

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

***COMIN JUNIOR SCHOOL***

***Trecynon***

***Aberdare***

***School Number: 674-2107***

***Date of Inspection: 2-5 December 2002***

***by***

***Mr Ben Wigley***

***Registered Inspector***

***Date: 24 January 2003***

***Under Estyn Contract Number: CT71/02P***

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### **CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES**

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

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

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

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

### **GRADE DESCRIPTIONS**

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

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



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## **1. CONTEXT**

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

Comin Junior School is located in the village of Trecynon in the Cynon valley and the intake is mainly from the areas of Robertstown and Gadlys. The infant school shares the same campus linked by a piece of land and until recently both schools had the same governing body. The school building dates from 1849 when it was a separate girls and boys primary school. Access to the first floor is via two external stone stairways that are exposed to the vagaries of the climate.

The number on roll has fallen and is now 200 pupils compared with 217 at the time of the last inspection. Last year the number on roll stood at 232 pupils but it fell substantially when the school lost one of its bus routes. Pupils attending the school come from a mixture of council owned homes, rented homes and privately owned homes. The nature of the intake is said to be both sizeably advantaged and disadvantaged.

Twenty-two per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. Fifty-one pupils are on the register of special educational needs (SEN) and this represents 25 per cent of the school population. No pupils have statements of SEN. One pupil was excluded from the school in the last twelve months. The family has since left the area.

The educational priorities identified in the School Development Plan (SDP) for this academic year are to:

- raise the standards in English, mathematics and science;
- revise and update spelling throughout the school;
- review the non-core subjects;
- improve the school building to provide a more stimulating environment;
- review and develop information and communications technology (ICT) throughout the school and
- address the key issues emerging from the inspection.

## **2. MAIN FINDINGS**

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

Comin Junior School is making steady progress in raising the standards in the pupils' achievements. All who are involved in the life and work of the school share the same hopes and values and they work together well as a team. The school has

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improved and has successfully raised standards since the last inspection in the core and foundation subjects.

Pupils' standards of achievement in the National Curriculum (NC) subjects and religious education are:

<b>Subject</b>	<b>KS2</b>
English	Good
Mathematics	Good
Science	Good
Welsh second language	Satisfactory
Design and technology	Satisfactory
Information technology	Satisfactory
History	Satisfactory
Geography	Good
Art	Satisfactory
Music	Good
Physical education	Good
Religious education	Very good

- In the use of the key skills across the curriculum, standards are good in listening and satisfactory in speaking, reading, writing, the application of number and in ICT.
- In the national curriculum assessment (NCA) tests in 2002, the percentages of pupils attaining level 4 and above were above the national and local education authority (LEA) averages in English and science. In mathematics, the percentages of pupils attaining level 4 or above were the same as the national averages and slightly below the LEA average. There is little perceptible difference in the performance of girls and boys. Over the last five years, apart from a slight dip in one year, the results have significantly improved.
- The provision of pupils' spiritual, moral and social is very good and their cultural development is good. Acts of collective worship are approached with due reverence. Pupils actively and movingly participate in school assemblies and there is often a reflective focus to the services. Assemblies also contribute effectively to develop pupils' moral and social sensitivities. Pupils' cultural development and their awareness of cultural diversity is good and is a feature in geography, art, music and, in particular, religious education.
- The standard of pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are interested in their work and are good at sustaining their concentration. The school, both in its academic and pastoral programmes, emphasises the importance of inclusion, with the pupils given every opportunity to have access to all facets in the life and work of the school. As a result, relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils' achievements are celebrated on a regular basis in assembly and daily in class by using the merit system. Attendance

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levels at the school are satisfactory and the school is constantly setting targets to improve the levels of attendance. Punctuality is, however, a problem for a minority of pupils.

- The guidance and support given to pupils with SEN is good. Pupils make good progress in developing their skills of literacy and numeracy. The learning tasks set in the mainstream classes and when withdrawn are appropriate, relevant and purposeful. The individual education plans (IEPs) are specific to the pupils and are regularly reviewed with parents being fully involved.
- The quality of curriculum provision is good in English, mathematics and science. It is broad, relevant and balanced. Cross-curricular aspects are good in design technology, history, geography, music, art and religious education as are references to the Welsh dimension and to cultural similarities and differences.
- In the 70 lessons or sessions seen the quality of teaching is good or better in 64 per cent, including four per cent that is very good and satisfactory in the remaining 36 per cent. The main features of the good or better teaching includes, good subject knowledge, especially in the core subjects; the use of a range of activities using good quality resources; constant encouragement given to pupils and good questioning techniques. Where the teaching is satisfactory and sound, minor shortcomings include, introductions that are too long; lesson objectives not always clearly presented and some work is not always set at the right level of challenge.
- The procedures for assessment, recording and reporting, especially in the core subjects, are good. Pupils' work is regularly marked with positive and helpful comments given, though occasionally a minority of comments do not always express what pupils have to do to improve. Pupils' portfolios are used by the teachers, to standardise the work and to check on what has been covered. They are of good quality. The annual reports to parents are satisfactory in the core subjects. However, the comments made in the non-core subjects lack sufficient specific judgements to be of positive academic benefit since the comments mostly deal with pupils' attitudes and interests.
- The school's arrangements for partnership with parents, schools and other institutions are satisfactory and are good with the community. A Home-School Agreement is in place and some parents assist with extra-curricular activities. There is, however, no Parent Teacher or Friends of the School Associations. The school prospectus is not particularly user-friendly and as with the governors' annual report to

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parents lacks some basic statutory requirements. The school supports local charities and makes many visits both locally and further afield. Visiting speakers are welcomed in the school. Good transition arrangements generally exist with the infant and secondary schools. Curriculum links in the foundation subjects are as yet underdeveloped between the infant and junior schools. There are good links, however with the science department at the Boys High School. Transition arrangements are to be reviewed as part of the SDP.

- The school's links with industry are good. Pupils visit local companies and learn about the environment in terms of re-cycling and waste disposal. Pupils visit other companies as part of their projects such as a power station, supermarket and the local park. A grant from one local company was used to create the Millennium garden and other companies provide financial support for school trips. Pupils recently took part in a young engineer's competition to develop teamwork and problem solving skills.
- The quality of staffing and learning resources is good but the accommodation is only satisfactory. The teacher assistants and other support staff offer effective support though there is still room for closer liaison between the class teachers and support staff in planning lessons. The layout of the school building does not make for easy communication but the use of the telephone and electronic messaging helps to offset possible problems. The two external staircases are still hazardous despite having handrails and are dangerous in wet weather conditions. Learning resources are generally good though reading books are well worn and library books are limited in number.
- The quality of the school's self evaluation document, namely the SDP is good. The SDP identifies clear objectives and sets appropriate goals and challenging targets. The action plan following the last inspection has been well addressed though the monitoring of the teaching and learning in the foundation subjects has yet to be fully implemented.
- The headteacher is maintaining a clear direction to school developments and initiatives and the quality of leadership and the efficiency with which the school is run by the headteacher and the senior management team is good. All staff have worthwhile job descriptions and fully appreciate their respective roles in relation to their academic and pastoral responsibilities. Communication in the school is effective and all school policies are reviewed and revised regularly. The governing body takes a keen interest in the life and work of the school. All members have specific responsibilities and are involved in ratifying subject

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schemes of work and all school policies. The finance sub-committee of the governing body meets regularly to audit expenditure and to ensure that the pupils are the direct recipients of any new spending. The school offers good value for money.

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

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

Pupils' standards of achievement in the 70 lessons seen are good in 58 per cent and satisfactory in 42 per cent. In the last inspection report, the standards were satisfactory in 79 per cent of the work seen and unsatisfactory in the remainder. The quality of the pupils' achievement in this inspection is significantly better and represents a substantial improvement.

- Standards of pupils' achievement are very good in religious education and good in English, mathematics, science, geography, music and physical education. In Welsh as a second language, design and technology, information technology, history and art, standards are satisfactory with some good features in aspects of the work in design and technology and art.
- In the NCA tests in 2002, the percentages of pupils achieving level 4 and above in English and science are above the national averages and above the LEA averages. In mathematics, the percentages of pupils achieving level 4 and above are the same as the national averages and slightly below the LEA average.
- The school has subsequently undertaken a careful comparative analysis and produced an annual review of the performance data. When compared with the levels of attainment last year, there has been a 2.1 per cent improvement in English, a 3.4 per cent improvement in mathematics and a significant 19.6 per cent improvement in science.
- When compared with last year's NCA results the core indicator also shows an increase of 10.8 per cent. On the core indicator, boys outperformed the girls by 3.5 per cent and in the previous year girls outperformed the boys by 4.8 per cent. Further analysis shows that in the 2002 NCA tests in English, 75 per cent of the girls attained level 4 compared with 82.1 per cent of the boys. In mathematics, the figures are 67.9 per cent and 71.4 per cent respectively. In science, 96.4 per cent of the girls achieved level 4 compared to 92.9 per cent of the boys. At level 5, however, there were no differences in the performance of girls and

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boys in English and mathematics. In science, 46.4 per cent of boys achieved level 5 compared to 35.7 per cent of girls.

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

Pupils are achieving good standards in listening and satisfactory standards in speaking, reading, writing, the application of number and in the use of ICT across the curriculum.

- Pupils' listening skills are generally good and are well developed in literacy sessions and across the curriculum. Whole-class discussions and paired and group activities develop pupils' skills. They listen regularly to teachers and to one another. Pupils obey instructions and listen carefully to what they have to do. A small minority of pupils are, from time to time, restless and inattentive and are not always immediately reminded of their distraction in class.
- Speaking skills are satisfactorily promoted across the curriculum. Class discussions provide some opportunities for pupils to express their views, especially in answering questions. They only have limited opportunities, however, to express and develop their ideas and opinions in alternative ways or by being encouraged to offer explanations in more than one way.
- Pupils develop satisfactory reading skills and use them purposefully when they investigate and research in science, geography and, at times, religious education and art. In using CD-ROMs, pupils are involved in reading texts and following instructions but their use and application across the curriculum is inconsistent. A range of worksheets in subject areas such as science, history and geography, encourage readers to read short extracts of texts. Also when reading reference books from the school library, pupils extend and improve their reading skills. Opportunities for pupils to read widely from a range of extended texts books are, limited.
- The application of pupils' writing skills across the curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils write up their accounts neatly about their experiments in science, their model making in design and technology and the information they accumulate in history, geography and religious education. In history, geography and religious education, in some classes, pupils sometimes write their personal views and use their creative skills well and pupils' written work shows signs of higher achievement. Pupils also use their knowledge of technical terms correctly and accurately in their written work.

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- Some use is made of the application of number in science, design technology, information technology, geography, physical and religious education but it is neither as regular nor as consistent as it could be not only across the curriculum but from class to class. It is a developing feature and in ICT is at an early stage of development.
  - The use of ICT across the curriculum is often inconsistent. Some good isolated examples of the use of the computer are seen, for example, in art when pupils produce A Warhol type painting effects or in science when collating results or in mathematics when creating various types of graphs. Overall, ICT remains relatively underdeveloped. The school has insufficient CD-ROMs for all NC subject areas.
  - Pupils' personal and social development is good. Teachers take every opportunity in lessons and across the curriculum to develop pupils' perceptions about their personal and social well being and about the importance of healthy living. Pupils are beginning to develop their problem solving and investigative skills. However, they are not yet consistently applied across the curriculum.

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

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

The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development; and pupils' cultural development is good.

- Pupils' spiritual awareness is developed through whole-school and class assemblies. The sessions are reverent and the themes appropriate, giving pupils very good opportunities to reflect on spiritual and moral issues.
- Pupils make a very good contribution to assembly, particularly noteworthy being the whole-school assembly led by Y3 pupils during the inspection. There was a warmth and a sense of community, on this occasion, with most staff being present. There is, however, insufficient use made of Welsh during the Welsh assembly.
- Once a week school assemblies focus on celebrating pupils' achievements and help to promote the positive attitudes prevailing throughout the school. Statutory requirements for collective worship are fully met.
- Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils are very good. Pupils are developing a clear sense of right and wrong and alongside they also realise the importance of taking responsibility for one's own actions.

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- Pupils respond enthusiastically to teachers' requests. Heads of Houses and prefects are given appropriate responsibilities that they carry out sensibly and with a sense of pride.
  - Pupils are extremely polite. They know that they are not to interrupt conversations; they open doors and let adults pass first. They are very welcoming to visitors and yet display a sense of respect.
  - Pupils support various charitable organisations and visit the local old peoples home. They communicate electronically with schools overseas. These initiatives are developing a good sense of social awareness within and beyond pupils' own community.
  - Pupils benefit from a range of cultural experiences, for example, when studying foreign artists. There is scope, however, to extend pupils' experiences further by visiting theatres or attending concerts. Cultural and religious diversity are met in a number of curriculum subject areas such as religious education and in class displays. Pupils learn to appreciate similarities and differences as well as developing a respect of other's traditions and way of life.

#### **4.2 Behaviour and Attitudes**

The overall quality of pupils' behaviour is good.

- Pupils display good attitudes to learning and this has a positive impact on their standards of achievement and the progress that they make throughout the school. The school has high expectations and pupils feel very much valued as individuals.
- The pastoral support programmes, including circle time and class discussions on personal and emotional development within, for instance, English and religious education, are very effective. Pupils are involved in preparing their own classroom rules that are displayed in a prominent place in the classrooms.
- A comprehensive anti-bullying policy is in place. Any incident of bullying when it occurs is dealt with very effectively. There was no evidence found of any sexist, racist or any other unacceptable discriminatory behaviour during the inspection. The weekly merit assembly is effectively used to show teachers' appreciation for the good standards achieved by the pupils as well as the effort they put into their class work and homework.
- Pupils are very friendly to visitors and are always anxious to assist them in any way possible. They take on responsibilities such as helping to administer the school

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library and older pupils assist staff with supervision at break and lunch times.

- The noise level is sometimes excessive in the school refectory during lunch-time and additional training for the supervisors would make their supervision more effective.
- There has been one instance of temporary exclusion recently and this was dealt with in accordance with statutory requirements.

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### **4.3 Attendance**

Attendance overall is satisfactory.

- During the last academic year attendance levels were recorded as 90.2 per cent (Spring 2002), 89.85 per cent (Summer 2002) and 93.4 per cent (Autumn 2001). The levels for the same three terms in 1999 were on average one per cent lower; levels have therefore improved.
- The unsatisfactory level of attendance in the summer was mainly due to holidays taken by parents in term time. Most parents seek to obtain permission from the headteacher to take their child from school and the majority do not exceed the statutory 10 days allowed.
- Registers are marked at the start of the school day and after lunch. They are properly coded and past records show that there is very little unauthorised absence.
- The school expects at least a 90 per cent attendance rate. Certificates of attendance are given to encourage pupils but greater use could be made of these to encourage pupils to come to school regularly and on time.
- Some lateness was observed during the inspection. Latecomers report to the office and a late book is kept.
- Where attendance is a cause for concern, the school works very closely with the Education Welfare Officer.
- The data entry and monitoring of attendance is very good.
- The school meets National Assembly guidelines for the recording and reporting of attendance.

## **5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **5.1 Teaching**

The quality of teaching in the 70 lessons seen is good or better in 64 per cent including four per cent that is very good and satisfactory in the remaining 36 per cent. In the previous report, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 81 per cent of the lessons and only occasionally good. There are far more lessons deemed to be good or better than in the last report and this represents a real improvement.

Where the teaching is good or better the main features include:

- good knowledge and understanding of NC, especially in the core subjects and in religious education, geography, music and physical education;

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- clear guidance and instructions given to pupils based on good lesson planning and maintaining a good pace to the work;
  - making use of a range of activities with good quality resources to support pupils' learning;
  - lucid explanations given to pupils that were helpful to them and using good models of language appropriate to the pupils;
  - establishing very good relationships with pupils that is supportive of sensitive suggestions made by the pupils;
  - giving encouragement to pupils to discuss and to express themselves and to develop independence in pupils' learning activities;
  - using good questioning techniques by means of open-ended questions especially during plenary sessions at the beginning and end of lessons.

Where the teaching is satisfactory the minor shortcomings are:

- somewhat lengthy introductions and consequently a drop in the pace of lessons;
- lack of appropriate challenge in the class tasks set for pupils;
- the work given is not always set at different levels of difficulty to cater for the broad range of pupils' ability;
- the objectives of the lesson are not made sufficiently clear to pupils;
- a small number of pupils are not reminded of their distraction.

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

Overall, the standard of assessment and recording is good.

- The policy for assessing, recording and reporting is in place and is comprehensive. Each pupil has an individual record that follows him or her throughout the school. There are also work folders containing annotated samples of work for the three core subjects that the pupils complete every each term.
- In addition, there is a school portfolio of pupils' work covering a range of ability and graded according to NC criteria. Portfolios are used purposefully by staff to standardise the work and to indicate levels of expectations.
- The marking of pupils' work is both regular and accurate, though occasionally comments do not express what pupils have to do to improve.

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- Arrangements for assessing pupils with SEN supported by the School Action and School Action Plus programmes are good.
  - The school carefully analyses the results of NCA tests and other external tests and uses them purposefully to improve pupils' performance and to ensure that the requirement of the equal opportunity policy is observed. Teacher assessments do not always match test scores and the school is aware it needs to refine their accuracy in the future.
  - Formal written progress reports for parents are issued twice a year. The reporting in the core subjects is informative and meets statutory requirements. However, the comments on the non-core subjects are not sufficiently specific or detailed and tend to record pupils' interests and attitudes rather than the standards achieved.

### **5.3 Curriculum**

The quality of curriculum provision is good and is an improvement on the last inspection report where the quality was said to be imbalanced with inadequate time given to some of the foundation subjects.

- The curriculum covers all statutory requirements including NC subjects and religious education in accordance with the LEA locally agreed syllabus.
- Schemes of work for all NC subjects have been modified and reviewed regularly. An external agency has provided support and guidance and the school has trawled a number of other agencies in an attempt to keep abreast of recent developments. Schemes are mostly planned on a year by year basis and are in line with the short, medium and long-term curriculum planning. The schemes are of good quality and within them, are numerous references to other common requirements such as the development of key skills and the *Cwricwlwm Cymreig*.
- Even though references to the use of key skills are present in schemes of work, the planning for the application of key skills across the curriculum is at an early stage of development and is uneven and inconsistent. The school has no means at the moment of monitoring this aspect of curriculum provision.
- The time allocation for all NC subjects is reasonable. Appropriate changes were made in the allocation recently to accommodate the provision of literacy and numeracy sessions and they are proving to be effective in raising pupils' standards of achievement.
- The loss of one teacher has meant that the classes were reduced at the beginning of this academic year to seven,

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including one mixed age class comprising Y3 and Y4. Flexible curriculum arrangements between this mixed age class and the other Y3 and Y4 class, where pupils move between classes for specific purposes, is an effective provision and pupils are making good progress.

- The homework policy is well structured and for older pupils takes account of the homework arrangements for Y7 pupils at the secondary schools. Although homework is not compulsory, the majority of pupils, including pupils with SEN, enjoy receiving both formal and informal work to complete at home. The curriculum for pupils with SEN is thoughtfully arranged and is of good quality and pupils have access to the full range of NC subjects.
- The personal, social and health education programme is a good cross-curricular provision and class teachers record aspects of personal and social education as part of their lesson planning. The policy and programme for personal and social education are of good quality and are a reflection of the ACCAC (Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales) guidance and framework.
- Other subjects appear as cross-curricular aspects, especially design technology, history, geography, music, art and religious education and the *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is another prominent cross-curricular provision. Extra-curricular activities are well attended and help to extend and enhance pupils' learning experiences and develop their personal and social awareness.

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

The standard of personal and educational guidance given to pupils is good throughout the school.

- All members of staff know their pupils well. Pupils are treated equally and there is good awareness of the needs of pupils with SEN.
- Pupils who benefit from the school's well-planned additional language support are carefully timetabled to ensure that they do not miss out on the plenary sessions for the whole class. Great care is also taken to minimise any disruption to mainstream lessons.
- Effective use is made of class circle time and the 'hot seating' technique helps pupils to address moral and social personal problems and to reflect on possible solutions.
- In addition to the healthy eating programme, delivered as part of the science curriculum and the sensitivity to other viewpoints or religious stances, pupils benefit from the

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school's programme of talks on such topics as drug abuse, given by adults.

- Teachers show concern for the welfare of pupils and constantly raise pupils' awareness of potential dangers in the school's narrow hall and the hazardous external stairway.
- There are regular visits to the school by external agencies such as the police, accident prevention officers and race relations personnel. The Education Business Partnership (EBP) gives valuable assistance in funding to ensure that no pupils are excluded from any additional educational and social visits.
- Parents of pupils who require support with literacy and numeracy benefit greatly from a programme offered to them at the school by lecturers at the local further education college who work closely and intensively with a small group of pupils and their parents.
- The school has appropriate procedures for child protection with the headteacher as the 'named person'. All members of staff are aware of the appropriate procedures. The school fully complies with National Assembly for Wales requirements.

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

Provision for pupils with SEN is good.

- The school's policy for pupils with SEN is comprehensive and effective and its documentation reflects the requirements of the recently revised Code of Practice.
- The SEN register, giving yearly details of pupils receiving support, is regularly updated.
- Fifty-one pupils benefit from the School Action or School Action Plus ten programmes.
- There are no pupils with statements of SEN. One pupil, however, receives support in lieu of a statement.
- Individual education plans are drawn up by the SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) in liaison with the class teacher and they are of good quality and relate directly to the needs of the pupils.
- When withdrawn, pupils make good progress in their language work. They build up a good knowledge of phonics and immediately make better progress in their reading and they enjoy writing activities including spelling new words.

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- The school employs a language support teacher for one and a half days a week and effectively provides intensive language and numeracy support for short periods of about 20 minutes.
  - Pupils with SEN are reviewed twice a year. Meetings are arranged for parents to discuss with the class teacher, pupils who are on the School Action programme. Parents of pupils on the School Action Plus programme meet regularly with the school's SENCO.
  - The school benefits from regular attendance of an LEA specialist teacher who gives extra support to pupils with specific learning difficulties.
  - The support teacher assistants provide positive support to individuals and to small groups within the mainstream classes.
  - There are good links with outside agencies such as the educational psychologist, the Child Family Centre and the Health Service.
  - The school has adopted a whole-school approach to SEN and ensures that all pupils are included in the whole curriculum. In mathematics, classes have been arranged to facilitate the best possible support for the less and more able pupils, with flexibility of movement from one ability group to another, as required.

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

Links with parents, schools and other institutions are satisfactory; links with the community are good.

- The school prospectus is not set out in a colourful and inviting way and as with the annual report to the governing body lacks some basic statutory details. Only three parents attended the last governors annual meeting.
- Newsletters are very informative and give parents advance dates and other information about school life. Parents have an opportunity, twice a year, to meet the teachers formally to discuss their child's academic and pastoral progress. In addition, parents of older pupils come into school for a meeting about the NCA assessment tests. During the inspection however, few parents came into school to talk to teachers informally.
- A Home-School Agreement is in place and parents are encouraged to sign it at the parent's evening.
- A few parents help with after school sport and with school trips, but none help in the classroom. There is no Parents Teachers or a Friend's of the School Association.

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- Some work has been done to assist parents to help their children with homework and a computer course has been run for parents in association with a local college.
  - The school has good links with the community. Pupils support local charities and visit the children's hospice and a nearby old peoples home. In addition, they visit local churches, chapels, the local library and museums in connection with their studies. Visiting speakers also come into school. Such links are specifically linked to curriculum areas and are of benefit to the pupils' learning.
  - Particularly strong links exist between the school and the emergency services. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about the work that is done in and for the community.
  - Good transition arrangements are in place with the infant school. The older infant pupils attend assemblies and spend a day in the junior school. However, the two schools do not liaise closely enough on the foundation subjects of the NC.
  - Links are also in place with the two high schools and junior pupils spend a day prior to transfer at the schools. There are limited curriculum links in place, although there are good links with the science department at the boys' high school.
  - The school's policy concerning transition in both key stages is to be reviewed as part of the SDP.
  - The school has links with a local college but there is no formal partnership with any teacher training departments.

## **5.7 Partnership with Industry**

The school's partnership with industry is good.

- Pupils have a good opportunity to learn about the environment, waste disposal and recycling by working closely with a local landfill company. They visit the plant, carry out simple experiments and learn about the effects of different pollutants.
- Older pupils visit a nuclear power station in connection with their study on electricity. Younger pupils visit the local supermarket and make bread and biscuits as part of their study on healthy eating. These links are very beneficial and help build further pupils' understanding of the topics studied.
- With a significant grant from a local company, the school's Millennium garden designed by the pupils, provides a quiet area with seating.

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- Good use is made of the local country park. The warden visits the school to talk to pupils and subsequently pupils visit the park to learn more about trees and forests and, in particular, sustainable development.
  - Financial and other assistance, for example, transport for school trips, is provided by the local EBP. In addition, pupils took part in a Young Engineers competition to develop teamwork and problem-solving skills.
  - Teachers have not undertaken any placements in industry.

## **6. MANAGEMENT**

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

The quality of self-evaluation is good and the school has identified a good range of objectives for improvement. The plans identified in the SDP are being implemented and evaluated but the process of monitoring is at an early stage and its quality currently is satisfactory.

- The headteacher has been in post for eleven years and this is his second inspection. Since the last inspection the headteacher, staff and governing body have responded positively in its action plan and has addressed the question of how to raise standards and these are embedded in the SDP and within the regular reviews of subject schemes of work.
- In analysing the NCA results over a period of five years, judgements are made in terms of measurable data and the headteacher and staff are able to identify strengths and weaknesses as well as improving the standards over time. The analysis also contains detailed information about the achievement of boys compared to girls and is part of the school's arrangements for monitoring any potential inclusion issue.
- The SDP represents the headteacher's evaluation statement and signifies the whole-school approach, involving all staff and the governing body in assessing outcomes and performances, based on clear targets and realistic criteria.
- The SDP covers three years and it identifies clear goals, the actions to be taken, by whom and when, the resource implications, progress reviews and any further action if required. The plan sets appropriate priorities and challenging targets to help raise the standards of pupils' achievements.
- Since the last inspection there has been a good in-service training (INSET) programme to develop staff expertise and

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all staff are required to disseminate to other staff the information received.

- The governors have undertaken an audit of their areas of interest and needs and also to help improve liaison arrangements between governors and the subject leaders. This has resulted in the identification of targets for each member of the governing body.
- The governing body has not set targets for the headteacher. This decision was based on a consensus of waiting and seeing what this inspection identifies as issues. There is, however, a committee for performance management and all members have been recently trained. The policy for performance management refers to purposes and outcomes, to an annual performance management cycle for all staff, to an annual timetable for review and to the arrangements for monitoring progress and improvement.
- Subject leaders in the core subjects have improved their monitoring arrangements since the time of the last inspection, they keep samples of work and at staff meetings, moderate and level pupils' work and retain the work in the record of achievement portfolios. Policies identifying the characteristics of good teaching and learning as they relate to the raising of standards were also drawn up as a result. The monitoring arrangements for the foundation subjects are, however, not yet fully in place for all subjects and remain underdeveloped.

## **6.2 Leadership and Efficiency**

The quality of leadership and the efficiency with which the school is run are good.

- The headteacher, despite having suffered from a period of prolonged illness, has very successfully maintained a clear direction to the work of the school. He, the deputy headteacher and the senior management team have ensured that the progress made and the quality of the standards achieved by pupils are subject to steady and regular improvement. He has the full support of the staff and governors, who are committed to the vision statement in the SDP which is to provide pupils with a comfortable, secure and safe environment and with opportunities to become life long independent learners.
- All staff are clear about their roles and they work well as a team with appropriate expectations. They share a common consensus about the important values that relate to pupils' academic, personal and social growth. The school aims and objectives are closely related to the needs of all pupils of a very broad range of ability and they are effectively implemented. All staff know their pupils well.

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- Communication in the school is effective and the various handbooks and other relevant policies contribute towards the smooth running of the school as well as providing good guidance on day-to-day matters.
  - School policies are regularly reviewed and updated. All have been seen and accepted by the governing body. More recently policies relating to equal opportunities, racial equality, inclusion and personal and social education indicate that the school is keeping abreast with recent initiatives.
  - There is a policy for the *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* and for the use of key skills across the curriculum. The headteacher and staff take every step to ensure that the ethnic minority of pupils are very well integrated into the life and work of the school and that all have access to the NC subjects, including in some cases, religious education.
  - The governing body takes a keen interest in the life and work of the school and its members have been allocated specific responsibilities covering academic and pastoral matters. Governing body sub-groups cover curriculum, administrative and financial matters and more recently performance management.
  - Regular consultation occurs between the governing body and the headteacher to ensure that expenditure benefits the pupils directly, and, in particular, providing the extra support for pupils with SEN. Good procedures are in place to secure the best value for money and to anticipate any staffing losses that may occur because of a fall in roll.
  - The school secretary provides very good support to the school. The kitchen staff and the caretaker and cleaners also contribute towards the day-to-day smooth running of the school.

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

The quality of the staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory. The school is appropriately staffed with eight experienced teachers, excluding the headteacher. There is also a language support teacher financed by the school for a day and a half per week.

- A teacher's aide gives valuable support to a number of classes during the week; two special support assistants also work with individuals and small groups and there is a full-time school secretary. Class teachers and support staff work closely together but there is still room for closer liaison between the teaching and support staff in the planning of lessons.
- In the weekly staff meetings there is regular sharing of information obtained on county and other courses.

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- Good use is made of the available accommodation with the resource room and small language support room helping to enhance pupils' curricular provision. Displays in corridors and classrooms are of good quality and are used effectively to exhibit pupils' work.
  - The geographical layout of the school does not make for easy communication but these difficulties have been surmounted by use of telephone and electronic messaging on the intranet computer system.
  - The condition of the external stairway is hazardous especially on wet days and potentially poses a danger to pupils and staff.
  - There is a staff development policy in place. Priority is given to courses in the core subjects. Teachers also attend courses that offer personal development as well as specific school curricular needs.
  - All staff have completed their New Opportunities Fund (NOF) training in ICT although only one member has received training on the use of the interactive white board.
  - The school functions very smoothly on a day-to-day basis and the staff are very familiar with all agreed routines.
  - There is good provision of mathematics and sciences resources and for most of the foundation subjects. Resources in religious education are very good. English text books are well worn and library books are limited in number. Some of the equipment used in physical education is rather heavy for some of the younger pupils to handle and manoeuvre.

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## 7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

### Standards achieved by pupils

#### English

Pupils achieve good standards in listening, reading and writing and satisfactory standards in speaking.

#### Good features

- Pupils listen attentively and for sustained periods of time during plenary whole-class discussions and when working in pairs and small groups. They listen effectively when listening to stories from the big books and when receiving instructions.
- Pupils' speaking skills are relatively underdeveloped though abler pupils can sustain a conversation and speak competently. Generally, pupils are insufficiently encouraged during class discussions, to express their points of view in alternative ways to help develop their fluency in speaking.
- Able pupils read fluently, with expression and anticipate the text well. All pupils achieve good standards in reading and their chosen reading books appropriately match their different levels of ability. All pupils make good progress and all have a good grasp of punctuation when reading texts.
- Younger pupils have a good understanding of eponyms and use their skills of investigation effectively when looking for information about the origin of eponyms.
- Pupils make good use of poetry and compose poems using similes and metaphors successfully. Many poems relate to their feelings and moods. This is a feature of the work and helps to develop pupils' personal and social awareness in positive ways.
- Pupils understand how people write for different purposes and have a good grasp of the nature of reporting and how journalists use language for maximum effect. They successfully identify the main characteristics of a good report.
- Pupils study the language of interviews and recognise the important features that makes for good reporting.
- Pupils throughout the school have a good understanding of how books are written and what the terms 'author' and 'illustrator' mean. They can correctly distinguish between fiction and non-fiction.
- Older pupils undertake book reviews and edit and re-edit their own texts effectively. They create accurate and well-

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balanced summaries of texts, for instance, dealing with the definition and explanation of dictionaries.

- Pupils study a broad range of literature including works by Charles Dickens and William Shakespeare. Older pupils produce their own concoction of spells based on the witches' spell in Macbeth.
- Pupils written work is generally neat and tidily presented. Able pupils achieve good standards in their spelling. All pupils are becoming more accustomed to looking up spellings in their newly acquired dictionaries but this practice is still not consistently undertaken in all classes.

### **Shortcomings**

- Average and less able pupils' spelling ability is satisfactory.

### **Mathematics**

Standards of pupils' achievement are good in mathematics. This is a significant improvement from the findings of the previous inspection. The progress of most pupils is good and that of the 25 per cent of pupils with SEN is satisfactory.

### **Good features**

- Pupils work well on the whole with decimals, fractions and percentages and many are developing effective strategies for solving problems. They speak with confidence about their work.
- Most pupils have a good understanding of fractions and can calculate these in a variety of ways.
- Most pupils respond well to challenging questions and are able to hypothesise and examine different strategies to arrive at a reasonable solution.
- Younger pupils understand basic fractions very well. They accurately identify three-dimensional objects and can describe and number sides and edges of three-dimensional objects correctly. They can use a measurement tape accurately to measure parts of the human body.
- Pupils have a good understanding of number relationships. They add a series of three digit numbers and work out area and perimeter accurately.
- Older pupils understand the relationship between net and gross weight and relate these to value for money when shopping. They are beginning to understand negative numbers.
- The less able group of older pupils find addition a challenge though some make good progress using number grids.

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They understand factors and that fractions are part of a whole.

- Older pupils in the more able group know their multiplication tables well. They can convert percentages into fractions accurately. They have good understanding of mathematical terms such as 'denominator' and 'nominator'. They are beginning to understand the significance of the decimal point.
- By the end of the key stage, most pupils have a sound understanding of the relationships between decimals, fractions and percentages.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no shortcomings in the lessons seen.

### **Science**

In science, pupils achieve good standards. This shows an improvement on the standards at the last inspection. Most pupils are making good progress.

### **Good features**

- Pupils achieve well in activities that involve predicting, testing, recording and evaluating.
- Good progress is made in the development of investigative skills and pupils record their findings in a systematic way. Most pupils understand the need for accurate recording of observations.
- Pupils use tables and graphs effectively to chart their results.
- Younger pupils have a good understanding of living processes. They describe accurately many of the organs of the human body and understand their functions. They have a good knowledge and understanding of plants and various methods of seed dispersal and they gain first hand experience through visits to the nearby National Park.
- Pupils use a good range of scientific terminology such as, solutions, dissolving and sediment. They successfully undertake a detailed study of friction and air resistance as forces. Pupils make suggestions as to how to meet the requirements for a fair test. They make accurate predictions and test these with well-constructed experiments.
- They accurately measure the distances covered by model cars on various surfaces around the schools and have made a table of the results. They are beginning to establish general principles on forces and friction.

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- Pupils make detailed study of different leaves. They successfully explore the use of roots for absorbing moisture. Most pupils know about different types of evergreen and deciduous trees that grow in Britain. They understand how to use a thermometer to measure temperature and how to read scales when conducting experiments.
  - Older pupils undertake a study of what makes for a balanced diet. They know the different groupings of foods and they understand why they need to eat different types of food to remain healthy.
  - The less able group of older pupils take their own pulse rates before and after play and after resting for a few minutes in the classroom. They carefully explore the reasons why a pulse rate increases during exercise.
  - The more able pupils make a detailed study of human teeth and their functions. They label their diagrams accurately and can correctly describe the functions of the four types. They enthusiastically discuss why various animals have different types of jaw-bones and teeth. In their study of plants, pupils understand the measure of terms such as 'pollination', 'germination' and 'photosynthesis'.

#### **Shortcomings**

- There are no shortcomings in the work seen.

#### **Welsh second language**

In Welsh as a second language, pupils' standards of achievement are satisfactory.

#### **Good features**

- Pupils respond confidently to commands, greetings, instructions and questions and know a range of other language patterns.
- Pupils know how to count to 10 and in some cases beyond and they can identify up to eight colours or more.
- When pupils sing songs in Welsh, they successfully link sentences together in a sequence and singing helps to develop pupils' confidence in their pronunciation and intonation.
- Pupils read mainly from worksheets and write mostly in single sentences. They correctly identify common words and phrases related to the topics about themselves, the family, clothes they wear, their likes and dislikes and other topics, such as the weather and the character of *Bwgan Brain*.

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- When pupils hear and see the language expressed in big books and discussed as a whole class they are able to put words, phrases and sentences into a context to which they can relate. As a result, their progress in reading sentences and putting them together in a sequence is much improved.
  - Pupils generally have a fairly extensive vocabulary and recall familiar phrases accurately.
  - They display confidence in using Welsh phrases incidentally when registering attendance and occasionally across the curriculum.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils' ability to read Welsh texts and to write in paragraphs as well as more extensively, is limited.

### **Design and technology**

Pupils' standards of achievement are satisfactory in design and technology.

#### **Good features**

- Pupils provide their own ideas for designs and select the most appropriate by evaluating alternatives.
- Pupils design cards and a book by using their skills of drawing, testing and calculating two-dimensional aspects effectively and produce working lifting flaps and levers.
- In considering different ways of joining paper, pupils make predictions, record outcomes and evaluate the final product competently.
- Pupils make a range of models including, thumb pots, shakers, desk tidies, pencil cases and older pupils, cars and bridge spans. In every case pupils consider the principles involved.
- Recent work by pupils involves examining yoghurt cartons and evaluating their advertising designs. Pupils devise their own ingredients for yoghurt and can explain their choice and subsequently produce their own design labels.
- Older pupils are involved in making bread and know about the various kinds of bread and their beneficial qualities. As part of their work on food, pupils look carefully at the various fillings available for sandwiches. They choose their favourite fillings. Pupils' choices are recorded and pupils produce good quality frequency charts using the computer.

#### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils' initial and subsequent designs lack the required precision.

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- Pupils' understanding of scale when designing is limited.
  - The quality of the finished product by pupils is only satisfactory.

### **Information technology**

Standards in information technology are satisfactory. This represents an improvement since the last inspection.

#### **Good features**

- The youngest pupils make good basic use of computers including changing from lower to upper case and changing font, colour and styles.
- Pupils effectively produce basic databases using predetermined structures. They add information accurately in database fields.
- Many pupils competently print out their work, delete words and move to new lines using the enter key. They successfully move words around within a document and they know how to correct words using the integral spell check,
- Pupils have their own floppy disk on which to save their ICT work. They reload their work effectively and they complete a self-assessment test to record their competencies.
- Pupils' work is assessed and annotated to indicate the progress made and this record remains with the pupils throughout their school career.
- Pupils use the computer database to prepare bar charts and to present information they gather through surveys.
- Pupils word process their writing for different audiences and develop images using repeating patterns. They write poems on Easter in religious education and word process formal letters. Pupils use bar graphs to illustrate their favourite foods. Pupils develop their understanding of the calculator well and create simple spread sheets.
- Older pupils competently analyse data and ask questions. They are familiar with and know how to use programming control devices, such as the roamer, correctly.
- Pupils use the Internet to search for large databases and to interpret information. They successfully use photographs downloaded from the Internet to enhance their individual projects. Pupils use pictures taken on the school's digital camera to include in their project work.
- Some pupils use e-mails to communicate with their peers, for example, with a school in a contrasting area, as part of their studies in geography. Less able pupils regularly use

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appropriate computer programs for short periods to extend their understanding of language and mathematics.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils do not develop their ICT skills sufficiently across the curriculum.
- Pupils' original compositions using the keyboard are limited though they often copy and second draft their work.

### **History**

In history, pupils' standards of achievement are satisfactory.

### **Good features**

- Younger pupils make good use of personal timelines, using family photographs to consolidate their understanding of chronology.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the housing conditions in the Tudor period.
- Pupils develop a reasonable understanding of buildings from various historical periods when visiting the Museum of Welsh Life.
- Pupils successfully recall how the Celts used to live in houses constructed of wattle and daub and how their life was controlled by a tribal system with local chiefs or king/queen. They know that Queen Boudicca lived nearly 2000 years ago.
- Older pupils make good use of primary historical sources. They enjoy handling household artefacts from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- The use of primary evidence increases pupils' knowledge and understanding of the changes that occur between the childhood of their grandparents and their own period.
- Pupils study the effects of the Second World War on people in Britain. More able pupils extend their knowledge of historical terms. Most understood the meaning of evacuee.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils' understanding of historical enquiry is underdeveloped.
- Pupils' sustained responses to historical questions are limited.
- Some older pupils find the ideas such as change and causation in historical terms difficult to understand.

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## **Geography**

Standards of achievement in geography are good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

### **Good features**

- Pupils have sound knowledge of the local environment and appreciate the decline in industry within their locality. They can recall appropriate geographical terminology such as preservation, diversity and change and apply them accurately.
- Pupils conduct effective enquiries into the central role played by tourism in a contrasting area and its effect on the local economy.
- Pupils gain benefit from relevant fieldwork which gives them first hand information about their two Welsh contrasting areas of study.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the different character of their own locality and the contrasting area of Tenby in Pembrokeshire. They know the route from their area to Tenby.
- Pupils understand how economic change has meant a change in use of seaside Victorian properties. They appreciate what is required of a walled town to protect the population from raids. Pupils are beginning to understand the problem of pollution caused to the environment by oil tanker disasters.
- Older pupils make good use of photographic evidence to find information on local jobs and trades. They can successfully locate businesses and other vital places on the map of Kesharpur in India and use signs and symbols to identify the various buildings correctly. They make good use of photographs to develop their creative skills.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no shortcomings in the work seen.

## **Art**

Standards of pupils' achievement in art are satisfactory with good features in some aspects of the work in reflecting the styles of famous artists.

### **Good features**

- Pupils draw, self-portraits, pencil drawings of the church and brass rubbings of gravestones, as part of their artwork. Their quality is variable.
- Younger pupils when sketching draw squirrels and begin with an outline based on the shape of number six in an attempt to draw using a sense of perspective.

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- Pupils are good at mixing colours to create mood and emulate the paintings of famous artists effectively. Older pupils produce flower designs in the style of Vincent Van Gogh very effectively. Their pencil drawings are detailed and they use pastels to create good textured effects.
  - Pupils successfully mix colours and clippings to imitate the style of famous artists. Older pupils effectively use scissors, paste and various textiles to create weaving patterns on tree twigs. They use their creative skills to produce interesting and imaginative designs.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils' experience of using perspective in their sketches is underdeveloped.
- Pupils use only a limited range of materials thereby unduly narrowing the range of their artistic experiences.

### **Music**

In music, pupils achieve good standards.

#### **Good features**

- Pupils appreciate the opportunity to listen to a wide variety of music. They know about and enjoy music from other cultures, especially from India.
- Pupils perform and are actively involved in creating music in the classroom. Pupils value the opportunity to evaluate their work and that of others so that they know how a performance can be improved. They justify their likes and dislikes.
- When singing, pupils take due note of posture and breathing. They sing a Jewish Hanukkah festival song with gusto. They confidently use the electronic white board to play their untuned instruments and to apply the correct beat.
- Pupils have an expanding knowledge of musical terms such as 'faster', 'slower', 'higher' 'lower' and 'louder' and 'quieter'. They understand that they can represent aspects of tempo, pitch and dynamics.
- Younger pupils clap various rhythms accurately. They successfully sustain a strong beat.
- Pupils recognise rhythm notation and distinguish between higher and lower pitch on bar chimes confidently. They make a good response to the challenge of how to find the difference between minor and major keys. They perform to the accompaniment of a pre-recorded tape, adding a drone and producing special effects for the first beats of a bar.

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- Pupils respond to music in different formats such as dance, paintings and imaginative writing. Older pupils compose an appropriate and appealing musical accompaniment for an extended piece of English writing about sounds in a kitchen.
  - Older pupils perform as a school choir in the St David's Day eisteddfod and at Christmas school concerts. They enjoy performing to senior citizens in the locality. Pupils also perform in a school recorder group tutored by one of the teachers.
  - Pupils benefit and make good progress with the violin taught by the peripatetic music teacher.

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### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils' use of ICT to expand their experiences of composing is limited.

### **Physical Education**

Pupils' standards of achievement in physical education are good.

#### **Good features**

- Pupils undertake appropriate warming up activities. They move freely and effectively to modern musical arrangements. They successfully jump, stretch and keep the beat using various parts of their bodies well. Pupils display good dance skills.
- Pupils show good bodily control when balancing and they refine repeated movements thereby making good progress. They run, stop and freeze, in line with instructions. Pupils also watch each other's performances and readily discuss ways in which they can improve.
- Pupils show good handling skills and display good control when using the ball.
- They move around the hall purposefully and they show that they can balance their body weight effectively by rocking different parts of the body and rolling and rocking in a balanced position.
- Pupils perform good sequencing movements when stretching, travelling, balancing, jumping, curling and rolling and many do so competently.
- Pupils learn how to balance correctly on landing mats and perform other balancing movements on various apparatus with increasing confidence. They use their imaginative skills purposefully when undertaking various bodily movements on the apparatus.
- All pupils, irrespective of gender, enjoy a range of physical activities, rugby, football, rounders, cricket, gymnastics and indoor and outdoor athletics and older pupils attend swimming lessons. Netball is also available to both boys and girls.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no shortcomings in the lessons seen.

### **Religious Education**

Standards of pupils' achievement are very good. The scheme of work is closely related to the LEA Agreed Syllabus and conforms fully with its requirements.

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## Good features

- Younger pupils are learning about reflection during circle time in religious education and how to respond personally, morally and socially to their likes and dislikes and to their fears and anxieties. Pupils' knowledge of the Bible is good and they recall stories from the Old and New Testament accurately and in some detail.
- Pupils sequence the story of Rama and Sita in Hinduism correctly. They investigate the religious, moral and social meaning of friend and friendships and why Teddy bears are so important in people's lives. They draw up their own class rules and discuss their moral significance. Pupils devise their own Rangoli patterns and appreciate the part they play in the Hindu festival of Diwali.
- Pupils describe and explain the meaning of the festivals of Id-Ul-Fitr, Hanukkah and Diwali accurately and relate them to other celebratory contexts, such as, birthdays, Easter and Christmas, maturely and confidently. They play the Jewish game of Dreidel with counters and dice with enthusiasm and excitement. Pupils designed and made their own large sized Dreidel dices that are of good quality.
- Pupils are eager to answer questions when shown various religious photographs and artefacts. They accurately identify the various sections and objects to be found in a church, synagogue, mosque and temple. Pupils know the meanings and purposes of the Menorah, Torah, Talith, Sukkat and Shabhat in Judaism. They can explain the sort of household tasks that have to be done before welcoming the Sabbath day and can describe the order for the Sabbath meal.
- Older pupils recount the life of Muhammad and the purposes of the Five Pillars of Islam and do so in some detail. They have a good understanding of special and sacred books such as the Bible and Qu'ran and their place in the lives of Christians and Muslims. They appreciate the significance of Jerusalem and Mecca to religious adherents.
- Pupils cover a broad range of themes and can give account of the meaning and purpose of, for example, Remembrance Sunday and the Children in Need appeal. They create some good quality brass rubbings from their visit to the churchyard near St Fagans and produce their own Thanksgiving prayers and read a selection of poems and appreciate their religious significance.
- Pupils visit a range of local churches and chapels and write extensively, in some cases, their own impressions of the visit and itemise some of the interesting things they saw at the time.

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## Shortcomings

- There are no shortcomings in the work seen.

## 8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

### 8.1 Progress Since the Last Inspection

Five key issues were identified in the last inspection report. In order to raise standards the school needed to:

1. improve the quality of teaching and the quality of learning by addressing the shortcomings highlighted in these sections of the report, particularly the lack of independent learning and appropriate differentiation;
  2. address the shortcomings identified in each subject and particularly in design and technology, information technology, geography and physical education;
  3. provide an overall curriculum plan to ensure that the requirements of the NC are fully met, that the curriculum is well balanced and that Welsh Office guidelines for teaching time are fulfilled;
  4. continue to develop effective INSET and monitoring procedures to increase staff expertise and subject knowledge across the curriculum;
  5. address the health and safety issues identified in the report.
- The previous report acknowledges as important that, at that time, aspects of the second, fourth and fifth key issues were already identified for action in their SDP.
  - The Action Plan is a comprehensive response with a range of targets, including far more than the key issues and addressed all the shortcomings referred to in the previous report.
  - The first key issue was addressed directly by the headteacher, who monitored the quality of the teaching, identifying good practice and subsequently providing relevant INSET and producing a policy related to teaching styles and methods of learning. The short-term planning was improved and the governing body was kept regularly informed. The whole process has since been subject to regular reviews to ensure that the standards are being maintained.
  - The second key issue was tackled, subject by subject. The geography scheme of work was reviewed and the subject was timetabled for an hour each week. The development of pupils' mapping skills was reviewed and staff informed of the best way to teach this aspect. All classes received examples of how the work could be differentiated. The scheme of work

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also included different ways of recording and interpreting data. Regular reviews are still being sustained to ensure that pupils make good progress.

- To improve the standards in physical education, all staff discussed the scheme of work and the gymnastics and games elements were reviewed and included within the planning sheets for staff. The subject was timetabled for at least an hour per week. An INSET programme was established with the LEA, focusing in particular, on providing opportunities for pupils to express themselves and to evaluate their own performance.
- To raise the standards of information technology, the school implemented the procedures already detailed in the school's SDP. The scheme of work was updated and the short-term planning sheets were altered to indicate how teachers were using information technology across the curriculum. Copies of pupils' work are stored on discs.
- The scheme of work for design technology was reviewed and the range of activities widened. The subject received more time to allow for the development of the design process. The planning was based on lessons of one hour weekly rather than on a block of lessons. New resources were purchased. The headteacher became the co-ordinator.
- The third key issue was successfully addressed by taking the shortcomings in the main body of the report and tackling them with specific targets.
- In music, the scheme of work was reviewed and more opportunities given to pupils to experience a range of music throughout the curriculum and to ensure progression from Y3 to Y6. In art, the school worked systematically through each Programme of Study, staff received INSET and the co-ordinator monitored, by collecting samples of pupils' work.
- Other targets were set including the planning of opportunities for pupils to engage in collaborative work and to acquire higher order reading and writing skills. In mathematics and science, more use of investigations led to developing pupils' problem solving skills. Opportunities were given for pupils to talk and write about spiritual and moral issues. A range of approaches were introduced to the teaching of oral skills. INSET was provided for staff in Welsh to help them to teach pupils better writing standards. Shortcomings in history were addressed by reviewing the scheme and the use of investigation and reference books.
- New curriculum plans were drawn up to take account of the Welsh Office guidelines, including reviewing the teaching time and shortening of the morning and afternoon breaks. The role of the curriculum co-ordinator was examined and a

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programme of INSET training was set up. Areas for monitoring were defined and targets set and feedback arrangements were finalised.

- The final key issues, addressing health and safety were fully met. New windows were installed, new canteen facilities were established and the external staircase made safer by the addition of a handrail. An LEA safety officer completed an independent safety report.

## **8.2 Key Issues for Action**

The school has made good improvements since the last inspection and has significantly raised the standards of pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science. To ensure that the standards are raised further, the headteacher and governing body need to:

- raise standards from satisfactory to good or better in Welsh, design technology, information technology, history and art and in the use of the key skills of speaking, reading, writing, the application of number and the use of ICT across the curriculum;
- develop more rigorous and regular monitoring procedures of the NC for the foundation subjects by the curriculum leaders;
- improve the quality of the annual report to parents especially in the assessment of the foundation subjects;
- develop closer curriculum links in the foundation subjects with the infant school;
- review the way that the school prospectus is conveyed to parents and ensure that the prospectus and the governor's annual report to parents comply fully with requirements and that the information to parents fulfil statutory guidelines;
- review the safety arrangements as they relate to the building, both internally and externally.

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

Name of School	Comin Junior School
School type	Junior
Age-range of pupils	7-11
Address of school	Hirwaun Road Trecynon Aberdare
Post-Code	CF44 8LU
Telephone Number	01685 875867

Headteacher	Mr S Edwards
Date of appointment	September 1993
Chair of Governors	Mr C Morris
Registered Inspector	Mr B Wigley
Dates of inspection	2-5 December 2002

**B. School Data and Indicators**

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>					
Year group	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	49	45	56	52	202

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	8	1	8.3

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil : teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	24.3:1
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	28.9
Teacher (fte) : class ratio	1.18:1

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<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>		
	<b>KS2</b>	<b>Whole school</b>
Autumn 2001	93.4	93.4
Spring 2002	90.2	90.2
Summer 2002	89.85	89.85

Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection.	1
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## C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

NATIONAL CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT RESULTS  
END OF KEY STAGE 2: 2002

National Curriculum Assessment KS 2 Results: 2002											Number of pupils in Y6: 56			
Percentage of pupils at each level														
			D	A	N	B	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	43	23	0	
		National	0	0	3	n/a	0	1	5	16	45	29	0	
	Test/Task	School	0	3.5	0	0	0	0	0	18	50	29	0	
		National	0	2	2	1	n	n	4	12	41	38	n	
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36	33	30	0	
		National	0	0	3	n/a	0	1	4	19	46	27	0	
	Test/Task	School	0	4	0	0	0	0	2	25	48	21	0	
		National	0	2	1	1	n	n	4	19	43	30	n	
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	36	46	0	
		National	0	0	3	n/a	0	0	2	13	49	33	0	
	Test/Task	School	0	3.5	0	0	0	0	0	2	53	41	0	
		National	0	2	0	0	n	n	1	10	47	38	n	

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school:	66	In the school:	81
In Wales:	68	In Wales:	68

D Pupils who have been disapplied under sections 364 and 365 of the Education Act 1996.  
A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence.  
N Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence.  
B Pupils not entered for tests because they are working outside the levels of the tests.  
W Pupils who are "working towards" level 1, but have not yet achieved the standards  
needed for level 1.  
n Tests do not cover these levels.  
n/a not applicable.

## D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection

Three inspectors spent a total of 12 days at the school, with two inspectors spending four days and one inspector two days at the school

- Pre-inspection meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, governing body and parents;
- Seventy lessons or sessions were inspected;

- Fifteen parents questionnaires were analysed and parents comments noted;
- Pupils work from a previous term and the present term were scrutinised;
- Interviews were held with the staff and groups of pupils;
- The school documentation including subject schemes of work and policies were read and analysed;
- Inspectors attended school and class assemblies.

### **E. Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team**

<b>Inspector</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Aspect Responsibilities</b>	<b>Subject Responsibilities</b>
Mr B Wigley	RgI	Context Main findings Standards achieved by pupils Teaching Curriculum Quality of self evaluation and planning for improvement Leadership and efficiency Progress since the last inspection Key issues for action	Welsh English design and technology art physical education religious education
Mrs R Boardman	Lay	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Attendance Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions Partnership with industry	
Mr D Treharne	Team	Behaviour and attitudes Support, guidance and pupils welfare Special educational needs Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	mathematics science information technology history geography music

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