

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

***Bryn Celynnog Comprehensive School  
Penycoedcae Road  
Beddau  
Pontypridd***

***School Number: 674-4019***

***Date of Inspection: 3-7 February 2003***

***By:***

***Miss Glynis Owen  
Registered Inspector***

***Date: 24 March 2003***

***Under Estyn Contract Number: CT28/02S***

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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.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS IN COMMON USE

A	Advanced
ACCAC	Qualifications Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales
AS	Advanced Subsidiary
CAD	Computer-aided Design
CAM	Computer-aided Manufacture
CASE	Cognitive Acceleration Through Science Education
CATs	Cognitive Abilities Tests
CoEA	Certificate of Educational Achievement
EBP	Education Business Partnership
EWS	Education Welfare Service
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
INSET	In-service Training
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
KS	Key Stage
LSAs	Learning Support Assistants
NC	National Curriculum
NQTs	Newly Qualified Teachers
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
PSE	Personal and Social Education
RoA	Records of Achievement
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SMT	Senior Management Team
SDP	School Development Plan
UA	Unitary Authority
WRE	Work-Related Education
Y1-Y13	Year 1 - Year 13

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## 1. CONTEXT

### **The school and its priorities**

Bryn Celynnog Comprehensive School is an 11-18, mixed community school, situated in the village of Beddau, near Pontypridd, in Rhondda Cynon Taff. There are 1386 pupils on roll, including 240 in the sixth form. These figures are slightly lower than those at the time of the last inspection. There are currently just over 50 more boys than girls at the school.

Pupils come from Beddau and the surrounding area, including the villages of Tonteg and Church Village. Formerly a mining area, it is now largely a residential area, with 'commuting' to places of employment in Cardiff and along the M4 corridor. Pupils come from the whole range of socio-economic circumstances, though the proportion entitled to free school meals (14 per cent) is lower than the national average of 20 per cent.

Pupils also represent the full range of ability, though there is a smaller than average proportion of the highest attainers and the literacy skills of a small but significant minority are under-developed, particularly in the upper part of the school. The school is resourced by the Unitary Authority (UA) for pupils with physical and sensory impairment. Thirty-six pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN), an above average proportion therefore, and a further 141 pupils have been identified as needing some support. A very small number of pupils do not have English as their first language.

The school aims to "develop the 'whole' person so that each student acquires an individual collection of knowledge, skills, experiences and attitudes which will provide support in the next stage of their life, whatever that may involve". It has specific plans and policies in order to try to achieve these aims.

The headteacher, deputy headteacher, one assistant headteacher and the bursar were in post at the time of the last inspection. Four other assistant headteachers were appointed in September.

## 2. MAIN FINDINGS

### **The main findings of the report**

Bryn Celynnog Comprehensive School offers pupils many opportunities to develop academically, personally and socially. It is an inclusive and friendly community where pupils have much good teaching, a wide choice of examination courses and extra-curricular activities and strong pastoral support.

### **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED**

Standards are at least satisfactory in virtually every subject and key stage and more often good. Pupils' progress accelerates as they move up through the school and standards in the sixth form are good in nearly all subjects. Examination results at the end of Key Stage (KS) 3 and KS4 have been close to national averages in recent years, which, in relation to pupils' abilities, represent a measure of progress, in line with the judgements of the inspection. Access to the sixth form is open and so there has been greater variation in results from year to year.

**Good features**

- Standards were at least satisfactory in nearly all classes (98 per cent) observed during the inspection and good or very good in 61 per cent.
- Standards are at least good in all key stages in the National Curriculum (NC) subjects of mathematics, Welsh, history, geography, modern foreign languages, art, physical education and religious studies.
- The most able pupils have performed well in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations, with a significantly high proportion of grades A\* and A.
- Pupils with SEN, taught in small classes or with learning support, achieve well.
- When teaching is good or very good, pupils make considerable progress in lessons.

**Shortcomings**

- Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) at KS3 and in ICT across the curriculum are unsatisfactory.
- At KS3 in particular, some pupils do not make maximum progress in some mixed ability classes because work is not sufficiently adapted to the needs of differing abilities and aptitudes.
- Boys achieve less well than girls, as nationally. A significant minority of middle to lower ability boys do not have a sufficiently positive attitude to learning.
- Although attendance overall has improved, sporadic absence hinders the progress of a significant minority of pupils.
- Pupils' key skills are not promoted sufficiently across the curriculum.

**Standards in key skills across the curriculum**

Listening	Satisfactory
Speaking	Satisfactory
Reading	Satisfactory
Writing	Satisfactory
Numeracy	Satisfactory
ICT	Unsatisfactory

**Standards in subjects**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>KS3</b>	<b>KS4</b>	<b>Sixth Form</b>
English	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
Mathematics	Good	Good	Very Good
Science	Good	Satisfactory	Physics Good Chemistry Good Biology Satisfactory
Welsh	Good	Good	Good
Design and technology	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory
ICT	Unsatisfactory	Very Good	Good
History	Good	Good	Good
Geography	Good	Good	Good
Modern foreign languages	Good	Good	Good
Art	Good	Good	Good
Music	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Physical education	Good	Very Good	Good
Religious education	Good	Satisfactory	-
Religious studies	-	Good	Good
Business and communication systems	-	Good	Good
Child development	-	Satisfactory	-
Drama	-	Satisfactory	-
Economics	-	-	Good
Home economics (Food)	Good	Good	-
Catering	-	Satisfactory	-
Textiles	-	-	Good
Media studies	-	Good	Good
Personal and social education	Good	Good	-
Psychology	-	-	Good
Sociology	-	-	Satisfactory
GNVQ Engineering	-	-	Satisfactory
Health and social care	-	-	Int. Satisfactory Adv. Good
Leisure and tourism	-	-	Good

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

Teachers are well qualified, caring and generous in the time they give to individual pupils and to extra-curricular activities. Pupils receive much good teaching in class but they do not always respond by being actively engaged in following up the work done in class. In most extra-curricular opportunities they respond well. The school has received several national awards for the programme it offers and for curricular developments.

**Good features**

- Teaching was at least satisfactory in virtually all classes observed (99 per cent), good in 53 per cent and very good in a further 11 per cent. These are good figures and an improvement on those of the last inspection.
- The school offers a wide range of examination courses at KS4 and in the sixth form, some in conjunction with local schools and colleges.

- The links with primary schools are very good and provide continuity in the curriculum as well as ease of transition.
- Equally, there are close links with higher education institutions, for students' studies after leaving school.
- Close links with the community and industry enhance the educational experience which pupils receive.
- The provision and support given to pupils with SEN enables them to make good progress and integrate well into the school community.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are insufficient classroom opportunities for independent learning and research. The lack of library provision and difficulty of access to ICT facilities compound this situation. Sixth formers have insufficient provision for independent study in school.
- The behaviour of a small minority of pupils can disrupt the learning of the class, particularly in Year (Y) 9.
- The day-to-day marking of pupils' work is inconsistent between and within departments and reports to parents, whilst provided three times a year, do not give adequate information on progress in each subject.
- The role of the form tutor is underdeveloped in monitoring pupils' progress.

### **THE SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF PUPILS**

The school's aim of developing the 'whole person' is reflected in the care shown to individuals, the good relationships within the school and the integration of all pupils. Much time is spent on managing the behaviour of individuals and supporting them, with success. The school is a happy and friendly community. However, there is some lack of rigour throughout the school in preparing pupils for the world of work by enforcing high standards of dress, time-keeping, and a litter-free environment.

### **Good features**

- The large majority of pupils behave well and are polite and courteous to visitors.
- Sixth formers are mature and responsible, with many opportunities to develop leadership skills.
- The school council gives pupils of all ages the opportunity to make and communicate decisions.
- The personal and social education (PSE) programme is well planned and generally well delivered.
- The system of rewards and sanctions is clear, including a 'Time Out' centre which meets particular needs.
- Pupils at KS4 who are disaffected have the provision of an alternative curriculum, for which the school has won a national award.
- Access to outside agencies is good, including a counselling service on site.
- Emphasis on care of the environment has resulted in the school being nominated an 'Eco school'.

- Among the many extra-curricular activities, the Eisteddfod gives pupils an awareness of their cultural traditions.
- Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced through a good input from religious education and from some thoughtful assemblies observed.

### **Shortcomings**

- Time at the start of the day, with form tutors, is not always used well by staff to support pupils' personal development and learning, and to reinforce the school's expectations of pupils.
- Statutory requirements are not met with regard to the daily act of collective worship for all pupils and religious education for sixth formers.

## **LEADERSHIP AND EFFICIENCY**

The school is at the forefront of national educational initiatives and has been pro-active in setting up and acquiring funding for many innovative developments. It also has very efficient management systems, recognised in the awarding of the Charter Mark. Self-evaluation is strong, development planning is comprehensive and communication systems are good. However, practice is not yet as consistently good as planning, and the considerable turn-over of staff has not helped to promote consistency.

### **Good features**

- The headteacher has a clear vision of educational priorities and a concern for the development of the 'whole person' and of an inclusive community.
- The senior management team (SMT) has clearly defined responsibilities and works well as a team.
- Senior management has strong support from governors who are fully involved in planning, monitoring and evaluating performance.
- There are good links between senior and middle management to oversee the work done in departments and in pastoral teams.
- Analysis of whole-school data is good.
- The quality of documentation about the school and newsletters to parents is good.
- The school has an open-door style of management which means that it is well-informed of issues to be resolved and parents and visitors are welcomed.
- Teachers are well qualified and deployed effectively to teach their subject specialism.
- Professional development, and support for students and newly qualified teachers are good.
- The school has made the learning environment inside the school as visually attractive as possible.
- Financial planning has resulted in a surplus each year. The latest auditor's report found control procedures in most areas effective and the few recommendations have been implemented.

### **Shortcomings**

- The monitoring of whole-school issues by senior management, heads of department and heads of year is not yet fully effective in eliminating shortcomings.
- Some organisational procedures need tightening.
- Progress on the key issues from the last inspection has been variable and some remain issues to be resolved, such as ICT assessment, the achievement of boys, and the marking of homework.
- A few health and safety issues were reported to the school.

### **3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **3.1 Standards Achieved in Subjects and Areas of Learning**

Standards are at least satisfactory in virtually every subject and key stage and more often good. Pupils' progress accelerates as they move up through the school and standards in the sixth form are good in nearly all subjects.

At KS3, standards are good in mathematics, science, Welsh, history, geography, modern foreign languages, art, physical education, religious education, home economics – food and PSE. They are satisfactory in English, design and technology and music. Standards in information technology are unsatisfactory.

In the NC tests at the end of KS3 in 2002, the percentage of pupils reaching at least level five (48 per cent) was just below the national average and above the local average. It is also average for all English speaking schools. Results in science were good, above average in all comparisons, including schools with a similar intake. Results in mathematics were about average but results in English were well below average, mostly due to the relatively low performance of girls. Boys also outperformed girls in mathematics and science in this particular year group.

At KS4, standards are very good in information technology and physical education. They are good in mathematics, design and technology, Welsh, history, geography, modern foreign languages, art, music, religious studies, home economics (food), business and communication systems, media studies and PSE. Standards are satisfactory in English, science, religious education, drama, child development, and catering. In no subject are standards unsatisfactory.

Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were close to national averages and, in relation to pupils' abilities represent a measure of progress. The percentage of pupils gaining at least five subjects across the full range of grades (A\*-G) was in line with the national figure (85 per cent), as was the percentage leaving school with qualifications (95 per cent). At the higher grades (A\*-C), the percentage was just below the national figure but above that locally. More significantly, the proportion of top grades (A\* and A) reflects a considerable measure of progress in relation to pupils' abilities. Results in mathematics were good and above the national average. Results in English and science were just below, but above the local average. The percentage of pupils gaining a grade A\*-C in all three of these core subjects was good; above the percentage nationally and above that of schools of a similar intake. Results in several foundation subjects have also been good; in geography, Welsh and physical education in particular.

In the sixth form standards are very good in mathematics. They are good in the vast majority of subjects: English, physics, chemistry, information technology, Welsh, history, geography, modern foreign languages, art, music, physical education, religious studies, media studies, business and communication systems, economics, psychology, textiles, leisure and tourism,

and advanced health and social care. In all other subjects, standards are satisfactory: biology, design and technology, sociology, engineering and intermediate health and social care.

As there is open access to the sixth form, results fluctuate somewhat from year to year, depending on the ability of the cohort. In 2001, results at A2 level were just below the national average but dropped in 2002. In both years, girls did better than boys. Although comparisons between subjects are difficult because of the small numbers involved, results in mathematics, French and physical education have been particularly good. There has also been success in the small number of vocational courses offered. Inspectors' judgements attest that current students are generally doing well in relation to their abilities. A good percentage of students go on to higher education, including the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

In the 268 classes observed during the inspection, standards were at least satisfactory in virtually all (98 per cent). They were good or very good in 61 per cent. Both of these figures are good. There is a significant variation between the three key stages in the proportion of good and very good work, from 49 per cent at KS3 to 63 per cent at KS4 to 79 per cent in the sixth form. Reasons for this discrepancy are outlined below and in section 3.2 on key skills.

The most able make good progress on the whole, as evidenced by the good examination results, particularly at GCSE and A2 levels. Their progress is better at these two levels than at KS3 overall. However, maximum progress is influenced by the following factors: insufficient extension work in some mixed ability classes, particularly at KS3, and particularly in Y7; limited opportunities in class for independent learning and research, compounded by the lack of full-scale library provision and easy access to ICT facilities; some over-direction by teachers and lack of challenge in the content of the work, particularly at KS3. When teaching is good or very good and pupils are given opportunities to probe their knowledge and understanding, the most able achieve well. Examples were seen in classes of most subjects, and across the key stages. However, the most able are not sufficiently challenged in information technology and music at KS3, in the scope of individual project work in design and technology, and in some mixed ability classes at KS3 in English, history, religious education and geography.

Pupils of middle to lower ability make at least satisfactory progress on the whole but progress varies between and within subjects, for one or more of the following reasons: some pupils are not sufficiently engaged in the learning culture to follow up, at home, the work done in class and complete coursework, particularly boys; in mixed ability classes, there are not always support materials to help their progress; a small minority of pupils can disrupt the learning of the group; pupils' key skills are insecure and hamper their work in a range of subjects. However, progress improves as pupils move up through the school and results at GCSE indicate that the proportion gaining five subjects at grades A\*-G is in line with the proportion nationally. They also do well when teachers' expectations are high and the work is challenging. Good examples were seen in some lessons in all subjects across the curriculum.

Pupils with SEN achieve well for their ability and, in many cases, very well. There is effective support from the SEN department and learning assistants in class, though the level of support does not meet all needs ideally. Withdrawal to boost literacy and numeracy on the computerised package "Successmaker" results in improved key skills, though at the cost of lack of continuity and progression in specific subjects. Schemes to boost reading, with sixth form helpers, are also effective. The integration of pupils with SEN, together with individual educational plans (IEPs) implemented by teachers, enables pupils to access and make progress in the full range of courses.

Whilst the progress of the large majority of pupils of all abilities is steady and the standards achieved improve as they move up through the school, the progress of a significant minority is

hampered by sporadic and longer-term absence. There are gaps in pupils' written work which are not filled when they return to school, and missing coursework for examination entries. Attendance is below 90 per cent, including the sixth form. In all subjects the standards achieved in class, through the good teaching, are not translated fully into examination results, through the sporadic attendance of a significant minority of pupils and some lack of responsibility by pupils for their own learning.

Boys achieve less well than girls generally, as nationally, though there are variations between year groups and subjects. For example, in examination results in 2002, there was a significant gap at GCSE and A2 level, with girls outperforming boys. However, at KS3, boys did better than girls. In lessons observed, girls reached higher standards and the attitudes of a significant minority of middle to lower ability boys at KS3 and KS4 were not sufficiently positive about learning. The most able boys do well at all key stages. In science, geography and physical education, inspectors did not see a gender gap. In design and technology and home economics, there remains a gender imbalance in the courses followed, an issue at the time of the last inspection.

The school has faced a relatively high turn-over of staff in recent years, including at middle and senior management level and several long-term absences. The calibre of staff appointed is more than good and the inspection witnessed an improving trend in standards of achievement.

### **3.2 Standards Achieved in Key Skills across the Curriculum**

#### **Literacy**

There is a whole-school policy on literacy and it has been a target of the school development plan (SDP). Some departments have planned the promotion of pupils' communicative skills in their schemes of work, but not all. In practice, there is insufficient emphasis on the spelling of key words, on extended speech and on individual research. Standards in each of the key skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are satisfactory.

The large majority of pupils listen attentively to the teacher and to each other. A small minority has difficulty concentrating or interrupts the learning of others, through unco-operative behaviour. Sixth formers listen with interest to the teacher, to each other and to outside speakers.

At KS3 and KS4, the extent to which pupils engage in extended speech varies between and within subjects. Short answers are too readily accepted in a number of subjects and the lack of opportunities for pair and group work also limits the extent to which pupils can debate, analyse and solve problems. Pupils' oral skills are not sufficiently promoted overall in English, mathematics, design and technology, information technology, home economics, art and music. The more able pupils use the limited opportunities most effectively. In other subjects, the large majority of pupils use extended speech confidently and the small minority with hesitation. In the sixth form, students show maturity in their ability to express and justify their opinions, debate and make presentations. Standards in the sixth form are good.

At KS3, pupils who have reading difficulties are given good support in reading schemes, with sixth form helpers and through the use of 'Successmaker', and their standards improve. A small amount of reading aloud in class was observed, completed to a satisfactory standard. At KS3 and KS4, the large majority of pupils can extract information from a text successfully, but when there is no learning support assistance in large mainstream classes, pupils with SEN find this difficult. The lack of a resource centre, and the limited emphasis on independent learning and problem-solving in class do not promote wider reading sufficiently. In modern foreign languages, there is also insufficient independent reading. The demands of coursework at KS4

in some subjects and in the sixth form generally lead to much improved standards of skimming, scanning, and extraction of relevant details.

Standards of writing follow those of the other three skills, in that standards improve as pupils move up through the school, and there is variation between subjects and classes within subjects, related to the expectations of the teacher. At KS3, good examples were seen of extended writing, from Y7, of good quality, in geography, modern foreign languages, Welsh and home economics. Able pupils write well in most subjects, though short answers on worksheets in some lessons do not adequately develop their skills. Pupils who have difficulties in spelling and grammar, are withdrawn to work on 'Successmaker', and their standards improve. There is, however, insufficient overt emphasis across the curriculum on the spelling of key, subject-specific words. By KS4, standards improve, the amount of extended writing increases and in the sixth form, in particular, standards are good across the full range of ability.

### **Numeracy**

The standards in numeracy and data handling are satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils' numeracy skills are tested in mathematics. In the sixth form key skills provision, numeracy lessons are provided. However, the school has no policy on numeracy and there is very little evidence that it is planned in schemes of work.

In information technology at KS4 high order skills are used in spreadsheets and databases but this type of work is lacking in KS3. In religious education, number work is included in the scheme of work and pupils calculate distances to religious sites. In geography, pupils are competent in handling simple data and graphs are used to represent results. In modern foreign languages, pupils have the opportunity to deal with money and in telling the time in the language studied. Calculations for electronics and structures are included in design and technology with pupils being able to measure and draw accurately. In food technology, they weigh ingredients accurately. In science, pupils can manipulate formulae and draw graphs to represent experimental results. In English, there are good examples of use of statistical methods such as in work done on surveys.

### **ICT**

Standards of achievement for ICT across the curriculum are overall unsatisfactory.

At KS3, standards of achievement in the use of ICT within design and technology are good. Pupils model electrical circuits, carry out research work on the Internet and word process their work for good presentation. Standards of achievement are satisfactory in home economics, Welsh, geography, art and science. Word processing and graphics packages are used to aid visual presentation of work. In art, pupils use a graphics package to design a CD-ROM cover. In Welsh, pupils use ICT to produce invitations and greetings cards and a Welsh spell checker is available to aid Welsh writing tasks. Standards of achievement are unsatisfactory in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, music and religious education due to limited access to computer facilities and limited software applications used.

At KS4 and in the sixth form, standards of achievement in music and design and technology are good. Within design and technology pupils use Prodesktop and other communication and graphics packages to aid folio work development and modelling. In music, pupils can access a small studio and new keyboards enabling "layering" to take place, and for storing and refining compositions. In science, standards of achievement are satisfactory at KS4 and good in the sixth form where pupils and students use ICT to research measurement data for Advanced (A) level chemistry. At KS4 standards of achievement are satisfactory in home economics and Welsh but are unsatisfactory in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and religious education. In the sixth form, standards of achievement are good in GNVQ health and social

Care where pupils carry out research on the Internet and for presentation of work. Standards of achievement are satisfactory in modern foreign languages and unsatisfactory in English and mathematics due to limited access to computer facilities and software application.

### **Creativity and Problem-Solving**

Standards overall are satisfactory. Pupils respond well to the challenge of creative and problem-solving activities but these are uneven across the curriculum. They reach good standards in creative writing, in work in art, in an enquiry-based approach in geography, in the use of ICT resources at KS4 and in the sixth form, in music at those two key stages and girls do well in gym/dance routines. Pupils also reach good standards in PSE. In the sixth form, good standards are achieved across the curriculum. When the timetable is suspended, for the Christmas revues, the Eisteddfod, Industry Days and Activity Days, and in extra-curricular activities, pupils and students have many valuable opportunities for being creative and solving problems.

### **Working with Others**

Standards are satisfactory, again because of the unevenness across the curriculum, but where pair and group work are an integral part of learning, pupils collaborate well. There is insufficient promotion of these skills in English, mathematics and religious studies and in some classes in a range of other subjects.

### **Improving One's Own Performance**

Standards are satisfactory but improving, as pupils are involved more in self-assessment and target-setting. However, not all pupils, especially boys at KS3 and KS4, are sufficiently engaged in the learning culture or in taking sufficient responsibility for their own progress. Conversely, some pupils show strong motivation in staying after school and in lunch-times to receive extra tuition and support from teachers. The increased maturity of pupils at KS4 and students in the sixth form leads to a greater sense of responsibility from the majority, but the sporadic absence of a significant minority detracts from that commitment.

### **Sixth Form Key Skills**

The school has invested heavily in staffing to promote students' key skills and this emphasis has undoubtedly contributed to the good key skills observed in practice. The provision has, however, not been fully utilised by students, though the majority of students have gained accreditation in key skills. Revision of the programme offered, currently being planned, should result in accreditation by more students.

## **4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **4.1 Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development**

The school is a happy and caring community. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory and their moral and social development, good.

Pupils' spiritual awareness is developed through work in religious education and in NC subjects such as art, music, Welsh and science. Opportunities are provided for pupils to gain understanding of other people's cultures and beliefs. They are given an opportunity to meditate on their experiences, and reflect and consider the fundamental questions of life. However there has been no audit across the subject of the curriculum to ensure appropriate coverage. Year acts of worship are well organised, are broadly of a Christian character, and include appropriate presentations by pupils, staff and sometime outside speakers. The themes are effectively related to the life and work of the school and contemporary religious and moral issues. In some acts of collective worship good use is made of music and communal singing to enhance the occasions. On the days when pupils remain in their registration classes there is a "thought for the day". Appropriate guidelines are provided. However, the quality varies from

the very good to poor. At best it is characterised by a positive contribution from the teacher and meaningful input from the pupils. In other instances, the presentation is mechanical with no time allowed for reflection. In a number of registration classes there is no corporate worship, contrary to the statutory requirements.

The school develops pupils' moral attitudes through emphasis on fostering self-confidence, respect and consideration for others. Pupils have an opportunity of discussing moral issues consistently in subjects such as religious education, English, Welsh, history and PSE. Pupils learn about issues to do with prejudice, honesty, choice and responsibility. The vast majority of pupils understand what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and develop an increasing understanding of what is morally good and bad on a personal and social level. They develop an understanding of environmental issues in geography and science. However, a small minority of pupils show a lack of respect for the school building and site by leaving litter following school breaks. Through their support for a number of charities and fund raising activities, pupils show awareness and care for children and people less fortunate than themselves.

Pupils' social awareness is developed through subjects, a large number of activities such as extra-curricular clubs and activities, as well as day-to-day opportunities in the school. When given the opportunity, pupils work well together in pairs and groups. The co-operation and social interaction between pupils is good. Pupils with SEN are integrated very successfully into mainstream classes and the full life of the school. The relationship between pupils and teachers is good. Pupils respond well to opportunities to accept responsibility and contribute to the social life of the school. The school council provides very good opportunities for pupils of all years to take responsibility and contribute to the ethos and social life of the school. Pupils take pride in representing their school across a wide range of extra-curricular activities including sports, music and drama. Sixth form students provide good support to younger pupils in reading programmes during their first months at school and in some lessons.

Pupils' cultural development is fostered well through some subjects and extra-curricular activities. Subjects including art, religious education, geography and English make good contributions to developing pupils' multi-cultural awareness. However it is not systematically planned across the curriculum. There is an appropriate race equality programme in place. The European dimension of the curriculum is developed through subject teaching and through links with a school in Germany. British culture is fostered through visits to theatres, art galleries and museums both locally and further afield. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. A large number of pupils take part in musical and drama performances and individual and team games. Welsh ethos and culture within the school are less well developed. It is included in some subjects, for example, art, religious education and geography, and there is a successful school eisteddfod. The Welsh department is particularly strong, organising cultural visits and residential experiences. However, around the school there is little Welsh ethos, only a few bilingual signs, and the *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is not planned across all areas of the curriculum.

Since the last inspection pupils' spiritual, moral and social development has improved and cultural development remains satisfactory. Although the school has planned for and provided guidance for staff on a daily act of collective worship, it still does not meet statutory requirements.

## **4.2 Behaviour and Attitudes**

Pupils' behaviour is good overall. During assemblies, at break times and in their movement around the school, pupils normally behave in an orderly manner, although some pushing and jostling in the passageways were observed during the inspection. In classes, most display good attitudes to learning and teachers respond effectively to any minor instances of misbehaviour

or pupils' occasional lack of concentration. However, a significant minority of pupils, particularly boys in KS3, display immature and inappropriate behaviour, sometimes disturbing the learning of others. Pupils' relationships with staff and with each other are good.

The school has developed good procedures for the handling of any misbehaviour by pupils. These consist of various stages to address indiscipline. At each stage, staff take appropriate actions, often involving pastoral support, in order to correct any behavioural problems. The use of the Time Out Centre is effective in providing support for pupils with a variety of problems relating to emotional and behavioural difficulties. During the past twelve months there have been 44 temporary exclusions, involving 37 pupils. Governors and parents are informed as appropriate. Disciplinary records are satisfactory.

The school provides useful opportunities for older pupils to take on responsibilities. There is a prefect system, and a head boy and head girl are appointed to represent the school and support staff when necessary. Pupils in each form select two of their number to represent them on a year council from which delegates are selected to form the school council. This developing group meets fortnightly to discuss matters of interest, which have recently included making presentations to staff and being involved in their interviewing procedures. Senior staff attend these meetings which enables good communication of ideas back to the headteacher and early action if important issues are raised. Some older pupils have been trained to support Y7 pupils as part of the 'Helping Hands' counselling service. Others assist them with their reading and literacy problems. Such schemes provide appropriate responsibilities for the older pupils while the younger ones receive helpful support.

As part of the school's reward scheme, pupils receive merits which lead progressively to bronze, silver, gold and platinum certificates for good work, improved behaviour, helpfulness and good citizenship. Pupils' achievements are also recognised at an annual ceremony in which they receive a 'Glan Lloyd', the former headteacher, award. Both pupils and their parents value these schemes.

The school's documentation clearly details the measures necessary to prevent any instances of bullying or racial harassment, none of which was witnessed during the inspection. Such matters are discussed daily by the SMT and pupils interviewed were confident that the school takes speedy and effective action to correct any such situation should it occur.

### **4.3 Attendance**

Attendance is slightly below accepted satisfactory levels, having averaged 89.4 per cent during the previous school year for the pupils of statutory school age. Unauthorised absence was worse than the Welsh average over that period. These figures are similar to those at the time of the previous inspection and are still below the school's own set targets. Average attendance for these pupils during the term prior to the inspection had improved to the satisfactory level of 90.6 per cent, though unauthorised absence remained high. However, attendance of students in the sixth form is consistently unsatisfactory with unacceptably high unauthorised absence.

In the current school year to date, one tenth of all pupils have taken more than two days holiday during term time, which has reduced overall attendance by about 0.5 per cent.

Since the last inspection, the school has introduced a range of good initiatives in an attempt to raise attendance levels. These include:

- the efficient use of a computerised monitoring system;
- the quick supply of the previous week's attendance statistics to senior staff with pastoral responsibilities;

- the rapid follow-up by the school with parents in the event of their child's unexplained absence;
- valuable assistance from and very good co-operation with the Education Welfare Service (EWS) based at the school;
- operation of 'good attendance' incentive schemes with appropriate rewards for pupils and classes with good or improved attendance;
- use of the Compact scheme to encourage older pupils to be responsible for their own regular attendance and
- the 'Step In' project to give extra support to poor attenders.

Punctuality of pupils at the start of the school day and between lessons remains unsatisfactory. During the inspection, a minority of pupils were seen to arrive late and some classes were dismissed several minutes before the scheduled time. This inevitably causes some disruption to the learning of others. Some individual pupils were observed wandering around the school during lesson time.

Registration procedures generally comply with National Assembly for Wales Circular 3/99, though the current system for sixth form students is insufficiently rigorous, in that students do not all sign out when leaving the premises during the school day, or sign in when returning.

## 5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

### 5.1 Teaching

The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in virtually every lesson observed (99 per cent). In 53 per cent of lessons, teaching was good and, in a further 11 per cent, very good. These are high figures and above the national targets for 2002. They are also an improvement on the figures of the last inspection. In close correlation with the standards achieved, the quality of teaching improves from KS3 to KS4 to the sixth form. Teaching was judged to be good or very good in 52 per cent of lessons at KS3, in 64 per cent at KS4 and 84 per cent in the sixth form.

Teaching is not only thorough but in a substantial minority of lessons it is innovative. Many new ideas have been introduced as a significant number of staff have joined the school in recent years and new technology is being used effectively, also. In all subjects there is a substantial proportion of good teaching, with some very good teaching in most. The quality of teaching in each department mirrors the standards achieved.

Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and plan lessons carefully. However, there is insufficient planning for the promotion of key skills through each subject and of strategies to raise the achievement of boys. There are clear presentations and whole-class questioning to elicit knowledge and understanding. However, pupils are quite passive in a significant minority of lessons and are not given enough opportunities to work collaboratively in pairs and groups in some classes in English, Welsh and religious education or find their own solutions to problems in physical education. Generally, there are insufficient opportunities for independent learning through research, also hampered by the lack of library provision and easy access to ICT facilities. In design and technology, there is not enough emphasis on the teaching of design skills.

The strength of teaching lies, to a great extent, in the quality of relationships between teachers and pupils. Teachers are caring and committed to their pupils and generous in the time they

give to individuals and to small groups outside the classroom, as well as to a programme of extra-curricular activities. Much praise and encouragement are given, as well as support to individuals who have difficulties. The challenging behaviour of a small minority of pupils is generally managed well though, on occasions, it can disrupt learning, especially in Y9, and to a lesser extent in Y8 and Y10, in classes observed.

The extent to which work is matched to pupils' needs varies between and within departments to some extent but, overall, is good. There is a better match at KS4 and in the sixth form than at KS3, where the needs of a wide spread of ability are not well catered for in all lessons, through the lack of extension and support work. This was evident in some lessons observed, particularly in English, history, and music and, in Y7, in Welsh.

Available resources are generally well used. The good provision of audio-visual resources in English, Welsh and modern foreign languages enhances teaching and the introduction of whiteboards into six departments is having some very positive effects. There are, however, few ICT resources in most departments and access to central rooms is difficult. The provision of photocopied materials supports teaching, though limits opportunities for extended reading and writing in a number of subjects.

Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good overall, with a significant amount of very good teaching. Students are more actively involved in their own learning and given opportunities for creative thinking, problem-solving and research. They are also provided with good resource materials to support their learning.

The good teaching throughout the school does not always result in the highest possible quality of learning, as pupils do not always take enough responsibility for following up work done in class, and for attending regularly. Extending the learning culture would make teaching even more effective.

## **5.2 Assessment, Recording and Reporting**

The quality of the assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' achievements is satisfactory.

There is a whole-school policy that is based on sound principles. Most departments have policies that are in line with the school's policy. Teachers in all departments mark homework, classwork and tests but there is insufficient monitoring of whole-school marking guidelines so that there is inconsistent practice within and between departments. In some subjects, grades and marks awarded by teachers are supplemented by appropriate use of praise but there is insufficient use across the curriculum of good oral feedback based on criteria for success. In subjects such as religious education, science, geography, home economics, English and modern foreign languages, teachers write comments on work that identify strengths and weaknesses but there is inconsistency of this practice within departments and there is insufficient use of such diagnostic marking on a day-to-day basis in other subjects, particularly at KS3. Teachers use grades and marks and pupils do not always know how improvements may be made. In departments such as English and design and technology there is monitoring of pupils' books but this does not occur in all departments and the process has not always eliminated inconsistencies in assessment practice. A variety of assessment methods is used, such as the end of unit tests, common tasks and trial examinations. Assessments are usually accurate. Pupils' involvement in their own and peer assessment is insufficiently widespread in KS3 and KS4 but there is some good practice in English, design and technology and Welsh.

Homework is regularly set, although it is not always recorded by pupils in their daily planners. Most teachers keep accurate records of their pupils' marks, grades and test results but records are not always used to improve standards. Regular and rigorous moderation of pupils' work is

a feature of only a minority of departments such as English, religious education, geography and music.

The school's database is comprehensive and there is very good analysis of external examination results, NC assessments and Cognitive Abilities Tests (CATs) results of pupils in Y7 and Y10. Data are used by the school's senior management team for the setting of departmental targets and for predicting external tests and examination results of individual pupils. Departments also use the data for class organization, examination entry and tracking progress. Each term, subject teachers are required to indicate the general progress of each pupil using the school's common grading system. Heads of year and heads of department are required to review the data to identify underachievement. Heads of year review the progress of individual pupils across the curriculum but there is greater success in raising standards when heads of department identify underachievement and subject teachers subsequently offer support to individual pupils. There is less use of available data by subject teachers to evaluate teaching, to assist curricular planning and to ensure that teaching methods are appropriate for each pupil. In Welsh, teachers use the data analysis to introduce appropriate teaching strategies but this good practice is insufficiently widespread.

Each term a progress report is issued to parents based on the data provided by subject teachers. In addition, a full report is issued annually. Arrangements to inform parents of progress are good in that as well as frequent reports there are opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress in annual meetings with subject teachers. The quality of information is less good. The full reports have a page allocated to each subject which includes comments by the teacher on progress within the subject, comments on standards achieved in key skills and targets set for improvement. In most cases, comments on progress and targets for improvement are general in nature and lack subject specific detail. There is often minimal comment on key skills.

At KS4, all pupils are involved in preparing their Records of Achievement (RoA). The school has an appointed co-ordinator of the process and all pupils in Y11 receive a comprehensive RoA which is updated for pupils in Y13. The school has recently introduced Pupil Progress Files, the content of which is embedded in the PSE programme, compiled during PSE lessons. They will eventually replace the RoA. Pupils with SEN are assessed in line with the requirements of the Code of Practice. Detailed IEPs are in place and subject teachers make good use of them and are involved in making them subject specific. Individual education plans are regularly reviewed by teachers and there is an annual formal review involving parents.

### **5.3 Curriculum**

The curriculum at KS3 and KS4 is broad and balanced and conforms to statutory requirements overall but the alternative curriculum at KS4 is an exception since legal requirements are not met because pupils do not follow a course in science and religious education. However, the alternative curriculum is a good attempt by the school to deal with disaffected pupils and those who might become school refusers. In Y12 and Y13 a wide range of courses is available, which makes the curriculum provided for these students extensive, being a combination of Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and A2 and vocational courses. However, religious education is not provided in the sixth form curriculum and as a result the school does not meet its statutory responsibilities.

At KS3 pupils study all the subjects specified in the NC together with religious education. Personal and social education is included as a timetabled subject in the school. Time allocations for subjects are appropriate. Information and communications technology (ICT) is part of the technology carousel. This is unsatisfactory, since all the NC requirements are not

included. In Y8 and Y9, the opportunity exists for a group, in each half year to study German at the cost of two lessons in Welsh and one in French in Y8 and one in Welsh and two in French in Y9. The provision of a second modern foreign language is good. There are some large classes in modern foreign languages and music at KS3, which has a negative effect on standards.

At KS4, pupils study the subjects specified by the National Assembly, the exception being those on the alternative curriculum as mentioned previously. The vast majority of pupils study double science, which is good provision. In addition, there are religious education lessons. Pupils have to choose two subject options above the set curriculum from the choices given and the choices available are wide and variable and are determined annually by the needs of the pupils. At this key stage the school gives pupils opportunities for accreditation by various bodies in a number of subjects. This caters well for the full spread of ability. In design and technology, there is an over-emphasis on systems and electronics in terms of courses at KS4.

In the sixth form a wide range of courses is available. Students can study up to five A2 level subjects. The Y12 curriculum gives opportunities for students to access key skills lessons as well. Personal and social education is not timetabled weekly in the sixth form curriculum, which means that the opportunities provided to deal with some aspects on a regular basis are limited. Some of the courses provided are partly offered off site, which is good since it increases students' range of choices. However, some classes are small and are inefficient in terms of staffing.

The quality of planning for the development of key skills is unsatisfactory at KS3 since the promotion of literacy is inconsistent and there are no clear policies in numeracy and ICT. In ICT lessons, the data handling provision is insufficient. Planning for key skills post-16 is satisfactory and time is set aside for students to get help in these areas although they do not always make full use of the provision made.

Curricular planning within subjects is good. All subjects conform to the needs of the NC and schemes of work are in place. Long-term, medium-term and short-term planning is at least satisfactory in most departments. In some subjects such as geography, science and mathematics the schemes of work are detailed and useful but the scheme of work in English at KS3 is unsatisfactory.

The contribution of homework to standards is satisfactory. The homework set is appropriate and often develops the topics covered in lessons. The time required to complete homework is adequate overall. However, there are many gaps in recording homework in pupils' planners.

The school provides a good number of extra-curricular activities, which are greatly appreciated by the pupils. In mathematics, science, Welsh, modern foreign languages and design and technology (food) there are opportunities to attend extra lessons for examination groups. In science students have the opportunity to attend lectures locally. In the English faculty there is a book club and writing competitions, a readathon and public speaking opportunities are arranged. In mathematics, pupils were involved in the UK Junior Mathematics Challenge. Pupils are also involved in whole-school productions and in a Gala concert involving the Rhondda Cynon Taff youth Choir in July 2002. Year 7 pupils in September were involved in an Outward Bound Course which they all enjoyed and there are foreign trips arranged on an annual basis. The school has a choir and an orchestra and there are opportunities in sport for many extra-curricular activities. The Welsh department organizes many study visits to language centres.

The school curriculum provision is socially inclusive and ensures equality of access and opportunity for all pupils as appropriate which is a good feature. The provision made for pupils for whom the NC is modified or disapplied is very good.

The school has responded to comments made in the last report but not all issues are fully resolved and the lack of religious education in the sixth form remains a key issue.

#### **5.4 Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare**

The quality of the support and guidance offered to pupils is good throughout the school. Overall the relationships between pupils and teachers are good. Pupils reported that they are happy in the school and are confident that they will receive every assistance from their teachers and that problems which they might have will be dealt with quickly.

On entry to the school pupils are placed in mixed ability tutor groups or an SEN group with a specific tutor under the care of a head of year. All the heads of year from Y8 to Y11 move with their year group to ensure continuity, although some heads of year are new to their posts since September. The sixth form is a separate pastoral unit. The head of Y7 stays with that year annually and in September the year group attended an Outward Bound Centre for half the week in order to develop relationships as a year group and to enable their tutors to get to know them. All pupils and staff who attended enjoyed the course, which is a good feature. However, the role of the form tutor is underdeveloped in a number of groups observed in terms of reinforcing the school's expectations of pupils in matters of general routines and in daily interaction to provide support to individuals.

The pastoral provision at KS3 and KS4 is overseen by two assistant headteachers who act as heads of school. Communication is effective, records are kept and the pastoral teams meet regularly according to a timetabled programme to monitor pupils. However, the interface between the pastoral and the academic side of the school is underdeveloped with insufficient regular monitoring of pupils' progress. Some mentoring has recently been introduced to try to encourage specific pupils. Support and guidance are good in departments because teachers are prepared to give pupils extra time at lunchtimes and after school to ensure that they do make progress.

Planners are given to pupils in Y7-Y11. They provide guidance and information for pupils and they give the opportunity for dialogue between home and school and vice versa. A small minority of pupils use them appropriately. With a significant number of pupils, the planner is not used effectively and often homework set is not entered on them.

The PSE programme is good and effective and is in line with the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) guidelines. There is some input by the careers service in Y8 and Y9 as part of the PSE programme and the careers education and guidance are effective. Careers information is made available to pupils as required and the careers officer sees disaffected pupils termly. All the pupils in Y11 receive a career plan and the pupils have the opportunity to attend mock interviews. Pupils, towards the end of Y10 or up to Easter in Y11, are offered one week's work experience and they are visited by school staff during their placement. This practice is effective. The PSE programme overall has been revised and is well planned to cover also health education, study skills and pupils' personal development. Good progress files are being drawn up. In the sixth form, there is a well planned programme of activities each morning and larger periods of time are devoted to particular issues with the timetable suspended. Overall, the quality is good despite some lack of continuity.

The governing body has approved a suitable range of policies, which include amongst others health and safety, sex education and health education. The school has clear guidelines for child protection, which comply with National Assembly requirements. A member of the SMT is the nominated person in charge of child protection. There is close liaison with specialist support and external agencies and there is a good counselling service available. Some sixth form students have attended a course, which provided a national vocational qualification (NVQ),

and they are trained listeners. This is called "Helping Hands" and is a valuable resource in the school. The school has a full-time nurse who is responsible for issuing any prescribed drugs the pupils may need.

The liaison with primary schools is very good and there are strong links between the school and the feeder primaries, which is effective. The pupils spend time at Bryn Celynnog during Y6 to acquaint themselves with the site and to get a flavour of the subjects they will take on transferring. There are curricular links in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages which are extensive and this is good provision.

Health and safety and child protection procedures are in place and are known by staff. A few health and safety issues were reported to the school during the inspection.

## **5.5 Provision for Pupils with SEN**

The provision for pupils with SEN is good and the school's response to the requirements of the Code of Practice is good. The inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream is a very good feature of the school.

Subject departments are responsible for providing suitable work for pupils with SEN within their curricular areas. The co-ordinator distributes relevant information together with IEPs to promote the work. There is a very good structure in place to ensure contact between link teachers and co-ordinator. There are good examples of differentiating tasks and the work is presented in an interesting way that is relevant to pupils' ability. However, in some KS3 classes lack of learning support assistants' (LSAs) support does affect standards of achievement of the whole class.

In the small groups, pupils with SEN make good progress. The LSAs offer effective support. In KS4, these pupils have access to accredited courses. There are good opportunities for them to integrate into mainstream classes.

Ten pupils with specific learning difficulties receive additional support from a specialist teacher of the UA. They make good progress in developing their literacy skills. They follow relevant individual programmes and develop useful strategies to improve their work. There is no structure in place to help them to organise their work and receive cross-curricular support at KS4.

Thirty KS3 pupils are withdrawn from mainstream lessons to receive extra support in literacy skills. The planning is very good and the pupils appreciate the provision. Pupils follow appropriate programmes of work, make good progress in their literacy skills and the work supports the mainstream work well.

Fourteen LSAs offer good support for pupils from the learning support centre to integrate into mainstream classes. The work is targeted well to ensure effective support and there are good examples of subject teachers and assistants co-operating closely. Learning support assistants keep good records of pupils' achievements in lessons and there are very good examples of work being differentiated appropriately to meet individual pupils' needs.

The curriculum for three pupils who are disapplied from three subjects of the NC reflects well on their special educational needs. There is very good co-operation amongst mainstream staff for the successful integration of pupils with a variety of special needs including those who are hearing impaired, partially deaf, partially blind and physically handicapped. The work of the school is supported by a good range of external services and agencies. Across curricular areas these pupils are achieving well. The work is very well co-ordinated from the learning support centre.

Four mornings a week, 22 pupils who have reading difficulties receive good help from teachers and LSAs during the morning registration period. They read enthusiastically and most are well on the way to reading with fluency and expression.

During the school day, 80 pupils are withdrawn from lessons for half an hour to follow an integrated literacy computerised programme. The activity is very well organised with careful records kept of pupils' progress. The vast majority of pupils are achieving well. There is some disruption to pupils' learning in subjects across the curriculum when they are withdrawn.

Thirty-six pupils have statements of SEN. The vast majority of these pupils are attached to the learning support centre. The number of statements in the mainstream school is very low. Statements are reviewed effectively and consultation takes place with parents, external agencies and the UA as needed. One hundred and forty-one pupils are identified on the SEN register on stages School Action and School Action Plus. Procedures for identifying pupils are good and the register is reviewed regularly and is effective. All pupils on the register have a relevant IEP. The IEPs relate well to the needs of the individual pupils and appropriate targets are set.

The SEN co-ordinators (SENCOs) provide very good leadership and are very well supported by the specialist staff, the SEN administrator and the key stage co-ordinators. The headteacher and the governors have been successful in creating an ethos where all pupils, regardless of their SEN, can integrate into mainstream in accordance with their educational and social ability. This inclusion is very good and is a strength of the school.

Since the last inspection purposeful strategies have been put in place to ensure successful integration of all SEN pupils and effective co-ordination of the work.

## **5.6 Partnership with Parents and Community, Schools and Other Institutions**

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents and good links with a wide range of organisations in the local community.

Only about four per cent of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and few attended the meeting. The majority of these expressed support for the school, but there were some concerns about pupils' attitudes and behaviour which were found to be partially justified. Information provided by the school through newsletters, reports, meetings and letters is mainly of good quality but the governors' annual report to parents and the school prospectus do not contain all the information statutorily required. Few parents have responded to the home/school agreement.

The school has good relationships with local agencies including the UA, EWS, social and medical services. The school nurse provides medical help to pupils and monitors their general health.

The school has a good relationship with the community police officer who visits the school regularly. She advises both staff and pupils about crime prevention and also gives valuable support to the PSE programme by talking to pupil groups about matters concerning their personal safety and substance misuse. The local Drugs Service also advises KS4 pupils about drugs misuse as part of the PSE programme. The police and other local agencies have recently set up a community/schools project at the school.

The school has links with the on-site education centre which provides adult education classes and the 'Eye to Eye' counselling service, which deals with problems relating to young people and their development. The proximity of this service is useful.

There are good links with local churches. The vicar of Llantrisant Church and other local ministers lead assemblies and support the curriculum. The school's annual carol service is held at the church.

There are very good links with the five feeder and other primary schools. The head of Y7, subject co-ordinators and the SENCO regularly visit to talk to Y6 pupils and their parents. French teachers teach in the feeder primary schools. These pupils attend activity days, lessons and sports/social events at Bryn Celynnog and their teachers visit the school to share subject expertise. The transfer of good quality information, both curricular and personal, enables the Y6 pupils to make as smooth a transfer as possible to the secondary school. Some Y11 pupils take part in work experience placements at the primary schools. The school also has an effective partnership with two other nearby comprehensive schools in the BYT project. This consortium enables the three participating schools to offer sixth form students a wider choice of subjects. There are good links with Bridgend and Pontypridd Colleges, the University of Glamorgan and Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Institutions. Pupils also take part in competitions organised by the local Rotary Club.

### **5.7 Partnership with Industry**

The school has a good partnership with local companies which gives pupils a good introduction to the world of work around them.

About a hundred local businesses and other concerns provide industrial placements to enable all Y11 pupils to undertake one week's work experience every October. The local Careers Wales office supports this programme. Most pupils not only obtain practical experience of the workings of business, but also increase their sense of responsibility, self-esteem, personal and social skills.

The adviser from Careers Wales attends the school on three days each week and gives good quality support. She introduces KS3 pupils to the careers library and advises them and their parents on options choices and future career possibilities. Pupils in KS4 receive individual help with the development of a career plan and have mock interviews. The careers office also arranges for some pupils requiring additional support to obtain extra careers advice, often in association with the BYT project. There are two separate industry days when business people set pupils tasks related to aspects of the world of work such as marketing, costing and quality control. These activities help pupils to develop their teamwork, decision-making and planning skills.

The school receives support from many local organisations through the donation of money and/or materials. A local printer helps with the school's printing requirements, a national bank sponsors the school's Compact scheme to encourage pupils' better attendance and a nearby cinema rewards the younger pupils who have particularly good attendance. A local electrical supplier has made provision which enables the rewarding of pupils who have made particularly good progress in overcoming personal problems.

There is a strong and effective link with the Education Business Partnership (EBP) which helps pupils in all year groups through various business-related events, technology challenges and industrial visits. Each year group also has its own industry day forming part of EBP's world of work programme for the school. Older pupils are helped with mock interviews by business people who include members of the local Rotary Club.

In the areas above, the school meets the recommendations of the ACCAC work-related education (WRE) Framework.

Although some school departments have few links with local companies, pupils have opportunities to learn about work through a wide range of industrial visits. For example, the home economics students have recently visited several catering establishments, while pupils doing media studies have visited a nearby printer, prior to producing a magazine.

Seven members of staff have recently attended business-related courses to support the teaching of their subjects. A management consultancy has discussed with eight teachers a personal development programme for initiating and managing change. The school has recently formed a working party to develop further its provision of WRE.

## **6. MANAGEMENT**

### **6.1 Quality of Self-Evaluation and Planning for Improvement**

The quality of self-evaluation and planning overall is good. The systems in place are very good; however, these have not yet led to consistency of practice in all areas.

After the last inspection, an action plan was drawn up to address the key issues. Whilst there has been improvement in some of these issues, progress has been variable and attendance, boys' achievements, marking and the use of tutor time remain areas for improvement.

There are some outstanding features in the monitoring of performance and the headteacher and SMT know the school's strengths and shortcomings in detail. The systems in place are comprehensive and part of a regular cycle of self-evaluation. These include regular reviews of departments by senior management and heads of faculty and department, termly and annual self-evaluation by departments which are the basis of discussion with the headteacher and link members of SMT, and an annual whole-school review. All other areas of the school are also monitored and participate in self-evaluation. Another unusually good aspect of practice is the extent to which all members of the school community are involved in the process – governors, parents and pupils. The results of all these systems are open and shared. However, not all the monitoring of departments is sufficiently critical in highlighting shortcomings to be addressed, and thereby eliminated. Self-evaluation, by pupils, of their own performance, is not yet embedded in practice across the curriculum.

Planning on a whole-school basis has many good features. The current SDP is part of a longer-term strategic plan, with appropriate targets, responsibilities defined and costings. It is clearly linked to the results of the review process. As with monitoring systems, consultation is very good and all sections of the school community have an input into planning. There is good correlation between the SDP and plans in each area of the school, though planning in music is inadequate. The quality of planning in other curricular subjects is variable. There is insufficient planning for the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT in a number of subjects and planning to eliminate shortcomings in practice is not sufficiently detailed. Planning is good in Welsh, design and technology, home economics, geography, modern foreign languages, art and physical education. Planning to promote consistency in organisational routines is not sufficiently rigorous. Review of the specific targets of the annual SDP is good, by governors, senior management and teams of staff. The setting up of staff working groups to take forward each target of the SDP is another good feature of planning for improvement.

The analysis of data on a whole-school basis is very good and departments are supplied with useful data by which to measure performance. There is growing and effective use of this information in most departments, and of data on individual pupils. Practice in physical education and in the management of the sixth form is exemplary. Data on all areas of performance, for example attendance and the use of each type of reward and sanction, are fully

analysed by governors and senior management and form the basis of discussion and planning for improvement.

## **6.2 Leadership and Efficiency**

The school is at the forefront of many national educational initiatives and has been pro-active in setting up and acquiring funding for many innovative developments. It has also received several national awards for the quality of these initiatives. Standards of achievement are more often good than satisfactory and the school has a strong ethos of social inclusion. However, as yet, practice is not as consistent as policy, particularly in key skills across the curriculum and several aspects of routine and organisational procedures need tightening, such as timekeeping, use of tutor time, signing out procedures for sixth formers and disposal of litter.

At the time of the inspection, the school had been through a period of significant change in staffing, largely due to promotions but also to several long-term absences through illness. Four members of the leadership team had taken up their appointments at the start of the current academic year, and there were also four new heads of department (three of them acting heads), and three new heads of year. In total, over a third of the staff has changed in the last three years. This situation has undoubtedly contributed to some inconsistencies but the calibre of new appointments augurs well for the future growth of the school.

The headteacher brings a clear vision of educational priorities and a concern for the development of the 'whole person' and of an inclusive community. Very efficient management systems are in place, both for self-evaluation and for communication throughout the school. He has also clearly organised the SMT's responsibilities and placed due emphasis on strategic management as well as day-to-day concerns. The deputy headteacher, five assistant headteachers and bursar make up the SMT and each contributes significantly to particular areas of responsibility. The school has received several awards for aspects of practice, such as the Charter Mark, for the quality of its services, Investors in People, for its development of staff and the Welsh Secondary Schools' Association Curriculum Award for its alternative curriculum provision. Currently, members of senior management are also involved in day-to-day pastoral management of individual pupils, which, coupled with their teaching commitments and other whole-school management issues, limits the time which they have for enforcing expectations and overseeing general routines such as movement, behaviour and timekeeping around the site.

The governing body is an able and supportive group, fully involved in all aspects of planning, monitoring and reviewing performance. They carry out these roles effectively through an appropriate structure of committees, as well as meetings of the whole governing body and play a significant part in the strategic management of the school. They also show a strong personal commitment to it.

The quality of middle management is generally good in departments and pastoral teams. Communication and team spirit are strong and documentation is generally good. There are, however, some shortcomings to be eliminated within subjects and in terms of general expectations of pupils.

Available resources are used well. Staff are deployed to teach their subject specialism and support staff are used effectively to promote learning. Resources within departments are used appropriately, but the use of ICT resources does not yet successfully promote satisfactory standards at KS3 nor across the curriculum. Time in lessons is generally used well and the pace of the large majority of lessons is good. The re-structuring of the school day also appears to be working well, apart from the timing of buses in the morning and the use of tutorial time in the mornings. The allocation of time to each subject is good. The school has made every

effort to make the interior of buildings as attractive as possible and create a stimulating learning environment, with success. The central areas, used as social areas, whilst visually attractive, do not provide any seating for pupils at break and lunchtime and this detracts from the caring ethos which is prevalent in the school as a whole. The close proximity of music and mathematics, and of the sixth form and humanities, causes some problems through transference of sound.

The school had a considerable financial carry-forward at the end of the last financial year, on paper, though much of this was ear-marked for expenditure and projections are that it will be considerably reduced. It has had an appropriate planned reserve in recent years and financial planning has been in line with the aims of the SDP. The school has also secured funding for a number of exciting curricular and extra-curricular developments, which have contributed substantially to the quality of provision offered. Capitation recognises both maintenance and development of provision, and resources in departments are adequate, though not generous, and inadequate in ICT provision in some departments. Finances are carefully controlled by the bursar, clerical staff and governors' finance committee. The latest auditor's report found procedures to be effective in the vast majority of areas, and the few recommendations have been implemented.

Statutory requirements are not met with regard to the daily act of collective worship for all pupils, religious education for sixth formers, the alternative curriculum at KS4 with regard to science and religious education, and the inclusion of all required details in the governors' report to parents and the prospectus. Requirements are met in all other respects.

### **6.3 Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources**

#### **Staffing**

The adequacy of staff, including the match of teachers' qualifications to the subjects they teach, and their deployment, is good. The teacher to pupil ratio of 16.85:1 is slightly higher than the Welsh average. The average class size is 21.13, which is almost the same as the Welsh average. The teacher to class contact ratio is 79 per cent which is high for a school of this size. The school has good provision in two part-time language assistants, who are shared with another school. In music, there are four peripatetic support staff who provide tuition for 70 pupils. This is a small number for a large school of this size.

Almost all teachers have graduate qualifications, with a small number having gained higher degrees. A small number have experience of working in industry. The teaching staff has a good range of experience, with the appointment of a significant number of new staff in recent years ensuring a beneficial flow of new ideas and practices into the school. There are seven newly qualified teachers (NQTs) who have a comprehensive programme of support led by an experienced teacher and supported by the departments in which they teach. A similar programme is organised for teachers who are new to the school. The school hosts a number of ITT students. They also receive an appropriate and detailed programme of support that addresses all aspects of school life.

All members of staff have a job description which identifies both academic and pastoral responsibilities. The allocation of additional salary points is appropriate for a school of this size, with women well represented in posts carrying responsibilities. The allocation of non-teaching time is appropriate to the level of responsibility in most cases.

The in-service training (INSET) programme is good in quality and is overseen by the deputy head. In-service needs are identified following professional development interviews carried out by the headteacher and the line manager. Training is closely linked to the school's priorities

and needs identified in department plans. Support staff also receive training. However, this provision is not as well developed as for teaching staff. During the week of the inspection, the school received confirmation that it had been successful in gaining the Investors in People Award.

There are 17 support staff who provide good support across a wide range of duties and responsibilities, and contribute substantially to the smooth-running of the school.

### **Accommodation**

The adequacy of accommodation for the number of pupils on roll and the curriculum provided is satisfactory.

Since the last inspection, there have been some improvements. These include the modernisation of the design and technology teaching areas which now include two well-equipped information technology suites, the installation of a new drainage system for the playing fields, and the recent start in building a new teaching block which will house nine classrooms and a planned library facility. However until this development is completed, the English department continues to teach in two separate blocks, and music is taught in rooms a considerable distance apart.

A number of aspects with regards to the accommodation within the school remain a concern. In physical education, the changing rooms urgently require repair work and refurbishment to be carried out, and the red gra area is in a poor condition and cannot be used on a regular basis. There is a shortage of information technology suites, which makes it difficult for subjects across the curriculum to access this facility and the library resource area continues to be inadequate.

A number of classrooms in the school are enhanced by interesting displays creating a subject identity and providing a stimulating environment for learning. They are particularly good in design and technology, home economics, history, geography, modern foreign languages and Welsh. Some corridors in the school have displays of a good standard, many celebrating the successes of pupils in recent years. However, some walls are bare.

The exterior of the school continues to have a drab appearance, and the lack of comfortable, seated areas at break and lunch-hours, especially in cold and wet weather and the locking of toilets for parts of the day, detract from the overall ethos and sense of community.

The internal fabric of the building is satisfactory overall. The caretakers and the cleaning staff work hard to ensure a satisfactory level of cleanliness throughout the school. However, throughout the day, especially after breaks and lunch-hours, there is an unacceptable amount of litter inside and outside the school.

A number of health and safety issues were reported to the headteacher during the week of the inspection.

### **Learning resources**

The adequacy of resources is satisfactory overall.

The level of funding for text books, materials and educational resources is close to the average for schools in Wales. An appropriate formula is used to distribute capitation, and departments have the opportunity to bid for further resources when needs arise. The majority of subjects are well resourced. However during the inspection the following shortages were reported; in music there is a shortage of classroom instruments and keyboards, the satellite in modern foreign languages is not working, pupils in home economics do not have individual text books, in

business studies and economics text books are inadequate and dated, and in media studies there are no cameras or editing facilities.

The school has made a modest investment in ICT, so that the ratio of pupils to computers is satisfactory at 8:1. This results in many curricular areas having difficulty in gaining access to computer facilities to develop ICT in their subjects.

The room designated as a library continues to be underdeveloped and does not function as a learning resource for the whole school. Attempts have been made to develop a fiction library in the English faculty and to allow pupils access via a CD-ROM server in the curriculum network; both initiatives have met with modest success. It is hoped that the new building programme will include a learning resource centre, and allow pupils access to a wide range of resources to support their learning.

## 7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

### Standards achieved by pupils

#### English

Standards of achievement in English are satisfactory at KS3 and KS4 and good in the sixth form. Examination results at KS3 and KS4 have represented satisfactory progress from pupils' prior achievements. A level results have reflected greater progress.

#### KS3 and KS4

##### Good features

- The majority of pupils listen to the teacher, respond to questions, recall information, describe and explain.
- Able pupils put forward a point of view, justify opinions and, when given the opportunity, collaborate in pairs.
- Most pupils respond well to drama approaches.
- The majority of pupils read aloud with accuracy and fluency.
- They read a wide range of texts and pupils in Y7 read for pleasure.
- Pupils with reading problems gain good support in paired reading and in Y8 and Y9 they make good progress following the 'Successmaker' programme.
- Able pupils use higher order reading skills and appreciate stylistic devices used for effect.
- Most pupils write in a range of forms and for a variety of purposes.
- Able pupils improve writing by effective drafting. Their work is well-structured and usually technically accurate.
- Writing frames are used effectively to support the writing process for pupils of lower ability.

#### Sixth form

- Students respond with growing maturity and confidence in class discussion. They use technical terms appropriately.

- In literary analysis students demonstrate sound knowledge and understanding of plot, character and style. There is appropriate reference to support opinion.
- They analyse and construct a wide range of literary and non-literary texts.
- They evaluate drafts effectively and writing is of a good standard.
- By the end of the course, students write at length, display good analytical skills, use effective structure and mature expression.

**Shortcomings**

- Pupils' independent learning skills are not sufficiently developed through limited opportunities to work in pairs and small groups.
- A minority of pupils of lower and middle abilities shout out inappropriately, do not listen attentively and do not adapt the register of their speech in formal situations.
- A minority of pupils of lower ability have insufficient opportunity to develop skills of inference and deduction.
- A minority of pupils of lower and middle ability do not effectively draft, structure and extend writing. The pace of their work is slow.
- Pupils of lower ability demonstrate difficulties of spelling, punctuation and handwriting.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained.

**Mathematics**

Standards at KS3 and KS4 are good. Standards of achievement in the sixth form are very good. Examination results are also good, being above the national average at KS3 and KS4. A level results have been very good.

**Good features****KS3 and KS4**

- Pupils understand number work, including place value and are able to manipulate decimals, fractions and percentages accurately and can deal with negative numbers. They are able to approximate numbers and can estimate answers with reasonable degree of accuracy. They are able to use trial and improvement methods to determine an answer where appropriate.
- Pupils understand probability at a level appropriate to their ability and they know that probability lies between 0 and 1. They are able to calculate various averages and understand grouped frequency distributions.
- They can solve simple equations and the more able pupils can apply their knowledge of this topic to deal with questions that involve inequalities.
- Pupils with SEN work well within their ability at both key stages and are able to add and subtract amounts of money and many are able to solve problems that require multiplication and division involving this process as well.
- At KS4, the able pupils understand and use index notation enabling them to write figures in standard form. They can solve questions involving surds and they can explain the differences between rational and irrational numbers.
- Pupils, as part of their work on algebra, can solve different types of equations namely simple, simultaneous and quadratic equations according to their level of ability using relevant methods including graphical methods as appropriate. This work is generally accurate.
- Investigative work is completed to a good standard by pupils of all abilities and they are able to hypothesise a solution from the investigation followed or from the data gathered and can represent the results graphically or develop appropriate equations or theories to predict further results.

- Pupils can name two and three-dimensional shapes and are able to calculate the values of perimeters, areas, including surface areas and volume.
- The least able pupils can deal with numbers and number patterns and can recognise patterns that arise from number sequences. This is more marked at KS4.
- The able pupils at KS4 can use the sine and cosine rules correctly to solve problems.

### **Sixth form**

- In pure mathematics the students are able to integrate and differentiate expressions and can apply relevant rules and methods to solve problems.
- Students can work out the function of a function and can calculate minimum and maximum values for a given expression. They are able to determine the distance between two points and to find the co-ordinates of the mid-point of such a line.
- In statistics, they can apply the binomial theorem to determine probabilities and can use specialist tables to determine answers. They understand the rules of probability and understand conditional probability and the meaning of independent events.
- In mechanics, they can apply equations of motion and are able to resolve forces and understand the concept of equilibrium. Equally they deal correctly with questions involving potential and kinetic energy.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **KS3 and KS4**

- Pupils of lower ability are not always able to recall the work covered previously and hence do not build effectively on prior achievement.
- Pupils who have been absent or who have missed work for any reason do not always copy up their work and hence there are gaps in their knowledge and they are unable to refer to that work when the need arises. There is some incomplete work in exercise books as well.
- The low attendance rate of some pupils is hampering their progress in this subject since a large body of mathematical understanding is missing and this considerably slows their progress.
- The presentation of work of some pupils is untidy and working is not always shown, making it difficult to revise topics for tests or examinations.
- Graphs drawn in exercise books as opposed to graph paper are not always sufficiently accurate and answers are not always corrected to a sensible figure, especially work that involves decimal numbers as answers.

#### **Sixth form**

- The files of some of the students are untidy.

#### **Progress since the last inspection**

- The department has addressed many of the shortcomings mentioned in the last report.

### **Science**

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and satisfactory at KS4. In the sixth form, they are good in chemistry and physics, and satisfactory in biology. The standards are reflected in the examination results which were better, relatively, at KS3, being above national averages.



**Good features****KS3**

- More able and a majority of average ability pupils have a good understanding of a wide range of topics covering all aspects of the NC. They have a good recall of key concepts and ideas, and apply them with confidence across a range of tasks and applications in everyday life.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress, relative to their abilities. They frequently use scientific terminology well to explain basic principles.
- Pupils develop satisfactory and sometimes good practical skills.
- The cognitive acceleration through science (CASE) lessons are beginning, in Y7, to have a positive impact in developing pupils' scientific thinking skills.

**KS4**

- More able and a minority of average ability pupils have a detailed understanding of more complex principles developed in the key stage in life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes.
- More able and a small minority of average ability pupils can apply their understanding to a range of problems many linked to the application of science in everyday life.
- The quality of investigations is satisfactory, overall, and good for more able pupils. Extended writing and independent research are well developed in investigations of a good standard.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress. In Y10, they are following the double award science course, with the majority achieving good standards relative to their abilities.
- In both key stages, the majority of pupils often make good use of mathematical skills in scientific contexts.
- Pupils work safely and collaborate well during practical work.

**Sixth form**

- The majority of students in the three subjects overall, have a good understanding of key concepts. They can apply their theoretical knowledge and understanding of complex scientific principles to a range of problems.
- The majority of students have good experimental skills. They can apply their theoretical principles to a range of practical tasks. There is evidence of detailed analysis and evaluation of experimental findings in a significant number of investigations.

**Shortcomings****KS3**

- A minority of average and lower ability pupils have a less secure recall and understanding of current and previous work.
- The standard of investigative skills is satisfactory, overall.

**KS4**

- The progress of a significant number of average and lower ability pupils is satisfactory. With a significant number of these pupils, progress is hindered by a lack of commitment to complete homework tasks.
- A significant number of average and lower ability pupils do not have a secure recall of previous work, and find difficulty in applying scientific principles in a range of applications.
- In a significant number of investigations, the lack of scientific knowledge and preliminary work in the planning stage, and insufficient depth in the skills of analysing and evaluating, prevent access to the higher marks. A number of pupils also did not have marks in some skill areas.

#### **Sixth form**

- A minority of students in chemistry and physics, and a significantly larger number in biology do not have a secure understanding of current and previous work, and have difficulty applying more complex scientific principles to a range of applications.

#### **Progress since the last inspection**

- Since the last inspection, the department has made good progress and has introduced many initiatives. However, there is still some underachievement of average and lower ability pupils at KS4 and in the KS4 investigations.

#### **Welsh second language**

Standards of achievement are good at KS3, KS4 and in the sixth form. Welsh is a very popular GCSE option and results have been good, above national averages. AS/A level results compare well with the national average and are commensurate with abilities or better.

#### **Good features**

##### **KS3**

- Pupils respond enthusiastically to lessons, often set at a rigorous pace with effective integration of language skills.
- Pupils, relative to ability, are competent writers. Able pupils produce written work of a very high standard. They vary their sentence structures and use a wide vocabulary.
- In pair and group work pupils are respectful listeners and support each other well. They enjoy questioning each other in Welsh.
- Intonation and expression are commensurate with ability when pupils read aloud.
- Pupils, including those with SEN, respond confidently to activities which are tailored to their needs and which represent a suitable challenge, in carefully setted classes in Y8 and Y9.

##### **KS4**

- Confident speakers conduct a natural conversation on a range of subjects with teachers and peers.
- Pupils, across the ability range, extract information well from a range of sources.
- The majority of pupils demonstrate a sound grasp of the rules of grammar.

- They structure their written work effectively and re-draft purposefully to produce a final copy of a good standard.
- Pupils with SEN work enthusiastically to improve the standard of their oral and written work.

**Sixth form**

- Very able linguists interact confidently in Welsh with teachers, peers and visitors.
- Folios of work are well organised and contain a wide variety of written formats.
- Students show a clear understanding of texts studied and make useful notes in preparation for extended essays.
- Their sound knowledge of grammar allows them to write accurately for different purposes.
- They extend their use of the language beyond the classroom in order to improve their standard and because they enjoy Welsh culture.

**Shortcomings****KS3**

- The progress of a minority of pupils in some Y7 mixed ability classes is hindered as there is insufficient differentiation between tasks that are too challenging for the weaker pupils and do not extend the more able.
- In a minority of classes, less confident speakers do not reach their full potential due to their reluctance to speak in a whole-class situation, and there is insufficient pair and group work.

**KS4**

- In whole-class discussion some pupils do not speak as naturally as they do in pair or group work as they are reluctant to extend their conversation in front of their peers.
- At KS3 and KS4, there is insufficient access to ICT equipment for it to have an impact on raising standards.

**Sixth form**

- Although they speak confidently on familiar topics, a small minority of Y12 and Y13 students are reluctant to express opinions and take the discussion forward. They lack the confidence to demonstrate language skills that are evident in their written work.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- The department has maintained the good standards highlighted in the last report. It has made good progress in nurturing pupils' interest in the language as demonstrated by the increasing number who study Welsh at GCSE and A level.

**Design and technology**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory at KS3. They are good at KS4 in systems and control and textiles, and satisfactory in industrial technology and the newly-introduced double award Vocational Engineering. At Advanced level, standards are satisfactory.

Examination results in 2002 in systems and control and textiles were good in relation to pupils' abilities and comparable to their results in other subjects. A level results were satisfactory.

**Good features****KS3/KS4**

- Pupils have a sound understanding of a design process and its application is satisfactory. In project work, pupils understand and develop specifications to guide their designing. The

link between specification and evaluation is understood by most pupils and applied in their project work.

- Making skills are satisfactory at KS3. Pupils generally work with accuracy but finish is variable, particularly in resistant materials. Making skills are generally good at KS4, where pupils work accurately and produce a good finish to their products.
- Mechanical, electronic and microprocessor control principles are understood and appropriately embedded in project work.
- Good use is made of a wide range of ICT skills in computer-aided design/manufacture (CAD/CAM), design applications, research, microprocessor control and general applications.
- Pupils have a sound understanding of structures and are able to make load failure calculations.
- Knowledge and understanding of materials and components and of their applications are good.
- Less able pupils and pupils with SEN make good progress.

#### **Sixth form**

- Students research, analyse and produce effective design specifications to guide their product development.
- Students' evaluation is good both of commercial products and of those that they design and make.
- In the main, project folios display good standards of presentation.
- Effective use is made of ICT for research, CAD, control modelling and presentation.
- Project work is innovative.
- Students' work demonstrates effective making skills in a wide range of materials.

#### **Shortcomings**

##### **KS3/KS4**

- Shortcomings are evident in some aspects of designing, in particular the generation of ideas, their development and the use of quick drawing skills.
- More able pupils' progress in Y8 and Y9 is limited by over-structured projects.
- There are insufficient links between modules and across year groups to ensure continuity and the enhancement of standards at KS3.
- The use of ICT in textiles is less well developed than it is in other courses.
- The absence from school of a minority in most groups adversely affects their standards at KS4.

##### **Sixth form**

- Quick creative design drawing skills are weaker than other elements of students' designing.
- Insufficient emphasis is placed on developing students' theoretical knowledge and understanding through regular writing of long and short essays.

- Case studies, which are well linked with commercial and industrial contexts, often lack sufficient evaluative commentary.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- Standards at KS3 are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. At KS4, standards have improved.

**Information and communications technology**

Standards of achievement in ICT at KS3 are unsatisfactory. Standards of achievement at KS4 are very good. Standards of achievement in the sixth form are good. Examination results at GCSE have been very good, above national averages, and in the sixth form, results have been good.

**Good features****KS3**

- Pupils work through the KeyBytes software programme of tasks following the on-screen instructions with additional text book support, and complete all tasks to at least a satisfactory standard.
- They all work to an individual pace with the more able pupils completing all units and worksheets set to at least a satisfactory standard.
- A significant majority of pupils develop communication skills and literacy skills to a satisfactory level for their ability including integrating text and images for presentation of information.

**KS4 and Sixth form**

- Pupils at KS4 and students in the sixth form demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the theoretical aspects of ICT such as UK legislation on computer use.
- They all work confidently with all the hardware and a range of fairly complex software applications for word processing and desktop publishing, graphics production and development, spreadsheet and database applications.
- A significant majority of pupils and students demonstrate high order skills when integrating macros, manipulating graphics and integrating text and numerical data.
- A significant majority of pupils and students work largely independently through identified tasks to meet the needs of set coursework, using technical vocabulary to discuss their work and explain choices made.
- Their work also demonstrates a good standard of numerical application.

**Shortcomings**

- Pupils do not work above a NC level 5 by the end of the KS3 in communication, data handling and modelling, with limited opportunities for integration of software applications.
- The more able pupils at KS3 who reach units on spreadsheet and database formats for data handling and modelling have only a basic introduction. Thus pupils have no or limited experience of these areas of the NC and limited integration of numeracy.
- The system of two modules across KS3 limits continuity and progression in skills, knowledge and understanding for all pupils; additionally shared computers for some classes results in slow pace and progress for some pupils.

- While all students in the sixth form are encouraged to work to the best of their ability and the current Y12 and Y13 students are showing an improving situation, the 2002 examination results identify a number of students gaining an un-graded result due to incomplete coursework.

#### **Progress since the last inspection**

- Standards of achievement have greatly improved at KS4 GCSE level, despite limited pupil experience at KS3. A level courses have replaced Advanced GNVQ courses in the sixth form and standards are good.

#### **History**

Standards of achievement are good at KS3, KS4 and in the sixth form. GCSE results in 2002 were good, and all students gained a grade at A level.

#### **Good features**

##### **KS3**

- Pupils have a generally good knowledge and understanding of topics and events and possess the ability to make confident, thoughtful use of both primary and secondary sources of evidence; they develop good investigative approaches to examining historical problems and often make acute observations.
- They empathise with people and gain an understanding from the perspective of the period being studied; Y7 pupils extract pertinent information from written and photographic evidence to accurately describe the quality of life of a peasant family in a Medieval village.
- Pupils in Y8 are aware that throughout the ages, people have been persecuted for their religious beliefs and their knowledge of the history of Wales is enhanced by their study of the punishment by burning at the stake of a "heretic" from the Cardiff area during Queen Mary's reign.
- In their studies of World War II, Y9 pupils evaluate sources well in terms of strengths and weaknesses and realise the limitations of certain evidence such as propaganda posters; they use subject specific vocabulary accurately and in the correct context.
- Good standards are achieved by pupils with SEN.

##### **KS4**

- Most pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of the topic being studied.
- Written work accurately reflects the abilities of students, with some good work. Enquiries are focused, using a variety of sources.
- Standards of listening and speaking are good, with pupils showing good recall of previous work and the ability to apply their knowledge to new situations.

##### **Sixth form**

- Students provide good explanations of historical events in written and oral form. They use specific terms accurately.
- Students can extract information from a source easily and evaluate its relevance to the topic under discussion.

- Students' files are well-organized and contain detailed notes and extended writing of good quality.

**Shortcomings****KS3**

- A small minority of pupils experience initial uncertainty with the use of more complex terms; they are occasionally reluctant to ask for assistance or for further explanations.
- The progress and overall standard of work of a handful of pupils is hindered by anti-social behaviour in class.

**KS4**

- A minority of pupils do not have a clear understanding of the major personalities and events of the period being studied.
- Some pupils do not use extended speech sufficiently.

**Sixth form**

- Some students' files are not well-organized and do not provide an adequate basis for revision.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- Standards have improved at KS3 and have remained good at KS4 and in the sixth form.

**Geography**

Standards of achievement are good at KS3, KS4 and in the sixth form. Results in external examinations in recent years are creditable.

**Good features****KS3 and KS4**

- Pupils acquire a wide range of skills and techniques, particularly those associated with the use of maps and atlases, diagrams and photographs; they use these with precision in geographical enquiry and fieldwork, both locally and further afield.
- They have a secure knowledge and understanding of the character and identity of Wales; they make good use of their knowledge in the study of other peoples and of countries in a widening range of contexts and scales.
- They possess a good appreciation of the interaction between people and the environment; they describe and explain environmental change and how attempts are made to manage it in areas such as the tropical rainforests.
- Pupils acquire an increasing vocabulary of geographical terms; they gain access to, and use, a wide range of sources, including ICT, to extract information and use statistical data in a variety of forms to illustrate their findings.
- They are keenly aware of the inequalities in the economic development of countries and of the effects on the quality of life of the local population in areas such as the shanty towns of Brazil.
- Examination candidates acquire the skills of collecting, recording and evaluating a range of evidence from primary and secondary sources; the presentation of their findings, using a range of techniques is, on occasions, very good.

**Sixth form**

- Students possess a sound grasp of relevant knowledge and its application; they are adept in applying previously acquired information to an unfamiliar context making good use of contrasting named case studies to exemplify their studies in physical and human units of study.
- Learning skills are well developed; communication and the application of number are used confidently in class and the wider key learning skills of problem solving and working with others are reflected in group presentations on changing patterns of world development.
- Innovative learning situations enable students to respond constructively using an investigative approach; they have a growing understanding and awareness of the relevance of geography to environmental, economic and social issues when researching changing urban land use.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **KS3 and KS4**

- In both key stages, the progress of a minority of pupils is restrained by a short-term recall of information, sometimes a lack of concentration in class and a poor record of attendance.
- Individual pupils experience difficulties in locating places; others are uncertain in the use and spelling of more complex terminology.
- Some are more confident orally than in writing but are reluctant to contribute in class.

#### **Sixth form**

- No significant shortcomings were noted in the sixth form.

### **Progress since the last inspection**

- The department has made good progress since the last inspection and standards have risen.

### **Modern foreign languages**

Standards of achievement in modern languages are good at KS3, KS4 and in the sixth form. GCSE results of the relatively large cohort of students taking a foreign language at GCSE reflect the good progress they make in relation to their ability with a particularly high proportion of A/A\* grades in French. Advanced level results exceed local averages with a particularly sharply improving trend in French.

### **Good features**

#### **KS3**

- The vast majority of pupils enjoy learning foreign languages and respond eagerly to opportunities to speak. Many demonstrate good levels of recall of vocabulary taught in previous lessons.
- The written work of students of all abilities is nearly always accurate and well-presented. Pupils' progress is enhanced by opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing from an early stage.
- In the significant number of classes in which the target language is properly the main means of communication, pupils are able to understand and follow instructions and take part in conversations with confidence, good pronunciation and fluency.

#### **KS4**

- The majority of pupils show substantial progress from KS3 in all four skills and in the breadth of vocabulary they can recall and apply.
- Pupils enjoy speaking the foreign language and participate readily and confidently in pair and small group oral work.
- Pupils' good standards in understanding the foreign language are aided by extensive opportunities to listen to and understand French and German spoken by the teachers and foreign language assistants.

#### **Sixth form**

- Students' comprehensive files of written work reflect their ability to write accurately about a wide range of topics.
- The majority of students have a good awareness of the rules of grammar and are able to apply them confidently and correctly.
- Students demonstrate very good standards of speaking in French and are able to converse fluently and confidently.

#### **Shortcomings**

##### **KS3**

- The number of answers pupils give using longer phrases or multiple sentences is limited.
- In a number of classes progress in speaking the target language is limited by an over-reliance on English as the main medium of communication.
- Inattentiveness in a very small number of classes is having an adverse effect on standards.

##### **KS4**

- Pupils have few opportunities for independent or extended reading.
- In a minority of classes the ability of students to speak at length, initiate conversations or use the foreign language for general transactions in the classroom such as requests for equipment or to leave the room is underdeveloped.

#### **Sixth form**

- Oral skills in German are less secure.

#### **Progress since the last inspection**

- The many strengths of this department have been maintained since the last inspection and the proportion of lessons in which standards of achievement are good or very good has increased to a very high level.

#### **Art**

Standards of achievement are good at KS3, KS4 and in the sixth form. GCSE results reflect these good standards. Current standards in the sixth form are higher than previous examination results.

#### **Good features**

##### **KS3, KS4 and Sixth form**

- Pupils and students have a good understanding of visual language and can apply it to good effect in their own work.
- All pupils have sketch books that they value as an integral part of their programmes of study.
- At KS3, sketchbooks display good development and progression of visual and technical skills.
- At KS4 and A Level, students use sketchbooks effectively for enquiry and exploration as well as for observation.
- Pupils explore and convey their ideas in a variety of media and in two and three dimensions.
- They successfully and progressively record from direct observation and from life.
- Pupils have good control and understanding of the medium in which they are working.
- They demonstrate progressive development of technical competence, processes and techniques.
- At all key stages, knowledge and understanding of other artists, including local, historical and contemporary examples, are well developed.
- Pupils and students have a good understanding of the arts of other cultures in, for example, study of Aboriginal and African art.
- They respond effectively to the arts of Wales.
- At KS3, pupils are able to follow a design brief and they can use ICT successfully to create a finished product.
- At all key stages, ICT develops pupils' research skills. They create and manipulate images.
- In the sixth form, students' skills are further developed by successful links with other institutions in, for example, a primary school mural project and a life drawing class.

### **Shortcomings**

- At KS3 and KS4, standards achieved by boys are not as good as standards achieved by girls.
- At KS3 and KS4, levels of understanding are not as secure as they are for making and investigating: skills of evaluation, including self-evaluation linked to progression and monitoring, are not sufficiently developed.

### **Progress since the last inspection**

- Progress since the last inspection has been good.

### **Music**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory at KS3 and good at KS4 and in the sixth form. GCSE results in recent years have been above the national average, though the number of candidates has been small. A level results have been appropriate for the abilities of the students.

### **Good features**

#### **KS3 and KS4**

- Pupils at KS3 sing with enthusiasm. They play melodies on classroom instruments with a good degree of accuracy and maintain good ensemble when playing together in unison and occasionally when performing in parts.
- Some of the pupils' creative melodic work, including improvisations, is well shaped and rhythmically interesting.
- Pupils have a sound awareness of musical elements and are able to identify instruments and features in recorded extracts of music.
- Pupils at KS4 make suitable progress in vocal and instrumental performance and achieve good standards, overall.
- Good use is made of ICT by many pupils to load, store and refine work in composing. Many compositions demonstrate imaginative treatment of musical ideas and a good understanding of style and structure.
- Standards of appraising music, though uneven, are satisfactory, overall. More able pupils can discern technical and expressive features well in extracts of music from different styles and periods.

#### **Sixth form**

- Students in Y12 and Y13 are able performers and achieve good standards.
- Students' compositions are of a good standard and display personal initiative and a good understanding of the style and medium chosen.
- Aural and appraising skills are satisfactory, overall. Students are acquiring sound knowledge and understanding of the main features of the music being studied in their respective areas of study.

#### **Shortcomings**

##### **KS3 and KS4**

- Pupils at KS3 do not always sing with sufficient attention to musical detail and expression. In general, pupils are less secure in keyboard individual and ensemble performance. More able pupils are not always fully extended in instrumental performance.
- The ability and experience of pupils to explore a range of sound sources and combine them imaginatively when composing are limited.
- Pupils' appraising of their own practical work is often superficial and lacks depth.
- The appraising skills of certain KS4 pupils are not evenly developed across a range of musical contexts.

##### **Sixth form**

- Certain students in Y12 have yet to fully research and plan their folio essays. Aural skills are uneven with responses sometimes insecure and lacking in detail.

#### **Progress since the last inspection**

- Since the last inspection standards have been consolidated in KS4 and the sixth form. There has not been a significant improvement in standards in KS3. However, new units of work recently produced for KS3 provide a sound basis for broadening experiences and raising standards.

**Physical education**

Standards achieved at KS3 and in the sixth form are good. At KS4, they are very good. GCSE and A level examination results over recent years have been above national averages for both boys and girls which in relation to ability, represents considerable progress across the full ability range. At AS level, results are more variable reflecting the difficulties some students have in meeting the more rigorous demands of advanced study.

**Good features****KS3**

- Knowledge and understanding are evident in pupils' organisation and execution of tasks.
- They talk knowledgeably about their own work and that of others and when given the opportunity, can adapt and refine work independently of the teacher.
- The majority swim confidently, show good ball control in games and demonstrate an appropriate range of skills in gymnastics.

**KS4**

- Written work is very well presented and in discussion, the more able pupils develop their ideas drawing examples from their own experience.
- In the core programme pupils prepare appropriately for exercise, demonstrate good and very good practical techniques, and learn new skills with enthusiasm and good attention to safety.
- Teams and individuals go on to achieve local and national honours.

**Sixth form**

- Within the examination courses, students in Y12 demonstrate a sound basic knowledge of contemporary sporting issues and engage in lively and informed discussion using examples from their own experience to illustrate points made.
- Students work diligently to understand complex anatomical and physiological aspects of the course.
- Written work is very well presented and there are examples of students' own work which shows the ability to produce well structured arguments.

**Shortcomings**

- Pupils do not always take responsibility for their own learning particularly at KS3 and in some sixth form sessions.
- Pupils' oracy skills are well-developed but the development of other key skills remains to be addressed.
- There is no provision for sixth form students outside of the examination programmes.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- There has been steady progress since the last inspection.

**Religious education**

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and satisfactory at KS4. There is no religious education in the sixth form.

**Good features****KS3**

- Pupils have good knowledge of the units of work studied, which reflect the requirements of the local agreed syllabus.

- The more able pupils show the ability to answer at length, successfully building on good knowledge, and they ask searching questions.
- Pupils have good knowledge of Christian traditions and they are developing a good awareness of other faiths practised in Wales. They have an understanding of the importance of religious beliefs in shaping the identity of both individuals and faith communities.
- Less able pupils are making good progress. They have good knowledge of the key issues in topics and some of them respond sensitively and thoughtfully.

#### **KS4**

- Pupils have secure knowledge of the current moral and religious issues they are studying. They understand that people have different views and most show respect for others' beliefs.
- Within Christianity they know that people have different religious beliefs and how their beliefs can shape their response to moral issues, and can create friction within a Church and between Churches.
- Pupils are willing to express opinions and the more able expand significantly on their comments.

#### **Shortcomings**

##### **KS3 and KS4**

- In some lessons, pupils give only short answers both orally and on worksheets.
- Pupils' investigating skills and ICT skills are limited.
- At KS4, pupils do not often express and argue a position on moral issues or bring a religious perspective to these issues.
- A minority of individual pupils have a negative attitude to the subject which inhibits progress.

#### **Progress since the last inspection**

- At KS3 standards are higher than during the last inspection. All pupils at KS4 now follow the short GCSE course, although the number of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in the last two years has declined when compared to previous years. Religious education is still not taught in the sixth form and this does not meet statutory requirements.

#### **Religious studies**

Standards of achievement are good at KS4 and in the sixth form. At KS4, pupils follow the course in one extra lesson during the lunch break. Good results were obtained in the GCSE examination last summer. In the sixth form, there are few students following the AS and A2 courses.

#### **Good features**

##### **KS4**

- Pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of the content area of the syllabus.
- In their oral work pupils respond correctly, on the basis of their knowledge, and make very good use of the subject's technical vocabulary.

- Pupils are developing a good understanding of the ways in which religious belief and practices address the questions and issues raised by contemporary spiritual, moral and social issues.
- Their written work is well organised and based on a satisfactory range of references.

#### **Sixth form**

- Students discuss issues at an appropriate level, have good note-taking skills and produce written work with a relevant range of references.
- Systematic reasoning and the analysis of issues enable students to reach appropriate conclusions, and the higher attainers show evidence of independent thought, drawing on their personal experiences especially regarding religious experience.
- Students' essays include discussion of the opinions of religious exponents and materials from appropriate sources. The more able analyse the information well.

#### **Shortcomings**

- Students in the sixth form do not easily debate and share views because of the small number in the class.
- Pupils make little use of investigative skills.

#### **Progress since the last inspection**

- The two outside accreditation courses are now offered and standards are good.

### **Business and communication systems**

Standards of achievement are good at KS4 and in the sixth form. GCSE and A level examination results have reflected these good standards.

#### **Good features**

##### **KS4**

- Pupils who are committed to learn have well developed learning skills and respond positively to the high expectations set for them. These pupils gain the target grade set.
- Pupils show good awareness of economic concepts, information and ideas.
- Pupils use ICT skilfully for text manipulation, retrieving and handling information. Appropriate web sites are identified for pupils and access is available.

##### **Sixth form**

- The higher attaining students who are motivated and enthusiastic undertake work which demonstrates their understanding of complex economic concepts.
- Students who engage in discussion and debate about their work gain in confidence.
- Individuals are articulate and knowledgeable and are sensitive to the views of others.

#### **Shortcomings**

##### **KS4**

- The written work of the least able is not completed to a standard commensurate with the individual's ability.

- Some pupils have poor literacy skills.
- GCSE results recently are lower than predicted due to the lack of examination revision undertaken by pupils for themselves.
- Weak skills of analysis and evaluation are shown by lower ability pupils.
- Underachievement is, in part, due to poor attendance rates in classrooms.

**Sixth form**

- Boys, in particular, display ineffective techniques of spelling. There is a lack of precision and consistency in their use of grammar.
- Students' irregular attendance adversely influences the completion of assignments.
- A small minority of students lack the necessary self-motivation to complete their coursework in the given time and this adversely influences standards.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- The subject has made many improvements since the previous inspection.

**Child development**

Standards of achievement at KS4 are satisfactory. Pupils usually achieve grades at GCSE which exceed expectation.

**Good features**

- Pupils experience a range of practical and theoretical tasks.
- Most are able to recall previous work showing sound understanding of the care and development of babies and young children.
- They develop good oral skills when they discuss their work on whole-class or group activities.
- Their investigative work in projects is well focused and research and presentation are often supported by the use of ICT.
- There are good examples of extended writing when pupils carry out research or record results of personal visits to individual children.
- Most Y11 pupils understand the concept of statistical norms.

**Shortcomings**

- A number of pupils find difficulty in interpreting and evaluating information independently.
- A minority are less focused on their work and this affects their progress.
- Currently, a proportion of coursework in child studies lacks depth, detail and reasoned analysis.
- Punctuation and spellings are of variable quality.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- This subject was not reported separately in the last inspection.

## **Drama**

Standards are satisfactory. This is a new department in the early stages of development. One group in Y10 is currently taking the GCSE course for examination in 2004. Pupils have limited and varied drama experience from KS3 as part of English.

**Good features****KS4**

- Pupils have very positive attitudes, and work together effectively. They have already begun to rehearse work independently of the teacher.
- Some good examples of facial expression, use of voice, gesture and mime to enhance performance were observed, with some pupils also using costume and props to help characterisation.
- Pupils are developing observational skills and the use of subject terminology in evaluating their own and others' work.

**Shortcomings**

- Pupils' progress is not easily measured through the current assessment data.

**Economics**

Standards of achievement are good in the sixth form and examination results overall are above the national average.

**Good features**

- Students understand and use investigative methods.
- Students show good knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of economics and how these are expressed in texts, writings and practices.
- Students are able to recall factual information from previous learning and show an increasing ability to apply what they know in different contexts.
- The written work of the more able shows development in the ability to analyse and interpret information they are given.
- Able, well motivated students distinguish facts and opinions without assistance.
- Students make reasoned judgements.

**Shortcomings**

- The use of ICT for personal research is underdeveloped.
- Students' self-evaluation of their work lacks confidence when appraising the areas to be improved.
- A few students do not complete their coursework in the given time and this affects standards. Some homework is not commensurate with the individual's ability.
- The less well-motivated students do not have the confidence to speak at length. They tend to confine themselves to short answers when questioned.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- Standards in the previous inspection have been maintained.

## **Home economics**

### **Food**

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and KS4. GCSE examination results for 2001 compared reasonably well with local and national figures and represented progress in relation to pupils' abilities. No pupils were entered for GCSE in 2002.

#### **Good features**

##### **KS3 and KS4**

- Pupils develop sound knowledge and understanding of nutritional guidelines, food trends, including cultural influences and food preparation.
- Investigational work is well undertaken and pupils are able to research a range of consumer issues and identify relevant factors. Completed projects contain good evidence of extended writing.
- Practical work is well executed. Pupils plan and prepare appropriate food items. They generally work safely, accurately and produce on the whole, quality products.
- Pupils work well in groups to taste test a range of manufactured products and use appropriate sensory terminology and star profiles to discuss and evaluate their work.
- Less able pupils and pupils with SEN receive sensitive support, modified tasks and make good progress.
- Pupils' work is enhanced by the use of ICT.

#### **Shortcomings**

##### **KS3 and KS4**

- Information and communications technology is not used to analyse dietary data.
- Work contains a number of spelling errors.
- Low numbers are taking the subject at examinations level.

#### **Progress since the last inspection**

- This subject was not reported separately in the last inspection.

### **Catering**

Standards of achievement in Y11 are satisfactory. No Y10 pupils are following this course. Recent examination results have been satisfactory.

#### **Good features**

- Pupils gain a sound knowledge and understanding of food outlets and the various roles within a catering organisation.
- They benefit from a number of visits made to local catering establishments.
- They are able to use catering terminology with reasonable accuracy when they describe aspects of their work.
- Class files are well organised and demonstrate that pupils are able to plan, make and evaluate appropriate food items for class and coursework requirements.

- Photographic evidence shows that a range of practical food products are prepared safely and are generally well finished.

### **Shortcomings**

- Food items produced are mainly for personal use with the result that pupils have limited experience of large-scale food preparation.
- A number of pupils lack the ability to work independently.

### **Textiles - Advanced Level**

Standards are good. Students achieve very creditable results in A and AS level examinations.

### **Good features**

- Students work independently on individual projects which reflect an awareness and appreciation of design principles.
- They experiment well with a wide range of fibres and fabrics and develop a good understanding of the properties of the materials they are using.
- Students produce innovative solutions to design problems and practical outcomes show flair, imagination and a variety of creative techniques.
- In-depth investigation into artists and designers is carried out with constructive use made of visits to local and national museums, exhibitions and craft centres.
- Information and communications technology is used effectively in design folios to support research and the presentation of work.

### **Shortcomings**

- There is only one student following the second year of the course, which limits the opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas and opinions.

### **Progress since the last inspection**

- These courses were not studied at the time of the last inspection.

### **Media studies**

Standards of achievement are good at KS4 and in the sixth form. GCSE results have been good, well above the national average. All students gained a grade at A level.

### **Good features**

#### **KS4 and the Sixth form**

- Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of media codes and conventions.
- They use technical terms with understanding and confidence, for example 'signifier', 'macho-iconography', 'referential codes'.
- Most display good standards of critical analysis when they study different media forms, for example, video and texts.
- Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of technical aspects, for example the purposes of camera angles and the use of music for effect.
- They plan, draft and evaluate coursework projects effectively. Able pupils produce work of a high standard.

- They participate in class discussion, listen to the views of others and put forward a point of view.

**Shortcomings**

- Less able pupils are more secure describing rather than analysing.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- Since the last inspection, good progress has been made.

**Personal and social education**

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and KS4. Lessons in PSE are not timetabled in the sixth form, but aspects are covered in tutorial time and on days when the timetable is suspended. Sixth form PSE is evaluated in section 5.4 of the report.

**Good features**

- Pupils gain knowledge and understanding of the topics studied, for example, health education, money management, revision techniques.
- They participate with interest in discussion, role-play, drama, and problem-solving activities, probing their understanding and developing attitudes and values.
- Most pupils listen with interest to the teacher and to each other.
- They read resource materials with understanding, and can extract relevant details.
- Written work is neatly presented in pupils' files and shows good analysis of subject matter, as well as evaluation of progress.

**Shortcomings**

- A small minority of pupils are not fully engaged in the lessons.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- Personal and social education was not reported on as a subject in the last report.

**Psychology**

Standards of achievement are good in the sixth form and examination results have been good.

**Good features**

- The majority of students research and write with accuracy, fluency and show a measure of independence.
- Students of all abilities are confident to ask questions, seek help when needed and value support given. This enables students to work independently and as part of a team.
- The ablest students produce good writing. They contribute enthusiastically in class discussion. Students can use research and analytical skills when planning their projects.
- Students maintain comprehensive, well organised files of work.
- The majority of students are able to apply theoretical knowledge and understanding to solving psychological problems including analysis of data.

**Shortcomings**

- A minority of students fail to fulfil their potential by absenting themselves from classes.

- The ablest students use ICT advantageously but the middle ability students make insufficient use of the technology available to them to raise standards.
- Errors of grammar and spelling are evident in the writing of the average ability students.
- A small number of middle ability students are reluctant to extend and develop their talk and have difficulty sustaining a conversation on psychological issues.

#### **Progress since the last inspection**

- The subject has made sound progress since the last inspection. There has been an improvement in students' standards of achievement. The quality of written work, especially in investigations, has developed.

### **Sociology**

Standards in sociology are satisfactory. Examination results have been satisfactory.

#### **Good features**

- Most students develop a sound knowledge and understanding of social processes and structures.
- All students have a good awareness of ways in which sociology can help them understand the everyday world.
- A Level students begin to make good use of sociological texts to broaden their understanding of social issues.

#### **Shortcomings**

- AS students do not use sociological concepts and methods effectively to analyse social issues.
- Students do not make good use of sociological texts to further their understanding of the subject.
- Too few AS students use subject terminology appropriately to formalise and express their analysis of social issues.

#### **Progress since the last inspection**

- Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

### **Vocational Education**

#### **GNVQ Engineering (Intermediate and Foundation)**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

In 2002 no students were awarded certification. The courses last year were taught jointly with a local college of further education.

#### **Good features**

- Students' work is embedded in industrial contexts which are used effectively to enhance standards.
- Practical skills are developing appropriately. Students use a range of materials to produce engineering products to a satisfactory standard.

- Knowledge and understanding of engineering principles, materials properties and practical applications vary across groups. Overall, standards are satisfactory.
- The key skills of communication, application of number, ICT, working with others, and problem solving are appropriately integrated into assignments. Standards are satisfactory.

**Shortcomings**

- Design drawing and engineering drawing skills are weak.
- Students' action planning and monitoring of their own standards and progress are underdeveloped.
- The progress of a minority of students is retarded by irregular attendance.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- This course was not in operation at the time of the last inspection.

**Health and social care****Intermediate**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory. Recent examination results are satisfactory.

**Good features**

- Students are developing a sound understanding of the structure and function of health care services and the role of professional carers.
- They are able to identify different life stages and a range of factors that affect personal development.
- They have good knowledge of potential health risks and prepare questionnaires to investigate the lifestyle of individual clients.
- ICT and numeracy skills are reinforced and extended in a variety of class tasks.
- Students benefit from an input from a local college and make good use of visits and placements within the community.

**Shortcomings**

- Some students find difficulty in analysing their research findings independently and are quite teacher reliant.
- Students are quite passive and reluctant to discuss their work orally.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- Progress since the last inspection has been maintained.

**Advanced**

Standards of achievement are good. Recent AS examination results are good.

**Good features**

- Students display good knowledge and understanding of an individual client's rights and the role of health and social care services and professional carers in providing non-discriminatory care.
- In the classroom situation students discuss relevant issues in a mature, confident way and most are able to formulate logical, informed opinions and evaluations.
- Communication skills are developed well through personal interaction with a range of clients, role play activities and extended report writing.
- Students are able to research independently and record information from a variety of sources including community visits and work placements.

- Good use is made of personal and whole-school ICT facilities to investigate the structure and function of statutory and voluntary organisations and to present completed work.

#### **Shortcomings**

- Students' skills in ICT are not used fully because of the lack of base ICT facilities.

#### **Progress since the last inspection**

- This subject was not offered at this level at the time of the last inspection.

#### **Leisure and Tourism Year 12, Intermediate level**

Standards of achievement are good. Results in recent years have been good, every student who completed the course being awarded a grade.

#### **Good features**

- Students have a good knowledge and understanding of the vocational area and can relate their current studies to a realistic commercial setting. They draw on their personal experiences and make effective use of the information gained to support class work on methods of travel and their relative merits in terms of convenience and availability.
- They work productively as individuals and in small groups as when asked to organise a specific event; they accept a key responsibility, complete the allotted tasks and work successfully as part of a team.
- They possess a keen appreciation of how leisure and tourism organisations use marketing techniques to promote their products and services and how local advertising can benefit smaller facilities.

#### **Shortcomings**

- The work of a small minority of the group lacks detail, with salient points not fully developed; one or two individuals are less confident in their written work which occasionally reflects received material rather than the product of their own research.

#### **Progress since the last inspection**

- This vocational area has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards have improved and students' computer skills continue to be a strength.

## **8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **8.1 Progress Since the Last Inspection**

1. **Governors and the SMT need to set up strategies to ensure the implementation and monitoring of school policies and procedures at all levels. Practice across the school should more positively reflect the high quality of the written policies.**

**These will include:**

- **The marking and monitoring of homework**
- **Delivery of the PSE programme**
- **More effective use of tutorial time**
- **Effective use of the swipe card system**

There is still some discrepancy between the high quality of the documentation about the school and practice across the school. With regard to the areas highlighted, there has been good progress on two out of the four issues. Personal and social education is now effectively delivered and the swipe card system has been replaced by Bromcom, which works well. The marking and monitoring of homework are still inconsistent and tutorial time is not used well in all groups.

**2. Steps need to be taken to address several curriculum issues:**

- **The gap in the relative performance of boys and girls**
- **Standards in public examinations at KS4 and in the sixth form in science**
- **Consideration of the gender imbalances in technology and modern foreign languages**

The gap in performance between boys and girls remains, though it varies from year to year and between subjects. Results in science have improved, particularly in physics and chemistry in the sixth form. The gender imbalance in technology still exists, in the take-up of GCSE courses but this is no longer a significant problem in modern foreign languages.

**3. The good work already achieved in information technology in some areas of the curriculum needs to be spread more widely to all subject areas. The subject requires efficient co-ordination and improved assessment procedures.**

There has been insufficient progress on this issue. The delivery and assessment of information technology at KS3 and ICT across the curriculum remain key issues. The school has already identified it as an on-going issue in its SDP and there is a staff working group on ICT assessment.

**4. Action is required to make ready access for all staff and pupils to the available learning resources, both books and those electronically stored.**

All members of the school now have a password which allows them access to electronically stored resources. However, the absence of a library/resource centre means that they have limited research facilities and there is not easy access to the central ICT rooms. The building under construction has a designated area for use as a library.

**5. The school needs to continue to seek strategies to improve attendance and reduce unauthorised absence. Improved punctuality at school in the morning is also needed.**

There has been some improvement in the overall rate of attendance but it is not yet satisfactory and the progress of a significant minority of pupils is adversely affected, including sixth form students. Unauthorised absence is still high and punctuality is still an issue, not just in the morning.

**6. The school should provide collective worship and religious education as required by statute.**

Statutory requirements are not met in either case. There has been some progress in drawing up a programme of "Thoughts for the Day" for collective worship in tutor groups, but this is not yet effective in practice. Statutory religious education is not provided in the sixth form.

## 8.2 Key Issues for Action

In order to build on its current achievements the school should:

1. Improve standards generally and in particular improve standards:
  - In subjects and key stages in which standards are satisfactory
  - At KS3, for both the most able pupils and those of middle-lower ability
  - In ICT at KS3 and ICT across the curriculum
  - In the level of achievement of boys.
- Promote the key skills of literacy and numeracy consistently across the curriculum and increase the opportunities for independent learning.
- Ensure that all school policies, procedures and initiatives are rigorously and effectively implemented.
- Develop the role of the form tutor and make best use of tutor time.
- Continue efforts to improve attendance, particularly in the sixth form.
- Meet statutory and health and safety requirements in those areas indicated in the report.

**APPENDIX****A. Basic Information About the School**

Name of School	Bryn Celynnog Comprehensive School
School type	Community
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Penycoedcae Road Beddau Pontypridd
Post-Code	CF38 2AE
Telephone Number	01443 203411

Headteacher	Mr Gareth Jones
Date of appointment	1 September 1992
Chair of Governors	Mrs Marilyn Thomas
Registered Inspector	Miss Glynis Owen
Dates of inspection	3-7 February 2003

**B. School Data and Indicators**

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>								
Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	220	212	240	248	226	144	96	1386

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	82	1	82.3

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16.85:1
Average teaching group size	21.13
Overall contact ratio	79%

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	92.5	91.5	89.0	88.6	91.5	87.6	79.8	89.8
Term 2	88.8	86.2	85.2	85.1	91.1	61.3	64.1	84.8
Term 3	90.7	87.9	89.9	89.1	85.7	77.1	69.9	86.4

<i>Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection</i>	37 temporarily 0 permanently
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### C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

<b>National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2002</b>															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 255															
<b>Percentage of pupils at each level</b>															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
EN	Teacher assessment	School	1	4	0	0	0	2	8	28	34	23	2	0	
		National	0	1	1	0	0	3	10	22	34	21	8	0	
	Test	School	3	5	1	-	-	-	12	25	39	13	2	-	
		National	0	3	2	-	-	-	9	22	33	19	10	-	
MA	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	26	29	25	11	0	
		National	0	1	0	0	0	1	10	23	25	26	13	1	
	Test	School	0	6	2	-	-	-	7	20	21	32	12	-	
		National	0	6	1	-	-	-	8	22	22	27	13	-	
SC	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	24	29	25	11	0	
		National	0	1	1	0	0	1	10	24	31	23	9	0	
	Test	School	0	6	0	-	-	-	4	19	34	26	11	-	
		National	0	4	1	-	-	-	9	22	29	24	10	-	

<b>Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)</b>			
<b>by Teacher Assessment</b>		<b>by Test</b>	
In the school:	48	In the school:	51
In Wales:	48	In Wales:	50

D - Pupils exempted under statutory arrangements from part of the National Curriculum

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

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

W - Pupils who are working towards level 1

EP - Exceptional Performance, where pupils at Key Stage 3 perform above level 8.

<b>For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, CoE, GNVQ and NVQ</b>			
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2002: 241			
<b>The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2002:</b>			
	<b>School</b>	<b>UA</b>	<b>Wales</b>
were entered for 5 or more GCSEs	87	85	86
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C	47	46	50
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-G	85	33	85
achieved GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language)	38	33	37
entered at least one CoE, GCSE short course or GCSE	96	96	97
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-C	73	69	74
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-G	93	91	92
achieved no graded GCSE	5	6	5
achieved one or more CoE only	2	3	3
achieved a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	0		
achieved a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	0		
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	47		
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	85		

<b>For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs</b>			
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2002: 122			
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2002:			
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2002:			
	<b>School</b>	<b>UA</b>	<b>Wales</b>
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	40	57	66
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	84	92	94
Average points score per candidate	14	17	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	5		
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	0		

#### **D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection**

- 18 inspectors spent the equivalent of 59 days at the school.
- 268 lessons were observed, including full and part sessions, including all curricular areas.
- Inspectors attended assemblies, and a sample of tutor periods and extra-curricular activities.
- Discussions were held with heads of department, representatives of the pastoral teams and support staff, and all members of senior management.
- Pupils' and students' work in all subjects was scrutinised, and the work from representative pupils in Y7-Y11.
- There were formal discussions with pupils from KS3, KS4 and the sixth form and informal discussion with many pupils in and out of lessons.
- The Registered Inspector met the staff and governors prior to the inspection.
- About 20 parents attended the parents' meeting and 64 replies to the questionnaire were received.
- Comprehensive documentation about the school was scrutinised before and during the inspection.
- Feedback was given to departments and to the SMT at the end of the inspection, and to governors and the SMT after the inspection.

## E. Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team

Inspector	Type	Aspect Responsibilities	Subject Responsibilities
G Owen	Rgl	Context; Main findings; Educational standards achieved by pupils; Key skills (literacy); Teaching; Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement; Leadership and efficiency; School improvement	modern foreign languages; history*; sociology*; PSE*
S Page	Lay	Behaviour and attitudes; Attendance; Partnerships with parents and community, schools and other institutions; Partnership with industry	
L Bithell	Core	Assessment, recording and reporting	English; media studies
G Davies	Core	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	science
H Evans	Core	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; Provision for pupils with special educational needs	religious education
P Francis	Core	Curriculum; Support, guidance and pupils' welfare; numeracy	mathematics
E Bowyer	Team		geography; leisure and tourism
N Carr	Team		business studies; economics; psychology
M Crandon	Team		Welsh
J Down	Team	ICT across the curriculum	information technology
P Evans	Team		science
S Gale	Team		design and technology; engineering
M Herbert	Team		home economics; health and social care; catering; textiles; child development
A W Jones	Team		music
B Lightman	Team		modern foreign languages
D Makin	Team		physical education; drama
J Williams	Team		Aat

\* These sections were written by the Rgl from contributions from other members of the team.

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