, has been agreed and adopted by staff and governors.
- The school's baseline assessment provides early and useful information on individual pupils and teachers use this information to plan relevant experiences and to identify pupils with special educational needs.
- Portfolios of annotated pupils' work are kept to enable teachers to identify levels at which individuals and groups of pupils are working. They also use the information to promote differentiated teaching and learning.

- Assessment is used to measure pupils' progress at various stages. The use made of assessment to inform teachers when planning future work is under-developed, especially with regard to ensuring the full development of skills identified within subject programmes of study.
- The school analyses test results for boys and girls separately and uses the information to monitor trends. Samples of work kept are useful, to both the pupils and parents, as a guide to monitor progress and identify weaknesses.
- Parents are invited to attend two parental consultation evenings, at which they can discuss their child's work with the teacher.
- Pupils' work is marked consistently, often in their presence, and teachers keep records of reading experiences. The written comments made in books and on pupils' work provide constructive advice for improvement.
- Pupils work well during lessons and are motivated by the team point system. However, individual targets, agreed between pupil and teacher lack focus, especially in the foundation subjects and key skills.
- Annual written reports to parents do not fully conform to statutory requirements, as they do not set targets for future improvement in pupils' standard of achievement and some comments, especially those made in foundation subjects, are less informative than others. Parents are provided with the opportunity to write a comment on the report and are allocated an appointment to meet the teacher to discuss them more fully.

5.3 Curriculum

The school provides an appropriate curriculum that meets the overall requirements of the National Curriculum and is satisfactory in KS1 and KS2. For children in the early years classes, the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum for the under-fives provides a well balanced programme of activities, which promotes children's learning well and supports good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes in the six areas of learning.
- There are clear objectives for the nursery and reception children and the planning ensures progression and continuity in the learning across the age range. Formal learning is well supported by well devised play activities and there is a high level of integration between the classes. Nursery children attend part time while those in the reception class attend full time. Good use is made of shared facilities and there are good links with the playgroup that meets in the school each Tuesday.
- The curriculum for the two key stages shows an appropriate balance between subjects and all National Curriculum subjects are provided for. There is good provision for personal, social and health education. Appropriate structures to teach subjects such as history and geography alternately in half-term blocks ensure good concentration on each in turn. However, arrangements to teach religious education do not meet requirements, as it is not taught weekly.
- Subject planning is generally good in core subjects and is at least satisfactory in foundation subjects. There is some exchange of teachers in KS2 for music and physical education in order to make the best use of staff expertise. There are now appropriate schemes of work in place for all subjects. Increasing use is being made of appropriate published schemes including those provided by government agencies. However, these are not always followed so that the planned balance within subjects cannot be assured in practice. In some subjects, there is insufficient clarity about how the programme is to be organised to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils in mixed-age classes.
- The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, including opportunities to develop sporting skills as well as after-school clubs in art and craft. There is a good range of visits to support the curriculum and extend pupils' experiences and effective use is made of visitors to the school to provide first-hand accounts, for example in local history studies.
- Homework is regularly set and marked by the teachers and is carried out conscientiously by the pupils. This promotes higher standards and serves as a positive link between home and school.
- The school is making satisfactory progress in promoting the Cwricwlwm Cymreig, as when celebrating Saint David's Day pupils sing songs in Welsh to English tunes. The pupils know the

emblems and symbols of Wales and learn about some famous Welsh people from the past. The work of Welsh artists is being integrated into studies in art, but there are limited references, for example, to Welsh scientists or musicians.

5.4 Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare

Arrangements to provide support, guidance and welfare for pupils are good and contribute significantly to their performance and achievement.

- The headteacher and staff know the home background of pupils and provide a warm, friendly and homely environment, in which the pupils are confident to approach them for guidance. The emotional well-being of the children is a priority in this school and there is a family ethos in which the pupils form close friendships.
- Personal and social education is provided and good use is made of outside agencies and specialists to support a range of PSE and health issues. Regular discussions on moral and emotional issues help pupils to feel secure and valued as individuals.
- Pupils have open and equal access to the curriculum and to the provision for support and guidance. There is good support to enable pupils for whom English is an additional language to access the curriculum, including support from the LEA service for those pupils at an early stage of acquiring English.
- The views of parents and children indicate that pupils enjoy their time at school. There are affective induction arrangements for children entering the nursery and the arrangements for the transfer of pupils to secondary school are good. New pupils are well supported emotionally and good induction procedures are followed to help them cope in the settling in period.
- Health and safety policies are in place and staff are familiar with procedures relating to health and safety, off site visits and first aid. Parents are informed promptly when pupils are sick or suffer minor injuries. Nominated first-aiders take care of the pupils in an emergency. Pupils feel that the staff provide good quality care and comfort in times of illness or stress.
- Arrangements for the supervision of pupils during breaks and lunch-time are such that immediate support is available when required, and pupils demonstrate good self-control. The staff use appropriate measures to rid the school of aggressive behaviour, including any form of verbal bullying. Behaviour within the school reflects the calm, caring atmosphere created by the staff.
- Relevant child protection procedures are followed and statutory requirements are met. Health checks and safety tours are carried out regularly and risk assessment is made in curriculum areas.

5.5 Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

The school makes good provision for pupils with SEN, both those in the specialist class and those in the main body of the school. As a result, they make good progress and achieve good standards. The school has addressed all shortcomings identified at the previous inspection so that provision overall is significantly improved.

- There is an appropriate policy in place and this has been updated to take account of the new code of practice. The SEN policy is well structured and detailed; it is described in the prospectus and its outcomes are reported in the governors' annual report to parents.
- The headteacher is the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and has prepared and presented parents with a simple and clear 'Parent Pack' explaining how SEN is supported. It invites parents to provide feedback as to whether they found it useful or interesting or would like more information?
- One governor has responsibility for special needs and keeps the Governing Body (GB) informed, but all governors take an active interest. Governors have a clear understanding of how priorities in SEN are determined.
- There are good systems in place for identifying and meeting SEN. These are identified early through monitoring of progress based on the assessments made when children are in the Reception class. All pupils with needs at the level of 'school action' or higher have appropriate IEPs that ensure all teachers have the necessary information to support them.

- The quality of IEPs has been significantly improved in that they now indicate clearly what pupils are expected to achieve and set targets or objectives across the curriculum. There is now an appropriate level of parental involvement in drawing up and reviewing targets.
- The impact of SEN on the whole of the school is very positive. The recent LEA decision to convert the LEA resourced class from primary to KS2 only has resulted in staff changes, but these have been very well managed so that the class provides very well for a group of pupils with significant autistic difficulties.
- Other pupils with SEN are well supported through a mixture of withdrawal and in-class support. Withdrawal support is carefully managed to ensure pupils do not miss the same lesson each time. Where pupils exhibit emotional or behavioural difficulties, the school makes good use of support from the LEA Behaviour Support Service.
- Gifted and talented pupils are nurtured through strong emphasis on creative activities as well as sporting links with the wider community, which are supported by extra-curricular activities. Pupils are supported in competitions and achievement outside school is celebrated both in school and in newsletters.
- The school makes good provision for potential high attainers and has ordered advanced materials for those identified.

5.6 Partnership with Parents and Community, Schools and Other Institutions

Overall, the school's partnerships with parents, community, schools and other institutions are good.

- Many parents express satisfaction with the school and are supportive of the values that the school promotes. A useful home-school agreement has been drawn up which has readily been accepted by most parents.
- Parents are kept informed about the life and work of the school by regular newsletters, by a useful curriculum statement and by informal daily contact. Consultations with staff to discuss children's work and progress are very well attended by parents.
- A successful partnership with parents is developed at an early stage. Nursery staff work diligently to provide parents with information and opportunities to become involved in their children's education. The nursery class information booklet provides valuable help and guidance to parents.
- Parents of pupils with SEN are provided with a very useful information pack, which gives clear help and guidance.
- The school's active Home and School Association (HSA) makes a valuable contribution to the life and work of the school. The association organises many social and fund-raising events, which enhance links with the local community and provide the school with a valuable source of additional income. Funds raised are used purposefully to enhance learning resources for all pupils.
- A number of parents and friends give freely of their time helping out throughout the school and accompanying pupils on educational visits. Their commitment is greatly valued by staff and they make a positive contribution to pupils' learning.
- The school enjoys successful pastoral and administrative links with the two main secondary schools to which pupils transfer. Arrangements for the transfer of pupils are good and ensure that Y6 pupils look forward to secondary school with confidence. Curriculum links are developing with both schools, but are not yet sufficient to ensure continuity of education between KS2 and KS3.
- Productive links have been established with the pre-school playgroup that meets at the school.
- The school has established partnerships with several institutes of higher education and provides training facilities for student teachers and students undertaking nursery nurse qualifications. Students from local secondary schools regularly undertake work-experience placements at the school. Students are well supported by staff and they make a positive contribution to the life and work of the school.

- The school enjoys good links within the local community. Good use is made of the community as a learning resource. Educational visits and the expertise of members of the local community make a positive contribution to pupils' standards of achievement in a number of curriculum areas.
- Overall, the positive partnerships with parents, schools, institutions and the local community make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, motivation and standards of achievement.

5.7 Partnership with Industry

The school's partnership with industry is satisfactory.

- The school has some effective strategies in place to raise the economic and industrial understanding of pupils and to give them insight into the world of work.
- No teachers have yet undertaken a relevant industrial placement with a view to enhancing professional development and enriching curriculum provision for pupils.
- The school enjoys a positive relationship with the Education and Business Partnership (EBP). Pupils have enjoyed EBP workshops, and with the support of EBP, the school has successfully introduced pupils to the British Association of Young Scientists after-school clubs
- Through their visits to a number of retail, commercial and industrial sites, including shops and supermarkets, a power station, a library and a post office, pupils are gaining insight into different working environments and an understanding of the work undertaken in their area.
- Teachers encourage personnel from different occupations and professions to speak to pupils about their work. The contributions of personnel from the police and fire service, together with professional artists and writers, have had a positive impact on pupils' learning and understanding of the world of work.
- Older pupils' understanding of the work of the emergency services has been enhanced by the school's involvement in the 'crucial crew' programme.
- Local businesses view the school in a positive light and are supportive of the school in its fund raising activities.
- The school acknowledges there may be scope for further development in its partnership with industry; pupils' motivation and standards of achievement have been enhanced by the links with business and industry that already exist.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of Self-Evaluation and Planning for Improvement

The school is in the process of developing and improving the arrangements for self-evaluation and school development planning. At present, planning for improvement is securely focussed on raising standards. However, there seems to be a very narrow basis for self-review and development planning which suggests that Best Value criteria are not well met. Significant improvements in the system are planned for the near future.

- Procedures for evaluating the school's standards of achievement are satisfactory overall. The LEA provides monitoring and evaluation reports on core subjects and this information is effectively used, but there is no evidence of other systematic approaches, particularly for evaluating standards in foundation subjects.
- The school development plan (SDP) is an effective working document that has a three-year focus and is based on a detailed review of the school's achievements and targets from the previous year. This review shows that targets are being met, but there is limited evidence of self-evaluation based on wider consultation or detailed examination of strengths and weaknesses in achievement. It is looked at by the governors' curriculum committee, but is largely written by the headteacher so that

governors oversee rather than draw up the plans. However, the GB intends to be more involved in future, particularly with post-inspection planning

- Over the past four years, development planning shows steady progression with increasingly focussed targets for improvement through a 'zooming in' approach. Issues for 2003/4 have been already identified for detailed planning, including revisiting and updating particular policies and schemes of work, the use of a networking grant to promote enhanced SENCO liaison with other schools and the full implementation of performance management.
- Development planning is hampered by the uncertainties about the size of the school population. Funding is an ongoing challenge to planning as is the variable age distribution of pupils. This creates difficulties in predicting and managing staff changes and leads to a reliance on short-term contracts. This is particularly problematic as large nursery numbers are not always carried through into full-time schooling as some parents choose a different primary school because they believe it enables them to get a better secondary offer.

6.2 Leadership and Efficiency

The leadership of the school is satisfactory and improving as it becomes more coherent and unified. Resources are effectively and efficiently used to promote the school's budget objectives.

- This is an effectively managed school, which is in the process of changing from fairly traditional structure of relationships between the headteacher and the GB. The headteacher has clearly secured the confidence and trust of governors, staff and the great majority of parents. The governors are alert to their responsibilities and have set up appropriate structures to carry out and monitor them. However, there is some evidence that emphasis on the 'critical friend' approach has limited the effectiveness of the GB in its leadership and management role.
- The headteacher had been recently appointed at the time of the previous inspection. Since that time, there has been a significant change in leadership style both from the headteacher and the GB. As a result, leadership now promotes a clear and coherent direction to the school so that the overall quality is satisfactory and improving.
- Although the school does not publish clear aims in the prospectus, there is general agreement on the principles contained within the curriculum statement and these are reflected in the school's work. They include a strong commitment to educational inclusion and equal opportunities.
- The school has made significant improvements in the arrangements for the co-ordination of subjects. Co-ordinators are in place for each subject and responsibilities reflect specialist backgrounds. The school has arranged for co-ordinators to be released for monitoring (each term) and additional time for training and development of assessment has been funded from the training budget. However, monitoring of subject planning and outcomes is not sufficiently established to ensure that schemes of work are fully reflected in class activities.
- Staff are well deployed and managed and there is a slim, but effective, staff handbook that provides advice to teachers on management and safety issue as well as describing routines and practices.
- The school has appropriate policies in place to inform practice on most areas of school life, including subjects. However, a number of policies do not appear to be in place, including those relating to bullying, drugs education, pay, restraint and physical intervention.
- The budget reflects the school's educational priorities well including identifying spending on subjects. The school makes effective use of LEA services through a service level agreement to structure the overall budget. The finance committee determines priorities within headings; for example, it has looked at issues of security recently, including the provision of new gates. Cost-effectiveness measures are built into spending decisions as intended outcomes are made clear from the outset.
- There are good systems for monitoring budget expenditure. The finance committee, which is broadly based, monitors monthly printouts with the headteacher. A recent audit report made minor recommendations, which the school has responded to.
- Routine administration and organisation are effective and the school runs very well on a day-to-day basis.

6.2 Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources

The school is appropriately staffed and the accommodation is satisfactory. The provision of resources to support learning is also satisfactory, but they are not always effectively used to raise standards.

- The school employs a sufficient number of experienced staff with suitable qualifications. Careful consideration is given to the needs of the school when recruiting new staff. Members of staff are appropriately deployed and have an appropriate range of curricular responsibilities.
- Classroom support assistants provide good support in a range of activities both for pupils with special educational needs and for others.
- Staff are committed and work successfully to provide a stimulating classroom environment. Within classrooms there are small anterooms that are effectively used for easy access to resources and as areas of independent working and learning.
- There are sufficient classrooms to provide for the current numbers of pupils and additional spaces, for example in the infants' building, are used well. However, the multi-purpose hall is too narrow to support a full-class physical education lesson although teachers show ingenuity and imagination in attempting to overcome this. There are good hard-surfaced outdoor areas, but no grassed area.
- Careful consideration is given to the space needed for children within the classrooms, as is evidenced by improvements made to the Early Years classroom, to provide ample space to teach all six areas effectively. However, there is no covered outdoor play area for these children
- The school is in need of some maintenance, especially the exterior woodwork and downspouts, which are not secured adequately to the walls. All rooms are kept tidy and clean and the school's standards of hygiene are good.
- The amount and quality of learning resources are satisfactory. They are not always stored efficiently to ensure easy access and are not always effectively used, as for example in design and technology. The range of musical instruments is limited and there are too few examples of instruments reflecting different cultural traditions. The school has a large selection of religious and historical artefacts, but these are not always deployed effectively to support understanding, particularly in religious education.
- Where worksheets are used to support learning, these are usually appropriate, but there are still examples of worksheets, in science for example, that constrain and limit pupils' opportunities to respond at length or to devise their own recording systems.
- The centrally situated library consists of a good variety of reading books and reference books and a catalogue system is effectively used to facilitate the task of searching for information.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards Achieved by Pupils

Provision for the under fives

The educational provision for the under-fives is good and successfully promotes the desirable outcomes for children's learning. There are very good standards of achievement in personal and social development. In all other areas, achievement is good. These standards are achieved for both nursery children who attend part-time and those in Reception who attend full-time. The children are given a firm foundation on which to progress into KS1. The ratio of staff to children is also good and it is planned to improve this further.

Good features

Language, literacy and communication skills

- The younger four-year-olds handle books carefully and accurately and they know that pictures and words have meaning. They are learning the basic skills of reading, using pictures and phonic cues effectively and they learn to form letters carefully. The more-able children recognize monosyllabic words and attempt to write using underwriting and overwriting techniques.
- The older nursery children recognise letters and familiar words. They start to match sounds and pictures or sounds and letters. They match pictures and sentences and complete cloze reading tasks.
- Children in the reception class listen carefully and are developing confidence in discussing a story; they express their opinions simply and share their experiences. They respond well to questions about characters within a story, and attempt to make simple predictions.
- They form sentences and begin to write independently with good pencil control.
- Spelling is developing well due to regular revision of phonic and whole-word approaches.
- Children use the computer effectively to consolidate learning and to produce simple information.
- Effective use of Welsh is made throughout the day and children have a good grasp of foundation Welsh.

Mathematical development

- Nursery children sort objects according to size, colour and type. They confidently count up to five or ten and explain how many objects they can see. Children recall numerical rhymes and songs and enjoy simple counting games.
- Children in the nursery are aware of shape and are beginning to learn the names of common examples. They are also developing a good range of vocabulary for comparing objects by size and shape and they are able to find these in the environment.
- Children in the reception class count forwards and backwards up to ten and count up to at least twenty by the end of the reception year. They place numbers in sequence and count from a given number, making effective use of learning aids. They develop good practical skills dealing with number through playing at shops and cafés, for example. They recognise coins and use them in simple transactions.
- They describe three-dimensional solid shapes, name them, and note simple properties when sorting. They relate shapes to objects in everyday life and in the environment. Their understanding is developing very well.
- Older children understand and employ the concepts of bigger or smaller, more or less, add and subtract, lighter or heavier.

- All children use information technology to develop number skills. Older children draw pictograms and graphs, showing good control of mouse and good understanding of program tools.
- Children aged four years gain understanding of basic weighing and measuring through practical activities. They also develop good mental mathematics skills through practical activities.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- All the children are learning and developing good basic investigative skills through a range of planned activities and through being offered good opportunities to explore and explain the world around them.
- Nursery children name animals and their young; they understand that living animals need certain conditions and have common characteristics. They understand that materials have different properties and uses and understand simple forces, especially push and pull.
- Reception children talk about and identify characteristics of living things, objects and events in the natural world. They also understand through their study of their homes and school, that materials have different characteristics. They have direct experiences of working with simple forces, learning to push, pull and change the direction in which vehicles or toys move. They talk about senses, parts of plants, their own bodies and a variety of animals and study life cycles of insects and frogs. They thoroughly enjoy role-play activities based on a veterinary surgery.
- The children have a good range of direct experiences in visiting venues locally and within the community. They keep a record of their experiences through photographs and simple diaries. They understand that certain features of their community affect their lives.
- Older four-year-olds understand that there are a variety of information sources available and are learning to use books, pictures, and television and information technology as a tool for finding information.

Physical development

- Children respond well to instructions and become aware of space from the time they arrive in the nursery class.
- Reception children move confidently and slow down, speed up and aim at a target with a degree of accuracy appropriate to their age.
- Children in both classes handle small equipment scissors and tools, objects, construction material and appropriate malleable materials carefully and with increasing control. They enjoy constructive play in water and sand and use their pouring and measuring skills to good effect.
- They show good control of the body when practising specific skills, using their imagination to initiate movements and make suggestions about improvement of skills.
- All children use large and small equipment such as bicycles and barrels with care. Children's skills in climbing and balancing are developing well, and they make good use of the apparatus available to promote them.
- Children's physical skills are well supported by use of the designated area for the development of outdoor activities and learning within the school grounds, but, as this is not covered, the children cannot make use of the facility all year round.

Personal and social development.

- The younger children in the nursery year play well together and enjoy role-play activities, during which they develop effective relationships with adults and peers. They show an eagerness to explore new learning and are beginning to initiate ideas and solve problems when engaged in purposeful play sessions and teacher directed activities.
- Children aged four and five work well as part of a group or independently, demonstrating good, confident relationships. They know the importance of friendship and the majority are sensitive to others, responding positively in a wide range of activities and experiences.

- They concentrate for extended periods of time and persevere in their learning, seeking help when needed. They express their ideas and opinions thoughtfully, take turns and demonstrate awe and wonder at the world in which they are growing up.

Creative development

- Good progress is made in music with the nursery children initiating rhythms accurately, singing in tune, with good diction and using instruments carefully.
- Older pupils in the reception class are making very good progress, showing ability and enthusiasm to create music and rhythms using a variety of instruments, body parts and voice. They recognise instruments and respond to what they hear. An example of creative composition was seen with pupils effectively working as a small band.
- Children of nursery age make good progress using paint to create representative images such as pictures of characters in stories or portraits.
- Older children in the reception class make decisions about colour and make effective use of a variety of media. These include examples of marbling, collage work, paintings, three-dimensional models of birds and others.
- All children respond well to instructions during role-play activities and movement tasks, demonstrating the ability to perform confidently.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

English

Standards of achievement in English are good in KS1 and satisfactory in KS2.

Good features

- Throughout the school, pupils' listening and speaking skills develop well as they work cooperatively in a range of subjects, and discuss topics and questions connected with their work.
- In KS1, pupils learn a range of skills to help them to become good readers. They use a variety of strategies to enable them to learn new vocabulary. They have a good understanding of what they have read and discuss characters and critical incidents within a story.
- They have a good knowledge of initial sounds, double consonants and vowel blends. They use different cues to attempt new words.
- They understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction and ask relevant questions when studying text and making judgments about what they have read. They know that a list of subjects or contents can be found at the beginning or end of the book.
- Pupils in KS1 make good progress in writing. They write for a range of purposes and begin to express ideas clearly in well-structured sentences, identifying the need for full stops, capital letters and commas.
- Handwriting is joined, well formed and neatly presented.
- In KS2, pupils use drama techniques to bring a story to life. They begin to understand how verbal language can be augmented by gesture and posture and practise this in pairs and small groups.
- They discover the tradition of oral storytelling when they examine where they would like to go on their 'magic carpet'. They talk confidently to the rest of the class with good levels of articulation.
- They learn about a broader range of literature and begin to develop their enjoyment and the ability to analyse text, discuss characters and plot. They learn about different authors and search for information using books, CD-ROMs and the Internet.
- When reading aloud, they apply good expression indicating that they are scanning ahead to ensure that they are not taken by surprise. They show a keen interest in new words and their meanings.

- Pupils write in a more extended range of styles. The majority of pupils take good care over the standard of presentation. They show a growing awareness of punctuation and grammar.
- Pupils are developing greater fluency of writing and begin to use language creatively to express ideas in a variety of forms and styles. They communicate ideas and information in a variety of forms, giving particular attention to words focussed upon during the teacher's introduction.

Shortcomings

- In KS2, pupils do not sufficiently develop their knowledge of literacy terms and vocabulary.
- Pupils do not produce sufficient extended pieces of writing, especially when writing across the curriculum and when they are completing set tasks using a variety of writing styles.
- Pupils make very little use of a dictionary or Thesaurus to improve and extend vocabulary. Pupils also show limited ability to create atmosphere when writing descriptively; their knowledge and use of metaphors, similes and idioms, is very limited at present.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement in mathematics are good in KS1 and KS2.

Good features

- In KS1, pupils make good progress through the mathematics scheme in use. The youngest pupils count forwards and backwards to 20 and know the number bonds within 20. They match objects to numbers to determine how many are in a group. They count in twos and identify odd and even numbers. They recognise a simple arithmetical series, adding in twos, threes, fours and fives, starting from different base numbers.
- They understand and use the language of place and direction and give instructions accordingly. They know what hour is showing on an analogue clock and recognise half-past and quarter-past the hour. They recognise simple fractions and divide shapes into two, three or four equal parts.
- They recognise and identify common two-dimensional shapes and investigate whether they can fit them together to make a continuous pattern. They identify lines of reflective symmetry and make up symmetrical patterns using a range of shapes. They give examples of common three-dimensional shapes such as cuboids or cylinders.
- They sort shapes according to characteristics using Venn diagrams to allocate them as red shapes, round shapes or both. They make a simple pictograph to show the distribution of eye colour in the class.
- Younger KS2 pupils show a secure understanding of place value when they arrange three digits to make the largest or smallest number. They write large numbers in words and vice versa. They use their understanding of number confidently to solve mental and written calculations involving the four rules. They extend their knowledge of the number system to deal with decimal fractions and negative numbers.
- They extend their knowledge of shapes to include the diamond, hexagon, octagon, semicircle, oval and parallelogram. They demonstrate ways of dividing each shape into equal parts. They learn to use standard measures of capacity and understand the relationship between litres and millilitres.
- Older KS2 pupils explore patterns in mathematics and discover the traditional 'magic square'. They solve linear equations by identifying the missing number in an addition statement. They round numbers up and down to the nearest chosen unit.
- They understand the relationships between fractions and decimals and extend this to work on percentages. They understand that multiplying and dividing are inverse operations and use this knowledge in solving problems. They construct mathematical problems in words for each other to solve.
- They use calculators to apply the four rules of number and use approximation to check that their answer is of the right order.

- They develop skills in measuring accurately using millimetres to check their estimation of the length of lines. They draw two-dimensional shapes accurately, setting out angles of appropriate size and using a protractor to check angles they are given. They identify different types of angle and label them correctly.
- They explore the properties of diagonals of regular polygons. They construct shapes and patterns using compasses.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of the basis for calculating areas and volumes when they use the technique of counting the squares and cubes involved. They develop formulae for the perimeters of regular figures. They begin to understand the relationship between volume and capacity, mass and weight and show awareness of the connection between volume, weight and displacement.
- In using and representing data, they show awareness of a range of graph types. They use simple co-ordinates to locate an object in space. They average a set of data using the mean, median and mode, and draw conclusions from these.
- By the time they leave Y6, they have good understanding of probability in terms of events being likely, certain, impossible and equally likely and calculate the possible outcomes of random actions such as throwing dice.
- In both key stages, pupils with SEN make good progress in the targets set for them. Pupils with significant SEN in the resourced class learn to recognise numbers and shapes including matching similar shapes of different sizes. Higher-attaining pupils with autism learn to tell the time, sequence numbers to 50 and sort objects using more than one attribute.

Shortcomings

- Pupils show limited skills in selecting the mathematics required for investigations or for conducting extended investigations.

Science

Standards of achievement in science are good in KS1 and satisfactory in KS2.

Good features

- In KS1, pupils understand that all living creatures need certain conditions for life and depend on sun, air and water. They list what they would need to take to the moon in order to be able to survive there.
- They investigate sounds, by listening and by creating their own. They discover that sounds get louder as they move towards them and fade as they move away. They examine properties and sources of light, including how night and day occur and establish that light will not travel round corners as they block a light source with card. They look at the uses of electricity in the home and consider safety aspects. They construct a simple circuit using a battery and bulb and explain what is happening.
- Pupils experiment with forces to push, pull, stretch and squash objects and materials and identify types of force in action. They discover that forces can be exerted on objects without touching them when they use air to move light materials by waving a piece of card. They discover basic properties of magnets and identify materials that are attracted and those that are not.
- They examine the properties of materials and examine whether they are man-made or natural and what they are used for. They identify the characteristics that make them suited to particular purposes. They experiment to find which kind of paper is most suitable for making a bag.
- Younger KS2 pupils continue to explore the properties of materials when they separate mixtures into their component parts. They separate the parts of dried soup by successive sieving and test the effect of adding water to each constituent.
- They extend their understanding of forces, learning that gravity pulls objects to earth as it exerts an attraction between two bodies. They experiment with the effect of forces and demonstrate that when pushing, the distance travelled is related to the force applied. They identify contexts in which forces start and stop movement and cause changes in the direction of travel or in the shape of an object.

They discover that water exerts an upward pressure when they investigate how much weight is required to sink a plastic bottle.

- They investigate properties of sound, establishing that it travels in all directions at once and explore which materials it will travel through. They show that light travels faster than sound and reinforce this by looking at the time taken by thunder to reach a given point after the lightning is seen.
- They recognise the characteristics of development and growth in organisms for example linking baby to adult, seed to plant, egg to chicken and caterpillar to butterfly. Higher-attaining pupils show good understanding of the nature of a food chain. Pupils with significant SEN in the resourced class show awareness of the needs of plants when they grow sweet peas for Mothers' Day and, in particular, know that they need water to grow.
- Older KS2 pupils learn about the conditions necessary for life and growth, including the role of plants in sustaining the oxygen content of air through photosynthesis. They explore various means of seed dispersal used by different plants as part of a study of plant reproduction and life cycles.
- They refine their study of forces, using appropriate tools and units to measure them. They learn about balanced and unbalanced forces. They identify which electrical circuits will work and which will not and explain why. They draw their own circuits using a range of standard symbols
- They look at changes in materials that are brought about by heating and investigate the factors that affect the speed at which chocolate buttons melt. They explore the different states of matter and discover that materials in different forms can combine in a range of ways. They know that some of the changes that result can be reversed, while others cannot. They experiment with different methods of separating mixtures using sieving, decanting and filtration.
- In both key stages, pupils use investigative approaches to extend their understanding and knowledge. They learn to make a prediction and test it by experiment. They observe carefully and record their results accurately so that they are able to draw appropriate conclusions. By the time they are in KS2, they have a good understanding of what is meant by a fair test. In an experiment, they determine which variables should be kept constant and which can be changed.

Shortcomings

- In KS2, as at the previous inspection, pupils are insufficiently independent in devising investigations and in determining appropriate methods of recording results.
- Pupils have a limited knowledge of life and living processes, as they do not cover this aspect in as much detail as they do other aspects of science.
- Pupils make insufficient use of ICT in science.

Welsh as a second language

Standards of achievement in Welsh are satisfactory in KS1 and KS2.

Good features

- Pupils in KS1 have increasing levels of confidence and vocabulary because of the regular use of Welsh during the day, as in commands, greetings, discussing weather and simple likes and dislikes, and making reference to things that happen during the school day.
- They know a selection of songs and action rhymes in Welsh. They know the Welsh names of colours, count and confidently and name food, clothes and everyday objects.
- Pupils in KS2 enjoy simple role-play in Welsh and are willing to respond to questions, using one-word answers or short phrases. They recognise words in context and make effective use of target vocabulary.
- Most pupils show a positive attitude to learning the language and pronunciation is clear. Older pupils make statements about themselves and topics that are familiar to them.
- Pupils use word-processing skills to improve the quality of their writing.

Shortcomings

- In KS2 pupils do not spend sufficient time being immersed in the incidental use of Welsh language throughout the day. This hampers their development as they lack confidence when responding to new phrases and vocabulary. They do not have a firm knowledge of vocabulary and phrases, sufficient for them to express own ideas confidently.
- Pupils in both key stages do not have access to Welsh books, which are appropriate to their age and level of development. As a result, reading skills are not sufficiently developed.
- Pupils are not confident when undertaking written tasks and are unable to complete simple free writing exercises.

Design and technology

Only one lesson was seen, in KS2, in design and technology. On the basis of this lesson and scrutiny of displays and other work, as well as teachers' planning, standards of achievement in design and technology are satisfactory in KS1, but unsatisfactory in KS2.

Good features

- KS1 pupils develop an understanding of simple mechanisms when they make a four-wheeled vehicle using margarine tubs to form the body. Higher-attaining pupils design and make a body themselves using a net for a four-sided container.
- They extend this when they use paper fasteners to create pivoting mechanisms to make parts of a simple card puppet move, such as opening and closing its eyes.
- They design and make a tube pencil case, following a common design, but devising their own variations in finishing it.
- Younger KS2 pupils design and make a desk tidy using reclaimed cardboard tubing. They assemble these in a range of ways and finish them attractively.
- They develop skills with textiles when they design a fabric glove puppet, using a range of tools and techniques to cut and join the materials. They show good imagination in their use of junk materials to provide accessories. They show some understanding of structure when they use other materials to stiffen parts of their puppet.
- Pupils in both key stages show skills in making, when they create and assemble attractively produced greeting cards and calendars.

Shortcomings

- Pupils, especially those in KS2, do not develop sufficient understanding of structures and mechanisms to employ these effectively in their design work.
- Pupils do not sufficiently engage in designing for a purpose, so that much of what they do consists of working to standard designs with individuality being reflected in peripheral decoration.
- Pupils show limited ability to evaluate their work against 'fitness for purpose' criteria, so that their evaluations tend to reflect likes and dislikes.
- Pupils in KS2 do not develop the ability to produce a design brief and work to it, reviewing and revising their design as work progresses, as they do not have a sufficient range of experiences in the subject to enable them to develop these skills.
- Pupils make insufficient use of ICT in their design work.

Information and communications technology

No dedicated lessons in ICT occurred during the inspection. From examination of pupils working in other subjects, their work in books and displays and from scrutiny of material stored on hard disks, standards of achievement in ICT are satisfactory in both key stages.

Good features

- Pupils in KS1 develop confidence and familiarity with a range of simple applications, especially in word-processing and graphics. They use 'My World' to undertake elementary modelling. They are comfortable and competent in the use of the mouse and keyboard, including 'space', 'shift' and 'return' keys and know how to switch the computer on and close it down.
- They give instructions to a programmable toy in order to make it carry out a series of predetermined movements.
- Younger KS2 pupils use word-processing programmes at an appropriate level and begin to use data-handling applications to sort and display information in the form of block graphs.
- Older KS2 pupils show more sophisticated use of graphics programmes to produce realistic representations of animals. They use a digital camera, taking and printing photographs for incorporation into posters about themselves.
- They extend their skills in the use of word-processing, taking a piece of text and changing the font, size and colour of the text, underlining and making bold as well as altering the alignment. They apply their skills in a range of contexts.
- They begin to explore modelling when they redesign a living room or kitchen and use a simple database to retrieve information.
- Pupils with significant special needs in the resourced class use the mouse effectively to select and manipulate images on screen both when playing educational games or practising basic skills.

Shortcomings

- Pupils have experience and knowledge of a limited range of applications and do not explore the features of these applications in any depth.
- Pupils' skills and understanding of the potential uses of ICT are insufficient to enable them to employ them in a wide range of other subject contexts.

History

Standards of achievement in history are good in KS1 and satisfactory in KS2.

Good features

- Pupils in KS1 have a good knowledge of history from stories, discussion and role-play. They gain a good knowledge of life in the past and make comparisons with life in the present day, such as in their studies of transport, school life, the village and the home.
- They use the appropriate terminology to talk about the passage of time. They look for evidence in videos and pictures and attempt to explain what has changed. Most pupils in KS1 place events in a given story in the correct order.
- They make good use of the access they have to artefacts, photographs and simple sources to extend their knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils make good observations and attempt to explain reasons for events or for the use of certain objects in the past. They ask good questions and make simple judgments.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the difference between fact and fiction in writings about past events.

- In KS2, pupils use a limited selection of sources to gather data and information. They develop a sense of chronology, place events in order and describe advantages and disadvantages of change over a period of time.
- They make simple comparisons and demonstrate empathy when talking about events in the past. They read information provided by the teacher and to answer questions about facts provided.

Shortcomings

- In KS2, pupils do not display a sufficient sense of enquiry. They lack the skills required to make simple historical analyses, make informed judgements and to communicate findings in an extended form. They rely heavily on comprehension exercises and photo-copied sheets.
- In upper KS2, pupils lack appreciation that the past is represented and interpreted in different and conflicting ways, as they do not develop the ability to work with primary and secondary sources. They rarely present independent, reasoned argument when completing tasks in history.

Geography

Standards of achievement in geography are satisfactory in KS1 and KS2.

Good features

- In KS1, pupils learn about the local area and describe simple human and physical features. They locate their neighbourhood on a simple map.
- They understand that symbols represent features on a map and draw a simple bird's eye view and plan of their school and its community.
- They talk about the characteristics and features of their own town and compare it to a similar and contrasting area. They understand that people do different work within the community and they show an awareness of environmental issues such as litter and pollution.
- In KS2, pupils are beginning to ask simple geographical questions and make comments on how to improve the locality. They identify signs of decay within the environment and discuss ways in which the environment can be protected.
- The pupils understand the needs of a town and are beginning to understand how physical features can affect life within a place. They are also beginning to identify different types of buildings and the use made of them.
- They describe how changes have occurred in the locality over a period of time and they attempt to explain why they occur and comment whether they believe these are good or bad.
- They use maps and atlases and use their understanding of symbols and data to gather information. They learn the eight points of the compass and understand that the equator and prime meridian divide the world map.
- Pupils in upper KS2 learn about life in an economically developing country and make comparisons between life in Wales and life in Kenya.
- They understand that physical features of an area can determine what use is made of land and what human and economical activities are developed within it.

Shortcomings

- Pupils acquire a narrow range of skills and techniques. They lack competence in carrying out geographical enquiry, due to lack of regular study of geographical topics and fieldwork.
- They have a limited and superficial knowledge of the places and topics they have studied and show limited ability to work independently with a range of geographical sources.

Art

Standards in art are good in KS1 and satisfactory in KS2.

Good features

- In KS1, pupils apply paint well, practising the skills of colour mixing and shading. They develop an awareness of texture and form. They use their skills well in subsequent work, when they make careful and effective use of pastels and a variety of art materials.
- By Y2, pupils are becoming aware of detail and take care when sketching objects and when drawing portraits of their friends. Many of the drawings had details that enabled the audience to recognise the pupil they depicted.
- Younger KS2 pupils produce work of promising quality, using oil pastels. They demonstrate Pointillism techniques successfully in producing pictures of flowers after the style of Seurat. Their work is well presented, especially their portrait work framed in gold.
- In upper Key Stage 2, pupils study the work of famous artists such as Munch and Mondrian and produce good quality work using their style.

Shortcomings

- The pupils in KS2 have limited sketching skills. Their observational drawing lacks attention to form, space, perspective, shade, line and tone at a level appropriate to their age. They do not routinely sketch and experiment with ideas before committing themselves to a final product, and this has a limiting effect on the quality of their work.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of art from other cultures is underdeveloped.

Music

Only one lesson, in KS1, was seen during the inspection. From scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work both written and recorded on tape as well as other incidental observations, standards of achievement in music are satisfactory in both key stages.

Good features

- In KS1, pupils compose and perform a sequence to represent various weather conditions, using untuned percussion instruments. They differentiate between wind and sunny weather as well as between heavy and light rain.
- They increasingly show an awareness of the need to take turns and work co-operatively to produce music together. They listen carefully and repeat clapping rhythms set by the teacher and identify the rhythm in their own names as well as 'Abercynon', 'Pontypridd', 'Cardiff City', 'Manchester City' and others.
- Their singing skills are developing well, they pay attention to breath control and posture and sing 'We like the weather' with good articulation and appropriate emphasis on key words. When singing unaccompanied they hold the tune well and pitch each verse correctly from the last note of the verse before.
- Pupils sing with enthusiasm in assembly and, in many cases, show regard for the meaning of the words in performing them. Key stage 1 pupils sing confidently and in tune.
- Younger KS2 pupils listen to recorded music from a range of styles, looking at common pulses. They accompany this using body percussion, recording and playing back their performance and discussing what they have achieved and how it could be improved.
- Older KS2 pupils investigate unusual instruments and classify them according to how they are played. They explore musical genres and identify a calypso rhythm.

- They learn ‘Cân Jerry Jocan’ and ‘Merched Beca’ to sing in the St David’s Day celebrations and the ‘Coffee Song’ round which they perform in three parts.
- Some pupils learn to play the violin and make good progress in individual tuition sessions.

Shortcomings

- Pupils lack a number of key skills and have limited awareness of many of the elements of music.
- Pupils in KS2 do not develop and improve their skills in singing, so that there is insufficient progression.
- Pupils have limited ability to compose using tuned instruments as they do not have access to appropriate resources.
- Pupils have a limited knowledge and understanding of music from a range of cultural traditions or the role that music plays in shaping feelings and commenting on historical and cultural phenomena. As a result, their spiritual and cultural development is insufficiently supported.
- Pupils make insufficient use of ICT in music.

Physical education

Only one lesson was seen in each key stage so that there is limited direct evidence of standards. However, from these lessons, school records and the observation of pupils’ physical skills in other contexts, standards of achievement in physical education are satisfactory in both key stages.

Good features

- Key Stage 1 pupils successfully develop dance skills when responding to a BBC tape, either working in groups to represent the movement of groups of dinosaurs or when working after school to learn a range of Welsh dances.
- Pupils move with care and deliberation, showing awareness of their own and others’ spatial needs. Higher-attaining pupils show good regard for rhythm in matching their movements to the music on the tape. They successfully devise and combine a sequence of movements representing a triceratops in various settings.
- In KS2, pupils are developing gymnastic skills and combine a series of jumps, turns and poses into a sequence that they repeat. They perform a number of different stretches and balances, using different combinations of body parts to take their weight. They evaluate and suggest improvements to each other’s performance
- They show ball sense and hand-eye co-ordination when participating in individual or ‘five-a-side’ tennis in the playground.
- Pupils learn to swim and the great majority achieve their 25-metre badge, with many achieving much greater distances.
- Girls in KS2 work successfully to develop netball skills and most participate in the school team. When competing with other schools they acquit themselves well, in the light of how few pupils there are in the school.
- In both key stages, pupils understand the need to warm up appropriately before physical activity and take this part of the session seriously

Shortcomings

- Pupils in both key stages show limited agility and have not developed a secure vocabulary of movement that they can employ in creative dance.
- Pupils in KS2 are content to repeat movement sequences with insufficient concentration on reviewing and improving them.
- In both key stages, pupils do not recognise the importance of stillness to indicate the beginning and end of sequences.

Religious education

Only one lesson was seen, in KS2, during the inspection. From scrutiny of teachers' planning, pupils' work, and other evidence, including listening to pupils, standards of achievement in religious education are satisfactory in KS1 but unsatisfactory in KS2.

Good features

- In KS1, pupils learn about special times, relating this to their own birthday and linking this to the Christmas celebrations. They explore the ceremony of baptism including the symbolism involved and learn about John the Baptist. They compare the roles of parents and godparents in bringing up children.
- They discuss the need to have rules in families and other organisations and relate these to the notion of keeping safe.
- Younger KS2 pupils show interest in developing a family tree. They understand why family names are important and place their ancestors in chronological order. They demonstrate awareness of the value of being part of a family.
- They extend their understanding of rules and authority and apply this to an examination of school and class rules.
- They explore some basic Christian beliefs and some of the signs and symbols associated with worship and examine the title and role of the priest in different denominations within Christianity. They acquire some knowledge of Islam and Buddhism.
- Older KS2 pupils learn about the structure and history of The Bible and that Christians read it when seeking help, guidance or knowledge. They examine how special places affect people's mood and thoughts and examine how they feel about some special places in their own lives.

Shortcomings

- Pupils do not have sufficient in-depth understanding of how beliefs shape cultures and affect the daily lives of societies.
- In KS2, while pupils learn about social structures as, for example, the family, this knowledge is not linked to concepts of religious groups and faith communities.
- Pupils have limited and superficial knowledge of the range of belief systems and religions in the world.
- Pupils are content to acquire and record factual information but do not relate this to value systems and beliefs, so that their spiritual and cultural development is insufficiently supported by religious education.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress Since the Last Inspection

The school was last inspected in the spring term 1998 and the inspection report identified key issues for action, covering the need to:

- raise standards in design and technology, geography, history and information technology
- improve the quality of whole-school curriculum planning by devising and implementing schemes of work in all subjects;
- improve the quality of teachers' weekly and termly planning;
- devise and implement consistently a behaviour management policy throughout the school;
- monitor patterns of absence closely and work with parents to reduce the number of short, but frequent, absences of some pupils;

- continue to develop assessment throughout the school and make more use of the information gathered to inform curriculum planning and identify targets for development.

The school has addressed these issues through post-inspection action and school development planning and although much remains to be done, it has made satisfactory progress overall.

- Standards are now satisfactory in geography, history and information technology and in design and technology in KS1. However, in religious education, previously borderline standards at KS2 have been insufficiently addressed and are now unsatisfactory.
- There are now schemes of work for all subjects and these have supported improvements in teachers' planning, although in a number of subjects, these are insufficiently followed.
- There are good arrangements for promoting good behaviour and attendance is appropriately monitored.
- Assessment arrangements are satisfactory, the positive marking policy is in place, increasingly effective use is being made of the information to set and monitor targets and parents find the reporting systems helpful.

Other improvements made as a result of SDP implementation include:

- higher attainment in core subjects; the school regularly sets new record levels;
- establishing more structured, coherent and professional leadership and management;
- strengthening the role of subject co-ordinators, particularly in core subjects;
- good improvement in the facilities for early years, including a secure play area;
- overall improvements to security to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils.

8.2 Key Issues for Action

In order further to enhance the quality of education and to continue to raise the educational standards achieved there is a need to:

- improve standards in design and technology and religious education in KS2, through more effective promotion of the subjects and, in the case of religious education, ensuring that it is taught weekly throughout the year;
- ensure that schemes of work are adequately planned to secure continuity and progression for all pupils in classes where there is more than one year group;
- ensure that teachers' planning and the outcomes are monitored to ensure that they adequately reflect the schemes of work in all subjects;
- make more effective use of available data to measure and report school performance, including involving governors, parents and, where appropriate, pupils in the self-review process and ensure that the information gained is fully and effectively used in school improvement planning;
- address all shortcomings identified in subjects and aspects of the school that are otherwise satisfactory particularly those relating to statutory requirements.
- Improve provision for pupils' cultural development.

APPENDIX

A. Basic Information About the School

Name of School	Abertâf Primary school
School type	Community Primary with Nursery
Age-range of pupils	3-11
Address of school	Troedpennar Terrace Abercynon Mountain Ash Mid-Glamorgan
Post-Code	CF45 4TS
Telephone Number	O1443 740265
Headteacher	Mrs. M. Locke
Date of appointment	October 1997
Chair of Appropriate Authority	Mr. S. Gregory
Registered Inspector	Dr Eric Peagam
Dates of inspection	From: 7.4.03 To: 9.4.03

B. School Data and Indicators

Number of pupils in each year group										
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total	
Number of pupils	16	12	13	15	19	9	16	6	106	
Including 6 pupils in the unit										
Total number of teachers				Full-time			Part-time		Full-time equivalent (fte)	
Number of teachers	6			-		6				

Staffing information	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding Nursery)	19:1
Average teaching group size	26
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1.2:1
Pupil :adult ratio in special classes	2:1
Pupil :adult ratio in Nursery	14:1

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>					
Term	Nursery	Reception	KS1	KS2	Whole School
Spring 2002	92.6	93.2	93.3	94.1	93.6
Summer 2002	89.8	92	91.6	92.1	91.9
Autumn 2002	88.9	92.5	91.8	92.2	91.6

<i>Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection.</i>	0
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C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

END OF KEY STAGE 1: 2002

National Curriculum Assessment KS 1 Results: 2002 (Wales 2001)			Number of pupils in Y2: 13						
Percentage of pupils at each level			D	A	W	1	2	3	4+
ENGLISH:	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	8	77	15	0
		National	0	0	4	13	62	21	0
EN: Reading	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	8	54	38	0
		National	0	0	4	13	54	29	0
EN: Writing	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	8	92	0	0
		National	0	0	5	13	70	12	0
EN: Speaking and listening	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	25	69	15	0
		National	0	0	3	11	63	23	0
MATHEMATICS	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	15	54	31	0
		National	0	0	2	9	60	29	0
SCIENCE	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	0	100	0	0
		National	0	0	2	10	67	21	0

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment

In the school:	85	In Wales:	81
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D Pupils who have been disapplied from the statutory arrangements

W Pupils who are working towards level 1

END OF KEY STAGE 2: 2002

National Curriculum Assessment KS 2 Results: 2002 (Wales 2001)			Number of pupils in Y6: 16										
Percentage of pupils at each level			D	A	N	B	W	1	2	3	4	5	6
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0		0	0	6	13	50	31	0
		National	0	0	1		0	1	6	19	48	25	0
	Test/Task	School	0	0	0	0			6	13	50	31	
		National	0	2	2	0			4	14	47	31	
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0		0	0	0	19	38	43	0
		National	0	0	1		0	1	4	19	47	28	0
	Test/Task	School	0	0	0	0			0	13	38	50	
		National	0	2	1	1			4	18	42	32	
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0		0	0	0	25	44	31	0
		National	0	0	1		0	1	3	15	52	29	0
	Test/Task	School	0	0	0	0			0	13	56	31	
		National	0	2	0	1			2	13	51	31	

D Pupils who are excepted under statutory arrangements from part or all of the National Curriculum

A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence

N Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence

B Pupils not entered for the tests because they are working outside the set levels of the tests

W Pupils who are working towards level 1

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school:	75	In the school:	81
In Wales:	68	In Wales:	68

D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection

The inspection was carried out by a team of three inspectors over a period of three days, and the report was based on evidence from:

- pre-inspection meetings held with the headteacher, staff and the governing body;
- the analysis of 27 returned parents' questionnaires and a meeting with 18 parents;
- the observation of 29 lessons or part lessons, including sessions of instrumental tuition in music, with work in each class being observed by at least 2 inspectors;
- a scrutiny of pupils' work and hearing pupils read;
- an examination of assessment records and reports to parents;
- observation of registration procedures;
- the scrutiny of school documentation, teachers' plans and assessment records;
- observation of pupils' behaviour in and around the school at break-times, lunch-times and before and after school;
- attendance at assemblies;
- discussions with the headteacher and other staff;
- post inspection meetings with senior management and governing body.

E. Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team

Inspector	Type	Aspect Responsibilities	Subjects
Dr E Peagam	RgI	Standards of achievement Key Skills Quality of teaching Curriculum Special educational needs Self-evaluation, Leadership and efficiency	mathematics science design and technology information technology physical education music religious education
Mrs. J. Warr	Lay	Attendance Behaviour, Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions Partnership with industry	
Mrs. S. Clough	Team	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Assessment, recording and reporting Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Resources	under-fives English Welsh geography history art

The visiting inspectors wish to thank the governors, the head and all the staff for the co-operation and courtesy they received during the inspection.