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**BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE**

Inspection under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

**Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy
Ffordd Tan-yr-ysgol
Llanrwst
LL26 0AP**

Report by H M Inspectors

School Number: 662/4035

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1. Context

The school and its priorities

Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy is a naturally bilingual comprehensive school. There are 783 pupils on the school roll, including 96 sixth form students. Pupil numbers have increased consistently over recent years.

The school is maintained by Conwy Local Education Authority (LEA). The school serves the town of Llanrwst and the adjacent rural communities. Sixty per cent of the pupils come from homes where Welsh is the main language.

According to the school's evidence, the pupils come from a residential area that is neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. Around 10% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is lower than the county and national averages for secondary schools. Twenty per cent of pupils are on the school's special educational needs register, which is similar to the national figure. Of these pupils, almost 6% have statements of special educational needs, a percentage that is much higher than the national figure. A moderate learning difficulties unit is located in the school, which comes under the school's management in consultation with the LEA.

The governing body has adopted a list of objectives that refers to:

- developing a civilised society;
- enabling every individual to be a full member of a bilingual society;
- enabling every individual to develop a range of skills and educational understanding; and
- understanding the relationships between the world's individuals, groups and nations.

The school's main quantitative targets for 2001-2002 are as follows:

Key stage 3 tests	% gaining level 5+ ¹
Welsh	86
English	69
Mathematics	53
Science	70

¹ Level 5 is the level that most pupils are expected to achieve in National Curriculum tests in key stage 3.

Key stage 4	% gaining
A*-C grade in the CSI ²	44
5 GCSE subjects, grades A*-C	65
5 GCSE subjects, grades A*-G	94

The last inspection of the school was held in the autumn term of 1996.

² The CSI (core subject indicator) is all of the Welsh (first language), English, mathematics and science combined.

2. Main findings

There has been a pattern of improvement since the last inspection. Standards have generally risen, especially in key stage 4 and the sixth form. Good progress has been made in relation to the last inspection's key issues.

Standards of achievement

The standards achieved by pupils in the **subjects** are summarised in the following table:

Subject	Key stage 3	Key stage 4	Sixth form
Welsh	Good	Good	Good
Welsh second language	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
English	Good	Good	Good
Mathematics	Good	Good	Good
Science	Satisfactory	Good	
Chemistry			Good
Physics			Good
Biology			Satisfactory
Design technology	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
Information technology	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
History	Satisfactory	Very good	Good
Geography	Good	Satisfactory	Good
French	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
Art	Good	Very good	Very good
Music	Good	Good	Good
Physical education	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory
Religious education	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	*
Religious studies		Good	Good
Motor vehicle and transport		Good	
Catering		Satisfactory	
Child development		Satisfactory	
Sociology			Satisfactory
Health and safety (GNVQ)			Satisfactory
Drama			Very good

*The school does not meet the statutory requirement of providing religious education in the sixth form.

There is variation between the core subjects in pupils' performance in the National Curriculum assessments at the end of key stage 3. The proportion of pupils gaining level 5 or higher in each of the core subjects combined [the core subject indicator (CSI)] is lower than the national and county figures. In key stage 4, there has been a pattern of consistent improvement over the last few years in the proportion of pupils gaining at least 5 A*-C grades in GCSE examinations. In 2001, 71% of pupils gained at least 5 A*-C grades. This figure places the school near the highest 25% in comparison with schools with up to 10% of pupils entitled to free school meals and amongst the highest 25% of Welsh or bilingual schools. There has also been a general pattern of improvement over the last three years in the post-16 results.

Pupils achieve satisfactory standards in the **key skills**. Overall, in their work across the subjects of the curriculum, pupils listen well and speak satisfactorily. They read well and write satisfactorily. In lessons apart from Welsh and English, pupils' ability to speak and write extensively varies between subjects. In numeracy, pupils achieve good standards. Standards in information and communications technology across the curriculum are satisfactory. Pupils make good use of computers in some subjects but, in others, opportunities are missed. In the sixth form, pupils' achievements in the key skills external assessments are good.

Quality of education

In key stage 3, 94% of the **teaching** is satisfactory or better, with 51% good or very good. In key stage 4, 90% of the teaching is satisfactory or better, with 57% good or very good. In the sixth form, 97% of the teaching is satisfactory or better, with 71% good or very good. Across all three key stages, the percentage of good or very good teaching is similar to the national figure for last year.

The quality of **assessment, recording and presenting reports** is good. The quality of the **curriculum** in key stage 3 and key stage 4 is satisfactory and good in the sixth form. All the National Curriculum subjects are taught, but only a limited choice of vocational subjects is offered in KS4. The time allocated for statutory religious education in key stage 4 is limited. The school's language streaming system enables pupils to receive their education through the medium of Welsh or English or bilingually. The provision for pupils with **special educational needs** is good. The **support** and **guidance** that pupils receive are good in key stages 3 and 4 and very good in the sixth form. Similarly, **partnerships with parents, the community, schools and other institutions** and the **partnership with industry** are also very good.

The ethos of the school

The **spiritual development** of pupils is satisfactory. In collective worship in the junior and senior departments, there is a reflective mood. The quality of collective acts of worship in the classes varies. **Moral, social and cultural development** is good. The standards of pupils' **behaviour**, on the whole, are good and they show commitment to their work in the lessons. **Attendance** has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory.

Management

The quality of **self-evaluation and planning for improvement** is satisfactory. The senior management team knows the school well. The headteacher and deputies have effective arrangements for visiting lessons across departments to monitor the quality of learning and teaching. The quality of self-evaluation at departmental level is satisfactory, as is planning for improvement. Although there are beneficial developments in some cases, the departments do not, on the whole, give sufficient attention while monitoring to the quality of teaching and the pupils' achievements.

The quality of **leadership and efficiency** is good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and works closely with the two deputies to set a clear direction for the school's work. The governing body is developing beneficial links with subject departments, thereby deepening their understanding of the life and work of the school. There has been an obvious improvement in the standard of leadership by heads of department since the last inspection. The school is an organised community, despite the difficulties associated with operating from two sites and the uncertainty about the future in this regard over the last few years.

The school makes efficient use of its budget.

3. Learning standards achieved by pupils

3.1 Standards achieved in the subjects and areas of learning

In **key stage 3**, standards of achievement are:

- satisfactory in Welsh second language, science, design and technology, information technology, history, religious education, French and physical education; and
- good in Welsh, English, mathematics, geography, art and music.

In **key stage 4**, standards of achievement are:

- satisfactory in Welsh second language, design and technology, information technology, geography and French;
- good in Welsh, English, mathematics, science, religious studies, music and physical education; and
- very good in history and art.

On the whole, there has been a clear pattern of improvement in standards in subjects since the last inspection. This applies in particular to key stage 4.

Pupils' performance in NC assessments at the end of key stage 3 varies between the core subjects. The proportion of pupils gaining level 5 or higher in each of the core subjects combined [the core subject indicator (CSI)] is lower than the national and county figures. The school's performance in the National Curriculum's external assessments in key stage 3, overall, is in the lower half of schools with up to 10% of pupils entitled to free school meals.

In key stage 4, there has been a consistent pattern of improvement over the last few years in the proportion of pupils gaining at least 5 A*-C grades in GCSE examinations. 71% of pupils gained at least 5 A*-C grades in 2001, which is much higher than the national and county figures. This figure places the school close to the highest 25% in comparison with similar schools and among the highest 25% of Welsh or bilingual schools. The performance of boys compared with girls shows a clear pattern of improvement over the last three years. The percentage of the school's pupils gaining 5 A*-G grades and the CSI is also much higher than the national and county figures.

3.2 Standards achieved in the key skills across the curriculum

Overall, standards of pupils' key skills are satisfactory.

Standards of listening and speaking are satisfactory. Pupils across the ability range in both key stages listen carefully to the teachers and to each other. The ability of native Welsh speakers to discuss in Welsh and English lessons is good. But the opportunities they get to discuss extensively in other subjects are varied and, in general, pupils give brief oral replies. The majority of pupils know technical terms in different subjects in both Welsh and English. In some subjects in both key stages, pupils are subdued and passive, and oral standards are only satisfactory as a result. In English lessons, pupils in the English streams discuss well. However, on the whole, they also give brief replies in subject lessons through the medium of English.

Standards in reading are generally good across the subjects in Welsh and English. Pupils understand what they read in textbooks and worksheets in their subject lessons. The most able pupils use a variety of information sources effectively. Bilingual pupils read well in both languages when required to do so.

Standards in writing across the subjects are satisfactory. Pupils do not get consistent opportunities to write pieces that require more than a word, a phrase or a sentence as an answer. In general, there is greater progress in extended writing in key stage 4 than in key stage 3. The most able bilingual pupils write effectively in both languages, when given a suitable opportunity to do so. Standards of achievement in pupils' work are generally good. Pupils of all abilities present neat work in their books and folders.

Standards in numeracy are good. In science, mathematics and geography, pupils apply their numeracy skills well. They do so satisfactorily in design and technology. In other subjects, teachers do not take sufficient advantage of the opportunities to develop and use pupils' number skills.

Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) are good in some subjects, such as Welsh and English in both key stages, and in physical education and art in key stage 4. In some other subjects, the use of ICT is developing satisfactorily. In the remainder of subjects, the effective use of ICT by pupils is limited. Overall, across the curriculum, pupils' ICT standards are satisfactory.

Collaboration is a strong feature in learning in some subjects, such as Welsh, English, science, music, history and physical education. Pupils do not get suitable and consistent opportunities to work in pairs and in groups in other subjects.

There are good examples of problem-solving in mathematics, English and science lessons. Pupils respond well in those situations by following a logical trail. In general, however, opportunities for pupils to develop proficiency in this field are limited.

Pupils' learning and thinking skills are developing well through opportunities to read and analyse different types of literature in English and Welsh. They can discuss themes and topical issues and demonstrate thoughtfulness and the ability to appreciate more than one side in a debate. Generally, there are insufficient situations in lessons, especially in key stage 4, to encourage pupils to think for themselves rather than merely accept information and opinion.

4. Ethos of the school

4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory and their moral, social and cultural development is good.

The assemblies of junior and senior departments are respectful occasions which give attention to moral and Christian themes. There is usually a short reading from the Bible and a prayer, and an opportunity for pupils to reflect and think about values and experiences. There is no use of music to create a sense of occasion and to reinforce a reflective atmosphere. The quality of class assemblies varies between good and superficial. In art and music and in studying poetry in literature lessons, pupils reflect on aesthetic experiences, but otherwise opportunities across the curriculum for them to reflect and wonder and consider their own values are limited.

Pupils respond responsibly to the high expectations of them. They are aware of what is acceptable and respect the environment and possessions. They also show respect for each other. In personal and social education lessons and in many subjects of the curriculum, pupils discuss a wide range of moral concepts thoughtfully, including tolerance, anti-racism and self-discipline.

Opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities and occasions contribute well to the pupils' social development. These include educational visits, events, competitions and school productions, as well as activities in the community. Pupils respond well to the additional responsibilities they get, for example helping to run the school shop. Also, the very good inter-relationship between pupils and their teachers and between the pupils themselves has a significant effect on the pupils' moral development. There is no school council for key stage 3 and 4 pupils.

Pupils' cultural development is promoted through theatre in education and regular visits to exhibitions, concerts and plays, as well as links with professional artists. Extra-curricular activities in music, sport and drama also make a good contribution. Work in a good number of subjects helps to develop pupils' awareness and appreciation of other cultures. The Cwricwlwm Cymreig is a strong feature of the provision, with specific and resourceful attention given to it in a number of subjects. As a result, pupils have a very good understanding of ideas, values, key events and the culture of Wales at present and in the past.

4.2 Behaviour and attitudes

Behaviour and attitudes are good.

In general, pupils behave well in lessons. The commitment of pupils to the work is a consistently good feature. In some classes in key stage 3, the behaviour of a small minority of pupils, at times, disrupts the work of other pupils.

There is good behaviour also in the assemblies and in the canteen, as well as around the school during the lunch hour and at breaktimes. The pupils move around the school in an orderly way, in a happy and homely atmosphere.

Effective measures to prevent unacceptable behaviour were introduced under the leadership of the school's social inclusion co-ordinator. The new discipline regime is based on sanctions and rewards and there are suitable follow-up steps where appropriate. The school established a referral unit to deal with unruly pupils. The pupils that attend it receive appropriate work and there is close supervision and detailed record keeping. These innovative arrangements have led to a significant improvement in the behaviour and attitudes of individual pupils.

The school guards against bullying and thoroughly investigates any allegations. Appropriate procedures are followed in cases of pupils being suspended from the school.

4.3 Attendance

Attendance rates are satisfactory. However, in some classes, attendance is consistently lower than 90%. Punctuality is good at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions, but some lessons begin late due to difficulties related to the spread-out nature of the two sites.

Detailed procedures have been introduced to reduce absence. The registers are kept in accordance with requirements, with the exception of partial recording in pencil in a few cases. There is some inconsistency between classes in the way that cases of absence are investigated. The office staff investigate the registers in detail and contact the home in cases of absence. The county education welfare officer visits the school regularly to discuss serious cases.

Among the appropriate measures used to encourage better attendance across the school is the presentation of certificates and shields for good attendance. Attention to the importance of good attendance is also given in assemblies and in displays around the lower school.

5. Quality of education

5.1 Teaching

In key stage 3, 94% of the teaching is satisfactory or better, with 51% good or very good. In key stage 4, 90% of the teaching is satisfactory or better, with 57% good or very good. The percentage of teaching that is good or very good is similar to last year's national figure.

Good features

- The best lessons have good pace. Teachers introduce clear aims and pupils understand the expectations. Teachers succeed in maintaining the pupils' interest and encourage them to give their best throughout lessons. Pair work, group work and purposeful tasks are used to ensure that pupils persevere and learn consistently. The suitable pace of these lessons challenges and supports the pupils effectively.
- The standard of questioning is generally good. Teachers use questions to differentiate appropriately. They succeed in maintaining consistent participation from pupils of all abilities and they give useful feedback on their efforts.
- There are effective introductions by teachers, sometimes by using visual and technical aids which spark the interest of pupils. Teachers show good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects.

Shortcomings

- The pace of a number of lessons slows as they proceed and pupils' interest fades as a result. In a few classes, the pupils begin to talk amongst themselves. In a number of lessons, there is no effective conclusion.
- In some subjects, teachers' presentations are sometimes too long and there are not enough materials or visual aids to maintain the pupils' interest. There is insufficient opportunity for the pupils to respond in class work or in smaller groups. In these cases, the teachers do not ensure oral participation from a sufficient number of pupils and depend excessively on those that volunteer a response.
- In many departments, the work has not been planned sufficiently well in order to meet the requirements of the range of pupils' ability in a class.

5.2 Assessment, recording and presentation of reports

The quality of assessment, recording and presentation of reports is good.

The school's assessment policy contains clear guidelines to departments on the key aspects of assessment. In general, teachers make regular and correct assessments of pupils' progress. In some subjects, especially English and art, there is consistency across the departments in terms of giving appropriate advice to the pupils on how to improve their work and in the way that pupils self-assess their progress. In information technology, the quality of assessment in key stage 3 is unsatisfactory. This arises because the arrangements for collecting evidence of standards in different subjects have not been sufficiently developed.

The whole school systems for assessing and recording pupils' progress are good. Departments have a common method of grading achievement and effort for internal assessments. Teachers make effective use of computer programs to facilitate the task of compiling and analysing the information that is collected in different ways. This process identifies pupils that are performing well. In cases where pupils are underachieving, appropriate subsequent steps are followed.

Pupils' work is marked regularly and thoroughly. On the whole, pupils receive helpful written comments on their work that usually suggest what needs to be improved. In some cases, the comments are too general.

There is an effective system of recording attainment across the school.

The annual reports to parents contain grades for attainment and effort. There is some variation in the detail of comments on pupils' progress and in terms of the usefulness of targets for improvement. In the geography, history and religious education reports in key stage 3, there are many comments that are too general in nature.

5.3 Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory in key stage 3 and key stage 4.

The range of subjects taught in key stage 3 and key stage 4 meet statutory requirements. In key stage 4, the school encourages pupils, with considerable success, to study a well-balanced combination of subjects. The majority choose a technological subject and one of the humanities, and half of them study an expressive subject. As at the time of the last inspection, only a small number study French, the only modern foreign language provided. The choice of vocational subjects is limited.

Through the language streaming system, the school succeeds well in its aim of enabling pupils to receive their education through either the medium of Welsh or English. In addition, there is a bilingual class in key stage 3, in which the pupils receive around a third each of their subjects through the medium of Welsh, English and bilingually. In key stage 4, pupils in the bilingual class change from second language to follow first language study programmes in Welsh; this is very good practice. Pupils that receive their education in the Welsh stream receive subject terminology in English, and there is some use of oral Welsh in the English stream classes. In general, the planning is not sufficiently detailed to fully develop bilingualism across the curriculum in either stream.

The total teaching time is a little below the minimum of 25 hours a week recommended by the National Assembly. In key stage 3, the number of lessons in each year is different in the foundation subjects. Although the total time allocated across the key stage to these subjects is sufficient, these arrangements make it difficult to develop the practical and research skills of the National Curriculum. The time allocation for statutory religious education in key stage 4 is not enough to meet all the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. In key stage 3, pupils study a module of information technology that includes one lesson a week for a third of the year. But, the contribution made by subjects across the curriculum to support pupils' information skills has not been sufficiently co-ordinated.

The quality of planning for developing key skills across the subjects is satisfactory. The working group established has made a good start in relation to planning for communication skills. There is some cross-school planning for numeracy and the use of ICT.

In several subjects, visits and other activities enrich the learning experiences. There is a lunchtime club for mathematics and clubs to promote English reading and homework. Pupils are regularly given appropriate homework in the core subjects and, overall, in the foundation subjects.

5.4 Support, guidance and care for pupils

The quality of support and guidance is good in key stage 3 and key stage 4.

There is a good relationship between pupils and their teachers. The teachers know the pupils well and offer ready support to them. Effective child protection arrangements are in place. The arrangement for identifying and tracking pupils in key stage 3 that need support and guidance is very thorough.

The need to move between the two sites reduces the class periods at the beginning of the school day. Nevertheless, the class teachers make good use of the time available to discuss issues such as attendance and keeping homework diaries. There is extensive use of the diaries in key stage 3 and in the sixth form, but not in key stage 4. The school diary does not contain details of the school's expectations about homework to help parents' supervision.

The provision for personal and social education (PSE) is good. The programme is relevant to the pupils' needs and has been well-planned. In some cases, there is not enough time to examine discussion topics fully or the handling of the topic under discussion lacks direction. Many of the subject lessons contribute towards PSE through aspects like co-operation and respecting others' ideas.

The provision for health education is very good. The provision is characterised by effective teaching and a learning environment which encourages open discussion on sensitive issues.

Although the careers room is small, comprehensive information is provided for pupils. The content of the careers education programme is appropriate for the age and development of the pupils. Close collaboration with Careers Wales is a feature of the provision. Responses to the survey distributed to key stage 4 pupils show satisfaction with the quality of provision offered. The careers department recently received the Recognition of Quality Award. Pupils receive useful guidance on choosing subjects. However, the choices handbook at the end of year 9 is not attractive or easy to read; in many subjects, there is little more than a summary of GCSE requirements.

In general, teachers give good support to pupils that expose their academic requirements. Some teachers extensively give their own time to support pupils by providing additional teaching in weak areas. Sometimes, not enough is done to ensure that there are no gaps in the work of pupils that have been absent.

5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs

The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The pupils achieve well in relation to their age and ability.

In the unit for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, there is a caring and happy learning atmosphere. Pupils make good progress in their ability to speak clearly, listen to each other and wait their turn patiently. They work independently and there is ready support at hand as required. Pupils learn the skills and information they need to live a full and independent life within their community. For each pupil, there is also an individual timetable for attending specific lessons in the main stream. These opportunities to integrate work very successfully. Lesson content is differentiated appropriately for these pupils in the majority of subjects and pupils receive good support from assistants. Provision for pupils attending this unit is very good.

Other pupils on the special educational needs register are taught in main stream classes. The majority of subject teachers are aware of which pupils are on the special educational needs register and of their needs. There is a comprehensive list of the characteristics and needs of these pupils. Some departments make effective use of this information to give specific support to the pupils. In other departments, the specific needs of the pupils do not receive enough attention.

A specialist teacher gives good support to 21 pupils that have been referred by the local authority. The achievement of these pupils is particularly good. The quality of teaching and support is very good and the strengths, weaknesses and progress of pupils are recorded in detail. Suitable targets are set for the pupils, and records outline teaching strategies and criteria for success. Pupils make good progress against these targets.

Some pupils are disapplied from some National Curriculum subjects in accordance with their statements. Others are withdrawn from French lessons for a period in order to reinforce their key skills; this does not ensure full access to the whole curriculum for each pupil.

The school has invested substantially in a team of 10 learning assistants. They make an important contribution in promoting pupils' work. They keep a detailed record of each pupil's progress and the content of their lessons.

The school conforms fully with the special educational needs Code of Practice. A wide range of standard tests are used to assess pupils' work. The individual educational plans for pupils on steps 2 to 5 include attainable targets. There are effective and clear communication procedures between the school and home, and with local authority services. The plans are revised every term and transition plans are drawn up for year 9 pupils.

Some able and talented pupils attend additional external classes, for example, in mathematics and music, or as members of local sports clubs. There is a variation between departments in terms of providing challenging work for able pupils in the usual classes in school.

5.6 Partnerships with parents, the community, other schools and institutions

These partnerships are very good.

There are effective links between the school and parents. The school handbook for the parents of prospective pupils is attractive and comprehensive. An excellent annual publication, 'Y Bont', is produced which includes a detailed and appealing review of the school's activities and achievements. The school-home agreement sets clear expectations for the parents, pupils and the school. Appropriate arrangements have been established for contacting parents in cases of concern and parents can arrange a visit to the school when they wish to discuss any matter in greater detail. The Parent Teacher Association supports the school well by organising a number of fund-raising activities.

There are very good links with the primary schools. The head of Year 7 and the language co-ordinator visit each primary school to meet the headteachers, teachers and pupils. The information collected is used to place pupils in the appropriate language stream and to form a detailed profile of each pupil for the use of class teachers, heads of department and special needs co-ordinators. There are substantial curricular and extra-curricular links between the school and the primary schools. These include science, health education and some religious education projects, as well as taster lessons in French.

An innovative feature of the primary links is a meeting for the core subject departments to examine samples of work produced by Year 7 pupils in Year 6. There are also annual discussions between heads of core subject departments and the primary schools about work plans and pupils' performance. Primary schools receive a copy of their former pupils' interim and end-of-year reports.

Links with other secondary schools include cultural, social activities and sports activities, as well as joint overseas educational trips. The school is a partner in initial teacher training with a higher education institute. There are good links with local further education colleges, with pupils attending open days and having opportunities to experience courses.

The school's partnership with the local education authority and the advisory services is well defined. The professional dialogue with the authority at a senior management team and departmental level contributes effectively to planning and policy.

The partnership with the local community is very good. The community uses the school extensively for classes during the day and evening. The school collaborates closely with local institutions, like the Rotary Club, local chapels and churches and gives strong support to local eisteddfodau, concerts and drama festivals. The programme of community activity for Year 12 includes giving assistance in primary schools and old people's homes. The 'Take a Chance' programme for Year 7 and Year 8 pupils includes using specialists from the community for various activities, including drama, sport and orienteering. The school makes good use of guest speakers to enrich the pupils' curricular experiences.

5.7 Partnership with industry

The partnership with industry is very good.

The contribution of each individual subject towards improving understanding of industry and the world of work is mapped in detail. A 'Work Experience' period is arranged to increase pupils' knowledge and appreciation of industry and business before they begin their GCSE courses.

The detailed reports prepared by Year 10 pupils following their week of work experience in July show that they benefit greatly from their placements with employers. These visits are carefully arranged by the work experience co-ordinator.

Industrialists visit the school to hold mock interviews with Year 11 pupils. A number of senior pupils' extended projects in information technology are based on businesses such as local hotels.

The school receives donations and resources from businesses in the area.

The examples of 'enterprise' education across the school are limited. Some Year 11 mathematics pupils help to run the school shop by selling goods and monitoring stock. The shop's profits are used to buy additional educational resources and to fund visits.

6. Management and efficiency

6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement

The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is satisfactory.

The senior management team (SMT) knows the school well. They make extensive use of statistical analyses and an effective programme of SMT visits to classrooms has been established. A beneficial development this year has been the move towards giving attention to individual departments and to prioritise according to greatest need. Clear evidence of improvement can be seen where the SMT has intervened. The self-evaluation report prepared for the inspection gives a useful outline of the procedures used to manage quality. However, it does not give a comprehensive and clear picture of the good features and shortcomings in provision and standards.

The quality of self-evaluation at middle management level is satisfactory. Departments draw up detailed commentaries of pupils' performance in tests and external examinations. A good start has been made in relation to monitoring the work in several departments, in particular Welsh, English and science, where the process of monitoring work in classes has begun. In general, self-evaluation at departmental level has not yet moved sufficiently to identifying shortcomings in pupils' standards of achievement. Opportunities to observe colleagues within departments are limited.

The standard of planning for improvement is satisfactory. There are good links between the school development plan (SDP) and the local education authority's strategic education plan. The SDP for 2002-05 identifies appropriate intentions for the short term, but does not include sufficient detail for the medium and long term, and there are no criteria to help measure success. Departmental development plans are well structured, but vary in quality. The most detailed plans are those of the English, geography and, in particular, Welsh departments. In general, too little attention is given in departmental plans to improving quality and raising standards.

The school conforms with statutory requirements in relation to setting quantitative targets. However, in several cases, the school's performance in examinations and tests was well above the quantitative targets set.

6.2 Leadership and effectiveness

The quality of leadership and effectiveness is good.

The headteacher has a clear vision regarding the school's development, and collaborates closely with other members of the senior management team (SMT). The deputies give good leadership in relation to their responsibilities and fulfil their duties thoroughly and in a supportive way. There is a close link between the members of the SMT and their designated departments. The establishment this year of an extended management team has been a beneficial development.

The quality of teaching and experiences in the classroom is given high priority by the management team. Setting specific expectations for departments to discuss characteristics of effective teaching and learning was good practice and this instigated discussion between the departments and the SMT. There are no concise written guidelines outlining the management team's vision in relation to key aspects of teaching methodology and self-evaluation.

The governing body fully supports the efforts of the headteacher and the management team. The link between governors and subjects departments is developing, and has included, in some cases, visits to lessons. A useful procedure has been established whereby heads of department and others with curricular responsibilities give presentations to the governing body. In doing so, the governors deepen their understanding of the school's life and work.

There has been a significant improvement in the quality of middle management since the last inspection. The quality of leadership is now good in a number of departments. In French, there not enough lead provided for the department in some key aspects of the provision. There is too little leadership and management across the curriculum's subjects in information technology in key stage 3. The management of pastoral care is of good quality. Subject teachers and the team of assistants receive very good leadership from the special educational needs co-ordinator.

The school makes effective use of its budget. The school development plan and departmental development plans give appropriate attention to the cost of the objectives identified within them. The school has carried over substantial sums of money from year to year in recent times. This is reasonable when considering the uncertainty of the school's situation in relation to the two sites together with the fact that substantial expenditure has been earmarked.

Despite the limitations of the site, good quality day-to-day administration means that the school is an organised community.

6.3 Staffing, accommodation and rooms and learning resources

Staffing

Staffing is good.

The school has sufficient members of teachers and their qualifications and experience are suitable to teach their main subjects. The support staff and classroom assistants provide effective support. Newly-qualified teachers are given effective leadership, which includes a programme of seminars on aspects of the school's work. Some attention is given to career entry profiles which bridge the initial training and the settling-in period, though they are not used widely. In some cases, there is insufficient lead on subject-specific methodology for teachers teaching outside their main specialism.

Staff attend a suitable range of in-service training courses. A central record is kept on the nature and quality of the training, and subsequent developments are monitored by the senior management team (SMT). The departments receive at least one visit from a subject adviser. Members of the SMT have taken advantage of the opportunities to attend appropriate management training.

The school has received an Investors In People quality mark.

Accommodation and rooms

The quality of accommodation and rooms is unsatisfactory.

The staff make best use of the unfavourable circumstances of operating from two sites. After coming to terms, over many years, with the challenge of operating from two sites, the staff and pupils are looking forward to uniting all classes on the lower school's present site by September 2003.

As the school operates from two sites, some provision is duplicated, such as two administrative offices and two large halls. Sometimes, lessons begin late because staff and pupils need to travel from one site to the other. The need to commute between two sites over half a mile away from each other also places limitations on the timetabling of lessons.

Some new buildings have already opened on the lower school site, offering very good facilities for subjects such as information technology, design and technology and science. There are also leisure centre resources conveniently at hand for physical education lessons on this campus. There are some deficiencies in the lower school's geography department, such as loose tiles on the floor and paint peeling from the ceiling. There are insufficient display boards in the art room on the lower school site, and there is a lack of space to store resources. On the lower school site, there is one music room in poor condition, another that is too small and there is no convenient place for instrumental lessons by peripatetic teachers.

The upper school's rooms and corridors are inhospitable and unstimulating due to a lack of expenditure over a long period. The condition of temporary classrooms is deteriorating. Despite its interesting architecture, the senior library does not promote independent study. The careers room is too small and the computer room is too hot due to a lack of effective air-conditioning.

The quality of displays across the school varies. In some subjects, especially English and art, and in some Welsh rooms, a stimulating environment is created with attractive displays of pupils' work.

Under the supervision of the extended management team, appropriate attention is given to health and safety issues. Electrical equipment, fire extinguishers and smoke detectors are inspected regularly. At the time of the inspection, there was a broken radiator and light cover in the gymnasium. The school is kept generally clean. Occasionally, pupils' bags are seen left randomly in corridors.

There are no shelters on either site for pupils to shield from bad weather whilst waiting for buses to take them home at the end of the day.

Learning resources

Learning resources are good.

In general, subject departments have sufficient resources. They are in good condition and are used effectively by the teachers.

There are a good number of computers in the lower school, in computer rooms and in some classes. The lower school has the most up-to-date information technology and communication equipment but the upper school's network occasionally breaks down and the link to the Internet is limited. There are insufficient numbers of textbooks in science and there are deficiencies in the specialist physics resources in the sixth form. The supply of resources such as keyboards, compact discs and song books in music is limited.

There are attractive English books for the reading club. A good start has been made in using small equipment in mathematics to promote class discussion and rapid answers from pupils. In science, insufficient use is made of practical equipment.

Teachers produce worksheets of good quality.

7. Subjects and areas of learning

Pupils' standards of achievement

Welsh

Standards are good in key stage 3 and key stage 4.

Key stage 3

Good features

- Standards of listening and speaking are good. Pupils express themselves confidently and clearly orally and discussion skills are developing well. They offer pertinent and original comments, ask questions and respect each other's comments.
- Pupils read a wide range of books and demonstrate a good understanding. They can discuss characters, plot and text development in an intelligent way. They review fiction books and, by year 9, they use literary terms naturally.
- Pupils can write in a range of different forms and for different purposes and produce interesting work.
- The standard of writing is satisfactory, with some examples of good work, especially in year 9. Pupils can write in a range of forms and for different purposes. The content is often interesting. At its best in year 9, the work is original and extended.

Shortcomings

- The written work of moderately able and less able pupils, in particular, is not extended and sufficiently detailed. A number of pupils have an uncertain grasp of syntax and make grammatical, spelling and mutation errors which impair their expression.

Key stage 4

Good features

- Pupils can summarise discussions and report back effectively to the whole class. By year 11 the most able pupils can respond enthusiastically and extensively by interacting with each other in a lively and disciplined manner in group work.
- By key stage 4, pupils can respond intelligently to literary texts and the majority can successfully extract relevant information. There is detail in the best pupils' responses and literary terms are used naturally when reviewing texts.
- There is obvious progress in key stage 4 in terms of writing skills and the best pupils can write analytically, while expressing opinion effectively. Creative work in Year 11 shows mature style and imagination, with a good grasp of style and correctness.

Shortcomings

- The oral contributions of some pupils in key stage 4 are more limited and incorrect.
- A greater than expected number of spelling and punctuation errors characterise the written work of moderately able and less able pupils.

The good standards witnessed in the last inspection have been maintained.

Welsh second language

Standards are satisfactory in key stage 3 and key stage 4.

Key stages 3 and 4

Good features

- Pupils develop a good passive understanding of Welsh. They listen well. In general, pupils make consistent progress in their ability to ask and answer questions using basic patterns. In some classes, pupils offer spontaneous comments and start to use conjunctions to lengthen their comments.
- Reading standards are good. Pupils can read aloud thoughtfully and with correct accentuation. They read appropriately challenging texts in their own time. They develop their ability to discuss the characteristics of characters in novels they study in the classroom.

- In some classes in both key stages, pupils make good progress in their ability to write extensively for a variety of purposes.
- Latecomers make good progress in the particular lessons provided for them.

Shortcomings

- In some classes, a number of pupils do not develop sufficient confidence to use Welsh when replying or speaking to the teacher.
- Pupils' ability to use a range of sentence patterns in pair or group work is inconsistent.
- There is inconsistency between classes in the progress in writing more extended pieces in their own words.

Since the last inspection, standards have remained satisfactory in key stage 3 and have fallen from good to satisfactory in key stage 4.

English

Standards are good in key stage 3 and key stage 4.

Key stage 3

Good features

- Oral standards are good. Pupils listen attentively in classes and respond confidently and fluently. The best pupils use a wide vocabulary and show a good understanding of sophisticated concepts in factual pieces and in literature. Often, their responses are extended and show originality.
- Reading standards are good. In general, pupils read easily without preparation. The best can analyse and appreciate literature by using critical literary terms effectively. They show considerable sensitivity and maturity when discussing characters in novels and dramas.
- Writing skills are good. Pupils use a variety of forms successfully. They can compose factual and fictional pieces and poetry effectively. The most able pupils produce creative writing of a high standard. They use their understanding of what they read effectively as a foundation to their compositions.

Shortcomings

- The oral responses of those with moderate ability are usually brief.
- Some elementary spelling errors impair the work of pupils, in particular those of moderate and lower ability.

Key Stage 4

Good features

- Oral standards are good across the ability range. Pupils participate well in pair and group work while preparing for presentations, mock interviews and role-play. Their contributions in these situations are clear and interesting. The most able pupils discuss eloquently and with confidence.
- Reading standards are good. Pupils of limited ability show a satisfactory understanding of plot and characters, including in pre-1900 literature. The response of the most able pupils to literature of different periods is of a high standard. They produce insightful analyses which show a deep understanding of characters, themes, diction and style.
- Writing standards are good. The creative compositions of the most able are excellent. They make subtle and effective use of language. They have a vast vocabulary and use sophisticated syntax. They show a mature understanding of difficult themes in literature, such as the work of Grace Nicholas and George Orwell. Pupils of more limited ability produce satisfactory compositions which show their ability to write extensively and interestingly. Their course work is of a good standard, particularly when they write about issues that are of personal interest to them.

Shortcomings

- Spelling errors impair the written work of moderately able and less able pupils.

Since the last inspection, standards have raised from satisfactory to good in key stage 3 and the good standards in key stage 4 have been maintained.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement are good in key stages 3 and 4.

Key stages 3 and 4

Good features

- Standards of work are good across the range of ability and across the subject areas. Usually, pupils make clear progress towards appropriate aims.
- Pupils develop a strong grasp on the subject's terminology and, in a number of classes, they can respond intelligently when undertaking challenging oral work as a whole class.
- Pupils' basic number skills are sound, and they can apply them without difficulty. Usually, their mental work and work on paper is correct. They use calculators in a sensible manner.
- Pupils can form algebra equations to solve problems by interpreting written descriptions or diagrams. They can use appropriate formulae to solve problems, such as in shape work.
- Most of the pupils use a wide range of information about angles with confidence to solve problems. They use their previous knowledge of shape effectively to master the calculation of the surface area of more complicated shapes. They can apply Pythagoras theory correctly.
- Pupils are developing a firm grasp of probability concepts and show a clear understanding of relevant research. There is some very good work on forming and interpreting graphs, which sometimes make effective use of ICT.

Shortcomings

- In some cases, pupils' understanding in key stage 3 is too superficial. Pupils' ability to conduct extended investigation is uneven.
- In key stage 4, pupils' uncertain grasp of fractions and algebra impairs the accuracy of their work on occasions.

Standards of achievement have risen from satisfactory to good since the last inspection.

Science

Standards are satisfactory in key stage 3 and good in key stage 4.

Key stages 3 and 4

Good features

- The majority of pupils can remember important facts and understand a full range of biology, chemistry and physics concepts, often to a high standard in key stage 4. They make consistent progress and build on their previous knowledge.
- When doing practical work, pupils collaborate effectively to handle equipment responsibly and measure and manage variables carefully.
- They can handle data, make relevant calculations and draw suitable graphs. They can see patterns in results, come to sensible conclusions and evaluate their work.
- Pupils use scientific terminology confidently and accurately in oral and written work. They write full notes in their own words and keep an accurate and complete record of their studies for revision purposes.
- They are aware of the importance of science to industry and its contribution to society locally and nationally.

Shortcomings

- In investigative work, key stage 3 pupils are too dependent on the teacher and often do not use more than one source of secondary information in their study.
- Usually, pupils are not confident to reason and explain their oral answers at length, particularly in key stage 3.
- Too little use is made of information and communication technology to measure and record data.
- Pupils do not have a clear understanding of the conditional nature of scientific information. They do not give sufficient attention to the uncertainty of measurements in their practical work.

Since the last inspection, standards have remained satisfactory in key stage 3 and have improved from satisfactory to good in key stage 4.

Design and technology

Standards are satisfactory in key stage 3 and key stage 4.

Good features

Key stage 3

- The majority of pupils have an understanding of design principles and show skill when designing. They develop good graphical skills, with some pupils using computers to enhance the presentation of their work.
- Pupils can build simple electronic circuits and understand mechanisms and basic management systems.
- They understand the purpose of nutrients in foods and the importance of eating healthily; they are able to compare the content, taste and value of 'shop' foods and home produce.
- They have information on fabrics and know how to complete basic sewing tasks.

Key stage 4 (Resistant materials)

- Folder work shows that pupils are able to investigate and analyse information effectively.
- Pupils show a readiness to experiment with metals, woods or plastics.
- They collect information as part of their preparation for practical work and show a good understanding of building techniques and the ability to apply them to their own work.
- Pupils use isometric and orthographic drawings effectively to improve the presentation of folders.
- Some pupils make effective use of computers to present reports and graphs.

Shortcomings

- Pupils do not make sufficiently regular use of computers to process words or data, and they only make some use of CAD and CAM equipment.
- In year 9 and in key stage 4, pupils do not evaluate their produce sufficiently based on the needs of the original brief.
- The most able pupils do not work to the highest level of detailed accuracy, particularly when designing and writing notes.

Since the last inspection, standards have fallen from good to satisfactory in key stage 3 and have remained satisfactory in key stage 4.

Information technology

Standards are satisfactory in key stage 3 and key stage 4.

Key stage 3

Good features

- Pupils make good progress in the information technology lessons and master basic procedures.
- They come to use software confidently to word process, draw up spreadsheets and use databases.
- In several subjects across the curriculum, pupils develop their ability to make decisions, use the Internet, combine different forms of information electronically and communicate with different audiences.
- Pupils come to understand the effect of information technology on society.

Shortcomings

- Able pupils do not achieve the standards they should in relation to the National Curriculum's higher levels.
- Pupils rely too heavily on teachers in their use of information technology.
- Only a few pupils create, use, or assess computer models or use e-mail.
- Pupils do not evaluate their work regularly enough.

Key stage 4

Good features

- Pupils build on their work in key stage 3 and make progress in their understanding of new theory.
- They use software competently at an appropriate level.
- Pupils can explain the purpose of their work confidently using appropriate technical terminology.
- In practical projects, pupils meet syllabus requirements and demonstrate their perseverance and understanding.

Shortcomings

- Pupils do not know enough about the practical use of information and communication technology and the social effects.
- Pupils do not evaluate their work in sufficient depth.

Since the last inspection, standards have remained satisfactory.

History

Standards are satisfactory in key stage 3 and very good in key stage 4.

Key stage 3

Good features

- Many pupils organise their work well and have a good awareness and understanding of chronology. The majority of pupils have good knowledge and understanding of historical events and characters, such as Llywelyn Fawr, the Great Plague and the Fire of London.
- In class discussions, they offer intelligent answers and, in small groups, they contribute thoughtful comments.
- Some historical investigations of high quality are conducted, such as on military equipment in the Middle Ages or the effect of the Great Plague.
- Pupils undertake some thoughtful work on why interpretations of the past vary.

Shortcomings

- Few pupils use their information on individual events to develop a wider awareness of the nature of a historical period.
- Pupils rarely conduct historical investigations in sufficient depth and explore evidence and interpretations of history fully.
- Able pupils do not undertake enough challenging work.

Key stage 4

Good features

- Pupils have very good knowledge and understanding. They deal with political, economic, social and cultural issues in a mature way.
- Pupils' skills when defining and using historical evidence are very good and they skilfully use cross-referencing across a range of sources.
- Pupils of lower ability, who follow the educational achievement certificate course, show good understanding and can refer to appropriate evidence when making historical statements.

Since the last inspection, standards have remained satisfactory in key stage 3, but have risen from satisfactory to very good in key stage 4.

Geography

Standards are good in key stage 3 and satisfactory in key stage 4.

Good features

Key stage 3

- Many of the pupils have a good understanding of physical and human geography patterns and processes.
- They use a wide and increasingly challenging range of sources skilfully and confidently. Pupils can interpret pictures, data and figures and develop their practical skills well.
- Pupils have good knowledge of the local area's geographical features and can recall facts.

Key stage 4

- Pupils across the ability range develop good knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils of higher ability show a firm understanding of aspects of the subject by offering correct answers.
- Pupils are able to use geographical vocabulary and terminology well.

Shortcomings

- At times, the content and presentation of the work of a number of boys in key stage 3 and key stage 4 is deficient and there are examples of incomplete work.
- In key stage 4, pupils' ability to raise questions, reason and express viewpoints does not develop enough.
- Key stage 4 pupils do not use computers enough to develop their understanding of aspects of the subject.

Since the last inspection, standards have risen from satisfactory to good in key stage 3, and have remained satisfactory in key stage 4.

Modern foreign languages

Standards are satisfactory in French in key stage 3 and key stage 4.

Key stage 3

Good features

- The majority of pupils hold conversations in French following a given structure. More skilful pupils speak in sentences that use a variety of verb tenses. They ask and respond to questions and express their opinions.
- Pupils follow narratives in French by teachers or a native speaker.
- They read various materials that are appropriate to their age and ability. More able pupils deal confidently with extended texts.
- The majority of pupils can write simple sentences within a specific framework. The more able pupils can write paragraphs which include descriptions, viewpoints and experiences and express themselves in a variety of tenses.

Shortcomings

- Across key stage 3, a number of pupils are not confident orally and need encouragement to speak.
- On the whole, their responses are brief, and they are less willing to ask questions than to answer them.
- Grammatical errors impair the written work of pupils of moderate and higher ability too much.

Key stage 4

Good features

- A small number of the most able pupils speak French confidently and to an acceptable standard of accuracy. They have an appropriate range of vocabulary, patterns and verb tenses.
- The majority of pupils follow use of French by teachers or a native speaker.
- Pupils can read a variety of written materials using dictionaries appropriately as required.
- The majority write extensively with the help of a framework. The most skilful pupils' standard of writing is accurate and includes a good range of vocabulary, phrases and sentence patterns. The standard of course work is good across the ability range.

Shortcomings

- The standards of oral work, overall, are unsatisfactory. Across the ability range, pupils have little confidence and cannot conduct a more extended conversation. There are gaps in their information of basic vocabulary and sentence patterns.
- Pupils of moderate and lower ability have difficulty in extracting details from reading and listening work.

Since the last inspection, standards remain satisfactory in key stage 3 and have risen from unsatisfactory to satisfactory in key stage 4.

Art

Standards are good in key stage 3 and very good in key stage 4.

Key stages 3 and 4

Good features

- In key stage 3, pupils develop a good understanding of visual language and have a good grasp of terminology in both languages. They use line, colour, texture and shape effectively in their graphic and imaginative work.
- In key stage 4, pupils work confidently in a variety of two-dimensional media, including paint, collage and printing. They make confident use of technical vocabulary when speaking about their work.

- In key stages 3 and 4, pupils have a good understanding of artists, craftsmen and designers from Wales and other countries and cultures. They apply this information successfully to their own creative work.
- Key stage 4 pupils make effective use of their sketching pads to develop their initial ideas by recording, designing and assessing their work independently. In key stages 3 and 4, pupils make good progress in their ability to self-evaluate their work based on the expectations of the National Curriculum's programmes of study.
- Standards of KS4 pupils' portfolio work are good.

Shortcomings

- In KS3, pupils' skills when working in three dimensions and their ability to draw based on direct observations are not developed fully.

Since the last inspection, the good standards in key stage 3 have been maintained, and the standards have risen from good to very good in key stage 4.

Music

Standards are good in key stage 3 and key stage 4.

Key stage 3

Good features

- Standards of performing are good across the key stage. Pupils play in an ensemble and as individuals, using a good variety of instruments. They sing in tune with confidence.
- Standards of evaluation are good. Pupils use appropriate musical language.
- Pupils understand composition techniques and standards are satisfactory.

Shortcomings

- The use of information technology is limited.
- Pupils' composition work does not show enough ability to use a variety of resources.

Key stage 4

Good features

- Composition standards are very good. Pupils develop their own style and have original creative ideas.
- Standards of performing are good, and pupils can improve and enhance their performances.
- Pupils show a good awareness of elements of music by responding to recorded music.

Shortcomings

- An insufficient grasp of musical language impairs standards of evaluation.

Since the last inspection standards have risen from satisfactory to good in key stage 3 and key stage 4.

Physical education

Standards are satisfactory in key stage 3 and good in key stage 4.

Key stage 3

Good features

- Pupils perform a number of coherent movements in gymnastics to create simple sequences.
- Pupils use resources and equipment carefully and safely.
- Year 9 boys have a range of lifesaving and swimming skills and work confidently in the pool.

Shortcomings

- Some boys have difficulty in showing control and clarity of shape in gymnastics.
- Standards of netball in year 7 are uneven. Although some pupils pass and catch the ball well, others have difficulty with basic skills.

Key stage 4

Good features

- Year 10 girls are aware of the effect of exercise on the body.
- Year 10 boys can make good decisions in football by showing the ability to adapt in changing situations. They can foresee situations and adapt as required.
- On the GCSE course, the best pupils achieve very good standards. They undertake practical work with determination and understanding. They show the ability to evaluate performance and make subsequent improvements in quality.
- Pupils make good progress in their ability to work independently.

Shortcomings

- Some pupils have difficulty in coping with the theory work of the GCSE examination course.
- Standards of written course work vary.

Since the last inspection, standards have remained satisfactory in key stage 3 and have risen from satisfactory to good in key stage 4.

Religious education

Standards are satisfactory in key stage 3 and key stage 4.

Key stage 3

Good features

- Pupils have a broad and firm understanding of, and knowledge about, Christianity, and they apply this knowledge well to understand the key aspects of other beliefs.
- They develop a practical understanding of key religious concepts and use a wide range of terms in discussing religious issues.
- The majority of pupils become aware of the important questions that derive from everyday experiences.

Shortcomings

- Pupils do not use a variety of sources independently to research and the written work is limited in scope.

- Pupils do not understand well how religious beliefs and practices influence the everyday lives of individuals and communities.
- In year 9 in particular, a substantial number of pupils do not develop sensitivity to religious issues.

Key stage 4

Good features

- Pupils build on their previous information and understanding of Christianity and a number of other beliefs.
- A number of pupils use their knowledge of other subjects to deepen their understanding of religious or moral ideas.
- Pupils develop an understanding of the relationship between religion and the arts.

Shortcomings

- Pupils' knowledge of some aspects of religion tends to be superficial or limited.
- A number of pupils fail to show maturity when discussing religious and moral issues.
- Pupils do not show sufficient progress in their ability to conduct their own research into religion and moral issues.

Standards have remained satisfactory since the last inspection.

Religious studies

Standards of achievement are good in key stage 4.

Key stage 4

Good features

- Pupils make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith and Judaism.
- The more able pupils learn how to use evidence and to structure a well-balanced and effective debate.
- Orally, the majority of pupils can express and justify personal ideas coherently and confidently.

Shortcomings

- Pupils do not give sufficient attention to Christianity in contemporary Wales when considering moral and religious questions.
- Pupils do not make sufficient progress in their research skills and in their ability to use resources.

Standards have risen from satisfactory to good since the last inspection.

Motor vehicle and transport studies

Standards are good.

Key stage 4

Good features

- Pupils respond well to challenging practical tasks.
- They expand their knowledge of machines and develop basic engineering skills.
- They record their practical experiences in notes and diagrams.

Shortcomings

- There is insufficient development in the standard of written work.

The good standards of the last inspection have been maintained.

Catering

Standards are satisfactory.

Key stage 4

Good features

- Pupils can produce meals to a good standard.
- Pupils are aware of working conditions within the catering industry and of the type of service expected by the public.
- The work folders of the most able pupils include detailed analysis of the activities they undertake in hotels in the locality.

Shortcomings

- A feature of the work of some pupils is their lack of understanding of a professional approach to practical work and to presenting meals in an acceptable manner.

Standards have fallen from good to satisfactory since the last inspection.

Child development

Key stage 4

Standards are satisfactory.

Good features

- The best pupils express sensible and meaningful opinions on child development issues.
- Some written work on a child's physical, emotional and educational development is extensive and polished.
- Pupils are aware of the need to protect small children from dangerous situations.
- Pupils' knowledge and information develops with direct contact with individual children. Pupils discuss relevant issues with specialists who work in childcare.

Shortcomings

- On occasion, pupils do not contribute to class discussions and their written work is brief and erroneous. This impairs their understanding and progress.

Standards have remained satisfactory since the last inspection.

8. School improvement

8.1 Progress since the last inspection

In general, good progress has been made in relation to the key issues of the last inspection.

The good features are:

- quality of middle management has improved;
- significant progress in the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum;
- standards of work in the sixth form have improved significantly;
- standards have improved in French in key stage 4 and in information technology;
- attendance is now satisfactory; and
- appropriate attention has been given to health and safety issues.

8.2 Key issues for action

- Raising standards from unsatisfactory in French oral work in key stage 4.
- Raising standards and quality in subjects and aspects which are satisfactory.
- Further developing departmental systems of self-evaluation.

Annex

Sixth form annex

Background

Dyffryn Conwy is a naturally bilingual school for pupils aged 11 – 18 which is maintained by Conwy Local Education Authority (LEA). There are 96 students in the sixth form, two thirds of them girls.

The school serves the town of Llanrwst and the adjacent rural communities. 60% of the total number of pupils come from homes in which Welsh is the main language.

According to the school's evidence, the pupils come from a residential area that is neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. Around 10% of all pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is lower than the county and national averages for secondary schools.

Eighteen A/AS subjects and one vocational qualification are offered. Music technology is offered as an option; this is open to students from other local schools.

The last inspection of the school was held in the autumn term 1996.

1. Standards

In the **sixth form**, standards of achievement are:

- satisfactory in biology, physical education, sociology and in health and social care (GNVQ);
- unsatisfactory in Welsh second language;
- good in Welsh, English, mathematics, chemistry, physics, design technology, information technology, history, geography, religious studies, French and music; and
- very good in art and drama.

The general picture is of substantial improvement on the situation at the time of last inspection.

Over the last three years, there has been a pattern of general improvement in the post-16 results. In 2001, pupils' average score was similar to the national and county figures, but the rate of A-C grades was lower, as it was last year. The average score of pupils across every subject is higher than the national and county figure. Last year's AS results were good.

This year, around 50% of pupils gained the full qualification in communication, mostly at level 3. Around a third sat the numeracy examination successfully. Around 50% of pupils gained level 2 in ICT this year. This is a good achievement by a significant proportion of the pupils.

Pupils measure their own progress as a part of the learning process, and they collaborate in a number of subjects.

Sixth form students participate in a good range of community activities, and play a leading part in a number of extra-curricular activities and school events. Through the programme of community work, students make very good contributions to the daily life of the school and the community and develop personal and interpersonal skills in doing so. This means offering assistance in lessons to pupils with special needs and in technology and physical education lessons. The sixth form council meets every half term, with students learning how to deal with various issues and making decisions.

Students attend their lessons punctually and show high levels of dedication to their work. Attendance rates are satisfactory.

2. Quality of education

Teaching and assessment

In the sixth form, 97% of the teaching is satisfactory or better, with 71% good or very good.

The good quality of teachers' questioning develops pupils' understanding, with good emphasis on encouraging students to ask their own questions.

Through discussions with individuals, pupils are taught to self-evaluate and see for themselves how they might improve their work. Group work is effectively organised and helps students to draw conclusions before presenting their responses to the whole class.

Teachers succeed in encouraging students to study and work independently through purposeful tasks which require background research.

Learning experiences

The quality of the curriculum is good. The percentage of pupils who return to the sixth form is similar to the national average. A good number of students began studying four AS subjects in year 12 and the percentage of those who continue to study four subjects in year 13 is high.

There is a wide choice of academic subjects available to post-16 students. Options are adapted a little annually in an attempt to respond to pupils' choices. As a result, there are few clashes between subjects on the timetable. No student has taken advantage of the opportunity provided to study an additional subject in another school under the consortium arrangement.

Valuable community experiences are provided for students, as are additional lessons in key skills and personal and social education. Only a small number of students attend physical education lessons.

The school does not meet statutory requirements in relation to providing religious education in the sixth form.

The county's Young Enterprise competition has been supported over the years, where year 12 pupils are given the opportunity to form and run an imaginary "company". A team won the county prize last year but this year's project came to an end in its infancy.

Support and guidance

The quality of support and guidance is very good.

The options booklet gives clear and useful information on the courses offered. There are effective arrangements for student induction at the beginning of their period in the sixth form. This is followed by a system of regular interviews to encourage and maintain their development. A feature of the pastoral programme is the attention given to studying skills and self-evaluation in progress by students. Health education is of very good quality and there is a useful 'call-in' arrangement with the school nurse. The Centigrade project helps students to identify a suitable career path.

3. Leadership and management

The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is satisfactory. The senior management team knows the school well. They make extensive use of statistical analysis and there are effective arrangements in place in relation to SMT visits to classrooms. The quality of self-evaluation on a departmental level is satisfactory, as is planning for improvement. Although there are useful developments in some cases, departments do not, on the whole, give sufficient attention, when monitoring, to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements.

The quality of leadership and efficiency is good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and works closely with both deputies to set a clear direction for the school's work. There has been an obvious improvement in the leadership of heads of department since the last inspection. The school is an organised community despite the difficulties associated with operating from two sites, and the uncertainty concerning the future in this regard over the last few years.

The school makes efficient use of its budget. Overall, the size of learning groups in the sixth form means that the cost of provision is reasonable. Learning groups with small numbers of students are avoided by teaching bilingually.

4. Subjects and areas of learning

Curricular area: mathematics and science

Mathematics

Standards are good

Good features

- The majority of students make good progress in skills and in their ability to use them across the subject areas.
- Their written work is organised and shows the ability to reason.
- In statistics, students' work is thorough and their written work in mechanics is accurate.

Shortcomings

- At times, weaknesses in algebra skills affect pupils' progress in pure mathematics.
- Pupils have only a superficial understanding of a few concepts in mechanics.

Standards of achievement have risen from satisfactory to good since the last inspection.

Science

Standards are satisfactory in biology and good in chemistry and physics.

Good features

- Students have a sound knowledge of key concepts, particularly in chemistry and physics. They answer questions from examination papers from previous years thoroughly and to a high standard.
- Students construct detailed and structured notes to an appropriate standard in their files.
- In chemistry and physics, students can explain their work logically and through using suitable concepts and terms.

Shortcomings

- There are shortcomings in practical work in biology. Students have some difficulty in reasoning effectively orally and in applying biological knowledge from one context to another.

Since the last inspection, standards have remained satisfactory in biology and have risen from satisfactory to good in chemistry and physics.

Curricular area: engineering, design and manufacturing

Design technology

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Students' design and planning skills have developed well. Students research thoroughly and experiment confidently with various materials.
- The outcome of practical work is of a high standard.
- Students make good use of links with local industry to develop their work and learn how to collaborate with employers on specific projects.

Shortcomings

- Students' written work does not develop to its full potential.
- Students make little use of computers to enhance folder work, to process data and to design and manufacture.

The good standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

Curricular area: information and communication technology

Computer studies

Standards are good.

Good features

- Students understand and can explain theory and applications at an appropriate level.
- All the students make consistent progress despite that their previous experience of studying the subject varies significantly.

- They undertake project work confidently and show creativity and independence.

Standards have risen from satisfactory to good since the last inspection.

Curricular area: hospitality, sport, leisure and travel
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Physical education

Standards are satisfactory.

Good features

- Students respond well to the learning activities, showing the ability to work effectively as individuals and in pairs or small groups.
- Students make good progress in their understanding of anatomy and physiology, with some students showing good understanding.

Shortcomings

- On the advanced subsidiary course, the limited grasp of English terminology by a small number of students impedes their progress.
- The standard of written work varies, with examples of careless and unfinished work.

Standards have remained satisfactory since the last inspection.

Curricular area: health and social care
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Health and social care (GNVQ intermediate and higher levels)

Standards are satisfactory.

Good features

- Students respond positively to every aspect of the course while developing skills in research, analysis and recording information at an appropriate level.
- They make good progress in understanding and skills through their experiences in nursery schools and old people's homes.
- Students on the higher course can produce extended written work of a good standard.

Shortcomings

- Some students on the intermediate course show some immaturity when discussing principles and ideas in the class.
- The standard of their written work is uneven, and spelling and syntax errors are common weaknesses.

Standards have remained satisfactory since the last inspection.

Curricular area: visual arts and performing, and the media

Art

Standards are very good.

Good features

- Students' self-motivation is high. They can discuss their work confidently and intelligently, noting how they can improve it.
- Standards of designing and making are good in a range of 2D and 3D media. Students use the computers to handle pictures on screen and print them in order to develop them through another medium.
- Notes in the students' sketchpads show the way in which their acute thinking skills are used to research ideas.
- Students make effective use of the local environment and other parts of Wales as starting points for their work.

Since the last inspection standards have risen from good to very good.

Music³

Standards are good.

Good features

- Students perform to a very good standard. They are confident when singing and playing a good range of instruments.
- Composition standards are good. Students use computers effectively to compose in different idioms and styles, showing a good understanding of composition techniques.

Shortcomings

- Although evaluation standards are satisfactory overall, there are gaps in students' musical vocabulary.

Since the last inspection, the good standards have been maintained.

Drama

Standards are very good.

Good features

- Students demonstrate shrewdness in analysing characters and their motivation, as well as the themes, style and linguistic features of plays from different periods.
- They question and discuss particularly well to ensure a depth of understanding. These discussions form the basis for performances of a high standard from students. Students can discuss and perform in Welsh and in English as required.
- They can offer various interpretations of characters and situations through their readings. Their research reading work is also good as preparation for their performances and to collect background information.
- Students write effectively about their preparations for performances, showing the ability to self-evaluate successfully. They analyse the essentials of a gripping performance very well. They also analyse the craft of different dramatists well.

Drama was not offered as an A Level subject at the time of the last inspection.

³ Due to the staffing situation in the music department at the time of the inspection, lessons were not observed. Standards were determined through discussion with students and through listening to their performances and compositions.

Curricular area: humanities

History

Standards are good.

Good features

- Students have good knowledge and can use it in an effective manner. Their grasp on historical concepts is firm.
- They evaluate historical evidence skilfully and use their understanding as a base for their explanations and debates. They come to valid and intelligent conclusions.
- Students plan written work effectively and evaluate it by using checklists.
- Although there is some variation, students make intelligent and clear contributions to class discussions.

Standards have risen from satisfactory to good since the last inspection.

Geography

Standards are good.

Good features

- Students discuss complicated issues, showing firm knowledge and understanding of aspects of the subject.
- Their research skills are developing well. Students can use the information they have in new or different contexts.
- They have a good understanding of the inter-relationship between environmental, economic and social issues.

Since the last inspection, standards have risen from satisfactory to good.

Religious studies

Standards are good.

Good features

- Students have a good understanding of Buddhism and elements of religious philosophy.
- The more able students can use their understanding of philosophical principles to consider moral and religious questions.
- The students use the Internet effectively to extend their information on philosophical aspects and current affairs.

Shortcomings

- Pupils do not use a sufficiently wide range of literature to enrich their religious and philosophical information and understanding.
- The less able pupils' efforts to use philosophical and religious principles when dealing with contemporary problems are superficial.

Standards have risen from satisfactory to good since the last inspection.

Sociology

Standards are satisfactory.

Good features

- Students have a good understanding of the principles of basic sociological research. They make good use of resources and displays to familiarise themselves with key ideas and theories.
- Students make intelligent contributions to class discussions, showing increasing confidence in their use of concepts and terminology.
- They can make useful notes based on a variety of sources.

Shortcomings

- Students tend to draw conclusions which are not sufficiently based on evidence. Some students base their debates on only one explanation.
- Although some written work shows good progress in the ability to analyse and present a viewpoint, there is often too much emphasis on being descriptive.

Standards have remained satisfactory since the last inspection.

Curricular area: languages and communication

Welsh

Standards are good.

Good features

- Students contribute maturely to class and group discussions and benefit by carefully considering each other's contributions. Comments are analytical and students can link a succession of comments when reporting back to the class on themes and style.
- In written work, students express a well-balanced opinion effectively while developing their debates and defending their viewpoints.
- The literature appreciation work is innovative, mature in style and includes appropriate quotations to reinforce comments.

The good standards of the last inspection have been maintained.

Welsh second language

Standards are unsatisfactory.

Good features

- Students listen attentively and can understand and follow an extensive use of Welsh as a teaching medium.
- They are willing to offer brief responses when studying a set poem.
- Students have developing knowledge of the terminology of literary style.

Shortcomings

- There are few oral responses that exceed one or two words. Students have an insufficient grasp of basic sentence patterns to enable them to cope with the requirements of the syllabus. They often turn to English to express themselves.
- Students have difficulty in questioning and answering each other independently in a small group.
- Written work is erroneous. Students do not write sufficiently regularly in Welsh there is little progress in the quality and accuracy of their work.

Standards have fallen from satisfactory to unsatisfactory since the last inspection.

English

Standards are good.

Good features

- Students can discuss the content, structure, style and linguistic features of literature effectively. They understand layers of meaning and the connotations of words and phrases well.
- They can recognise and appreciate a range of technical and style features effectively.
- Their written work is often of a good standard. The most able students produce essays of a very high standard.

Since the last inspection, standards have risen from satisfactory to good.

French

Standards are good.

Good features

- Students can speak confidently on a range of issues in a sufficiently eloquent way and with good accentuation. They make spontaneous comments and take part in conversations without preparation and express their viewpoints.
- Students can deal with a variety of reading texts confidently.
- They can understand use of French by their teachers and respond appropriately.
- On the whole, students write extensively, presenting viewpoints and well-balanced opinions. They have a good range of vocabulary and phrases.
- They have a good understanding of France, its people and its traditions.

Shortcomings

- At times, students' written work includes too many grammatical errors.
- Standards have risen from satisfactory to good since the last inspection.

5. Recommendations

- Raise standards from unsatisfactory in Welsh second language.
- Meet statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form.

A. Basic information about the school

Name of school	Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy
Type of school	Maintained by the LEA
Age range of pupils	11-18
School address	Ffordd Tan-yr-ysgol Llanrwst
Post code	LL26 0AP
Phone number	01492 640516/640649

Headteacher	Ifor Glyn Efans
Date of appointment	September 1992
Chairman of Governors/ Appropriate authority	Councillor Dafydd Parry Jones
Lead Inspector	Iolo Dafydd HMI
Dates of inspection	22 April – 3 May 2002

B. School data and indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>								
Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	150	140	132	139	126	54	42	783

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (FTE)
Number of teachers	48	2.29	50.29

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher ratio (FTE) (excluding special classes)	15.57:1
Average size of teaching groups	21.2
General contact ratio	81%

<i>Attendance percentages for three full terms prior to inspection</i>								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Spring 2001	92.0	89.3	91.0	89.6	88.3	94.1	92.3	90.9
Summer 2001	93.5	93.7	90.4	91.0	92.4	93.8	94.0	92.7
Autumn 2001	93.1	91.7	90.7	88.9	86.0	90.2	93.1	90.5

<i>Number of pupils suspended during the 12 months prior to the inspection</i>	<i>Temporary: 6 Permanent: 3</i>
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C. Results of NC assessments and public examinations

Results of KS3 National Curriculum Assessment: 2001															
Number of pupils in Y9: 137															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	N	B	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 +
Welsh	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0		0	0	0	4	11	3	36	1	0
		National	0	0	1		0	0	1	6	22	3	28	1	0
	Test	School	0	3	0	0				3	8	3	31	2	
		National	0	2	1	1				4	21	3	28	1	
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	1	0		0	0	4	16	23	3	20	4	0
		National	0	1	1		0	0	3	10	22	3	21	8	0
	Test	School	0	4	0	4				9	24	3	16	7	
		National	0	3	2	3				9	22	2	19	1	
Maths	Teacher assessment	School	0	1	0		0	0	0	9	33	2	22	9	0
		National	0	1	0		0	0	1	10	23	2	26	1	1
	Test	School	0	4	0	0				8	26	2	28	7	
		National	0	6	1	1				8	22	2	27	1	
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	1	0		0	0	0	7	25	3	31	7	0
		National	0	1	1		0	0	1	10	24	3	23	9	0
	Test	School	0	5	0	0				6	12	4	26	1	
		National	0	4	1	1				9	22	2	24	1	

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either Welsh (first language) or English			
according to teacher assessment		according to test	
In school:	47.8	In school:	53
In Wales:	51	In Wales:	50

D – Pupils exempt under statutory arrangements from a part of the National Curriculum
A – Pupils who have failed to register a level due to absence
F - Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence
W – Pupils working towards level 1

GCSE and GCE results for 15 year old pupils			
Number of 15 year old pupils on the school register in January 2001: 103			
In 2001, percentage of 15 year old pupils that:			
	School	LEA	Wales
registered to sit 5 or more GCSEs	96	89	86
achieved 5 or more GCSEs, grades A*-C	71	54	50
achieved 5 or more GCSEs, grades A*-G	95	88	85
achieved GCSEs, grades A*- C in mathematics, science and Welsh (first language) or English	56	38	37
studied at least one entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	100	98	96
achieved one GCSE grade A*-C or more	96	77	73
achieved one GCSE grade A*-G or more	99	94	92
did not achieve any GCSE grade	1	6	8
achieved one entry level qualification or more only	2	2	3

A-Level/AS Level results of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18			
Number of pupils who were 16, 17 and 18 years old in January 2001: 37			
Number of pupils registered for 2 GCE A/AS Level examinations or more or an equivalent qualification in 2001: 35			
	School	HE	Wales
Percentage of pupils registered who achieved 2 or more A-C grades	57	66	62
Percentage of pupils registered who achieved 2 or more A-E grades	91	94	93
Average points score of candidates	18	19	18

D. Evidence base for the inspection

- 186 lessons or part lessons were inspected, as well as a selection of the pupils' previous work, ensuring an appropriate range in terms of age and ability;
- a cross-section of registration periods and collective acts of worship were visited;
- discussions were held with a wide range of teachers and pupils about their work;
- all the documentation presented by the school prior to the inspection was analysed;
- pre-inspection meetings were held with the senior management team, the governing body and staff; and
- a meeting with parents was held prior to the inspection and responses to the parent survey were analysed.

E. Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Name	Whole school aspects	Subjects
Iolo Dafydd	1, 2, 3.1, 6.1, 6.2, 8.1, 8.2, annex.	Welsh second language
Meilyr Rowlands	4.1, 5.3, 5.5	Science, Information technology
David Williams	5.2, 5.4, 6.3	Mathematics
Rhiannon Lloyd	3.2, 5.1	English
Alun Morgan	4.1, 5.6	History, Sociology
John Roberts	4.2, 4.3, 5.7, 6.3	
Ifan Glyn Jones	5.5	
Paul Morgan		Religious education
Ray Owen		Art
Menna W Jones		Geography
R Esther Jones		Design technology, Health and safety
Ellen Roberts		Modern languages
Delyth Williams		Science
Manon Wyn Siôn		Welsh
Dewiena Thompson		Music
Non Evans		Physical education

The inspection team wish to thank the governors, staff and pupils of Ysgol Dyffryn Conwy for their co-operation during the inspection.