

**INSPECTION UNDER SECTION 10
INSPECTION OF SCHOOLS ACT 1996**

**Ysgol Brynhyfryd
Mold Road
Ruthin
Denbighshire
LL15 1EG**

School number : 663 / 4031

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Registered Inspector : WO19 / 17166
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under ESTYN contract number – T/14/02**

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CURRICULUM AND KEY STAGES NOMENCLATURE

A new nomenclature to describe pupils' progress through the school was introduced in 1989. It is intended that this system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory education until the age of 18 should facilitate communication amongst schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs and emphasise the importance of progression.

The term "Reception" (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school (not a nursery class) whose fifth birthday will occur during the academic year. "Year 1" (Y1) is used for the year group of pupils whose sixth birthday will occur during the academic year and so on until Y13 - the year group whose 18th birthday will occur during the academic year:

	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Age	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 includes Y1 and Y2; KS2 includes Y3 to Y6; KS3 includes Y7 to Y9 and KS4 includes Y10 and Y11 (the last year of compulsory education).

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

The following five point scale is used to represent the main opinions in the report as follows:

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

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1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

Ysgol Brynhyfryd is a naturally bilingual co-educational comprehensive school for pupils aged 11-18, maintained by Denbighshire Unitary Authority [UA]. It has about 1230 pupils on roll, including 240 students in the sixth form. The school is located on the outskirts of the market town of Ruthin, among the low-lying hills of the Vale of Clwyd and it serves a mainly agricultural area.

Forty percent of pupils are drawn from the town and 60% from the surrounding rural area. According to the school, about half the pupils are neither privileged nor underprivileged and the other half are relatively prosperous. It is claimed pupils are relatively advantaged and only 7% of the pupils have been registered as being entitled to free school meals.

The school receives pupils from the full range of ability. Thirty-two of the pupils (about 3% of Y7-Y11 pupils) have a statement of special educational needs [SEN]. In addition, 103 pupils and students (10%) are on stages of the Code of Practice for SEN. This percentage is about half the national figure. Twenty-four pupils have been disapplied from the National Curriculum [NC]. The school houses a small county Welsh medium unit for SEN pupils with a range of learning difficulties.

About 35% of the pupils are drawn from homes where Welsh is the main home language and about 65% from homes where English is the main language. About 1% of pupils come from non-white ethnic backgrounds and speak languages other than English or Welsh at home. About 40% of the pupils can speak Welsh to first language standard. The school uses Welsh and English as media of instruction.

A The school's main priorities for the period 2002-2005 are to:

- raise subject standards and standards of literacy, numeracy and information technology [IT];
- improve pupils' behaviour and attitudes;
- develop a system to monitor attendance at lessons;
- improve the quality of teaching, by developing more differentiated tasks and by the development of pupils' key skills;
- further develop the school's monitoring and self-evaluation framework, to introduce 'performance management' and to increase the use of information and communication technology [ICT] in school management;
- introduce vocational courses, develop education relating to the world of work and to integrate Personal and Social Education [PSE] and the *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* (Welsh Curriculum) into all subjects;
- ensure the consistent implementation of the new assessment policy;
- ensure effective use of the registration period held at the beginning of the day;
- ensure that the school conforms to the new Code of Practice for pupils with SEN;
- develop the partnership with parents, the community, primary schools and with industry;
- work with the Local Education Authority [LEA] to develop the school site.

The school was last inspected at the beginning of February 1997.

The school's specific quantitative targets for 2002-2003 are:

Key Stage	Subject etc	% on level 5 or higher at the school	County target (%)	Target for Wales (%)
KS3	Welsh	82	69	70-80
	English	74	69	70-80
	Mathematics	80	70	70-80
	Science	74	68	70-80
	Core subject indicator	62	55	
	Performance of boys compared with girls	-10	-4	
KS4	gaining 5 GCSE subjects grades A*- C	72	45.1	
	gaining 5 GCSE subjects grades A*-G	98	91.9	
	Core subject indicator	54	45.1	
	% leaving without qualification	2	1.3	
	% unauthorised absences	0.05	0.8	
	Performance of boys compared with girls	-15	-5	
Teaching	% of good and very good lessons	60% by 2005		

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

Introduction

This is a good school. It is a civilised, caring, family community serving a naturally bilingual area. The results of external assessments and examinations at KS3 and KS4 are good, and are better than those for the county and for Wales. The quality of advanced level examination results is very good. The pupils' behaviour is good and the support and guidance provided for them is also good. Links with the community are very good and the linguistic nature of the area is reflected in the developing bilingual provision in the school.

Standards achieved by pupils in their subjects and in the key skills

Standards were satisfactory or better in 99% of the lessons observed during the inspection. They were very good in 9%, good in 68% and satisfactory in 23% of the lessons. On occasion, a relatively small proportion of pupils underachieve and this is identified in the detailed reports on individual subjects.

Standards in 19% of Y12 and Y13 lessons were very good; in 75% of them they were good. They were satisfactory in 6% of lessons observed.

Subject	Standards at KS3	Standards at KS4	Standards in Y12 and Y13	Notes
Welsh (first language)	Good	Good	Very Good	
English	Good	Good	Good	
Mathematics	Good	Good	Very good	
Science	Good	Good	Biology good, chemistry good, physics good	
Welsh second language	Satisfactory	Good	Good	
Design and technology	Good	Good	Very good	
Information technology	Satisfactory	Very good	Good	
History	Good	Very Good	Very Good	
Geography	Good	Good	Good	
Modern languages (French, Italian at KS4 and in the sixth form)	Good	Good	Good	Italian, very good at KS4
Art	Good	Satisfactory	Good	
Music	Satisfactory	Good	Good	
Physical education	Good	Good	Very good	
Religious education	Good	Good*	No provision	*Refers to standards observed in lessons. Overall <u>provision</u> is unsatisfactory at KS4
Religious Studies		Good	Good	
Personal and social education	Good	Good		

Other subjects studied

Subject	At KS4	In Y12 and Y13
Home Economics, Child Development	Good	
Humanities (CoEA)	Good	
Vehicles	Good	
Agriculture	Good	
Media	Good	Good
Business Studies	Good	
Economics		Good
Sociology		Good
Catering	Good	

The standards achieved by pupils with SEN are good.

The school's formal arrangements for promoting the key skills across the curriculum are good.

The school succeeds in developing, to a significant extent, the bilingual skills of those pupils who follow the Welsh (first language) and bridging course who study some of their subjects through

the medium of Welsh. Pupils taking Welsh as a second language and who follow their education through English develop their linguistic skills mainly in English in accordance with their parents' wishes.

The table below summarises the standards in the main key skills across the curriculum.

Skill	KS3 (Welsh)	KS3 (English)	KS4 (Welsh)	KS4 (English)	Sixth form (Welsh)	Sixth form (English)
Speaking	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Listening	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Reading	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Writing	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
ICT	Satisfactory		Satisfactory		Satisfactory	
Numeracy	Good		Good		Good	

The following table summarises the standards in the 'additional' key skills.

Skill	KS3	KS4	Sixth form
Problem solving	Good	Good	Good
Working co-operatively	Good	Good	Good
Improving their own learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good

Examination results

Over the past four years, KS3 results have been in the top quartile of results for every school in Wales and have been above the median for schools with up to 10% of pupils eligible to receive free school meals. Girls have achieved substantially better than boys during this period although boys have done better than boys in the county and nationally. There have also been variations from year to year and from core subject to core subject. Value added analysis indicate that pupils have progressed by at least one level between KS2 and KS3.

Over the last three years, GCSE results have been in the top quartile of all the schools in Wales and above the median for schools with up to 10% of pupil's eligible to receive free school meals. Over the same period, there has been an increase in the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*- C in five or more subjects at GCSE. Girls still perform better than boys in the number of A*- C grades achieved and also in the core subject indicator [CSI] and the average pupil scores. Value added analyses from KS3 to KS4 show that a majority of subjects show a positive residual although there are subjects that have shown a negative residual over the last three years.

A level results are one of the school's main strengths; they are substantially higher than LEA and national averages and there has been a consistent improvement over the past three years. There has been no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls at A level.

Quality of education

The quality of the teaching is also one of the strengths of the school; 15% of the teaching observed was considered to be very good and a further 68% was deemed good. Teaching was considered to be satisfactory in 17% of the lessons. Seven of the teachers were identified as very good teachers; included were three members of the history department. Teaching in the sixth form was particularly good with the quality of teaching being very good in 32% of the lessons and good in a further 66% of them.

Good teaching is characterised by positive relationships, high expectations and good support for the pupils. In addition, lessons are well planned. Teachers, however, do not always make effective provision for pupils of different abilities in the same class.

Leadership of the school and efficiency

The leadership and management of the school are good; a purposeful work ethos has been established. The school is well led by a head who has a very clear vision and makes it a priority to promote good standards. This vision and ethos are shared by other members of the Senior Management Team [SMT], by the rest of the staff and by governors who are very supportive of the school. The school is managed in an open and accessible way. The School Development Plan [SDP] is of good quality and prioritises important educational developments. It forms the basis of departmental and faculty developmental plans that are generally of satisfactory quality. Satisfactory links have been established between members of the SMT and the departments and faculties. The quality of departmental leadership varies from good to unsatisfactory. In general it is satisfactory. The quality of departmental documentation and planning is generally good, but, as yet, faculties' and departments' abilities to evaluate their own work are at an early stage of development and departments have little strategic influence on the school's development. Human and financial resources are managed effectively and the school gives very good value for money.

Self-evaluation

The system of self-evaluation in the school has only just started and is satisfactory; external evaluations and internal inquiries together with the collection of a substantial amount of data have taken place and the school has identified a wide range of possible developments. Although some evaluations of classroom practice have been completed, they do not concentrate sufficiently on monitoring the quality of teaching and subject standards and do not identify targets for improvement.

Response to the previous inspection in February 1997

The school has responded well to all the key issues raised in the last inspection report. However, in some instances, such as the provision of new buildings, they are still waiting for the agreed positive outcomes to their efforts.

Curriculum

The school offers a wide and balanced curriculum. A good range of subject options is provided at KS4 and in the sixth form. Pupils' curricular experiences are enriched by very extensive extra-curricular provision; they are offered good opportunities to take part in competitive sports and experience considerable success. However, at KS3, a significant number of pupils do not receive their full NC entitlement and are withdrawn from lessons in one subject. At KS4, the time allocated for statutory religious education is insufficient to conform to the requirements of the local Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education [SACRE]. In addition, sixth form students do not receive lessons in religious education and this is contrary to the statutory requirements for schools.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The pupils' spiritual and moral development is good. Their social and cultural development is

very good. The school promotes important values. The pupils show respect for each other, for their teachers and for visitors. The pupils are willing to undertake responsibilities and they work well together.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Standards were satisfactory or better in 99% of the lessons observed during the inspection. They were very good in 9%, good in 68% and satisfactory in 23% of the lessons. Standards were very good in 19% of Y12 and Y13 lessons and they were good in 75% of them. They were satisfactory in 6% of lessons.

Standards in the subjects of the National Curriculum

- In Welsh first language, standards are good at KS3 and KS4 and very good in the sixth form.
- In English, standards are good throughout the school.
- In mathematics, standards are good at KS3 and KS4 and very good in the sixth form.
- In science, standards are good at KS3 and KS4. Standards are also good in biology, physics and chemistry in the sixth form.
- In Welsh (second language), standards are satisfactory at KS3 and good at KS4 and in the sixth form.
- In design and technology, standards are good at KS3 and KS4 and very good in the sixth form.
- In IT, standards are satisfactory at KS3, very good at KS4 and good in the sixth form.
- In history, standards are good at KS3 and very good at KS4 and in the sixth form.
- In geography, standards are good throughout the school.
- In modern foreign languages, standards are good in French throughout the school. Standards in Italian are very good at KS4 and good in the sixth form.
- In art, standards are good at KS3, satisfactory at KS4, and good in the sixth form.
- In music, standards are satisfactory at KS3 and good at KS4 and in the sixth form.
- In physical education, standards are good at KS3 and KS4 and very good in the sixth form.
- Standards in religious education are good at KS3 and the standards observed in lessons are good at KS4, although the provision is unsatisfactory. There is no provision for this subject in the sixth form.
- Standards in PSE are good at KS3 and KS4.

Examination results

Over the past four years, KS3 results have been in the top quartile of results for every school in Wales and have been above the median for schools with up to 10% of pupils eligible for free school meals. Girls have achieved substantially better than boys during this period, although the boys have done better than boys in the county and nationally. There have been variations from year to year and from core subject to core subject. Value added analysis indicate that pupils have progressed by at least one level between KS2 and KS3.

In 2002, at KS3, the percentage of pupils gaining level 5 or above in the core subjects was high with 79% of pupils doing so in English, 78% of pupils in mathematics and 86% gaining level 5 or above in science. The percentage for eligible pupils in Welsh first language was 80%. These figures are above the national and LEA average, as is the percentage reaching the core subject indicator [CSI] – gaining level 5 or better in a combination of either Welsh (first language) or English, mathematics and science – namely 68%.

Over the past three years, GCSE results have been in the top quartile of all the schools in Wales and above the median for schools with up to 10% of pupils eligible for free school meals. Over the same period, there has been an increase in the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*- C in five or more subjects at GCSE. Girls continue to perform better than boys in the percentage of A*- C grades achieved and also in the CSI and the average pupil scores. Value added analyses from KS3 to KS4 show that a majority of subjects show a positive residual although there are subjects that have shown a negative residual over the last three years.

GCSE results were good in 2002 with 68% of pupils gaining A*- C grades in five or more subjects. This was substantially higher than the figure for Wales as a whole (50%) and for the LEA (52%). Fourteen percent more girls than boys achieved these grades. Fifty one percent of the candidates achieved the CSI – gaining grades A*- C in a combination of English or Welsh (first language), mathematics and science – and this was again substantially more than that for Wales (37%) and for the LEA (35%). Pupils' average score of 52 (calculated as the sum of the results of each individual candidate) was very high when compared with Wales (39) and the LEA (40). Results in all core subjects were good as were the results in the great majority of foundation subjects.

A level results are one of the school's main strengths; they are substantially higher than LEA and national averages and there has been a consistent improvement over the past three years. There has been no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls at A level.

A level results were good in 2001 with 73% of candidates gaining A-C grades (LEA 61%, Wales 62%) and candidates gaining an average score of 21 (LEA and Wales 18). A level results were very good in 2002 with 92% of the candidates gaining A-C grades and all gaining A-E grades. The students' average score of 24 was also very high.

3.2 Standards in key skills

The school significantly develops the bilingual skills of those pupils who follow the Welsh (first language) course and pupils in the bridging class, who study some of their subjects through the medium of Welsh. Pupils studying Welsh as a second language and who follow their education through English develop their linguistic skills mainly in English in accordance with their parents' wishes.

Throughout the school, the standard of oral work in both Welsh and English is good. Pupils and students speak extensively using clear language to express and justify viewpoints. They are willing to answer questions and contribute to group, pair and class discussions. They explain, describe, analyse and come to conclusions. On occasion, their ability to ask questions is satisfactory rather than good. The spoken language of Y12 and Y13 students is often mature in its ideas and expression.

Listening skills are good throughout the school. Pupils listen carefully and with understanding and this is reflected in their oral and written contributions.

Reading standards are good in both languages. Throughout the school, standards in reading aloud are good. Pupils of all abilities read with meaning, though the presentation occasionally lacks confidence. The standard of reading for information is good at KS3 and KS4 and this is a particular strength of the sixth form where standards in using books and other sources as the basis for personal research are very good. Reading for pleasure is good amongst the girls throughout the school in both languages, but boys are sometimes more reluctant to do so. The standard of pupils' ability to transfer knowledge from English to Welsh is good.

Standards in writing in both languages are good across the curriculum at KS3 and KS4. Pupils write extensively but spelling errors impair written standards in both English and Welsh, where, in the latter, incorrect mutations may also affect standards adversely. Standards in writing in Y12 and Y13 are also good; there are examples of very good writing in both languages.

The standard of achievement in numeracy across the curriculum is good. In mathematics, numerical work is good and in many lessons tests or tasks are conducted at the start or end of lessons to reinforce this aspect, which is valuable. In science, pupils measure and weigh accurately and deal effectively with data. In this subject, graph work is generally good but it is underdeveloped with lower ability pupils at KS4. Investigational work involving numeracy is good in science at KS4 and in the sixth form.

In design and technology, pupils can measure and weigh accurately and they are able to use scale drawings to represent their work. They can use data effectively to argue what is the best method of delivering the specification of projects they are set. In ICT, the use of spreadsheets contributes to numerical development, as does estimation, the use of formulae, and the ways of representing data. In this subject, the pupils' ability to correctly apply the four rules of number and to deal with fractions contributes to the good standards. In history, there is some incisive analysis of statistical and graphical data, which contributes to achievement in the subject. There are also good chronological calculations such as the number line for historical development this century, and this is equally true in religious education where a number line is used to depict the development of religion. In geography, pupils deal with statistical data effectively and are able to interpret graphs and construct these accurately, and can represent data in a number of forms. Numeracy is built into the scheme of work in geography and mathematics, which is good practice. Numeracy is also a feature of business studies and economics and standards are appropriate. In the sixth form, a lesson is set aside weekly for numeracy as a key skill and this is valuable.

Standards in ICT are generally satisfactory throughout the school, and standards in certain strands such as control technology and computer assisted design [CAD] and computer assisted manufacture [CAM] in design and technology are good.

At KS3, in a large number of subjects, pupils use ICT to combine picture and text in order to present information. However, there is insufficient progression in the work and, as a result, the pupils' ability to combine a range of different media from a variety of sources is not sufficiently developed. In geography and history, pupils' ICT ability to save, change and retrieve information from a database is good and their ability to use a spreadsheet for modelling in mathematics is also good. Pupils use sensors for recording data in science to a satisfactory standard. The pupils' ability to use design software in art is good.

At KS4, pupils continue to combine picture and text to create examples for specific parts of coursework.

Pupils' ability to find information on the Internet and incorporate it in their work develops satisfactorily in a significant number of subjects at KS3 and KS4 but examples of using increasingly complex interrogation methods to find information are rare.

In Y12 and Y13, a significant number of students are successful at level 2 and level 3 of the key skills examination. ICT is also often used for improving the presentation of project work. Apart from those following the ICT A level course, where standards are good, students' ability to select the appropriate software to complete tasks and to use the technology to improve understanding of a subject is not adequately developed.

Additional key skills

Pupils' problem solving ability is good and in many instances reflects a teaching style that encourages active learning skills. Pupils work well together. At KS3 and KS4, pupils evaluate and improve their work to a satisfactory standard. In the sixth form, students' evaluative skills are well developed.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The school is a happy and caring community; all concerned work together to create an atmosphere where pupils are valued as individuals. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is good and their social and cultural development very good.

Religious education makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual development, providing opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own experiences, to consider life's fundamental questions and to develop a respect for the beliefs of others. A number of other subjects including art, design and technology, Welsh, science and history also make a contribution by providing opportunities for pupils to gain an understanding by development of a sense of curiosity through reflection on their own and others people's work, lives and beliefs. Regular acts of collective worship are held throughout the week for individual year groups. They are Christian in character, include satisfactory participation by pupils and are effective in reinforcing the school's values and celebrating achievement. A 'Thought for the Day' forms part of the morning registration period for those with no designated act of collective worship in the school hall. At its best, collective worship in class is characterised by the positive contribution of teachers and meaningful participation of pupils, but a significant number of classes does not achieve these standards. The Christian Club run by sixth form students also makes a good contribution to this aspect.

Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong. They show respect for each other, their teachers, visitors to the school and for the school's environment and resources. In a range of subjects, including religious education, PSE, geography and science, pupils reflect on wider moral and ethical concerns relating to economics, racism and prejudice. Pupils express their opinions sensitively and honestly. They show care for those less fortunate than themselves in the support given to a wide range of charities and fund-raising activities selected through the School Forum. These include Hope House, Shoebox Appeal and welcoming pupils from Romania into their homes.

Pupils are very co-operative and work well together in lessons and activities. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils are confident and self-disciplined. They work effectively in pairs, groups and when role playing. Across a wide range of activities, pupils show pride in representing the school in events, competitions and local and national sports. Pupils mix well socially and co-operate across the age range. Together, they produce the excellent weekly Talking Newspaper for their local community. Sixth form students support pupils with SEN in mainstream classes and listen to them read through the paired reading scheme. The School Forum, work experience and school prefect system all contribute to pupils' social development. Pupils from a number of different backgrounds and cultures are well integrated into school life.

The school ethos promotes pupils' awareness of the locality and of Wales and its cultural heritage. The *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* (Welsh Curriculum) is planned across the subjects of the curriculum. The school's cultural activities and links with the local community make a substantial contribution to pupils' cultural development. Pupils benefit from visits to the theatre linked with Welsh, English and media studies, and from field trips locally and further afield in geography and science. A good number of extra-curricular events, including Urdd activities, sports, concerts and visits to museums and religious buildings, also make a very good contribution to pupils' cultural development.

Pupils' European and global awareness is developed through specific aspects of the curriculum and there are extensive opportunities to visit different countries through exchange schemes. Students from the sixth form benefited from participating in the World Challenge Programme in Australia last year. The numerous notice boards around the school record visits, activities and pupils' successes. They reflect the commitment of pupils and teachers to the life and values of the school.

4.2 Behaviour and attitudes

The general quality of pupils' behaviour and attitude is good.

In the lessons, pupils respect each other, their teachers, other staff and visitors. In general, pupils have an interest in their work; they are eager to participate and concentrate well. Pupils show a disciplined attitude in practical situations. On rare occasions, when tasks lack variety, some middle and lower ability pupils are disruptive and have difficulty in working independently. In one set of Y11 pupils, the unacceptable behaviour of a small number of boys had a negative effect on class standards.

Behaviour on the corridors and about the school is good. Pupils are polite and cheerful.

The school's discipline policy is current and practical. It aims to foster a supportive environment in which pupils are treated fairly and consistently. Pupils understand the clear rules, which are prominently displayed around the school. Teachers give encouragement; they praise good work and effort. When necessary, they operate appropriate sanctions.

There is a suitable anti-bullying policy, which contains a useful Charter of Pupil Rights. During the inspection period, no instances of bullying, sexism, racism or any other forms of negative discrimination were observed.

Form tutors, heads of year, senior management and members of outside agencies provide support and guidance to pupils who have difficulty in accepting the school's values and customs. During the past twelve months, 17 pupils, about 1.4% of the school population, were temporarily

excluded. There were no permanent exclusions. In all instances, guidelines were followed consistently and appropriately.

4.3 Attendance

Pupil attendance is satisfactory.

Over the three terms prior to the inspection, the average attendance for Y7 to Y11 pupils was 91.3%. Over the same period, the percentage of unauthorised absences was 1.04%. This figure was slightly inflated because the school was unable to process parental notes received after the end of the summer term. For this academic year, the school has set its target for unauthorised absence at 0.5% and is aiming for an overall attendance of 92%.

During the summer term of 2002, attendance figures for Y9 and Y10 pupils fell slightly below 90%. In the spring term, the attendance of Y11 pupils fell just below 90%.

In January 2002, the school changed to a computerised system of recording attendance. This provides a tool for monitoring the attendance of individuals or groups of pupils. At present, the system is not fully exploited since the record forms are only fed into the computer at the end of each week.

Form tutors follow a set of clear instructions for marking attendance sheets and for following up unexplained absences.

The school does not comply with the requirements of the National Assembly for Wales Circular 3/99 on two counts relating to the registration of Y11 pupils during the summer term. The pupils are not removed from the register on the last Friday in June. During the second half of the term, Y11 pupils are deemed to be on study leave but the code used is interpreted as “present” rather than “authorised absence”.

Heads of year oversee the registration procedures, take appropriate action, and, when necessary, bring cases of particular concern to the attention of the Education Welfare Officer who visits the school regularly. Individual cases are reviewed on a weekly basis and the course of action modified as necessary.

Punctuality at the start of the school day is generally good. A noticeable minority arrive late to registration; in some instances, this is due to buses being late. Owing to the nature of the site, a significant amount of time is inevitably lost between lessons. Pupils arriving after the lesson has started offer an explanation when challenged by their teacher.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Quality of teaching

The quality of the teaching is one of the strengths of the school; 15% of the teaching observed was considered to be very good and a further 68% was deemed good. Teaching was considered to be satisfactory in 17% of the lessons. Seven of the teachers were identified as very good teachers; included were three members of the history department. Teaching in the sixth form was particularly good with the quality of teaching being very good in 32% of the lessons and good in a further 66% of them. Here, teachers’ subject knowledge and planning of lessons are generally

very good and expectations are appropriately high.

With a few exceptions, teachers' subject knowledge is at least good, and often very good. Lessons are planned carefully to provide continuity and progression in pupils' learning experiences.

When the teaching is very good, the teachers' subject knowledge is thorough. Lessons are planned in great detail. Expectations are very high. Presentations are lively and the pace of lessons is appropriate. Subject specific concepts, as well as facts, are very well presented. There is adequate practice to consolidate skills. Tasks are very clearly explained and assessment criteria shared with the pupils. Good use is made of key skills to enhance learning and all members of the class receive attention.

Good teaching is characterised by positive relationships between teachers and pupils, high expectations and good support for the pupils. In addition, lessons are well planned and good use is made of a variety of teaching techniques.

When teaching is satisfactory, many of the good features described above are evident but the pace is slower and expectations are not as high. Teachers do not always make effective provision for pupils of different abilities in the same class. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to work independently and to develop their own initiative.

5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting

Procedures for the assessment and recording of pupils' work are good. The quality of reporting of pupils' progress is satisfactory. The school policy, recently reviewed, has appropriate principles and aims. Departmental policies for assessment, recording and reporting are generally in line with the school policy.

The quality of marking of pupils' work, including homework, is generally good. It varies from very good in Welsh and history to satisfactory in art and science. Where the quality of marking is good or better, the constructive and accurate marking includes detailed comments indicating pupils' strengths and weaknesses. In many subjects, clear targets are set and pupils are provided with suitable strategies to raise the standard of their work. Where the quality of marking is satisfactory, day-to-day marking is variable and comments are not specific enough to identify how pupils can improve their work. In science and design and technology, there are also some inconsistencies in assessment within the department. The process of self-assessment is developing within the school. It is good in Welsh, history, religious education and physical education. All pupils complete a self-assessment sheet when full reports are issued.

Teachers keep suitably detailed records of pupils' progress. Departmental records are generally complete and accurate. There are good procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress and for identifying pupils' underachievement. In all years, including the sixth form, internal progress reports are completed in all subjects to identify underachievement, the returns being analysed by a deputy headteacher and the relevant head of year. When underachievement is identified, the pupil is assigned a mentor and the home informed. In addition to the mentoring programme, all pupils have a timetabled review interview with their form tutor.

The school meets requirements for the assessment of pupils' progress in the NC. Pupils' with

SEN have appropriate individual education plans [IEP] in line with the new Code of Practice. Statements are reviewed annually, ensuring suitable parental, LEA and outside agencies involvement in the process.

The school fulfils statutory requirements for reporting to parents except for its reporting on IT at KS3. At present, one full report is issued a year; however, the revised policy proposes that a brief interim report will also be issued. The full report provides information on a pupil's attitude to work and behaviour, and grades for the quality of the organisation, presentation and completion of work in the subject. Subject teacher comment on strengths and achievements, and on areas for improvement. Few subject reports give pupils specific targets for improvement. Other reports do not provide sufficient information or advice on ways of improving achievement. A Parents' Evening is arranged for all year groups, and parents of pupils in Y7-Y11 receive detailed information in the Home-School Agreement booklet, which includes the resources required, a brief outline of the course and the main homework tasks in each subject.

The well-organised system of Records of Achievement [RoA] is used effectively to celebrate and promote achievement and to emphasise the positive progress made by each pupil. Pupils use their RoA to summarise their achievements in school and in the community. They include in their booklets such items as certificates and a report on work experience. The Records also contain pupils' personal statements and development of key skills. The final document is much valued by pupils.

The school's analysis of both external and internal assessment data is detailed and effective. A deputy head carefully analyses the data available from primary schools at the end of KS2, to arrange appropriate learning programmes for pupils arriving at the school, and to set provisional targets for future achievement. After further testing in Y7 and consultation with heads of department, end of key stage targets are set in each subject. This process is repeated at KS4, and in the sixth form where target grades are also given in each subject. The information gained, together with progress reports, provides the focus for individual pupil interviews with form tutors. This is good practice.

5.3 Curriculum

The quality of the curricular provision is good.

The school offers a varied and balanced curriculum, which reflects the bilingual nature of the community it serves. With a few exceptions, the curriculum meets statutory requirements and is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. There is suitable provision for the entire range of abilities.

Two Welsh medium classes are established from Y7. Pupils in these classes study eight subjects through the medium of the Welsh language. In addition, a bridging group is established that provides for pupils who have high levels of competence in Welsh Second Language. They are taught four subjects through the medium of Welsh and some go on to follow the Welsh (first language) course to GCSE level in Y11. This is good practice.

At KS3, pupils follow an appropriate range of subjects, mainly in mixed ability groups in Y7, but increasingly in ability sets from Y8 onwards. All classes have a weekly period of PSE, but the provision for IT, as part of the PSE rotation, is insufficient and has a deleterious effect on standards of achievement in the subject. The time allocation for other subjects is appropriate.

At KS4, pupils study the core subjects and select from five option groups including one technology group. Each group provides a range of academic and practical subjects, which are so arranged as to allow pupils a wide choice. However, the inclusion of physical education in one option group only, results in the loss of abler pupils to more academic subjects. Religious education is taught for a six-week period within the PSE time allocation. This does not allow sufficient time to cover the demands of the locally agreed syllabus and consequently fails to meet with statutory requirements. The non-provision of food technology at KS4 leads to a lack of continuity between KS3 and KS4.

In Y10, Italian is introduced as a second modern foreign language and Welsh second language is offered as a full or short course. The high proportion of pupils electing to follow the short course, on an allocation of one hourly lesson per week, means that these pupils have little opportunity to enhance their bilingual competence. The present limited curricular provision offered in art is unsatisfactory; opportunities to provide a wider range of courses are missed.

Post-16 students are offered a good range of traditional subjects enhanced by a distance learning course in sociology and a course in law and psychology organised during twilight hours with the co-operation of a local further education college. Every effort is made to cater for the various needs of students, which in some instances, can only be met by extra-timetabled teaching. In the case of art, for example, the subject is not timetabled, but students are expected to make up eight hours a week from their own free time. This occasionally leads them to join GCSE classes, an arrangement which disrupts the progress of GCSE pupils. There is no provision for physical education and religious education in the sixth form.

The provision for the development of the key skills in Y12 is very good. Weekly lessons are timetabled for each skill and are well attended by students. Many subjects, such as Welsh, English, mathematics, history, geography, religious education and science, provide tasks which contribute towards the students' portfolios. The work is well co-ordinated and good standards are achieved.

Key skills provision is also good at KS3 and KS4 and is included in the schemes of work of many departments. Literacy skills are well supported while numeracy and ICT skills show progress.

Students have good opportunities to take part in enterprise programmes and to support slow learning pupils lower down the school. Y12 morning registration periods are used to present careers education, which also features, along with health and sex education, in PSE lessons from Y7 to Y11.

PSE provision is planned on a whole school basis and is so organised to provide a progressive, relevant and coherent programme of study, which supports pupils' learning and prepares them for life after school. The quality of the experiences offered is consistently good and pupils generally respond well.

The curriculum is planned to allow equality of opportunity and access for all pupils to all aspects of school provision. With some exceptions, this is largely achieved. Pupils with SEN are taught within mainstream classes, either in mixed ability groups or smaller bottom ability sets. Responsibility for their education lies firmly with the subject departments who liaise with the special needs department so as to ensure appropriate provision. A small number of statemented pupils are withdrawn to the special unit for short periods to receive specific attention. Also, at KS3, a total of 43 pupils are withdrawn from French, with parental consent, to receive additional tuition in numeracy and literacy skills. As this practice continues beyond the concessionary

period allowed, it contravenes statutory requirements regarding curricular entitlement. The provision made for pupils for whom a subject of the NC is disapplied, is good.

The quality of departmental planning is generally good and very good in subjects such as Welsh, history, religious education and physical education. In a few departments, newly revised schemes are not yet being fully implemented. Where subject planning is satisfactory it lacks focus. The French scheme of work is unsatisfactory as it is not sufficiently detailed. The Welsh dimension in the curriculum receives good attention, particularly in subjects such as history, geography, religious education, music, physical education and PSE.

Homework is well planned across the curriculum. Homework timetables have been prepared and are largely adhered to. The quality of the homework set is good. It is often related to work done in class and is imaginative and challenging. Examples of inconsistent setting of homework were few.

A rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities, which further promote the pupils' academic, cultural and social development, enhances the school curriculum. Lunchtime clubs, Urdd activities, competing in local eisteddfodau, overseas visits, charity activities, visits to theatres and art galleries and a varied programme of competitive games, all contribute significantly to the pupils' holistic development.

The school provides a stimulating and well-planned curriculum, which contributes to the pupils' achievements and progress and reflects the overall aims of the school.

5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

The quality of support and guidance is good and one of the strengths of the school.

The school places considerable emphasis on pupils' welfare, their academic development and personal achievements. Senior members of the management team and heads of year are responsible for overseeing this provision and work closely with their teams of form tutors. They play an important role in ensuring that the school is a community in which pupils feel secure, and every individual is valued. The school is mindful of its responsibility to cater for all pupils and to treat them equally. There are clear policies and guidelines on equal opportunities, pupil support, pastoral and social education and health education. The quality of relationships between pupils themselves and between pupils and teachers is very good. Teachers know their pupils well, and are accessible to them; the pupils and their parents value this.

The PSE programme is well structured, includes statutory health education and sex education, and clearly meets the requirements of the ACCAC framework. The programme is delivered by a team of specialist teachers and outside speakers and is taught throughout the school in a designated lesson once a week. The quality of teaching is good, across all key stages.

The quality of the programme for careers' education and guidance is good. The school works closely with the appropriate external agencies and values the excellent contribution made by Careers' Wales in supporting the school provision. Some pupils in Y11 undergo mock interviews; work experience takes place in Y10 and Y12, although the timing for Y10 restricts the opportunities for follow-up support work. The school uses an appropriate commercially prepared careers' programme at KS4, which is helpful in choosing career pathways and the sixth form use a comprehensive scheme which is co-ordinated by Careers' Wales. "Industry Day", "Project Business" and "Young Enterprise" schemes all enrich the range of experiences available

to students.

Pastoral links with the large number of primary feeder schools are effective and ensure that new entrants settle as quickly as possible into their new school. There is a very good induction programme in place. Trained Buddies in Y8 shadow pupils on their visit to the school, and on their initial days in Y7. Y7 pupils greatly appreciate this support. In addition, sixth form students support Y7 pupils in mainstream classes, and listen to them reading during registration period. Heads of year carry out their responsibilities effectively and work well together as a team. Heads of year and form tutors stay with their pupils in Y7 and Y8, and Y9, Y10 and Y11. The relationship between form tutor and pupils is one of the strengths of the school. Form tutors know their pupils well and acquire a clear understanding of their sometimes complex social and emotional needs and aspirations. Pastoral teams meet regularly to review progress. A mentoring system releases form tutors on a weekly basis to interview two pupils per week. This assists tutors to monitor the pastoral and academic development of each individual. Pupils are confident in approaching teachers, tutors and heads of year with their problems. A significant number of parents make good use of the pupils' individual homework diaries, which also serve as an effective means of two-way communication.

Health and Safety procedures are effective; a few matters dealing with this aspect were reported to the school during the week of the inspection. Risk assessments are undertaken as appropriate. Traffic management of school transport works very well. Every effort is made to ensure the safety of pupils at the end of the school day.

In the sixth form, students are supported, counselled and advised very effectively. Their curriculum and extra curricular activities allow them to contribute fully to the life of the school. The students value the access to the facilities in the school house, and good use is made of this area, despite the difficulties that the building presents. Students are well supported by subject teachers and the sixth form pastoral system. Career advice is very good.

Both the school's ethos and the school's arrangements successfully foster social inclusion.

The arrangements for child protection are operative, and all members of staff are aware of these arrangements.

5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)

The provision for pupils with SEN is good as is the school's response to the requirements of the new Code of Practice. Appropriate strategies are used to meet the needs of pupils with SEN.

Subject departments are responsible for providing appropriate work for pupils with SEN within their curriculum area. There are very good links between subject teachers and SEN teachers. Every term, a useful meeting is held to discuss and share relevant information about the educational needs of pupils and methods of differentiation within the class. In addition, the special education needs co-ordinator [SENCO] distributes relevant information to each subject teacher, which includes appropriate strategies in pupils' Individual Educational Plans [IEP]. In most subjects, standards achieved are good. There are good examples of pupils being supported by the learning support teacher [LST] in the mainstream classes rather than through withdrawal. Lunchtime clubs in literacy and mathematics provide good support for the pupils with SEN. In a number of mixed ability classes, learning support assistants [LSAs] offer good support for pupils with SEN. The work is specially selected to support individual pupils; there are good examples of close co-operation with subject teachers that leads to support for a number of pupils in the class. The quality and success of the support is discussed regularly with the SENCO, but there is no formal record kept of the quality of the support in the classroom. Y12 students also provide good support for individual pupils with SEN.

The 67 pupils who are withdrawn from modern foreign language lessons to receive additional literacy support achieve well and are making good progress. They have good educational programmes that reflect their attainment. Good use is made of commercial programmes, including ICT software, to support the good individual programmes devised by the school. Records of pupils' achievement show that most are making very good progress towards achieving competence in literacy skills.

Ten KS3 pupils derive benefit from regular reading practice sessions and ICT software programs during morning registration periods. Pupils commit themselves energetically to their tasks and make good progress in their literacy skills.

Appropriate work is provided for pupils with significant special needs in the Welsh Unit attached to the school. Work is very well organised, good individual targets are set, and good records kept, which show that most of the pupils are making good progress within their ability. Very good opportunities are created for most pupils to integrate within mainstream classes and with further education colleges. However, the school does not make maximum use of the resources provided by the Unit and the work is not monitored by the SMT.

Thirty-two pupils have a statement of SEN. The statements are reviewed effectively and consultation takes place with parents, external agencies and the LEA, as needed. The SEN register includes 55 pupils on "School Action" and 48 pupils on "Action Plus". The arrangements for identifying pupils in need of support are thorough, and the SEN register is reviewed effectively. Every pupil on the register has a good IEP. The targets set relate well to the needs identified. They are shared with the pupil and parents, which is good practice.

The SENCO offers good guidance and is effectively supported by a LST and the LSAs. Y12 students also make valuable contributions by supporting pupils in mainstream classes. There are good links with the primary schools, LEA and other agencies. The SMT and the designated governor are supportive of the work and ensure appropriate opportunities for the pupils with SEN.

5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions

The partnership with parents and the local community is very good. Partnership with other schools and institutions is good.

The school actively seeks parents' views through surveys, and these views are being taken into account in planning the new facilities and buildings as well as broader aspects of school life. Very good information is provided for parents. The governors' annual report to parents is comprehensive, with, in addition to statutory information, news of the main successes of the school year. The attractive handbook for parents is supplemented by a regular newsletter; this provides interesting and useful information. Classes in mathematics have been arranged for parents in response to parental interest. The home-school agreement is particularly detailed, containing separate information for each of years Y7 to Y11 on the work covered in each subject during the current year. Departments such as English and design and technology prepare booklets for parents and pupils that set out homework tasks, coursework guidelines and dates, and what is expected of the pupils in that subject. Parents are invited to an annual parents' evening, and are contacted individually if a department feels that the pupil is falling behind or underachieving. There are full annual reports to parents, and there is a useful daily link up to Y11 through the homework diary, which is signed regularly by both parent and form tutor. The Parent Teachers'

Association is very hard working; last year it raised over £15,000 for the school. This money is spent on equipment to enhance learning. The money is partly raised through “Discount Cards”, organised in conjunction with local businesses; nearly 60 of these take part in the scheme which supports both the school and the local community.

There are very good links with the community. Local groups and societies use the school for many activities. The John Ambrose Theatre within the school is a good resource for the surrounding district; it is used for concerts, shows, performances and a film club. The swimming pool, gymnasium, outdoor sports facilities, sports hall are also all used in the evening and at weekends. Adult education classes are held at the school. This is all beneficial to the local community. The school makes good use of local resources through, for example, links with local industries to enhance learning in textiles, business studies and economics, and links with local churches in religious education. The school produces a newspaper for the blind and partially sighted every week throughout the year, sending out over 60 tapes to people in the surrounding area, and inviting recipients into the school once a year. Y11 pupils work in the community as part of their PSE programme, for example in the primary schools, in homes for the elderly and in Ruthin Hospital. The pupils also help on a voluntary basis with organisations such as Riding for the Disabled.

The locality is well reflected in work at KS3 in both history and geography. The media studies department has produced a promotional video for a local firm. Speakers are invited in to departments such as religious education and Welsh; this practice helps to raise standards. The Welsh department works closely with the Urdd.

There are good links with the outside world through trips to theatres and abroad; there is an annual exchange with schools in both France and Italy and pupils have links with Kenya, Poland and Finland. The “People to People” link with America also broadens the outlook of pupils. Children from Romania come to stay with pupils every summer; in this way also, parents support the school and its aims.

Pastoral links with primary schools are good; curricular links are satisfactory. Teachers from Brynhyfryd meet colleagues from feeder primary schools to ease the transfer of pupils. Pupils benefit from these pastoral links and the developing curricular work. The “buddy” scheme, whereby Y8 pupils visit Y6 at the primary schools and look after them when they come to the secondary school, is popular with pupils and very positive in its outcomes. *Athrawon Bro* (Area Welsh teachers) provide a useful curricular link between the sectors. The English department organises a valuable “bridging unit” which means that Y6 pupils work on activities at the end of their time in primary school and bring the work to Brynhyfryd on their induction day. The mathematics department organises an enrichment event for Y6 pupils. Y6 pupils attend science road-shows arranged by the science department. Y7 pupils keep in touch with their former primary schools by letter; this is good practice.

Links with higher education are good. Students in Y12 and Y13 feel that they are well prepared for higher education. The school has agreements with two initial teacher training institutions and accepts students each year. This work is well organised and enhances the provision of education for pupils at the school. There are good links with other Welsh medium secondary schools; ideas, plans and resources are shared through discussion, reviews and some continuing professional development with a view to enhancing the quality of provision for the pupils. There are also good links with local advisory and library services.

The partnership between parents, the school and the community is a very valuable one; it contributes substantially to pupils’ education and development and is a particular strength of the school.

5.7 Partnership with industry

The school's partnership with industry is satisfactory.

All Y9 pupils participate in a business project over a two-day period. They spend time on problem solving exercises and learn about topics such as marketing and accounts under the leadership of a group of local industrialists.

The work experience arrangements for Y10 and Y12 pupils are implemented and managed appropriately. Pupils are well prepared beforehand. Health and Safety requirements are vetted and school staff visit the pupils during the placement period. Some subjects, such as Welsh, catering and IT, make good curricular use of pupils' work experience. A small number of Y12 modern foreign language students gain placements in Europe. Last year, one Y12 student succeeded in gaining a 'quality placement' in London.

Career guidance is given at appropriate times. The school co-operates closely with Careers Wales.

In the Y8 PSE module, pupils make good use of a CD-Rom prepared by the Environment Agency to improve their understanding of issues such as re-cycling and pollution.

During the past year, the school took advantage of an Education and Learning Wales [ELWa] initiative which enabled one teacher to spend five days studying urban development at different locations. The PTA also provided funds to match that provided by ELWa to arrange a study skills and revision day for KS4 pupils.

Vocational and practical courses, such as business studies, child development, agriculture, catering, textiles and design and technology, make good use of visits to business and industry as part of their coursework. Nevertheless, few other subjects have a significant link with industry. A number of previous initiatives are no longer functional.

Groups of Y12 students gain valuable experience of business in their attempts to set up and run enterprise companies. A number of students are successful in the end of year Young Enterprise examination.

Over the past few years, the art department has hosted a good number of Welsh artists in residence. Some of these residences are held in conjunction with the Multicultural Art Week. As a result, pupils of all ages have gained valuable practical experience.

A number of staff who have established personal links with industry, or who have previous experience of working in industry, use this to good advantage in their lessons.

The school has successfully attracted sponsorship from various local companies.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement

The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is satisfactory. Throughout the school, there is a focus and a shared commitment to raise standards of achievement and improve

the quality of experiences and education for all pupils. The SDP identifies ten key priorities to improve the quality of provision throughout the school. Building upon the school's procedure for self-evaluation and maintaining of standards at departmental and whole school level annually, is one of the main priorities for 2002-2005.

The SDP identifies clear targets and numerous action plans, defines responsibility, offers guidelines on timescales, costings and success indicators for every priority. The success indicators do not always match the action plan for individual priorities. All departments produce departmental development plans [DDP] which are identical in format to the SDP. Success indicators are not, however, sufficiently quantified nor are objectives prioritised into short-term goals to ensure detailed monitoring at regular intervals.

A culture of self-monitoring is developing throughout the school. A five-year cycle has been put in place where every area of school life will, in turn, be evaluated. Personnel responsible for the evaluation have been identified. The programme is an ambitious one, but the timetable is too protracted to have the desired effect. Every department has carried out an evaluation of the priorities listed in its DDP. A considerable amount of information has been collated. With the odd exception, these evaluations do not clearly identify the action required to move departments forward, since they lack clear process and success indicators.

The governors commissioned an external agency to investigate parents' perceptions of the school. A detailed analysis of the questionnaires prompted the SMT to focus much of the self-evaluation on the issues raised.

Roles and responsibilities are identified in generic job descriptions. The headteacher has carried out direct observation in the classroom, where over half the staff have been observed teaching. The self-evaluation cycle involved lesson observations across Y11 during the first half of the current term. Pupil pursuits in Y7 and Y8 by the headteacher have also proved to be informative, and the issues raised have been shared with departments. The school recognises that the whole school monitoring programme is in its infancy, although the self-evaluation review carried out by departments has given all concerned a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas requiring attention.

The school carries out detailed analyses of KS2 and KS3 statutory tests and GCSE and A level external examinations, together with data from commercial tests. This is one of the school's strengths, although the effective use of this data has not been fully developed. Analyses of test results are shared with heads of departments, heads of year and class tutors, and they are a basis for discussion between heads of department and link members of the SMT. Some departments take full advantage of the information provided, for instance Welsh, where individual progress from one key stage to the next is monitored clearly. Here, challenging targets are set, and boys' proficiency in particular is measured against clear criteria matched to high teacher expectations.

The school uses the analyses to set individual targets for pupils and the targets are revised annually. Pupils in Y10 undertake self-assessment of, for example, specific units of work in PSE, history, mathematics and geography, and the information is used to shape the structure of future units.

A formal procedure to monitor the quality of teaching and learning has been put in place in September 2002. The five-year cycle will allow for all aspects to be monitored closely in the fullness of time. Observation of colleagues by heads of department and SMT members has yet to make the desired impact in raising standards and securing consistency across the school. The practice of monitoring pupils' books by departments as a way of monitoring subject standards is inconsistent.

6.2 Leadership and efficiency

Management and leadership in the school are good. The school creates a purposeful work ethos.

The governing body is very supportive of the school, knows it very well and takes a keen interest in the curriculum and the school's links with the local community. There is a good partnership between the governing body and the SMT. The governing body monitors the school's examination results and pupils' standards of achievement very carefully through their contacts with members of staff. The governors manage money very carefully.

The school is well led by a head who possesses a very clear vision, the ability to plan and to deal well with people. She makes the promotion of good standards a priority. She gives good support to pupils and staff and she has their respect. The other members of staff share the head's commitment to the school. There have been changes in the membership of the SMT recently and, consequently, a number of members are new to their posts but are developing their managerial skills well at whole-school level.

The draft SDP (2002-2005) is of good quality. As a result of a self-evaluation process, it identifies ten main priorities. It places due emphasis on issues relating to raising standards and reflects both national concerns and issues arising from the school's particular needs. Priorities are carefully costed.

Satisfactory links have been established between members of the SMT and the departments and faculties. They generally attend faculty meetings and represent their link faculties' concerns and views in meetings of the SMT. They do not, however, monitor the departments rigorously.

SMT have started to monitor the school's provision by a system of pupil pursuit in Y7, Y8 and Y11 and produced reports with recommendations. As yet, however, subject standards have generally not been monitored by direct classroom observation.

The quality of departmental leadership varies from very good to unsatisfactory. It is generally satisfactory. It is very good in Welsh and history where curricular planning is detailed, where previous pupils' performance is analysed as a means of raising standards and where the departments evaluate objectively their strengths and areas for improvement. The management of art is unsatisfactory and there are specific weaknesses in the management of modern foreign languages. Generally, members of staff co-operate well to provide good curricular experiences for pupils. The quality of departmental documentation is uneven. In general, it is satisfactory. The quality of planning of work is generally good. Middle management, however, often lack adequate skills for monitoring subject standards and focussed lesson observation.

The co-ordinators and the year heads fulfil their roles effectively. The school has a system of academic and pastoral committees where middle management can contribute their ideas on whole school issues. Some members of staff serve on more than one committee and this is appropriate, as there is an overlap in functions. As yet, however, middle management has little role in deciding whole school strategies.

The head, the bursar *cum* site manager and the governing body draw up, and manage the budget very effectively. Good advantage is taken of the interest and expertise of members of the governing body to monitor expenditure. Cost effectiveness is evaluated very carefully. The school lives within its budget though the allocation from the UA is among the least generous in Wales. By cutting back on staff and creating larger classes in Y7, the school has successfully balanced its budget. The sum in reserve for 2002-2003 is predicted to be much lower than the 5% recommended by the Audit

Commission and is very near the break-even point. The school responded appropriately to the points raised in the UA financial audit in June 2000.

The sixth form is generally cost effective despite a few small classes in Y12 and Y13. Human and financial resources are managed effectively and efficiently. Given the quality of school life, quality of education, examination results, pupils' standards of achievement, and the wealth of extra curricular experiences provided, the school gives very good value for money.

Day-to-day communication is clear and the daily administrative process very effective. With specific exceptions identified in this report, the school conforms to the statutory requirements and the recommendations of the National Assembly for Wales.

6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing

The staff are highly committed to the success of the school.

The school has suitable staff to meet its curricular requirements and on the whole their qualifications correspond well to the subjects that they teach. In a small number of subjects where teachers teach outside their specialism, they receive effective support. There is a good balance of experienced teachers and those new to the profession. There is a very good induction programme and teachers new to the school are well supported by heads of departments and the in-service training [INSET] co-ordinator. The support offered to newly qualified teachers is very effective. Supply teachers are provided with clear information when they arrive at school and are well supported.

The INSET provision is very well organised by a co-ordinator who is a member of the SMT. All staff, both teaching and support staff, are fully involved and INSET needs are identified in whole school and subject plans and by consultation with individual staff. The effect of INSET is good and appropriate methods of disseminating information are carefully considered after staff have evaluated the training.

There are 17 support staff; they include LSAs, office and clerical staff, translators, laboratory and workshop technicians and a library assistant. Non-teaching staff provide very effective support across a wide range of duties and responsibilities and make a valuable contribution to the life of the school. The two caretakers and their assistant undertake their work with enthusiasm and dedication. The network manager displays exceptional knowledge and support for both staff and pupils.

All staff have generic job descriptions and are very well deployed to cover the curricular, pastoral and support roles. Non-contact time is generally in line with responsibilities.

The school is preparing for 'performance management' and many teachers have crossed 'the threshold' for pay-awards.

Accommodation

The accommodation is adequate and most of it is in a satisfactory condition.

The school's permanent buildings do not provide sufficient accommodation to cater for the number of pupils on roll. As a result, 21 classes are located in terrapins, three of these being science laboratories. The environment within them is very difficult to control as temperatures

vary from one extreme to the other. During the inspection period, the atmosphere inside some of the older terrapins was clammy and windows were constantly misting over. A number of other rooms, including the art rooms, three history rooms as well as four laboratories and the refectory are housed in extensions built in the seventies as temporary accommodation. In many of these rooms, water seepage from diverted drainpipes and leaking flat roofs is a constant problem.

Both the library and refectory are too small for the number of pupils using them.

During the summer, the food technology and textiles rooms were refurbished. The UA has secured a Welsh Assembly grant to build a new teaching wing. This is seen as a first step in the development of the school site.

The house, which accommodates the music department and the sixth form, is some distance away from the main building. It has been re-roofed recently. The school is now in the process of making good the internal damage caused by past water leaks. Currently, many of the rooms are untidy and dirty. The rooms allocated to the sixth form groups are too small for the numbers involved. Part of the main school hall has to be used to provide a supervised study area for them during the school day.

In some parts of the school, the heating equipment is unsuitable. Fan assisted radiators in the pottery room are a potential hazard as they could circulate ceramic micro dust. Music is not compatible with a noisy fan heater. There are no facilities for dust extraction in workshop C11.

With the aid of a lottery grant, the school has developed the hall and concourse as a community arts centre. This area, together with the school's sports facilities, is extensively used during the evenings. However, the main entrance lacks a proper reception area to welcome and monitor visitors to the school.

The gymnasium is adequate but its paintwork has deteriorated. There are serious problems with the proper storage of equipment. Inadequate changing rooms for both pupils and staff affect adversely the indoor facilities for physical education. Pupils coming off muddy playing fields contaminate the 'clean' changing rooms associated with swimming pool activities. The size of the all weather surface is inadequate for the size of the school.

In spite of numerous difficulties, the school makes good use of the accommodation available. With the efforts of staff and the co-operation of pupils, a good learning environment is successfully created. There are some examples of very good classroom and corridor displays. In general, they are good.

The toilet facilities for pupil use are not adequate, nor are they well maintained.

Fire drills are held once a term and fire-fighting equipment and portable electrical equipment are inspected annually. The school has identified a number of Health and Safety issues. Some additional instances were reported during the inspection period.

Learning Resources

The school has a satisfactory provision of basic learning resources, which are generally of good quality.

In general, departments make good use of the resources available. The history, physical education and ICT departments make very good use of their resources. At KS4 and in the sixth form, the art department's use of resources is unsatisfactory.

Good use is made of the books and other reference material located in the main library and in departmental libraries. Some departments have an arrangement with the county library to borrow books related to specific themes. Art has a good departmental library but is short of material relevant to Welsh culture.

Music has a good number of glockenspiels but their condition is deteriorating. They are also short of listening material for new GCSE, AS and A2 courses.

Most subject areas produce good quality worksheets and use photocopied material sensibly. Some very good examples exist in English, mathematics, history and physical education.

The provision of resources for ICT is generally satisfactory. In some departments such as Welsh, modern languages, geography, media studies and KS3 music, it is unsatisfactory. The school is only partially networked. As a result, some departments do not have direct access to multimedia computers and there is considerable pressure on the specialist ICT rooms. Good use is made of laptop and the interactive white board in the few classrooms where they exist.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

7.1 Standards achieved by pupils

Welsh

Standards are good throughout the school.

In the 2002 GCSE results, 86.5% of the pupils gained A*-C grades in Welsh language. This is significantly higher than the national figure. In Welsh literature the percentage is a little higher than the national figure. In the advanced level examination the percentage of students gaining A-C grades is lower than the national figure. Girls perform significantly better than boys in the GCSE examinations.

KS3 and KS4

Standards are good across the skills with a significant number of pupils in each year achieving very good standards.

Good Features

- Without exception, pupils listen well to the teachers' questioning and presentations and respond appropriately. They interact effectively during pair and group work. By KS4, they challenge each other, extending responses and justifying standpoints.
- Increasingly, pupils present relevant spontaneous comments. At their best, these presentations are confident and extended, showing wide vocabulary and a sound grasp of syntax and idiom. On the whole, pupils are aware of the requirements of different linguistic

registers and they can modify their style according to the audience being addressed.

- Although reading standards vary according to age and ability, they are generally good. A substantial number of pupils read widely; they read a poem fluently and with meaning. They discuss characters in novels successfully and analyse plot and style. By Y10 and Y11, they respond with understanding to literary texts, expressing a firm opinion and using the terminology of literary criticism appropriately. They can gather information from factual texts and use it with relevance and purpose.
- Pupils' written work is broad and varied. Pupils across the age range succeed in writing in an extended manner using a range of linguistic genres. They express themselves clearly when presenting and defending an opinion and in creating portrayals, letters, dialogues, poems and stories. The work is generally of a good standard.
- A substantial number of pupils in each year produce work of very good standard. This work is extended and interesting, and shows a sound grasp of syntax and idiom together with a rich vocabulary. By KS4, the most able pupils begin to use style consciously, including a deliberate use of striking adjectives, metaphors and comparisons. Often the content is sensitive and perceptive and, on occasion, there are interesting and humorous touches. They produce monologues that convey emotion and conflict.

SEN

- Pupils with SEN are ready to express an opinion on topics that they find interesting and they contribute to group discussions. They read texts that match their ability in a deliberate and meaningful manner and they can express a simple view on the main characters. They write in a number of forms and the content of their work is often interesting. Although their syntax is limited and their spelling frequently inaccurate, they can express their ideas. The standard of their work is generally good and shows progress from year to year.

Shortcomings

- A core of pupils in every year contribute little to class and group discussions. On occasion, the comments they offer are superficial and general.
- A minority of pupils read aloud slowly and mechanically and have difficulty in sustaining meaning.
- The written work of a significant number of pupils at both key stages is inconsistent. From time to time, lack of detail, difficulty in expressing an opinion clearly, and careless linguistic mistakes impair the standard of the work.

Sixth Form

Standards are very good across the skills.

Good Features

- Students' oral contributions are mature and intelligent. They offer original and perceptive comments in responding to literary texts and visual stimuli. They respond astutely to each other's ideas, producing useful and constructive interaction.
- They show perceptiveness in analysis of set texts and use the terminology of literary criticism appropriately. They see the significance of style techniques and they can compare texts competently.
- Many of these qualities are transferred to their written work. Students compose carefully

structured essays when expressing an opinion and maintaining a standpoint. They show the ability to analyse thoroughly and to express themselves clearly. They gather information from various sources and present it systematically and purposefully. Their creative work is skilful and, on occasion, striking. They possess rich linguistic resources and are rapidly and deliberately developing a personal style. They can vary the register according to the situation, using dialect if there is need.

Shortcomings

- On occasion, students' use of quotations is not fully effective. They have not yet developed the skill of blending quotations into the structure of their essays.

Since the last inspection the department has maintained the good standards achieved in KS3 and KS4 and has raised standards in the sixth form from good to very good.

English

Standards are good throughout the school.

KS3 and KS4

GCSE examination results in 2001 were above those of both the LEA and Wales; the girls' results were significantly higher than boys' results. The boys' results, while comfortably above those of the LEA, were just below those for Wales as a whole. In 2002, the boys' results improved to be above those for both the LEA and Wales; the gap between boys and girls' results reduced from over 30% to 16%. In Y13, for the past two years, all students have succeeded in passing A level, with 52% in 2001 and 61% in 2002 gaining passes at the A/B level.

Good features

- Listening skills are good at all ability levels. By Y8, pupils listen well to each other in group work, and pay close attention to their fellow pupils when they read aloud. They follow teacher instructions when tasks are introduced.
- Oral work is good at both key stages. Pupils of all abilities use appropriate language for the task set in group work. They demonstrate good standards when asked to improvise or role-play; they choose suitable language registers and tone, empathise with the characters they play, and are often able to act in front of the class with some style.
- Higher and middle ability pupils read aloud with increasing confidence as they pass through the key stages, and by the end of KS4, convey character and emotion clearly as they read. Lower ability pupils increase in confidence as readers, and sometimes produce very good work for their ability level during KS4. Pupils read for pleasure, borrowing books from the school library, and keep a useful record of the books they read.
- Written work across the ability range often shows good creativity, with pupils producing imaginative work in the form of poems, parodies, stories and newspaper articles. The presentation of this work is often enhanced by the use of ICT.
- By the end of KS4, pupils are able to write good factual reports using questionnaires, and graphs to illustrate points of view, attitudes and findings.

- Work on literature shows increasing understanding through the key stages, with all pupils, including those of lower ability, demonstrating increasing ability to discuss attitude, theme, characters and issues, in both oral and written work.
- Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress.

Shortcomings

- In written work, spelling is poor in the work of a significant number of pupils at KS3, and this persists as a problem with lower and middle ability pupils at KS4. Sentence structure and punctuation are also a problem for many of these pupils.
- Apart from boys of high ability, reading skills are less well developed than those of girls.
- When discussing literature, only the most able pupils use technical terms with confidence.

Sixth form

Good features

- The best students reach very good standards at A level. In their coursework, they show sensitivity to literature, an ability to analyse difficult poems with insight, and an intelligent appreciation of the subtext. They can comment on form as well as content. They develop an appropriate individual style.
- Orally, students of all abilities question sensibly, discuss eagerly and show a good command of spoken English.
- They read aloud well, and are able to convey character and mood as they read.

Shortcomings

Middle and lower ability students still show uncertainty in spelling, grammar and style. Their work on literary texts, while showing understanding of character and theme, does not show sufficient analysis of language or of the way an author creates effects.

The good standards in English reported in the last inspection have been maintained.

Mathematics

At both KS3 and KS4, standards of achievement are good. Standards are very good in the sixth form.

The results at KS3 compare very favourably with the LEA and Wales and reflect an improvement since the last inspection. In 2002, 78% attained level 5 or better in the external SATs tests but the difference between boys and girls at 10% in favour of the girls is significant. Data shows added value from KS2 to KS3. In the same year, 65% of pupils gained grade A*- C in the GCSE examination, which is significantly better than the LEA and Wales, but girls outperformed boys by a significant 10%. However, this difference is not true for every year. Every pupil in Y11 gained a GCSE grade. In the A2 examinations, all students gained an A or B grade, which is good and significantly better than the LEA and Wales.

KS3

Good features

- At KS3, pupils deal competently with number and they understand place value; they are able to apply the four rules to determine answers that involve number, decimals or fractions.
- Pupils are able to classify numbers and can name different types of numbers such as factors and primes.
- Pupils can use number patterns to determine the relationships between numbers and can then apply the rule that they have established to calculate further terms in the sequence or relationship; the investigational type work done on this topic further improves attainment.
- Pupils can recognise and name two and three-dimensional [2D and 3D] shapes and can find areas and volumes as appropriate. They measure accurately within the constraints of the equipment such as a ruler and are able to use a protractor appropriately. They make sensible estimates of lengths and are able to determine if answers make sense overall. They can enlarge shapes by a given scale factor.
- Pupils can apply the Theorem of Pythagoras to solve problems and they can also determine the locus of a point that moves according to a given rule. They can appropriately apply the trigonometrical ratios to solve problems that involve right angle triangles and can determine such triangles in the questions they are asked to consider.
- Pupils are able to use the vocabulary of probability and know that probability must be between 0 and 1; they are able to use their knowledge of this topic to find probabilities by applying the appropriate rules.
- Pupils can construct and interpret frequency diagrams, can draw pie charts and are able to draw the correct conclusion from scatter diagrams; they understand the meaning and importance of correlation and know how to use given information to determine a line of best fit.
- Pupils with SEN are making good progress in the subject, working at a level appropriate to their understanding and ability.

Shortcomings

- Not all of the work that pupils produce is neatly presented; some is untidy and at times difficult to follow.
- Pupils are not always able to easily recall work covered previously and this at times has a negative effect on achievement.
- Not all pupils, mainly those of middle ability, apply themselves to lessons and learning is affected.
- Not all pupils fully complete their work and there are gaps in the exercise books of some pupils.

KS4

Good features

- Pupils have a good understanding of number and are able to deal with problems that involve calculating powers and roots. They can expand numbers written in standard form and are able to estimate answers correctly.
- They are able to evaluate algebraic formulae including those that involve decimals, fractions and negative numbers. They are competent in calculating a variable given the numerical values for other parts of the formula or expression.
- They can solve simple, simultaneous and quadratic equations at a level appropriate to their ability and are able to use these to solve more complex problems by stating the given information as an equation when appropriate and then finding a solution. With quadratic equations, pupils are equally confident in using factorisation or the formula to find the solutions.
- The able pupils understand and use mathematical similarity and can use trigonometry to calculate answers.
- Lower ability pupils are able to establish patterns from given information and can then solve the equations derived.
- Pupils can interpret and construct cumulative frequency tables and hence graphs. They understand the various averages such as mean, median and mode and the differences between them, and are able to calculate the range from given data.
- The standard of coursework for external examinations is good and shows that the pupils have a good understanding of the subject since they are able to apply their knowledge to deal with more complex topics.

Shortcomings

- A significant, but relatively small, number of pupils do not attempt all the homework they have been set by their teachers.
- Not all pupils apply themselves to their work in some classes and they do not reach the more challenging questions in a set exercise; they consequently tend to underachieve in the subject.
- Some pupils, mainly girls, lack confidence in dealing with algebra and are reluctant to attempt the more challenging questions at a level appropriate to their understanding and ability.
- Pupils who are absent do not consistently follow the departmental policy of copying up the work they have missed and hence they do not have all the work on a topic when they revise for internal or external tests or examinations.
- Some pupils are unable to recall work done previously and they sometimes get confused with notation.
- Graphs are not always drawn to the required degree of accuracy, especially graphs that involve curves.

Sixth form

Students follow courses in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics at this level and the results

for these subjects combine to give the examination grade at A2.

Good features

- In pure mathematics, students are able to calculate the mid-point of a line between two points and know how to determine the gradient of a line.
- Students are able to differentiate and integrate expressions correctly and their understanding and confidence in algebraic techniques develops over the two years.
- Students use ICT effectively to model answers for realistic situations and use trial and improvement, as well as different ICT packages, effectively to improve their knowledge and understanding of this aspect of the subject.
- In statistics, the students know how to find the probability of mutually exclusive events and can calculate permutations and combinations.
- Students can apply the Poisson and binomial distributions effectively and can use appropriate statistical tables to determine probabilities.
- In mechanics, students are able to resolve forces and realise the need to ensure units are standardised to provide accuracy.
- The work covered on equations of motion is accurate and the students are able to apply the correct equation to find the answer to a given question.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant weaknesses in sixth form work, but students do not manage their subject files adequately.

Science

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and KS4 and in the sixth form.

At KS3, the percentage of pupils obtaining level 5 and above in the national tests in 2001 and 2002 was significantly above LEA and national averages for boys and girls. At KS4, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*- C in the GCSE examinations was above national averages. However, this was not as significant in 2002. In the AS and A level examinations, almost all students gained grades in the A-E category, with the majority gaining A/B grades.

Good features

- At KS3, the majority of pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of a wide range of topics covering all aspects of the NC.
- Pupils have a good recall of key concepts and ideas and apply them to a range of problems and applications in everyday life.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress in relation to their abilities.
- Experimental skills are developed throughout the key stage. Pupils are able to follow instructions and carry out practical work safely.
- In the cognitive acceleration through science [CASE] lessons, pupils are developing good

thinking skills, which is a good foundation for future investigational work and problem solving.

- At KS4, the majority of pupils build upon their achievement at KS3, and have a good recall and understanding of topics covering life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes.
- More able and a majority of average ability pupils can apply their understanding to a range of problems, many related to the application of science in everyday life.
- The quality of investigations is good, and sometimes very good, for the majority of pupils. These pupils use detailed scientific knowledge and preliminary work at the planning stage and make a range of appropriate observations that are checked for accuracy. The skills of analysing and evaluating are also good for these pupils.
- At both key stages, the majority of pupils make good use of mathematical skills in scientific contexts.
- Pupils work safely and collaborate well in practical work.
- The use of ICT is satisfactory. In some classes, pupils use the facility to collect, process and present data. In a small number of classes, pupils are able to research information and use data to extend their learning.

Shortcomings

- At KS3, a minority of average and lower ability pupils have a less secure recall and understanding of current and previous work. There are occasions when they have difficulty in relating scientific principles to applications in everyday life.
- At KS4, a minority of average and below average pupils, especially boys, make satisfactory progress. They have a less secure recall of previous work when applying their knowledge to a range of tasks.
- In a minority of investigations, the lack of scientific knowledge and preliminary work at the planning stage, the drawing of inappropriate graphs and the absence of units, and the lack of detailed evaluation, prevent access to the higher marks.
- The quality of assessment is uneven at both key stages, and pupils are not always clear what is required in their responses to achieve higher standards.

The sixth form

The number of students studying the sciences at A/AS levels has increased significantly over the last two years.

Good features

- Students have a good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of topics and key concepts in biology, chemistry and physics.
- The majority of students use their knowledge, understanding and skills well in solving a range of problems.

- Communication and mathematical skills are well used. Students research and organise information effectively, building up well-kept files.
- Practical skills are good. Experiments are well planned; students work safely and systematically, collecting accurate data. Results are well analysed and interpreted using appropriate scientific theory.
- The majority of students make good progress, and some very good progress, in all aspects of their work.

Shortcomings

- A minority of students make satisfactory progress; they have gaps in their understanding of key topics.

Since the last inspection, the department has continued to make steady progress. However, modes of differentiation, more rigorous assessment and monitoring need further development to ensure that standards are consistently good.

Welsh Second Language

Standards are satisfactory at KS3 with a group of pupils achieving good standards. Standards are good at KS4 and in Y12.

In the Welsh second language GCSE examination in 2002, 95.95% of the pupils gained A*-C grades. This is more than 30% higher than the national figure. The results of the short course were over 20% higher than the national percentage.

CA3 a CA4

Good features

- A substantial majority of the pupils have a good understanding of relevant vocabulary and syntax.
- Most of the pupils can answer a range of questions by recalling learnt patterns, and new sentences are produced by transposing and adding words and phrases.
- A good percentage of pupils offer sentences spontaneously and express an opinion simply. On the whole, their pronunciation is correct.
- By the end of KS3, the highest achieving pupils can sustain short dialogues, using relevant vocabulary and a range of sentence patterns.
- At KS4, an increasing number of pupils can discuss some topics effectively and express their experiences and ideas in brief responses. They use wide vocabulary and offer unsolicited comments confidently.
- The highest achieving pupils successfully analyse simple poems, showing good understanding of the content. A number of them offer more extended comments and speak at normal conversational speed when discussing a range of topics.

- The standard of pupils' reading is generally satisfactory. Some pupils read sentences and paragraphs containing familiar language slowly but accurately and with appropriate modulation. By Y10 and Y11, they read more challenging texts with a good measure of accuracy.
- Y7 pupils can produce written sentences using the patterns learnt orally. Gradually, they come to compose short paragraphs by repeating some basic patterns. By Y8, a good number of pupils describe, compose simple dialogues and express their feelings about their likes and dislikes.
- From Y7 on, a group of pupils write at length across a number of language forms, using a range of vocabulary and patterns. By the end of KS4, the highest achieving pupils compose more extended essays and express opinions; they write the occasional interesting story. These pupils have a secure grasp of the short forms of verbs, in the present and past tense, and use them correctly and purposefully. They include some idioms and comparisons in their work.
- At both key stages, pupils with SEN respond well to the provision that is modified to meet their needs. At KS3, they respond briefly but purposefully, showing their understanding of the language presented to them. They can read the language presented orally to a satisfactory standard. They communicate successfully in writing within a narrow range of patterns. By KS4, they produce extended paragraphs and succeed in expressing their feelings. They derive pleasure and enjoyment from completing the tasks presented to them.

Shortcomings

- A substantial number of Y7 pupils are uncertain in their use of basic patterns and their vocabulary is limited. Because of this, their response is slow and incorrect when answering questions.
- Some KS3 and KS4 pupils have difficulty in pronunciation of common words in speech and reading. Many of them read slowly and without expression.
- A good number of KS3 pupils rely heavily on teacher support, and on notes and worksheets when responding orally. They produce brief responses on the whole.
- The written work produced is short and repetitive on the whole. Spelling errors impair the standard of writing at both key stages.

Y12

Standards are good.

Good features

- In expressing an opinion and responding to literary texts, students offer extended comments using a good range of vocabulary and patterns. They express their ideas clearly and to purpose. The occasional individual offers perceptive comments.
- Students' reading is fluent and meaningful. They can interpret poems with some assistance.
- Students' written work is good on the whole. They write at length and the content of their work is often interesting. The occasional individual can write sensitively.

Shortcomings

- Lack of detail is a constant feature of the written work produced.
- A number of small errors impair the expression.

The department has maintained the good standards achieved in the last inspection.

Design and technology

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and KS4. Standards are very good in the sixth form.

External examination results are good and higher than the Wales average for A*- C; textiles are significantly higher than the Wales average.

Within design and technology at KS4, pupils opt for the resistant materials, textiles, graphic products or the systems and control course.

KS3 and KS4

Good features

- At KS3, pupils gain experience of working with a good range of materials; they understand and apply the design process in all specialisms.
- Pupils display good competencies when using equipment and machines and an understanding of Health and Safety procedures.
- In the best folios, pupils trace the development of original initial design ideas and produce clear, annotated drawings and final solutions.
- Overall, practical outcomes are of a good standard, with some very good examples.
- The majority of pupils understand the properties of the materials used and can support the reasons for choice.
- A significant number of pupils use relevant technical terms correctly during discussions and in their written reports.
- With teacher help and support, pupils with SEN make good progress and achieve good standards in relation to their ability.
- During both key stages, pupils experience and apply a good range of ICT skills, including the use of scanners, computerised sewing machines, Computer Assisted Design and Manufacture [CAD/CAM], and control.
- The presentation of designs and supportive information is generally good, with some very good examples in textiles.

- The best folios display original creative designs, which are clearly developed from initial ideas to final solutions; pupils' ability to research, experiment, plan and evaluate is also evident.
- Isometric and anthropometric drawings, process and flow charts, graphs and star profiles are a feature of the work.
- Pupils use an appropriate range of equipment, tools, and machines confidently to produce items of a good standard, with examples of very good standards in textiles.

Shortcomings

- The less satisfactory folios present weaker drawing and presentation skills; they do not consistently contain step-by-step plans and lack good application of colour to enhance presentation.
- The use of ICT skills to enhance folio work is limited.
- On occasion, pupils of moderate ability produce superficial written reports.
- At KS4, evaluations do not consistently relate to the original design specifications.
- The quality of finish is inconsistent.
- The less successful folios display weak lettering and presentation skills.

The Sixth Form

Design and Technology, Product Design.

A level and AS courses are provided. Standards are very good as are external examination results, which are significantly above the national average.

Good features

- Students plan well for their placement in industry and produce good case study reports containing comprehensive records carefully analysed and evaluated.
- Whole group presentation, discussion and peer group evaluations provide valuable experience for students; objective observations and suggestions strengthen the design process.
- ICT skills are confidently used, including CAD/CAM, within project work.
- Practical work is generally of a good standard, with some very good standards in textiles and resistant materials.
- The consistently good standard of textile work, in particular, is well supported by the good use of sketchbooks, research books, manufacturing diaries and specification records.
- Where appropriate, students make good use of anthropometric data and ergonomic studies to influence the development of the initial design.

Shortcomings

There are no major shortcomings

The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Examination results have improved; schemes of work have been revised and the KS3 curriculum now addresses all NC requirements. Facilities are improved in all specialist areas, particularly in textiles and food technology. Also, pupils' experience of CAD/CAM is improved. With the exception of food technology, the department further benefits from good technician support.

Information technology

Standards are satisfactory at KS3, very good at KS4 and good in Y12 and Y13.

Over the past three years, GCSE examination results have been very good and results at AS and A level have been good.

KS3 and KS4

Good features

- At KS3, pupils have a clear understanding of the functions and specific characteristics of different kinds of software.
- In Y7, standards of presenting information are satisfactory. Pupils can combine text and graphics and prepare material for a specific audience. In subsequent years, they refine aesthetic aspects.
- Pupils in Y8 use spreadsheets to record and amend data and can use simple formulae while doing so. They can create graphs and often comment sensibly on what they represent.
- Y9 pupils are aware of the characteristics of databases. They can create simple ones and interrogate them and more complex pre-prepared ones in many ways.
- Pupils at KS3 have a satisfactory knowledge of the influence of computers on contemporary society.
- At KS4, pupils have a very good understanding of IT concepts and display this by correctly identifying and using technical terms appropriate to the subject. They can relate their own personal experiences to these concepts.
- KS4 pupils are very aware of many of the important issues affecting the use of IT in society.
- Pupils have satisfactory variety of relevant IT skills at the beginning of Y10 and can select appropriate applications for defined tasks.
- Y11 pupils are skilled users of IT packages and many use suitable sophisticated techniques to enhance their work.
- Pupils' initial planning for GCSE IT projects is good.

- Pupils following the CLAIT course are making good progress in learning the necessary skills.

Shortcomings

- At KS3, although pupils acquire basic IT skills, sometimes to a high level, they have insufficient teacher contact time to practise and develop their skills to a level where the skills become automatic.

The Sixth Form

Good features

- In Y12, the great majority of students have a good understanding of initial concepts relevant to the AS ICT course and discuss these confidently using relevant technical terms.
- Students following the AS course who have taken the GCSE examination have an initial high level of computer skills.
- Y13 students have a good understanding of technical issues relating to hardware, software and communications.
- Students understand how ICT is used by a range of organisations.
- Y13 students are beginning to apply their knowledge and understanding of ICT in unfamiliar situations; they can analyse a system and plan an appropriate solution to a problem.

Shortcomings

- A significant majority of students rush to respond to IT projects set without enough prior thought and planning.
- As yet, a significant number of students do not answer examination-type theory questions in ways that sufficiently meet the requirements.

Since the last inspection standards in KS4 and the sixth form have been consolidated and improved.

History

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and very good at KS4 and in the sixth form.

GCSE, 'AS' and A level results are good and often very good, especially in GCSE.

KS3 and KS4

Good features

- KS3 pupils use of a wide range of methods, including varied applications of ICT, to develop a good level of knowledge and understanding.
- KS3 pupils have good historical skills. These enable them to undertake good evaluations of historical sources and to consider historical interpretations in a balanced fashion.
- KS3 pupils have in-depth comprehension of a wide variety of historical evidence.
- The quality of the organisation, and presentation of assignments and projects at KS3 is good. These often contain good understanding of cause and consequence, continuity and change, and similarity and difference.
- Many KS4 pupils have very good knowledge and understanding.
- KS4 pupils' comprehension and evaluation of a variety of historical evidence is considered, thoughtful and analytical.
- At KS4, the quality of oral and written work around major questions such as "Why did Hitler succeed in taking power?" or "How and why did the USA come to lead the world economically in the 1920s" is high. The best of this work is exceptionally good.
- GCSE coursework is very knowledgeable and well-presented.

The Sixth Form

Good features

- Y12 and Y13 students have a depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding, and they apply this to both classwork and extended assignments.
- The quality of students' categorisation, evaluation and analysis of historical sources, including visual and statistical evidence, is high.
- In Y12 and Y13, the standard of classroom debate is high.

Shortcomings throughout the school

- The occasional shortfall in pupils' knowledge, mainly at KS3, prevents them accessing full understanding of a few topics and issues.
- There is a tendency by a noticeable minority of KS4 pupils and Y12 and Y13 students in their work with historical evidence to over-concentrate on bias at the expense of more important considerations.

Geography

Standards of achievement are good at KS3, KS4 and in the sixth form.

In recent years, results in external WJEC examinations have been significantly above LEA and national figures at the higher grades at GCSE (A*- C) and at A level (A-B) and show 100% pass rate in both.

KS3 and KS4

Good features

- Pupils make good progress in acquiring the skills of geographical enquiry; they show good knowledge and understanding of introductory topics in both physical and human geography.
- Pupils acquire a good knowledge of location and of places through the regular use of atlases; they relate their knowledge of local and Welsh features to regions on a wider scale and their grasp of the *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* improves over the key stage.
- Across the key stage, pupils' understanding of theoretical aspects of the programme of study is enhanced by opportunities to discuss the inequalities in the quality of life experienced by people in different parts of the world such as Italy and Kenya.
- Pupils increase their subject vocabulary of key words, which they apply with increasing precision; key learning skills of communication, numeracy and the use of ICT are enhanced by regular opportunities to make use of them in classroom activities and in homework.
- KS4 Pupils have a secure understanding of the natural habitats of the world and how they are under threat; they extend their knowledge of fragile environments and explain how regions of tropical grasslands may be converted to desert by a combination of factors.
- In KS4, pupils work productively as individuals and in small groups; they record and evaluate evidence from primary and secondary sources effectively; they use a wide range of techniques to illustrate their findings, making very good use of computers and satellite imagery to identify patterns and processes.
- Pupils make good use of previously acquired information and apply it constructively in their studies of current trends in tourism in the UK and Spain and in individual presentations as weather forecasters.
- Pupils have a very good appreciation of examination requirements and respond to the high expectations of their teachers; they practise productively on past examination papers and show a sound grasp of relevant knowledge and understanding.

Shortcomings

- At KS3, the progress of a minority of pupils is restrained by a short term recall of information, an uncertainty of location on a global scale, and of more complex terminology, and by inattention on the part of a handful of pupils.
- At KS4, the knowledge of some lower achievers is limited in breadth and depth, and while achieving standards commensurate with their abilities, some are more confident orally than in writing.

Sixth form

Good features

- Students possess the ability to analyse, to interpret and to evaluate well-researched subjects; they make very good use of a wide range of sources to obtain relevant information and apply it with precision.
- They work productively as individuals and as a group to solve problems and identify for themselves geographical questions and issues and they select appropriate methods of illustrating their findings.
- Innovative learning situations enable students to make good use of their learning skills; there is accurate linking of theory to actual case studies as in their deliberations on natural hazards such as earthquakes and flooding.
- Individual presentations on economic activity in Japan enable them to draw on their knowledge and understanding of different aspects of the subject.

Shortcomings

No significant shortcomings were noted in the sixth form.

The department has made good progress since the last inspection; the good standards have been maintained. An investigative approach adopted by pupils and an emphasis on the development of key learning skills is evident in class.

Modern Foreign Languages

Standards in French are good throughout the school. Standards in Italian are very good at KS4 and good in the sixth form.

Examination results at A level have been good in both languages over a number of years. This is also true of the recent AS examinations.

At GCSE level, results in Italian have been very good. In French, where the take-up is about the same as the national average for Wales, the percentage of candidates gaining A*- C grades has been higher than those for the county and Wales. Value added analysis for French at KS4 shows a small negative figure.

KS3 and KS4

Good features

- In Italian at KS4, pupils achieve very good standards in all four language skills. This reflects teaching of a very high standard.
- In their oral work in French at KS3 and KS4, pupils can ask and reply to questions; pronunciation is good. They express simple opinions and can do so using a suitable variety of verb tenses and a good range of idiom and vocabulary.

- Pupils understand in detail the authentic reading and listening passages which they read and hear. They can record their understanding in a variety of ways. Standards in reading aloud are good and those of reading for pleasure are satisfactory.
- Pupils can write factual descriptions, letters and essays using a variety of tenses and good lexis with a reasonable amount of accuracy.
- Pupils can often use linguistic content they have read or heard as the successful basis of oral and written work.

Shortcomings

- A small number of the ablest KS4 pupils under-perform in French; although they speak or write extensively, they make little use of conjunctions or nuances of vocabulary.
- The standard of written work is marred by a lack of accuracy, especially in spelling, verbal forms and agreements.

Sixth form

Good features

- In French in Y13 and in Italian in Y12 and Y13, students discuss orally at length, express an opinion and defend a point of view and use a wide range of structures and vocabulary.
- Students have a good level of knowledge about the culture and traditions of France and Italy.
- Students have a good understanding of facts and ideas about topics relating to France and Italy and of current affairs, which they read or to which they listen.
- Students write at length on advanced level topics and structure their work well.

Shortcomings

- Grammatical mistakes, though less evident in Y13, affect the standards of accuracy of written work and, to a less significant extent, those of oral work in both French and Italian.
- Y12 students in French as yet lack confidence when discussing abstract ideas.

Since the last inspection standards have become more consistent and have been consolidated.

Art

Standards of achievement are good at KS3, satisfactory at KS4 and good in the sixth form.

22% of the cohort was entered for GCSE last year. GCSE results are below the national average. Results are above average in AS and A2.

KS3 and KS4

Good features

- At KS3, pupils make good progress in their understanding of the visual elements of art, for instance drawing and printmaking.
- Y7 pupils experiment with texture and use an understanding of Celtic Art to inform their designs for printmaking.
- Y8 pupils explore and use a range of reference materials and resources to establish and develop ideas and themes based on the understanding of the work of William Morris.
- Y9 pupils create self-portraits using a manipulated digitised image to develop designs into a colour silkscreen print.
- The use of ICT to create images shows progression and is good.
- Y7 pupils create computer graphics using Vector tools to design logos.
- Y8 pupils' skills are further developed using Photoshop to create layers.
- Knowledge of perspective and Surrealism informs graphic design.
- Investigative collage making, using high quality magazines as art, stems from an understanding of advertising design.
- Y9 pupils use digital cameras for image manipulation showing increasing skills in creating an array of effects with the process menu.
- Pupils' ceramic work shows the influence of artist in residence, Neil Darlrumple, who created ceramic totem poles. This work increases the pupils' awareness of native American Art and art from differing cultures.
- At KS4, standards are good in drawing and painting.
- Surrealistic 3D sculptures are good.

Shortcomings

- Pupils do not create enough examples of ceramics and printmaking to enhance their coursework.
- The use of sketchbooks is uneven.
- Pupils do not take sufficient responsibility for the storage and organisation of their coursework units.
- Pupils do not review and evaluate their work appropriately, explaining how it has developed.

Sixth form

Good features

- In Y12 and Y13, pupils' fine art is good.
- Studies of oriental art, leading to textile wall hangings by one pupil, show an understanding of art from different cultures.

Shortcomings

- Students do not make effective use of ceramic and printmaking facilities to broaden their experience in different media.

Artwork of high standard exhibited on the walls and on the school grounds and produced by local artists, craftworkers and designers, and by the pupils themselves, induce in pupils a sense of awe and wonder.

Music

Standards of achievement are satisfactory at KS3 and good at KS4 and in the sixth form.

GCSE results in recent years have been well above the national average although the number of candidates has been small. In 2002, students gained two A, two B and one C grades at AS level and two A grades at A2 level.

KS3 and KS4

Good features

- Standards in performing, composing and appraising music are satisfactory overall at KS3
- Pupils sing with enthusiasm. Y7 pupils sing rounds in two parts with secure intonation and clarity of diction.
- Pupils develop a good awareness of rhythm and pulse by using body-percussion. Most of them perform parts on classroom instruments and keyboards with a good degree of accuracy. More able pupils maintain secure ensemble when performing with others.
- More able Y8 pupils revise and refine compositional work. Initial ideas for their “Film music” compositions show imagination. Extended improvisations, based on the “Blues” scale, by a few Y9 pupils are rhythmically and melodically interesting.
- Pupils in KS3 have some awareness of musical elements and can identify instruments and features in recorded extracts. A few more able pupils make perceptive comments.
- KS4 pupils make suitable progress in vocal and instrumental performance and achieve good standards.
- Much of the compositional work in KS4 in progress displays an interesting treatment of ideas. It is often idiomatic, has a good sense of style and structure and is of a good standard.
- Pupils in Y11 are, to varying degrees, able to discern features in recorded extracts of music from different styles and periods. Evaluation skills are satisfactory, overall.

Shortcomings

- KS3 pupils do not always sing with sufficient attention to musical detail and expression.

- Certain KS3 pupils are unable to play in time with others or fail to adjust the volume to the needs of the ensemble.
- Some “Film music” compositions and “Blues” improvisations are very brief at KS3; the former lack depth and the latter, coherence and a sense of direction. The experience and ability of pupils to explore sounds and combine them effectively is limited.
- The ability of many pupils to evaluate their own and others’ music-making is under-developed and comments are often superficial.
- A few Y11 pupils are less experienced in group performance.
- Evaluations by certain Y11 pupils, when discerning features in recorded extracts of music, lack sufficient detail. Evaluation skills are not evenly developed across a range of musical contexts.

Sixth form

Good features

- Students are able and experienced performers and achieve high standards in performing.
- Students are developing a good understanding of Baroque style composing devices. Initial ideas in composing show promise and display, in general, a good understanding of the chosen style and medium.
- Y12 and Y13 students display a sound knowledge and understanding of the main features of the music being studied in their respective areas of study.
- Students’ aural skills are progressing appropriately.

Shortcomings

- In composing, a few students need support to make progress and refine ideas.
- Y12 students have yet to decide on their individual folio topics.

Owing to inadequate resourcing, the use of ICT as an aid to enhance work in composing is limited at all key stages.

There has not been a significant improvement in standards at KS3 since the last inspection. At KS4 and in the sixth form, standards have been consolidated though the numbers opting for these courses remain very small. Peripatetic tuition provided for one in eleven of pupils on the school roll, together with numerous extra-curricular groups of good and sometimes very good standard, complement the work of the department. These make a positive impact on school and community life.

Physical education

Standards of achievement at KS3 and KS4 are good, and in the sixth form they are very good.

In 2002, 47 pupils were entered for GCSE examinations full course. They all achieved A*- F grades, and 60% achieved A*- C. These results are marginally below the LEA and national averages. At advanced level, six students were entered for the examination and four achieved A-C grades.

Good Features

At all key stages, pupils dress appropriately and respond positively to physically demanding work in all activities.

KS3 and KS4

- KS3 pupils are attentive, respond enthusiastically and enjoy participating across the range of activities.
- Pupils work hard individually, in pairs and in groups and co-operate well in response to the tasks set.
- Pupils at KS3 recognise the benefits of exercise and consistently show a willingness to improve fitness and skill levels.
- KS3 pupils are confident in water, using a range of stroke techniques, and are developing competence in life-saving skills.
- Pupils achieve a good standard in games activities, rugby Y8, netball, hockey Y9; they create space, keep possession and can play the game.
- Pupils show good compositional skills; in dance and gymnastics in years 7,8,9, they understand and demonstrate high quality in their work, and as a consequence, produce good work on floor and apparatus.
- There are examples of very good individual and pair performances in Y9 girls' gymnastics.
- KS4 pupils are able to practise, repeat and refine actions with greater control and accuracy.
- KS4 pupils of all abilities have a clear understanding of the laws of the game and are able to interpret the rules and practise them.
- Pupils are capable of sustained physical activity.
- GCSE coursework is well prepared and pupils display a mature attitude towards the work; written work is completed with varying degrees of success, with achievement in line with individual ability.
- There are examples of very good individual performances in both practical work and written assignments in KS4.

Shortcomings

- The quality of work in Y7 boys' gymnastics is not consistent with that shown throughout the department.

- Opportunities to challenge the more able pupils, both physically and mentally, are not always planned in advance.
- Learning outcomes in a minority of lessons are not always specific enough or shared with the pupils, and as a consequence, some pupils underachieve.

Sixth Form

Good features

- Students who follow AS and A2 courses display a mature attitude towards the work and make very good progress.
- The standard of independently researched Personal Performance Portfolios is very good, and they are further enhanced by very good presentation using word processing skills.
- Teacher preparation and guidance is interpreted and used effectively.
- Students display knowledge and understanding as they use their analytical skills to good effect.
- A2 students reveal in-depth knowledge and research of factors affecting performance, are able to relate to previous knowledge (AS) and are able to discuss effectively when analysing, evaluating and explaining aspects of their coursework.
- A2 and AS students give up their free time to assist in curriculum delivery across KS3 and KS4. They take responsibility (under supervision) for warm ups and small group activities. The students respond well to their peers.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings in the sixth form.

The extra curricular programme is extensive and caters for pupils of all abilities. A high percentage of pupils participate. The school competes at all age groups across an impressive range of activities, and the standards attained are good. The school has a strong tradition in competitive sport, and many pupils go on to represent their county and achieve national honours. This reflects the hard work and dedication of teachers and pupils collectively.

Religious education

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and in the few lessons observed, good at KS4.

KS3 and KS4

Good features

- Pupils, across the range of ability, at KS3 show good knowledge and understanding of the units of work studied, reflecting the Agreed Syllabus.
- They make good progress in their knowledge of how and why believers from different religions worship, reflect and celebrate their faith. By studying local places of worship, their knowledge of religious practice in Wales develops well.
- Pupils with SEN at KS3 have good knowledge of the topics studied.

- Across the ability range, pupils' ability to use appropriate vocabulary to discuss religious affairs, both orally and in writing, is good.
- KS3 pupils' ability to gather information and interpret it for joint projects is good. The presentation of the final work is good.
- In the topics studied, the knowledge and understanding of KS4 pupils of current moral issues is developing well.
- In pair and group work, they are honest, and on the basis of their knowledge they can generalise and form an opinion.
- KS4 pupils develop their understanding of the ways creeds and religious practices handle the questions raised from their experience of the natural world and human inter-relationship.

Shortcomings

- Very good standards of oral achievement are not always reflected in the written work at KS3.
- The time earmarked for the subject at KS4 does not allow the completion of the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus and an opportunity is lost to build on the good standards of achievement at KS3.

Sixth form

There is no statutory religious education course in the sixth form.

Since the last inspection standards of achievement have improved.

Religious studies

Standards of achievement are good at KS4 and in the sixth form.

GCSE standards are good and higher than the average for the LEA and Wales. The number of pupils sitting the examinations has increased since the last inspection and results are still good.

Good features

KS4

- Pupils' factual knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith and Judaism are good.
- They make good progress in their ability to master a range of words, terms and images that enable them to discuss with understanding issues related to the religions.
- They have good understanding of the authority believers attach to religious issues and traditions. In pair and group work, they are honest, and on the basis of their knowledge they can generalise and form an opinion.
- The standard of their written work is good. They complete a good range of tasks and the more able analyse skilfully and use it as evidence to present a balanced opinion effectively.

Sixth form

- Students have secure knowledge and understanding, and the majority can apply this appropriately to the questions and issues raised by the natural world and human relationships.
- The essays of the majority include consideration of the opinion of religious expositors and material from suitable sources. They gather and analyse information well.

Shortcomings

KS4 and sixth form

- A small minority of pupils and students produce satisfactory work; they have an appropriate grasp of the content of the syllabus but there is lack of detail and analysis in some of the work, and they tend to a narrative style.

Personal and Social Education

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and KS4.

KS3 and KS4

Good features

- At KS3 and KS4, pupils' interpersonal skills are good across the age range. They listen attentively to others and work well in pairs and groups, showing a high level of collaboration.
- The personal and social skills of KS3 pupils are good. They understand and appreciate the importance of relationships with friends and within the family and society. They have a good understanding of equal opportunity issues, e.g. racism and disabilities.
- Through their support for charities and good causes, they display an increasing understanding of world issues such as divisions between rich and poor.
- KS3 pupils understand the nature of the European Community; they know about the different cultures and can discuss issues at an appropriate level.
- They know about the risks from the use of illegal drugs and know that maintaining regular exercise is good for their mental and physical benefit.
- They show good awareness of the problems of bullying and other aspects of antisocial behaviour. They recognise moral issues and know what are considered to be right and wrong actions.
- In class discussion, KS4 pupils show sensitivity to the feelings and opinions of others and a responsible attitude to the natural world. They can empathise with the experiences of others and can appreciate and evaluate another person's point of view.
- KS4 pupils review and reflect on their learning and performance, and are increasingly able to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to set targets for improvement. Pupils develop increasingly effective study skills and plan their examination revision sensibly.

- KS4 pupils have a good understanding of issues concerning sex, drugs and health.
- Pupils can make decisions and effective choices and they make good use of the careers services.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- A minority of pupils show little respect for their own environment by dropping litter around the school.
- In some lessons, the opportunity to develop some issues and matters fully is restricted; the presentation is over-long and the opportunity for pupils to ask questions and to discuss is short.

Business Studies

The standards at KS4 are good.

The examination results at GCSE have been good over the past two years

Good features

- In Y11, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of profit and loss accounts and financial ratios. The large majority of pupils use financial ratio work to arrive at good logical conclusions.
- In Y10, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of business organisations, hierarchical systems and the various leadership styles. Pupils relate the work well to real organisational situations.
- Good use is made of the local economy for business surveys and for producing coursework. Relating the work to the local economy and local businesses leads to more meaningful classroom discussion.
- The large majority of pupils produce coursework of good standard.

Shortcomings

- In one Y11 class, a significant number of pupils had not completed the homework set.

GCSE - Child Development

Standards of achievement are good.

The percentage of pupils gaining grades A*- C in the external examination is significantly higher than the national average. Grades frequently exceed expectation.

Good Features

- Case study reports related to the physical, social, emotional and intellectual development of a child are generally good. The best examples reveal clear, well-researched content, where information is carefully planned and structured into a logical sequence.
- Coursework files are well organised, and contain comprehensive notes and records of written tasks.
- Practical activities, such as the designing and making of items to develop manipulative or number skills, result in good quality outcomes in a range of materials.
- Pupils have a good understanding and appreciation of the importance of play in the development of language, for example, the acquisition of new skills and the ability to co-operate with others.
- All pupils benefit from the virtual reality parenting experience; pupil and parent written evaluations are positive and constructive.
- Pupils achieve good standards in relation to ability.

Shortcomings

- In the less successful examples, evaluations are superficial, and there is insufficient evidence of personal research.

GCSE Catering

Standards of achievement are good.

Examination results are significantly above the national average.

Good features

- Pupils have knowledge of the various types of catering outlets within the industry and can evaluate management structures and responsibilities.
- Pupils understand and apply good nutritional principles when planning menus for a range of clients, including cultural diversity and those with food allergies such as coeliac disease, for example.
- Computer programs are appropriately used by pupils to support and reinforce learning.
- All pupils benefit from completing the food hygiene course; hygiene practices are generally considered during food preparation and production.
- Visits, visiting speakers and related video programmes provide pupils with relevant, and frequently first hand experience of the industry and its requirements.
- Reports, written as a consequence of work experience placement at a selected catering outlet and at a local college, are good overall. In the best examples, considered evaluations and conclusions are evident, together with the appropriate use of ICT skills to enhance presentation.

- Pupils understand the value of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point [HACCP] and its relevance in food production.
- Sensory evaluations are undertaken and star profiles are frequently used to record findings.
- Practical work is well planned and recorded; outcomes are generally of a good standard.
- Technological development, related to the catering industry, is addressed and understood.

Shortcomings

- Pupils have insufficient opportunity to gain experience of working within realistic industrial conditions.
- A small number of pupils do not apply important personal health and hygiene practices.

Economics

Standards are good in the sixth form.

The results at AS and A level have been good over the past two years.

Good features

- In Y13, students have a good knowledge and understanding of the types of inflation, the causes of inflation and the way inflation is measured.
- In Y12, the large majority of students have a good knowledge and understanding of price elasticity of demand and the factors that influence it.
- Students relate the work well to the national and local economies and to current economic events and data. This deepens the understanding of the subject.
- Students discuss topics in a mature and intelligent manner.
- The large majority of students show good analysis skills when undertaking data analysis work.
- Students have good problem-solving skills, take responsibility for their work and work well in pairs and individually.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Humanities

Standards are good.

This CoEA course consists of five units. There are geography, history and religious education units plus a local study and a contemporary study.

Good features

- Pupils' generally have good outline knowledge and understanding of topics and issues.
- Pupils make good use of a variety of sources, including using ICT to find and organise information.
- Pupils show sound application of knowledge and understanding in their short answers to stimulus questions in tests.
- In course assignments on the effects of tourism, pupils provide thoughtful and clearly set out findings.

Shortcomings

- Weak general knowledge prevents some pupils from gaining full access to questions and activities.
- Pupils experience difficulties in responding to more open ended and evaluative questions.

Sociology

Standards are good.

Sociology is provided at AS and A level through a distance learning scheme. It is becoming an increasingly popular option, especially at AS level. Examination results are satisfactory.

Good Features

- Many students make good progress in understanding and applying sociological theories and concepts.
- They have good understanding, and make good use of subject terminology.
- Students make generally good, and sometimes very good, analysis of sociological theories and models.
- Students show some well-thought-out redrafting, especially in the updating of topics and issues.
- Students produce clearly organised, well-informed accounts that directly address questions.

Shortcomings

- A significant minority of students over-generalise and over-simplify, especially in topics such as 'education' or 'identity'.

- Some work is too descriptive; it lacks required levels of evaluation and analysis.
- There is some misinterpretation and misrepresentation of statistical evidence and analysis.

Media Studies

Standards are good at KS4 and in the sixth form.

At GCSE level, in 2001, all pupils achieved a pass at A*-G, and all girls gained a C grade or above. In 2002, the pass rate at the higher grades was lower, but 16% achieved an A grade, which was higher than the average for Wales. At A level in 2002, 75% of students gained a grade in the A/B range, and all candidates achieved a pass.

KS4

Good features

- Pupils show an increasing grasp of media codes and conventions, and by the end of the key stage are able to use technical terms with confidence.
- They develop good analytical skills.
- More able pupils show good understanding of the techniques of filming, and an ability to analyse video clips quickly and accurately.
- They produce good coursework on video, showing good skills of co-operation in group work, scripting, filming and editing; they use a digital camera well, showing that they understand how to use visual methods to convey messages.
- The best written work demonstrates very good analytical skills, and an ability to reflect on the pupil's own performance with objectivity and insight.
- They plan, draft, produce and evaluate coursework projects effectively.

Shortcomings

- Less able pupils show an uncertain grasp of technical terms.
- Less able pupils' written work shows insufficient evidence of research and insufficient analysis of their own strengths and weaknesses.

Sixth form

Good features

- Students have a wide vocabulary of technical terms with which to discuss media texts. The best students can deconstruct text with ease; they can identify genre, recognise media sign and code systems, and understand the processes involved.

- Students produce artefacts of a good standard; they make good use of the limited equipment available.
- The best coursework shows clear evidence of wide research, careful analysis, clear conclusions and penetrating self-evaluation.

Shortcomings

- Middle and lower ability pupils produce coursework which is restricted in scope, and lacks clear deconstruction of media text.

Since the last inspection, good standards have been maintained.

Motor Vehicle and Road User Studies – Entry Level

This course is taught by Llysfasi College staff and pupils are taught at the college for one hour per week with one hour of co-ordinated study at the school.

Standards are good, as are the external examination results, in this subject.

Good Features

- Pupils develop a range of skills and use technical information confidently.
- Pupils display good planning, researching and organisational skills in their case study reports.
- Pupils display their development of knowledge and understanding in frequent tests.
- Pupils have a sound grasp of technical vocabulary and they use it appropriately.
- Pupils appreciate the vocational value of the course.

Shortcomings

- Some pupils lack sufficient numerical, linguistic and ICT skills to ensure the best standards.

Rural and Agricultural Science

Standards of achievement are good and commensurate with pupils' ability.

Good Features

- The majority of pupils in Y10 have a good understanding of soil structure and the impact of factors such as temperature, moisture and pH on growth.
- The majority of pupils in Y11 have a good knowledge of the structure of the reproductive system in birds and animals, and can explain the function of most parts.

- The majority of pupils in Y11 are developing a wide range of practical skills in many sections of the course.
- In the small sample of investigations seen, some pupils are achieving good standards in planning their work. Observations are carefully recorded, and the skills of analysing and evaluating are developing.

Shortcomings

- A minority of pupils have some difficulty in using the appropriate terminology when completing certain written assignments.
- The attendance of a minority of pupils is irregular and there is evidence of incomplete work.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress since the last inspection

The Key Issues in the last report were:

In order to maintain the civilised ethos and high standards across the curriculum and in every key stage the school needs to:

- *consolidate the current policies and continue with strategies, which lay a good foundation for the generally good behaviour of pupils.*

The school has re-considered policies relevant to this area and made changes to behaviour policies as necessary. A list of behavioural expectations from pupils is displayed in every classroom. The school has also strengthened the monitoring of this aspect, now ensuring that good behaviour is the norm for all pupils. There are also useful links with the LEA behaviour support team. The behaviour of pupils continues to be good.

- *continue to seek additional capital*
 - *to extend the school's permanent accommodation and the hard surfaces outside.*
 - *to improve the school's technical resources;*
 - *to provide conditions of work appropriate to staff and pupils in the next century; and*
 - *to provide a safer and more stimulating environment for the whole community;*

Good progress has been made. The hard surface provision has been increased since the area surrounding the many mobiles is hard. The school has successfully gained funding from the National Assembly for Wales, through the persistence of the governors and the school, to build 20 new permanent classrooms. This work is expected to start soon, but some issues still need to be finalised. Two technology rooms (textiles and food) have recently been refurbished. The school assembly hall has been upgraded to a theatre and this has been named after the headteacher in post during the last inspection but since then deceased. The school has more ICT rooms available for use by pupils than during the last inspection and the number of computers available for use by the pupils has significantly increased. The school states that NOF funding has been gained to upgrade and improve the changing facilities in the school and this is a clear need. The school has included security locks on external doors to ensure a safer environment for staff and pupils, and the site is decorated with stimulating displays in all areas. The LEA has also commissioned a site development report from a firm of consultants. The school budget is used to provide a rolling programme of decoration and furniture replacement to improve working conditions for all staff and pupils. The school site overall provides a number of learning stimulations for pupils.

- *continue to extend the good practice within the school, by*
 - *extending the very good assessment practices within the faculties;*
 - *setting clear targets for the academic work of all pupils and their personal and social development.*

Good progress has been made. The school has developed the target setting process for all pupils and this now involves tutors interviewing pupils at least once a year and is more formalised than during the last inspection. This is related to the establishment of a progress file for all pupils which is regularly considered in an extended registration period once a month. During this time, pupils consider their achievement and determine their targets for improvement; this is valuable. Some self-assessment also occurs but this is an area the school is continuing to develop.

- *extend further the current monitoring practice, to ensure*
 - *that all morning registration/tutorial sessions provide pupils with experiences as good in quality as those offered in the subsequent subject sessions;*
 - *that all tutorial sessions give pupils the opportunity of joining in an act of communal worship.*

Good progress has been made. Head of years monitor the experiences pupils have in registration. The experiences gained in registration was deemed good overall during this inspection and pupils now have the opportunity of joining in an act of worship since a “thought for the day” is provided in each registration group from Y7 to Y13. Monitoring of provision has been further developed since heads of year visit registration groups on a regular basis.

In respect of all the key issues included in the last report, the various headteachers in post have ensured that good progress was made.

8.2 Key issues for action

The school needs to:

- continue to close the gap between the results of boys and girls at KS3 and KS4 while maintaining the quality of the results;*

- maintain the good and improve the satisfactory standards in subjects and aspects;*
- refine and develop its evaluation procedures, focussing on aspects that will raise pupil standards and improve the quality of the provision;*
- develop the role and the responsibility of middle management so as to enhance their contribution to whole school development;
- pay appropriate attention to a number of statutory requirements relating to the curriculum and
 - provide statutory religious education for Y12 and Y13 students;
 - ensure that the religious education provided at KS4 conforms to the requirements of the local SACRE;
 - ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement to the National Curriculum at KS3;
- pay appropriate attention to the health and safety matters contained in the report.*

* These issues have already been identified by the school and form part of its SDP.

APPENDIX

School data

A. Basic information about the school

Name of the School	Ysgol Brynhyfryd
Type	Naturally bilingual LEA/ Community Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 – 18
School address	Mold Road Ruthin Denbighshire
Postcode	LL15 1EG
Telephone number	01824 703933

Name of Head	Eleri E. Jones
Date of appointment	September 2001
Chair of Governors	Dr Richard Barrie
Registered Inspector	Gareth W. Roberts
Date of inspection	18 – 22 November, 2002

B. School data and indicators

<i>The number of pupils in each year group</i>								
Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
The number of pupils	201	186	211	208	193	124	107	1230

<i>The number of teachers</i>			
	Full time	Part time	Full time equivalent (fte)
The number of teachers	71	4	73.6

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher ratio, excluding special classes	16.7 : 1
Average size of classes	20.7
Overall contact ratio	81%

<i>Attendance percentages during the three full terms before the inspection</i>								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	The whole school
Autumn 2001	95.3	94.3	91.8	92	90.9	94.7	89	92.6
Spring 2002	92.7	91	89.7	88.5	90.3	91.8	86.5	90.1
Summer 2002	92	90.6	97.7	87.3	95.2	84.3	91.7	89.4

<i>The number of pupils excluded during the previous 12 months</i>	<i>14 boys and 3 girls temporarily</i>
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C. Results of NC assessments and public examinations

Results of KS3 National Curriculum Assessments : 2002													
Total Y9 pupils: 215													
Percentage of pupils at each level													
			D	A	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8/EP
EN	Teacher Assessment	School	0.5	0.9	0	0	0	7	25.2	34.1	24.3	7.9	0
		National	-	-	-	-	1	8	27	22	28	15	-
	Test	School	0.5	1.9	-	-	-	1.4	17.3	31.8	32.2	15	-
		National	-	1	1	-	-	8	21	26	29	15	-
WE	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	5.6	11.1	25.9	38.9	14.8	0
		National	-	-	-	-	-	12	28	25	28	7	-
	Test	School	0	0.9	-	-	-	5.6	13	24.1	38.9	16.7	-
		National	-	-	-	-	-	13	30	22	28	8	-
MA	Teacher Assessment	School	0.5	0.9	0	0	0	0.9	10.7	27.9	32.1	26.5	0
		National	-	2	2	-	-	8	27	16	28	17	-
	Test	School	0.5	5.6	-	-	-	4.2	11.2	26.5	31.2	20.5	-
		National	-	2	2	-	-	8	27	16	28	17	-
SC	Teacher Assessment	School	0.5	0.9	0	0	0	3.7	13.1	38.8	29.4	13.6	0
		National	-	-	-	-	-	8	29	28	21	14	-
	Test	School	0.5	1.9	-	-	-	1.4	10.3	38.8	33.6	13.6	-
		National	-	1	0	-	-	8	26	32	19.2	13.8	-

Percentage of pupils achieving at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either Welsh or English			
According to teacher assessment		through test	
In the school:	68	In the school:	68
In Wales:	53	In Wales:	50

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

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

W - Pupils working towards level 1

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

GCSE, ELQ (1) and Equivalent Achievements

Number of pupils aged 15 who were on roll in January 2002: 202
 Percentage of pupils aged 15 who:

	Entered 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	Achieved GCSE and vocational qualifications equivalent to five or more GCSE grades		Core Subjects Indicator (2)	Average GCSE/GNVQ points score per pupil
		A* to C	A* to G		
School 2001/02	98	68	98	51	52
LEA Area 2001/02	88	52	87	35	40
Wales 2001/02	86	50	85	37	39
School 00/01/02	94	66	94	51	50
School 99/00/01	93	67	93	53	50

	Entered at least one short course, ELQ (1), GCSE short course, GCSE or equivalent	Entered one or more GCSE or equivalent	Achieved GCSE and vocational qualifications equivalent to		Achieved at least 1 GCSE short course - grades A* to G or equivalent	Achieved no graded GCSE or equivalent	Achieved one or more ELQ(1) only	Did not achieve a GCSE GCSE short course ELQ (1) or equivalent
			One or more GCSEs at grades A* to C	A* to G				
School 2001/02	100	100	89	100	41	0	0	0
LEA Area 2001/02	97	94	76	93	31	7	3	5
Wales 2001/02	97	94	74	92	42	8	3	5
School 00/01/02	98	97	87	97	40	3	1	2
School 99/00/01	97	96	86	96	41	4	1	3

GCSE results in selected subjects

Percentage of pupils aged 15 who:

	Entered any GCSE in	Achieved a GCSE grade		Entered any GCSE in	Achieved a GCSE grade	
		A* to C in	A* to G in		A* to C in	A* to G in
English (2)				Welsh (2)		
School 2001/02	98	69	98	94	73	94
LEA Area 2001/02	89	55	88	58	40	57
Wales 2001/02	89	55	88	63	36	61
School 00/01/02	96	64	96	91	72	91
School 99/00/01	95	66	95	91	71	91

	Entered any GCSE in			Achieved a GCSE grade		
	A* to C in	A* to G in		A* to C in	A* to G in	
	Mathematics (2)			Science (2)		
School 2001/02	99	64	99	99	61	99
LEA Area 2001/02	90	46	88	90	46	89
Wales 2001/02	90	45	86	89	48	87
School 00/01/02	94	63	94	96	61	96
School 99/00/02	91	64	90	96	63	95

(1) Entry Level Qualification

(2) For information about which syllabuses are included in each subject area see Notes for Guidance.

GCE A level/AVCE or AS level ASVCE equivalent achievements (1)

Number of pupils aged 17 who were on roll in January 2002: 68

Number of pupils aged 17 who were entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations/AVCE or AS/ASVCE equivalent: 62

Percentage of pupils aged 17 entered for 2 or more A level examinations/AVCE or AS/ASVCE equivalent who achieved a points score of:

	0	1 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 14	15 to 19	20 to 24	25 to 29	30 or more
School 2001/02	0	0	5	3	13	31	29	19
LEA Area 2001/02	0	4	15	18	15	17	14	18
Wales 2001/02	1	3	11	18	17	18	13	19

Percentage of pupils aged 17 entered for 2 or more A level examinations/AVCE or AS/ASVCE equivalent who achieved 2 or more A level examinations or equivalent at grades:

	A-C	A-E	Average score per candidate Entering 2 or more A levels/AVCE or AS/ASVCE equivalent
School 2001/02	92	100	24
LEA Area 2001/02	64	95	20
Wales 2001/02	66	94	20

Number of pupils aged 17 who were entered for fewer than 2 GCE A level examinations/AVCE or AS/ASVCE equivalent: 3

Percentage of the pupils aged 17 entered for fewer than 2 A level examinations/AVCE or AS/ASVCE equivalent who achieved a points score of:

	0 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 15	Average score per candidate
School 2001/02	33	67	0	5
LEA Area 2001/02	72	26	3	3
Wales 2001/02	73	23	4	3

(1) Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) and Advanced Subsidiary Vocational Certificate of Education (ASVCE).

D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection

Sixteen inspectors spent a total of 58 days inspecting in the school and 277 lessons or parts of lessons were observed. In addition, a cross-section of registration periods, morning services and extra-curricular activities were observed. Interviews were conducted with members of the SMT, representatives of the governing body, heads of department and heads of year together with members of staff, including ancillary staff with specific responsibilities.

A cross-section of the work of able, middle ability and lower ability pupils from Y7 to Y13 was examined. Additional examples of pupils' work were also observed during visits to classrooms, workshops and laboratories. The pupils' work was regularly discussed with them and formal interviews were held with pupils chosen to represent the different years.

All the documentation presented by the school before and during the inspection was analysed. Pre-inspection meetings were arranged with the school's SMT, with the staff, the governing body and the parents. 39 parents attended the meeting, and 201 parent questionnaires were returned together with 14 letters, and 3 comments by parents on questionnaires.

E. Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team

NAME	ROLE	Sections of the report	SUBJECTS (section 7)
Gareth W. Roberts	Registered Inspector	1, 2, 3.1, 3.2, 5.1, 6.2, 8.2, Appendix	Information technology, Modern languages
Griff Ch. Morris	Lay Inspector	4.2, 4.3, 5.7, 6.3	
Gareth Davies Jones	Core Team	5.3, 5.6	Welsh, Drama
Heddwyn Evans	Core Team	4.1, 5.5, 6.3	Religious education, PSE
S. Glyn Davies	Core Team	5.2	Science
Haydn Davies	Core Team	5.4, 6.1	Physical education
Catherine James	Core Team	5.6	English, Media studies
Peredur Francis	Core Team	8.1	Mathematics
G. Briwnant-Jones			Design & technology, Child development, Catering
Alun Morgan			History, Sociology
Elwyn Bowyer			Geography
Sian Owen			Art
Alan W. Jones			Music
Elen Roberts			Italian
Richard Williams			Business studies, Economics
Mansel Davies			Motor Vehicle Studies, Agriculture
Alan Evans			Contribution to science
Gerran Thomas			Contribution to science

The inspectors wish to thank the school governors, head, staff, pupils and parents for their willing co-operation during the inspection.