

REPORT

on the

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

**GILFACH FARGOED PRIMARY SCHOOL
VERE STREET
GILFACH
BARGOED
CF81 8LB**

School Number: 676/2121

Date of Inspection: 25th – 27th February 2003

By

Mr Eifion R Morgan
Registered Inspector W087/16248

Under Estyn contract number: T/105/02P

© **CROWN COPYRIGHT 2003**

This report may be reproduced for non-commercial educational purposes but only as a whole and provided it is reproduced verbatim without adaptation and the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of the full report are available from the school. Under the School Inspection Act 1996, the school must provide copies of the report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the cost of reproduction may be made to others requesting a copy of the report.

CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES

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

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

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

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

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

CONTENTS

	Page
1. CONTEXT	
The school and its priorities	1
2. MAIN FINDINGS	
The main findings of the report	1
3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	
3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning	5
3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum	5
4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL	
4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	6
4.2 Behaviour and attitudes	7
4.3 Attendance	8
5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION	
5.1 Teaching	8
5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting	9
5.3 Curriculum	10
5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare	11
5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)	12
5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions	12
5.7 Partnership with industry	13
6. MANAGEMENT	
6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement	14
6.2 Leadership and efficiency	15
6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	16

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

Provision for the under-fives	16
English	19
Mathematics	20
Science	21
Welsh second language	23
Design and technology	24
Information technology	25
History	26
Geography	27
Art	28
Music	29
Physical education	29
Religious education	30

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1	Progress since the last inspection	31
8.2	Key issues for action	32

APPENDIX

A.	Basic information about the school	33
B.	School data and indicators	33
C.	Results of National Curriculum assessments and public examinations	34
D.	The evidence base of the inspection	36
E.	Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team	37

1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

The school is located in Gilfach Fargoed, a village adjacent and to the south of Bargoed in the Rhymney valley. Practically all pupils come from the village which incorporates a housing estate built in the 1970s and some private housing. The school describes its intake as neither advantaged nor disadvantaged and comprising the full range of ability. At present there are 209 pupils on roll and a further 13 pupils attend the nursery in the mornings only. The number of pupils attending the school has fallen over the last few years. The school has identified 38 pupils (18%) as having special educational needs (SEN) and a further four pupils have statements of special educational needs. There are 46 pupils (19.6%) who are registered as being entitled to receive free school meals. English is the language spoken at home by all pupils and none speaks Welsh to an equivalent standard. There are no pupils at the school for whom English is an additional language.

The school teaching staff comprise 10 teachers, including a part-time nursery teacher. The headteacher took up her post in 2001 and since then five new teachers have been appointed to the school. These include the deputy head on a permanent contract and four other teachers, including the nursery teacher, on temporary contracts.

The aims of the school, as outlined in the School Development Plan, are encapsulated in the school's motto which is "Learning Together" and its aims reflect this in that it aims to create an ethos conducive to learning and working together. The school has set ambitious but realistic targets for improvement.

The school was previously inspected in January 1998.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

The school is a good school where pupils enjoy good quality teaching and a wide range of educational opportunities. Pupils' behaviour overall is very good and they have a very good attitude to work.

- The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and the pupils are making good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. A number of children entering the nursery have limited communication skills but by the end of the reception stage their standards of achievement in the six areas of learning are as follows:

Areas of Learning	Standards
Language, literacy and communications skills	Good
Personal and social development.	Good
Mathematical development	Good
Knowledge and understanding of the word.	Satisfactory
Physical development	Good
Creative development	Satisfactory

- Standards of achievement in the National Curriculum (NC) subjects and religious education are as follows:

Subjects	Key Stage 1 (KS1)	Key Stage 2 (KS2)
English	Good	Good
Mathematics	Good	Good
Science	Very good	Good
Welsh second language	Good	Satisfactory
Information technology	Good	Satisfactory
Design and technology	Good	Satisfactory
History	Good	Good
Geography	Good	Good
Art	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Music	Good	Good
Physical education	Good	Good
Religious education	Very good	Good

- Standards of achievement in the 47 lessons observed during the inspection were very good in approximately 20% of lessons, good in a further 60% and satisfactory in the remaining 20%.
- Pupils in KS1 make good and sometimes very good progress across the curriculum. Pupils' progress is good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and very good in science. Good progress is also evident in Welsh second language, information technology, design and technology, history, geography, music and physical education. Pupils make very good progress in religious education. Progress is satisfactory in art.
- Pupils in KS2 make good progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and good progress in history, geography, music, physical education and religious education. Progress is satisfactory in Welsh second language, information technology, design and technology and art.
- Standards achieved in key skills are generally good. Pupils have good listening skills and they read and write well. Standards of presentation are generally very good across the curriculum in both key stages. Pupils' speaking skills are satisfactory in that many pupils lack fluency to speak at length and to develop their thoughts, such as in class discussion. Pupils' numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) skills are generally good and pupils' skills are well used across the curriculum.
- The school's results in the NC Assessments (2002) showed that pupils' attainment at the end of KS1, based on teacher assessment, were above national and LEA averages in English, mathematics and science. The results were above those for similar schools in Wales based on the number of pupils registered as being entitled to free school meals. The school's NC Assessment (2002) results showed that pupils' attainment, based on tasks and tests, were slightly below national averages in English at the end of KS2, below national averages in mathematics and above national averages in science. The results are below LEA averages and below those for similar schools in Wales (based on the number

of pupils achieving the expected levels) in English, mathematics and science. However, analysis of NC Assessment results over the last three years indicates that standards achieved by pupils in KS2 are improving.

- The good and very good quality of teaching in the early years, in KS1 and in KS2 is a notable feature of the school and makes a substantial contribution to pupils' standards of achievement. In lessons seen during the inspection the quality of teaching was good or better in approximately 85% of lessons. Overall the quality of teaching was very good in approximately 25% of lessons, good in about 60%, and satisfactory in the remaining 15%. This is well above national expectations. A very good feature of most lessons is the very good provision made for all pupils of all abilities and in particular for those identified with special educational needs. Tasks are appropriately differentiated and well matched to their needs and abilities. These pupils are very well supported by classroom assistants and this is a significant factor in the very good progress these children make.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides pupils with a good range of learning experiences. The curriculum for the under-five's is appropriate and well designed to meet the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. It effectively takes into account children's individual needs and their differing rates of development. However, opportunities to develop pupils' speaking skills through constructive play are limited and some of the work is too adult directed and inhibits children's imagination and free speech. The curriculum for pupils in KS1 and KS2 is enhanced by visits locally and further afield; by visitors to the school and through other extra curricular activities. Good arrangements are in place for promoting pupils' personal and social education and clear policies are in place to eliminate oppressive behaviour and to promote equal opportunities. Homework, in the main, is used effectively to reinforce class work. Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers' comments are constructive.
- Curriculum co-ordinators have been designated for all NC subjects and religious education. In subjects such as English, their role is well developed in that the subject has been effectively monitored and changes made where necessary to the curriculum resulting in improved pupil performance. In other instances however, curriculum co-ordinators have only recently been appointed and consequently their role is underdeveloped.
- The quality of assessment, recording and reporting pupils' achievement is good overall. The recently produced documents give teachers clear guidelines, and current procedures are good in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' progress is effectively tracked and individual targets set for improvement. Children under five are assessed when they begin school and the results are effectively used to plan the work for them. Assessment in the foundation subjects is satisfactory and is largely dependent on records kept by individual teachers and informal end of year discussion between teachers.
- The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good and all the pupils make good and often very good progress. Early identification of pupils likely to have special educational needs is seen as a priority and resources have been effectively targeted so as to support these pupils. Class teachers consistently modify the work to meet the needs of pupils with SEN and they are well supported by classroom assistants.

- The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and pupils' response to this provision is very good. Acts of collective worship are very well planned and used to extend pupils' understanding of those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils respect each other and are tolerant of the views and beliefs of others. They are suitably encouraged to respect the beliefs and cultures of others and be tolerant of others. Pupils have a good understanding of cultural diversity and the heritage of Wales. Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is effectively developed across the curriculum and other school events, such as school concerts and visits.
- Pupil's behaviour and attitude to learning are very good and make a positive contribution to the very good quality of life at the school. The quality of provision for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils is also very good. All pupils in the school are equally valued and treated with understanding and respect.
- Partnership with parents and the community, schools and other institutions is good overall. Parents are kept informed of their children's progress through twice-yearly formal reports. Satisfactory arrangements are in place enabling parents to meet teachers after school on an informal basis. Links with the community are very good and good partnerships have been established with industry and local businesses. A home-school agreement is in place. Attendance is satisfactory and pupils arrive punctually.
- The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is good. The headteacher has a clear view of the areas for school improvement. Pupils' test results are used to set targets for every pupil, and their progress is monitored. The School Development Plan itemises clearly the school's priorities for improvement and how they are to be implemented.
- The quality of leadership and efficiency is good overall. The school has explicit aims and values and a commitment to improve standards whilst ensuring equality of opportunity for all. A senior management team has been identified and co-ordinators appointed for all curriculum subjects and relevant aspects. However, considerable staff changes have occurred recently. Consequently the staff involved, including members of the senior management team and curriculum co-ordinators, have not had time and opportunities to establish themselves fully in their new roles and to use their professional expertise to best effect.
- The governing body is very well informed and actively involved in school developments. Governor's individual expertise is well used and through its committee structure they maintain a good oversight of school finances and other aspects of school life.
- Overall, the school's staffing, accommodation and resources are good and used effectively to promote pupils' achievement. The school buildings are very well maintained and the school and its environs provide pupils with an attractive learning environment.
- The school has satisfactorily addressed the key issues identified in the previous inspection report.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

- The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and the pupils are making good progress toward the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. Standards achieved are good in language, literacy and communication skills, personal and social development, mathematics and physical development satisfactory in knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development.
- In KS1 pupils' standards of achievement in are good in English and mathematics and very good in science. Standards of achievement are also good in Welsh second language, information technology, design and technology, history, geography, music and physical education. Standards are very good in religious education and satisfactory in art. All pupils' progress is reflected in the standards they achieve.
- In KS2 standards of achievement are good in English, mathematics and science. Standards of achievement are also good in history, geography, music, physical education and religious education. All pupils make good progress in these subjects. Standards of achievement are satisfactory in Welsh second language, information technology, design and technology and art. Pupils make satisfactory progress in these subjects in KS2.
- In lessons seen during the inspection, standards of achievement were very good in approximately 20% of lessons, good in a further 60% of lessons and satisfactory in the remaining 20%. No lessons were observed where standards of achievement were unsatisfactory.
- The school's results in the NC Assessments (2002) showed that pupils' attainment at the end of KS1, based on teacher assessment, were above national and local averages in English, mathematics and science. The results were above those for similar schools in Wales based on the number of pupils registered as being entitled to free school meals. The school's results at KS2 showed that pupils' attainment, based on tasks and tests, were slightly below national averages in English, below national averages in mathematics and above national averages in science overall. The results are below local average and below those for similar schools in Wales (based on the number of pupils achieving the expected levels) in English, mathematics and science. The results, however, indicate that standards achieved by pupils in KS2 are improving.

3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum

Overall the standards achieved in the key skills of listening, reading, writing, numeracy and ICT are generally good across the curriculum. Pupils' speaking skills are satisfactory.

- Children in the nursery and reception classes develop their key skills of early literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT effectively through a good range of purposeful activities in the six areas of learning. Whilst some children have immature speaking skills initially the school's emphasis on developing their personal and social skills enables them to make

good progress. By the end of the reception stage, pupils have good listening, reading and writing, numeracy and ICT skills. Their speaking skills are satisfactory.

- Pupils in KS1 and KS2 have good listening skills. Most pupils concentrate and listen attentively to their teachers and peers and show a good understanding of instructions and commands. Speaking skills, however, are limited in comparison to the other key skills. Progress is made throughout both key stages but pupils' lack fluency and an ability to develop their point of view. Pupils are also reluctant to speak in Welsh.
- Pupils' reading skills are built up gradually through both key stages. Pupils in KS1 respond enthusiastically to books; they read their own topic books, and value reading as a source of pleasure and information.
- Pupils in KS2 successfully use their reading skills to look for information and to develop as independent learners especially through using the reference library, as in history and geography. Older pupils analyse what they read to answer specific inquiries.
- Pupils' writing skills are well used across the curriculum. In KS1, pupils write logically and clearly but spelling is sometimes inaccurate. By the end of KS2, pupils write at length, having developed a range of writing techniques to suit different purposes, for example, labelling diagrams in science and writing letters in history. The presentation of work and handwriting throughout the school, in all subjects, is good and pupils' work is well displayed in classrooms and other areas in the school.
- Skills in numeracy are good and pupils successfully apply these skills across the curriculum. Pupils benefit from regular mental mathematics and problem solving activities and they apply and interpret data well.
- Pupils of all ages are confident in their use of computers. They successfully use their developing skills to support learning across the curriculum.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and pupils' response to this provision is also very good.

- The school makes good provision to enable pupils to know and understand Christian values and beliefs and those of other religions.
- The well organised, varied and well-planned acts of collective worship are clearly enjoyed by pupils. These collective acts of worship have a high level of pupil participation and make a very positive contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils develop an understanding of people and children who are less fortunate than themselves and how their charitable contributions have been used.

- Charitable contributions made by the school have been generous. Pupils are currently involved with a charity that provides care in the community for disadvantaged children in Romania.
- Achievements of individual children in the school are recognised and celebrated. Certificates for special help in the classroom, good behaviour in the playground and special effort with schoolwork are presented by the head teacher, and displayed for all to see.
- The school keenly promotes good manners, care and respect for others and ensures that children know right from wrong. Children are taught to share and take turns. They are encouraged to help each other and learn to do this instinctively. The school has a policy for race equality and pupils are encouraged to have respect for the beliefs and traditions of others. Their knowledge of other faiths and cultures is well developed.
- Pupils socialise well both with their peers and with adults. They respect the school environment and are very welcoming to visitors. Children are proud of their school and the community, and wear their uniform with pride.
- Incidental Welsh is used throughout the school and children are aware of some of the cultural traditions of Wales. Notices and displays in the classroom and around the school contain a high proportion of written Welsh. Visits to local historical sites such as the Rhondda Heritage Centre contribute to a clearer understanding by pupils of the culture and history of Wales.
- The school's programme of extra-curricular sporting activities and art are supported and enjoyed by pupils in KS2.

4.2 Behaviour and attitudes

The school is an orderly community and standards of behaviour are very good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are also very good.

- Standards of behaviour and the attitudes of pupils in the classroom and around the school are a particular strength of the school, and have a positive effect on the quality of life and pupils' levels of achievement.
- Pupils are well aware of what is expected of them. They are polite and considerate in classrooms, on the playground, at assembly and at lunch, and while moving around the school.
- Pupils show consideration towards one another, and are respectful and courteous to teachers and visitors. They co-operate well and help one another when engaged in group activities. Pupils' curiosity is stimulated by well-designed lessons and this very effectively sustains their interest and motivation over extended periods of time.
- Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are few and they are dealt with quietly and firmly. Discussion of personal relationships in lessons and watchful monitoring effectively eliminates bullying and other forms of discrimination.

- The positive attitudes to learning, and the interests shown in work are very good and sustain pupils' concentration, commitment and enjoyment. Teachers' use of praise, rewards and sanctions is very effective in promoting a very good standard of behaviour.

4.3 Attendance

Attendance levels are satisfactory and pupils arrive punctually at school.

- Attendance figures averaged 92 per cent during the term prior to the inspection; a slight improvement on the previous two terms.
- Registration sheets are completed at the beginning of each session, and are correctly codified. Data from these sheets are entered onto an electronic register each week, which produces statistical data for review and analysis. Monitoring of attendance is carried out by the head teacher, and during occasional visits by the Education Welfare Officer.
- Appropriate action is taken in the event of any concern about an individual's attendance, and recorded in the headteacher's Cause for Concern book. However, such records do not always indicate times and dates.
- Parents co-operate by notifying the school of reasons for their child's absence.
- The school recognises and rewards pupils whose attendance records are good.
- Punctuality throughout the day is good. With few exceptions, children arrive at school on time, allowing morning and afternoon sessions to begin promptly.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

In all, 47 lessons were observed including every year group was observed being taught literacy and numeracy. The quality of teaching was good or better in approximately 85% of lessons and satisfactory in 15%. In approximately 25% of lessons the quality of teaching was very good. This is well above national expectations and very commendable in view of the staff changes and those on temporary contracts.

- The quality of teaching in the under-fives classes was very good in 25% of lessons, good in approximately 63%, and satisfactory in the remaining 12%. These lessons are well planned and the work well matched to pupils' ability and prior attainment. Very good emphasis is given to developing the children's personal and social skills which effectively develops their listening skills and self confidence.
- The quality of teaching in KS1 was very good in 33% of lessons, good in a further 50% and satisfactory in the remaining 17%. In KS2, the quality of teaching was very good in 22% of lessons, good in 63%, and satisfactory in the remaining 15%.

- Good and very good teaching incorporates good classroom management strategies. These lessons proceed at a good pace and teaching techniques are well matched to lesson objectives. Pupils are well aware of intended lesson outcomes and this effectively keeps them focused on the task in hand. In these lessons plenary sessions are well used to consolidate learning.
- A notable feature of lessons in both key stages is the degree to which the work meets pupils' needs. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are making very good progress through well-directed tasks that are matched to their abilities and prior attainment. Support staff are very effectively deployed and keep careful records of pupils' progress. They make a very valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
- Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. Lessons are well planned in terms of content and, in the main, they build on previous knowledge and understanding. In some instances, there was a degree of unnecessary repetition in the work planned.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good overall. A pleasant classroom ethos exists and pupils' contributions are valued and respected. This effectively gives them confidence to contribute in class and helps them to develop their speaking skills. Teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms of academic achievement and discipline. These expectations are very largely met.

5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting

The overall quality of assessment, recording and reporting is good.

- The assessment and recording policy has recently been amended and now clearly outlines the school's assessment procedures but is yet to be monitored and implemented effectively across the curriculum.
- The school complies with the requirements for the national baseline assessment of children under five. This provides an effective system for assessing the achievements of these children and provides useful information for planning. Staff in both classes work well together and this ensures that children's progress in speaking is good.
- Procedures for teacher assessment at the end of KS1 and teacher assessment along with end of KS2 testing, meet statutory requirements. The school analyses the results of NC tests and uses benchmarking to identify the school's performance so as to highlight any areas for further development.
- In addition to statutory assessment at the end of the key stages, all year groups are assessed using Reading Progress Tests and National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in mathematics tests. This work is levelled for each individual pupil and the results placed on individual pupil tracking forms. The information is used to inform planning, including on the relevant individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils with SEN, and passed on to the next teacher.

- A manageable informative proforma for assessing writing has been developed with links to key learning objectives. These link targets for improvement and to individual pupil targets. Pupils are actively involved in the target setting process and this helps them to be aware of their own learning and is effective in raising their own standards. These targets are in pupils' writing books and are reviewed at the end by the teacher and pupil. This proforma is now being adapted for numeracy.
- Ongoing assessment opportunities are identified in medium and short-term planning and effective use is made of assessment information to plan on-going work. Assessment and recording procedures in the non-core subjects are satisfactory but not consistently applied. Assessment in the foundation subjects is largely dependent on records kept by individual teachers and informal discussion between teachers.
- Pupil's work is marked regularly. Comments are encouraging and often inform pupils as to how their work can be improved. The keeping of school portfolios to aid the moderation of standards in individual subjects is still at a developmental stage.
- The new end-of-year reports to parents give a good indication of a pupil's progress during the academic year, an indication of the way ahead for the pupil and offer the opportunity for a written comment by parents. However, teachers' comments in the non-core subjects, on occasion, lack consistency.

5.3 Curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum provided is good and fully meets statutory requirements. The religious education curriculum is based on the local authority agreed syllabus.

- The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and the pupils are making good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. It effectively takes into account children's individual needs and their differing rates of development. However, opportunities for constructive play are under exploited and some of the art work is too adult directed.
- The curriculum for KS1 and KS2 is broad, balanced and relevant to pupils' needs, interest and abilities. All subjects have appropriate time allocations and pupils' learning is enhanced by visits to areas of interest in the locality and further afield. It is equally accessible to all. Particularly effective arrangements are in place to ensure that pupils with special educational needs have access to work which is well matched to their needs and abilities.
- Policies and schemes of work are in place for all NC subjects and religious education. Lesson plans incorporate provision for the inclusion of key skills, however, the planning does not always ensure the progressive development of key skills across the whole age range.
- Homework is set appropriately and the school has recently developed imaginative homework packs in literacy and numeracy. Homework makes an effective contribution to pupils' learning. A home-school agreement is in place.

- The school has satisfactory arrangements for promoting pupils' personal and social education (PSE) and is based on the Qualifications Authority for Wales Curriculum and Assessment (ACCAC) guidelines. Provision for ensuring racial harmony is good and is well reflected in pupils' knowledge and understanding of racial issues.
- Pupils experience a good range of extra-curricular activities. Both boys and girls have equality of access to clubs such as art, netball and soccer clubs.
- The school gives good emphasis to developing Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig across the curriculum, as well as through other school activities. Welsh is used incidentally, and pupils sing Welsh songs. Studies in history and geography extend pupils' knowledge of the locality and further afield.
- No pupils are disapplied from the NC and no pupil is receiving a modified curriculum.

5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

The overall provision for pupils' support, guidance and welfare is very good.

- The school provides a welcoming and caring environment in which pupils feel happy and secure. Teachers and support staff know the pupils very well and display an evident concern for their well-being.
- Nursery children adjust very well to the transition from home to school because of the well-organised arrangements for their induction and the calm, nurturing environment created for them by the Nursery staff.
- The academic progress, behaviour and attendance of all pupils is carefully monitored and recorded. Pupils with special educational needs receive very good support within the classroom.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is good. Relevant issues are raised in subjects such as science, physical education and religious education.
- The school has effective child protection procedures and all staff, including the nursery nurse and a governor, have recently received up-to-date training from the Child Protection Development Officer.
- The headteacher and a governor conduct monthly health and safety review checks to ensure the health and safety of the pupils when in the school's care. The Health and Safety Officer from the local authority also carries out an annual audit. The school caretaker plays a very important role in maintaining a secure, clean environment for the pupils.
- One teacher and all the lunch time supervisors have first aid qualifications and any incidents are recorded in an accident book.
- Clear policies are in place to eliminate oppressive behaviour and to promote equal opportunities. The school's provision is socially inclusive.

5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)

The school's provision for pupils with special education needs is very good. All pupils make good and often very good progress. They achieve good standards relative to their abilities.

- There are 42 pupils on the school's SEN register, of whom four have statements of special educational need. A consistently very good feature of the provision is that these pupils have access to the same broad and balanced curriculum as other pupils.
- The head teacher is the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO.) She gives a clear and positive lead to the school.
- Another consistently very good feature is the way in which class teachers modify work to meet the needs of pupils with SEN so that they usually complete and succeed in the tasks they are given. As a result, they have a positive attitude to their work and are happy to share it with the rest of the class.
- Nursery nurses and class assistants receive a variety of training and support, they are knowledgeable about pupils' individual needs and provide very good support for pupils identified with SEN.
- The school's SEN register gives a clear indication of the needs of pupils. Pupils often come off the register as a result of the very good progress that they make.
- Early identification of pupils likely to have SEN is a priority and resources have been effectively targeted in KS1 to reduce the number of pupils with learning difficulties. The school plans to extend this policy to the under-fives in the near future.
- Individual education plans (IEPs) are written for pupils with the help of a recently purchased IEP writer. They clearly identify pupils' needs and criteria for their successful achievement. Progress is tracked and regularly reviewed in consultation with parents, pupils and staff. As current targets are achieved, new ones are set. Overall pupils achieve good standards relative to their abilities.
- A member of the Governing Body actively supports the work of pupils with SEN and meets the SENCO on a regular basis to discuss progress. Parents are fully involved in the planning process.
- The school's policy for SEN contains clear aims and objectives and outlines appropriate procedures so that it fully complies with the recommendations of the new Code of Practice.

5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions

Overall, the partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions is good.

- The school handbook provides parents with much useful information. This is supplemented with regular newsletters and letters to parents. The 'Gilfach Gazette'

produced by the pupils, provides further information. A separate handbook has been drawn up for parents with children in the nursery.

- Parents' assistance in school is encouraged and welcomed. Overall, parents make a valuable contribution to children's learning, they listen to pupils read, help with art and technology, and accompany pupils on educational visits.
- Formal consultations for parents to meet with teachers occur twice yearly and at other times by arrangement. The results of parents' questionnaires, and comments made by some parents in the pre-inspection meeting, indicated some concerns about the informal ways in which parents could contact the school and speak to their children's teachers. Whilst previously established links have been affected by staff changes, the present arrangements whereby parents can meet with staff after school and at other times by arrangement, are satisfactory.
- The parents association, the 'Friends of Gilfach' organise and manage a number of fund raising activities throughout the year, providing much useful additional revenue for school resources and equipment.
- The school is very proud of its links with the community, and discussion with local residents indicates that the community is justifiably proud of the school. Pupils from school are joined by parents and the community for Easter, Harvest and Christmas services at the parish church. Christmas carols are sung by children from the school at the village pensioners Christmas dinner. Pupils support charities and they raise funds for people less fortunate than themselves.
- Older pupils contributed to improving the local environment by planting daffodil bulbs in public areas. Younger pupils are taken on guided walks around the community. Educational visits and visitors enhance and enrich pupils' learning.
- Members of the community make good use of the facilities offered by the school for learning and improving their computer skills.
- Arrangements for transfer of pupils to receiving schools are good, and ensure a smooth transition.
- The school provides training for Nursery teachers, and work experience for secondary school students.

5.7 Partnership with industry

The school's partnership with industry is good.

- Educational visits to local commercial and industrial sites give children an insight into the world of work. They have benefited from their visits to sites such as the Rhondda Heritage Park, a supermarket, reservoir, local shops and a pottery works.

- Children’s understanding of the world of work is broadened significantly by talks and demonstrations given by visiting speakers, such as a local councillor, policeman, road safety officer, fire fighters and health visitors.
- Y6 pupils’ business acumen is developed through running the school fruit tuck shop, with profits used to enhance school resources.
- The school has benefited materially from its links with local companies. Donations have been received to cover the cost of sports trips, and for materials for improving the playground environment.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement

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

- The head teacher has a clear view of the areas for improvement that the school needs to address and directs resources effectively to those areas. However, the senior management team and curriculum co-ordinator’s roles are underdeveloped and not fully effective.
- Self-evaluation has begun to take into account the views of pupils as presented in the School Council. Plans to take into account the views of parents are at an early stage of development.
- Pupils’ NC assessment results are analysed by the head teacher with current and previous class teachers and these results, together with information obtained from other tests, are used to set targets for every pupil. The school compares its performance with that of similar schools to ensure targets offer a real challenge. The results of tests and monitoring of standards are used to identify trends in pupil performance and plan for improvement. For example, a dip in standards of achievement in mathematics in KS1 was identified and appropriate action taken which effectively raised pupils’ performance.
- The School Development Plan (SDP) is a useful working document containing clear objectives for improvement, actions to be taken, success criteria, and dates for review and completion.
- The head teacher regularly reports to the governing body on progress regarding key targets in the SDP and identifies the way forward. The governing body effectively monitors the implementation of plans and progress towards targets.
- A regular rolling programme of classroom observations and monitoring of pupils’ books is in place, linked to priorities identified in the SDP. Curriculum co-ordinators report once a year to governors on progress in the subjects for which they are responsible.

6.2 Leadership and efficiency

The quality of leadership and efficiency is good.

- The school has explicit aims and values and a commitment to equality of opportunity for all, and this is reflected in its work.
- The headteacher undertook a complete audit of the school on her appointment and identified aspects for improvement and a clear direction to the work of the school. A senior management team (SMT) has been identified and co-ordinators appointed for all curriculum subjects and relevant aspects. However, the school has, by necessity, undergone considerable staff changes recently and many of the appointments are recent. Consequently the staff involved, including members of the SMT and curriculum co-ordinators, have not had opportunities to fulfil their roles and to use their professional expertise to best effect.
- The governing body is very well informed and actively involved in school developments. It plays an important role in school-community links and governors are well known in the community and to parents. There is a strong and effective link between the headteacher and the chairman of the governors and all governors visit the school. Individual governor expertise is well used and governors have attended training courses.
- Curriculum co-ordinators have been appointed for all curriculum subjects and relevant aspects. The effectiveness of curriculum leaders is variable and in instances underdeveloped due to their recent appointments. In other instances, such as English, the role is well developed and effectively supports the promotion of higher standards.
- The school manages its resources efficiently and effectively. Following the recent audit and purchasing of resources, the school is now generally well resourced to meet the needs of the National Curriculum. The school is well aware that some deficiencies in its resource provision still remain, such as the provision for the physical development of children under five. Governors have an overview of the financial resources and ensure that they are managed to meet the priorities identified in the SDP. Major spending decisions are carefully evaluated so as to ensure best value for money.
- The SDP is put together after evaluating last year's developments and in consultation with staff and governors. It is regularly reviewed and is an effective working document directing the work of the school. The plans are routinely monitored and the governing body kept informed. Overall, the school gives good value for money.
- Routine administration is undertaken efficiently by the school secretary and the school runs smoothly on a day to day basis.

6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are good overall.

- There are sufficient teachers, all of whom are appropriately qualified for the delivery of the National Curriculum and religious education. All have appropriate job descriptions. Pupils in Y3 have, in the past, been adversely affected by staff changes.
- Support staff assist teachers effectively and provide good levels of support for pupils, across the school and parent helpers also offer effective support to the teaching staff.
- There is a comprehensive staff handbook to assist newly appointed teachers and the newly qualified teacher has a designated mentor and they meet formally and informally. Lessons are observed by both the mentor and headteacher and observation sheets identify good features and aspects for further development.
- Teachers' continuing professional development is supported by a programme of in-service education and training (INSET), which is linked to individual professional needs, the needs of the curriculum and the priorities identified in the SDP.
- The school building is cleaned to a very high standard by the caretaker and is in a good state of repair. This has the positive impact of gaining pupils' respect for their learning environment. The outdoor environment further enhances pupils' work, especially in Geography through environmental themes. Attractive displays of pupils' work also enhance the learning environment.
- The overall floor area of the school is adequate but some of the teaching areas are rather cramped. There is sufficient hardstanding for play and games' lessons, and the school has regular use of grassed games' pitches. Good use is made of out-of-school resources through regular, planned visits which enrich pupils' learning experiences.
- Children in the early years have access to an external play area but this does not contain sufficient large equipment to fully develop their physical potential and the development of gross motor skills.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

Provision for the under-fives

The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and the pupils are making good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

Good features

Language, literacy and communications skills are good overall.

- A number of children entering the nursery (3-4 year olds) have limited communication skills. However, through their teacher's prompting they develop good listening skills and respond appropriately. Pupils enjoy listening to stories and recall some details about the characters. They are developing an understanding that print has meaning, and hold books and turn the pages appropriately.
- Reception children (4-5 year olds) speak with increasing confidence about their observations and activities and respond well to questions. They listen attentively and with great enjoyment to stories told and read to them and have developed a repertoire of favourite songs and rhymes in Welsh as well as English. Most children have begun to read and understand simple familiar texts and can write missing words in a sentence. More able children can write short statements independently.

Personal and social development is good overall.

- New entrants to the nursery settle quickly into the class routine and play happily alongside older children. They make good progress in learning to take turns and share equipment and concentrate for a good period of time on activities of their choice. Older nursery children show a good degree of independence and explore and experiment confidently with new learning opportunities. They show respect for one another and the teacher and respond appropriately to her directions.
- Reception children are increasingly confident and independent. They have formed good relationships with one another and are beginning to co-operate in their role-play activities. They enjoy sharing jokes with their teacher. Most of them can undress independently for physical education sessions and place their clothes neatly, ready for dressing again. A few need help with buttons, shoes or putting things on the right way round, but most manage to get dressed again without help.

Mathematical development is good overall.

- Through their play activities with sand and water, and role-play in the 'Three Bears' House,' nursery children are developing an understanding of mathematical concepts such as size and quantity. Older nursery children can sequence up to five shapes in order of size and many of them recognise and can count reliably numbers up to 5. They also recognise and can name simple 2D shapes.
- The majority of Reception children can count forwards to 20 and illustrate numbers using their fingers. Most can also count back from 10, and some from 20. They have good recall of a range of number rhymes, which help them to memorise numbers. More able children can write numbers to 12 and less able children recognise and match numbers to objects. They also recognise and can name a number of 3D shapes such as a 'prism.'

Knowledge and understanding of the world is satisfactory overall.

- Nursery children are developing an awareness of the past through comparing photographs of themselves as babies and now. They are interested in the way materials behave; for example, how jelly changes from solid to liquid and back to solid when cooled. They can complete a simple program on the computer and join construction pieces effectively to make a house for three bears.
- Reception children show great interest in a picture of the earth as seen from space and some of them understand that blue represents the sea, and brown the earth. They know that they live in the village of Gilfach and can identify some of its features on an aerial map of the area. They can use a program on the computer to display a text box in which to add their own names.

Physical development is good overall.

- Nursery children pedal and steer tricycles with confidence and control. Their manipulative skills are developed through a wide range of tasks. They are developing control of scissors and glue spreaders, thread laces on a threading board and manipulate pieces of jigsaws and construction kits effectively. They are learning how to hold and use paintbrushes, crayons and pencils correctly.
- Reception children move in a variety of ways around the hall, dodging around, adjusting their speed and changing direction to avoid one another. They understand and respond to suggestions about spatial movements such as in, around and over. They make good progress in the development of fine motor skills, handling paintbrushes with care and manipulating playdough successfully.

Creative development is satisfactory overall.

- Nursery children enjoy opportunities for free painting using a range of colours. They explore the sounds made by a range of percussion instruments and enjoy finding alternative ways to play them. They are developing the ability to imitate and tap out a simple rhythm. They also enjoy playing imaginatively alongside one another in the 'Three Bears' House.'
- Reception children observe and discuss a demonstration of the process of mixing two colours and then enjoy experimenting with mixing colours themselves to paint scales for the 'Rainbow Fish.' They are beginning to co-operate in their imaginative role-play in the home corner. They enjoy singing songs in Welsh and English and respond enthusiastically to rhythm and rhyme.

Shortcomings

- Children's use of language, literacy and communication skills in structured play activities are underdeveloped.
- The provision for outdoor play in the nursery is limited and unstimulating.

- Some adult-directed artwork restricts children's ability to explore and experiment with a variety of media, techniques and materials and express their own creativity.

English

Standards of achievement are good overall in both KS1 and KS2. They are good in listening, reading and writing and satisfactory in speaking. All pupils make good progress overall but speaking is a weakness throughout.

Good features

- Pupils in KS1 listen carefully in class discussions and respond appropriately to teachers' questions. Pupils in Y2 are developing an interest in words and offer some thoughtful suggestions such as "summer or winter," "pale or dark" when discussing the topic of antonyms.
- Pupils in KS1 have a positive, confident attitude to reading and use the pictures, as well as their knowledge of letters and sounds, to work out unfamiliar words. More able pupils in Y2 read fluently and can scan a text to locate information read earlier to help them recall details of the story.
- Pupils make good progress in their writing skills in KS1. They write in an increasingly wide range of forms such as stories, poems and plays and by Y2 more able pupils produce longer and more varied pieces. All pupils complete good pieces of writing relative to their abilities.
- The handwriting style of Y1 pupils is sometimes difficult to read, but they make good progress so that by Y2 most pupils' writing is fluent, joined and legible. They use a range of strategies to help them spell independently and often use capital letters and full stops correctly. Presentation is of a good standard.
- Most pupils in Y3 and Y4 listen effectively during initial class discussions. After discussing beginnings and endings of a story in Y3, for example, they are able to structure their own written stories. Y4 pupils are keen to contribute ideas about the imagery in fairy tales.
- Most pupils in Y3 read fluently and by Y4 they understand contradictions in a story such as "poor little rich girl." More able pupils can contrast a traditional story with a modern day equivalent such as Snow White in New York.
- Most pupils in Y3 and Y4 write at length and link ideas logically, paying due attention to the setting and sequencing of events. In Y3, though their writing is based on a story discussed earlier, some pupils include original ideas.
- Some pupils in Y5 use their voices expressively to hold the listener's attention when they read their own work aloud. In a small group, Y6 pupils articulate effectively their ideas about the controversial issue of fox hunting and can explain the difference between fact and opinion.

- By the end of KS2, pupils have good library skills. They can use a catalogue and index to locate information and scan the text to extract details. They enjoy opportunities for personal reading and read with understanding. They know that the reader can be ‘hooked’ through action, dialogue and feelings.
- The more able pupils’ writing in Y5 and Y6 is lively and interesting, and words are chosen thoughtfully. Y5 pupils understand the style and content of diaries and write their own in an appropriate form. Y6 pupils identify key points surrounding a controversial issue and plan and effectively structure a balanced report.
- The standard of handwriting and presentation in KS2 is good, and often very good including in Y5 and Y6 less able pupils. Spelling is generally accurate, and pupils have developed control of a range of punctuation. Some pupils in Y5 experiment with different forms of punctuation to good effect.
- Pupils, in both key stages, use their word processing skills to present their work.

Shortcomings

- Many pupils’ ability to speak at length and to sustain conversations at a level appropriate to their age and ability is limited.
- Less advanced readers in KS1 tend to rely on phonic strategies and do not often use their grammatical knowledge and contextual understanding to read unfamiliar words and establish meaning.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and KS2.

Good features

- Pupils in KS1 know that addition can be done in any order and can undertake simple mental calculations effectively. They have a good understanding of number up to 100. They are confident counting in twos, threes, fives and tens. Many show they understand the concept of multiplication and of odd and even numbers.
- Pupils in KS1 tell the time using o’clock and half-past as well as matching digital time with analogue time.
- Younger KS1 pupils measure and estimate weights using non-standard units. They can compare the weights of several objects by weighing and have a good mathematical vocabulary to describe their findings using phrases such as “heavier than” or “lighter than”.

- Pupils in KS1 can identify and name two-dimensional shapes and have the ability to sort the shapes based on their properties. Pupils' ability to explain their reasoning and calculations are strong features of the work in this key stage.
- Pupils in Y3 and Y4 successfully develop their mental skills and can choose and use appropriate operations to solve numerical problems. Most pupils recognise that division is the inverse of multiplication. Pupils can construct pictograms and answer and pose suitable questions based on the data.
- Pupils in Y5 and Y6 have good skills to calculate mentally and are able to give rapid and accurate answers with an explanation when challenged. Pupils are developing their ability to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in problem solving and investigative tasks. They work well together and are able to reach solutions both independently and through co-operative problem solving techniques.
- Pupils in Y5 and Y6 know how area is measured and can estimate an area of a rectangle before checking for accuracy by counting squares. Older and more able pupils understand and use a formula to calculate an area of a rectangle. Many can apply this when calculating the area of a triangle using appropriate strategies, and some can calculate an area of a compound shape that can be split into rectangles.
- Pupils in Y5 and Y6 can interpret and create frequency tables. They collect and represent indiscreet data using graphs, and can also generate graphs on computers based on real data linked to their Healthy Eating project. They interpret the data and use it to maintain and order fruit for the Tuck Shop.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings but some older pupils use mathematical notation inconsistently when calculating area and volume.

Science

Standards of achievement are very good in KS1 and all pupils make very good progress. Standards of achievement are good in KS2 and all pupils make good progress.

Good features

- Pupils in KS1 have a very good understanding of the basic ideas of investigative work. Pupils' initial scientific investigations in Y1 incorporate the ideas of fair testing and, by Y2, most pupils know what variables need to be kept constant during an investigation. This was clearly illustrated in their investigation of the distance travelled by a toy car over different surfaces. These pupils measured the distance travelled and recorded their work accurately.
- Pupils in KS2 have good experimental skills and handle equipment carefully and sensibly. They undertake their experimental work methodically and purposefully. Pupils

draw conclusions based on their results and all pupils have well developed recording skills.

- Pupils in KS1 identify common plants and animals found in habitats around the school. Pupils in Y1 can name the major parts of the human body and those pupils in Y2 know how they change as they mature. These pupils know what constitutes a healthy diet and how certain foods, such as sugars, can cause tooth decay. Pupils know that plants grow from seeds and that they need water, light and warmth to grow.
- Pupils in KS2 have a good knowledge and understanding of life processes in both plants and animals. By Y6, pupils know the stages in the life cycle of plants and have a well-developed vocabulary that, for example, enables them to describe accurately the process of photosynthesis. They recognise the great variety of living things and the importance of classification as a means of identifying them. Older pupils in KS2 have a good understanding of human life processes. They know, for example, that the heart acts as a pump to move the blood around the body and that the rate of heartbeat is affected by physical exercise. Pupils understand the importance of regular exercise in maintaining a healthy life style.
- Pupils in KS1 can distinguish between man-made and natural materials and know that the properties of materials determine the use that can be made of them. Pupils in Y1, in their study of materials used in their homes, know that glass is transparent and used for windows, whilst bricks are solid and waterproof and used in walls. By the end of Y6, pupils recognise the differences between solids, liquids and gases, such as their shape and volume. They understand what whilst some changes, such as when water is frozen, are reversible, other changes, such as when bicarbonate is mixed with vinegar, are irreversible in that new substances are produced. Older pupils in KS2 have a good scientific vocabulary and can describe accurately how mixtures of materials can be separated depending on their properties.
- Pupils in KS1 know that a complete electrical circuit is necessary if a bulb is to light. They can deduce when circuits are not complete and what needs to be added to complete a circuit. Pupils can name appliances in the home that use electricity and are well aware of the dangers of mains electricity. Pupils in Y1 can distinguish between different sounds that they hear in and around the school and the more able understand that some materials are more efficient sound insulators than others. Pupils in Y2 understand that pushes and pulls are examples of forces and that toy cars travel further the steeper the ramp if no other variable is changed.
- By the end of KS2, pupils have a good understanding of the different types of force and their effect. They know of the forces of attraction and repulsion between magnets and that friction as a force between surfaces slows down moving objects. Pupils in Y6 know that forcemeters are used to measure force. Pupils in KS2 know that light travels from a source and that shadows are formed when light cannot pass through an object. Pupils in Y6 know that the nearer the object is to a source of light the larger the shadow formed. Older pupils in KS2 know that switches can be used to control electrical devices and that sound is made when objects vibrate.

- Appropriate use is made of pupils' ICT skills to reinforce learning and to store and present data.

Shortcomings

The investigative skills of the more able pupils in KS2 are not always sufficiently developed across the key stage.

Welsh second language

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and satisfactory in KS2. Pupils make good progress in KS1 and satisfactory progress in KS2.

Good features

- Pupils in both KS1 and KS2 respond well to the use of incidental Welsh throughout the day.
- In KS1, oral work is developing appropriately, with pupils using a suitable range of words, in simple sentence patterns, in work related to topics such as the weather and parts of the body. They participate in a range of oral activities such as simple role-play and singing.
- Vocabulary is reinforced in KS1 through labelling, drawing and writing simple sentences related to the topic. Use is made of big books to promote the development of early reading skills.
- Pupils in both key stages speak clearly and their pronunciation is developing well. Teachers, on the whole, act as good role-models for speech and a number make substantial use of the target language in all aspects of the lesson.
- Pupils in KS2 can ask questions of each other and by Y6 pupils are starting to make extended observations in reply to questions following a set pattern. By the end of the key stage, some pupils engage enthusiastically in role-play scenarios.
- Pupils throughout the school are developing an awareness and knowledge of aspects of Welsh culture. This is developed through St David's Day Celebrations, work based on the local supportive community in both History and Geography along with the weekly Welsh medium assemblies.

Shortcomings

- Pupils' reading skills are insufficiently developed through using a varied range of reading books.
- Pupils' writing skills are underdeveloped in KS2 and they do not write in sufficient variety of forms or complexity.

- Pupils' progress in Welsh is uneven across KS2.

Design and technology

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 where all pupils make good progress. Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS2 where all pupils make satisfactory progress.

Good features

- Pupils in KS1 have a good understanding of the design and make process. In their work on puppets, they gathered information by examining different types of puppets and investigated how each type was moved, comparing finger puppets with string and stick models. Their investigations also enabled them to assess the suitability of materials to be used and how to join them together.
- Pupils in KS1 use diagrams to show their designs and list the materials they will need. Pupils cut and join materials appropriately and evaluate their efforts in terms of their likes and dislikes.
- Good use is made of pupils' scientific knowledge of electrical circuits. Pupils designed and made a model lighthouse using discarded materials and incorporated batteries and bulbs in their designs.
- Pupils in KS2 examine commercial products and to consider the needs of the users, as when designing a board game for seven year olds. Pupils' designs are illustrated by annotated diagrams and include materials to be used.
- Older pupils in KS2 are aware that the properties of different materials determine the use that can be made of them as, for example, when considering the best materials for a slipper. In this instance the availability of a range of commercial products helped pupils to make their choices.
- Some of the work in KS2 incorporates a challenge, such as to design a bridge to span a specific distance and to support a specified weight. In this instance pupils worked with a limited range of materials and investigated how different structural designs could be used to best effect.

Shortcomings

- KS2 pupils' drawings and annotated diagrams lack accuracy and do not include measurements, neither do their design notes indicate the sequence of events in making their models.
- Pupils' evaluative skills in KS2 are underdeveloped, they are too easily satisfied and cannot suggest how improvements can be made.

- The quality of the finished product made by pupils in KS2 is often of an unsatisfactory standard and pupils do not routinely test their models.
- Pupils' ICT skills are not sufficiently used to develop and communicate aspects of their designs and to modify and store instructions to control events.

Information technology

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and satisfactory in KS2. Pupils make good progress in KS1 and progress is satisfactory in KS2.

Good features

- Pupils use the computer with growing proficiency, confidence and independence as they progress through the school. From an early age pupils understand the functions of the mouse and show good co-ordination while controlling it.
- Pupils in KS1 make effective use of their word processing skills across the curriculum. It is effectively used to enrich their work especially in geography as illustrated in their contrasting locality project based on Newton. Most can save their work into individual folders with some help, retrieve and amend as needed.
- Modelling is well developed across KS1. Pupils independently use software such as My World to develop their skills and understanding. Pupils in Y2 are involved in early or pre-Logo work as is illustrated in their work with the Roamer.
- Pupils in most classes and in both key stages, effectively use graph making packages to present information in a real context. Pupils in Y5 and Y6 are familiar with terms such as 'record' and 'field' and amend and create a database. This data handling work is especially developed in their historical enquiry on the Victorians and in managing their tuck shop.
- Pupils in KS2 collaborate effectively when working in pairs on word processing tasks. Editing skills are well-developed as are combining words and pictures. Pupils can save their work independently in their individual folders and retrieve it at a later stage.
- Research work using CD-ROMs is well developed. KS2 pupils make good use of the Internet to search for information and are starting to learn to be discerning in its use. Information gleaned from the Internet is used to support work across the curriculum such as in history and shows a high level of manipulative skills.
- Pupils in Y5 and Y6 combine words, pictures and sound while preparing a multimedia presentation. This is illustrated in their work on sustainability where text is combined with images from the Internet to prepare a hyper-linked PowerPoint presentation.

Shortcomings

- The ability of pupils in KS2 to use ICT based models and simulations to explore patterns and relationships is underdeveloped.
- Pupils' progress in their information handling skills is uneven particularly at the beginning of KS2.

History

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and KS2. All pupils make good progress.

Good features

- KS1 pupils' chronological awareness develops appropriately across the key stage. Younger pupils, through historical enquiry, are starting to make informed judgements and answer questions about the past while handling artefacts. Pupils correctly use common words relating to the passing of time and are able to identify differences between ways of life of a child like Susan Rees and themselves.
- Older pupils in KS1 communicate their knowledge and understanding of the past by using ICT to prepare a report of a visit to the class by a member of the local British Legion Branch. Through this visit pupils were taught about the past using primary information gleaned from questions to an eyewitness.
- Pupils in both key stages understand that historical artefacts and photographs are helpful in finding out about the past and use these to develop their knowledge and make judgements. The Victorians project in Y5 was particularly worthwhile in developing their skills of enquiry.
- Pupils in both key stages make effective use of the ample opportunities afforded them to visit places of historical interest and this effectively develops their knowledge of Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig. Visits include those to Castell Henllys, Llancaiach Fawr, Merthyr and the Imperial War Museum in London. As a result of such visits pupils show enriched understanding and interpretation of history and an enhanced range and depth of knowledge.
- Pupils in Y5 and Y6 make good use of the internet to search for relevant information and some combine pictures and text for a wall display on the World War Two and their visit to the Imperial war Museum. Their work demonstrates understanding of the effects of war on peoples' lives and empathy for children who were evacuees. Pupils at the end of KS2 also have a good understanding of the value of primary and secondary sources of evidence.
- Pupils use their ICT skills to reinforce their learning as when researching information on the Victorians.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Geography

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and KS2.

Good features

- Pupils in Y1 have a growing knowledge of the local area gained through visits. Their virtual village walk display shows that they can describe many of its features and that they can draw simple maps of the immediate locality.
- Pupils in KS1 are acquiring a range of techniques associated with the use of maps and aerial photographs. Pupils can select information from aerial photographs and use this information to identify the main features of a beach environment and to ask and respond to questions using appropriate geographical terminology. Their work on the small coastal town of Newton shows an awareness of places beyond their locality whilst also developing their knowledge and understanding of that contrasting location, its features and characteristics leading to preparing a land-use map of the beach area.
- Map work is further developed in KS2 and younger pupils can identify the positions of the main towns and rivers in Wales. Pupils can use grid reference to locate Caerphilly as a contrasting town. Sketch maps are also produced, and older pupils further their geographical enquiry and can identify changes in their community through comparing a recent OS map with one of 1886.
- Pupils in Y5 and Y6 use their knowledge of the local area to further develop their enquiry skills when studying a less economically developed country. They can research in groups purposefully seeking evidence in order to explain how jobs and trade, connections and services available in Kesharpur differ from those in their own locality.
- By the end of KS2 pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the relationship between people and the environment and have a well-developed awareness and understanding of the relevance of geography to environmental issues. Pupils listen to and learn from a range of voices and opinions on sustainable development and Agenda 21 issues.
- Pupils use their developing ICT skills to reinforce their learning, including importing pictures and text from the Internet during research and producing a hyper linked PowerPoint presentation.

Shortcomings

- There is some lack of consistency in the work done in different year groups.

Art

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS1 and KS2. All pupils make satisfactory progress.

Good features

- Pupils in KS1 use a satisfactory range of media including pencil, crayon and paint, and the work shows that pupils can mix colours and produce patterns. Pupils in Y2 experiment with colour as when using “warm” colours in their illustrations of desert scenes.
- Good use is made of their developing skills in art to illustrate stories they have read, such as the story of the Giant of Gilfach.
- Pupils in Y2 made three-dimensional artefacts based on candleholders associated with their work on Divali.
- Pupils, in both key stages, study the work of famous artists and attempt to paint in the same style. Pupils in Y4, following their study of the work of Georgia O’Keefe, produce good large detailed paintings of flowers. Their work in the style of Seurat was also of a good standard.
- The work of some pupils in KS2 shows good observational skills, as evidenced in some of the observational drawings on display. Pupils use charcoal and pencil to depict light and shade, and the work shows good attention to detail. In other examples, pupils used the work of Kyfin Williams as a stimulus for their work.
- Pupils’ developing skills are well used across the curriculum to illustrate their work, as in Y5 where their drawings and paintings were well used in their work on the Victorians.
- Some use is made of pupils’ developing ICT skills, as when digital photography was used. Pupils are able to manipulate and rearrange images.

Shortcomings

- Overall, pupils’ skills and techniques are not developed progressively across the key stages. Whilst good examples of artwork are in evidence there is a lack of consistency in pupils’ progress.
- Pupils’ observational drawings and sketches, as seen in their sketchbooks, are unsatisfactory.
- Pupils’ ability to express their views about art is underdeveloped and their ability to comment on the work of artists and craft workers is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils’ knowledge of Welsh artists and craft workers is unsatisfactory.

Music

Standards of achievement are good in both KS1 and KS2. Progress overall is good and, with the support of a peripatetic singing teacher, pupils make very good progress in singing and achieve very good standards by the end of KS2.

Good features

- Pupils in KS1 sing enthusiastically, expressively and broadly in tune. They develop a repertoire of favourite songs and hymns, and sing them confidently, with and without accompaniment. They show good control of musical elements such as ‘loud and soft’ and a good sense of rhythm in their accompanying actions.
- Pupils in KS1 use a wide range of percussion instruments, as well as their voices, effectively to create a group composition to accompany the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. They play simple musical patterns with good control of pace and pitch and recognise their ‘cue’ from the ‘conductor’ when it is their turn to play a part.
- Pupils in Y3 and Y4 maintain a part in a two-part song to create a pleasant harmony. They sing a rock song with great verve and gusto, demonstrating a good sense of rhythm.
- Using percussion instruments, most Y4 pupils also accurately imitate a rhythm clapped by the teacher and maintain their part in a group piece depicting African animals. They show good control of musical elements such as pitch, pace and dynamics and understand technical terms such as ‘ostinato’ and ‘pentatonic scale.’
- Pupils in Y5 and Y6 perform with good posture and breath control, an expanding repertoire of songs from Wales and other cultures. They have very good recall of musical patterns and successfully maintain their parts in two, three and four-part songs. Both boys and girls thoroughly enjoy singing.
- Pupils benefit from a range of extra-curricular musical activities. There is a lunchtime percussion group and optional violin, cello and flute tuition. More than 10 pupils sing in the County Choir.
- Assemblies and special events such as Harvest Festival and the Christmas carol service provide pupils with the opportunity to perform with a sense of occasion. They also perform for members of the community.

Shortcomings

- Pupils’ ability to appraise and discuss the effectiveness of their own and others’ compositions and performances is underdeveloped.

Physical education

Standards of achievement are good in both KS1 and KS2. All pupils make good progress.

Good features

- Pupils understand the importance of warm-up activities. Pupils in KS1 know that their heart beats faster during and after vigorous exercise and those in KS2 know the importance of regular exercise in maintaining a healthy life style.
- Pupils in KS1 respond promptly to their teacher's instructions during warm-up activities and move safely around the hall. They show good control and co-ordination in their exercises that include turning, jumping and balancing. Pupils are eager to take part and practise to improve their performances. They respond imaginatively to their teacher's suggestions and use their own ideas in their movements.
- Pupils in KS2 show very good self-discipline when engaged in gymnastic activities and practise to consolidate and improve their performance. They demonstrate good body control and co-ordination and can link movements into complex sequences of movements.
- Pupils in KS2 work well in pairs and support each other effectively. Most pupils analyse their performances and practise in order to improve. They make constructive suggestions as to how their own and other pupils' performance might be improved.
- All pupils in KS2 to learn to swim and the school reports that virtually all pupils are proficient swimmers by the end of Y6.
- The school gives its pupils a good introduction to a range of games and many pupils, both boys and girls, partake in the extra-curricular activities provided after school.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Religious education

Standards of achievement are very good in KS1 where all pupils make very good progress. Standards of achievement are good overall in KS2 and all pupils make good progress. The school's scheme of work for religious education is based on the LEA locally agreed syllabus.

Good features

- Pupils in KS1 have a very good knowledge of Bible stories from both the Old and New Testaments. They can recall the story of Moses in Egypt and know stories Jesus told. Pupils in Y2 know the major festivals in the Christian calendar.
- Pupils in Y2 know of people who are special to them and of people in the community that help them. These pupils also know that prayers are their way of talking to God.
- Pupils in Y2 have a very good understanding of Hinduism and the significance to Hindus of some of their customs. They know that a Torah is a banner hung over doorways as a

sign of welcome and that Divali is the festival of light. They can vividly relate the story of Rama and Sita.

- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism is well developed in KS2, particularly in Y4 and Y5. Pupils compare and contrast religious customs, and older pupils recognise how religious beliefs shape people's lives.
- Pupils in KS2 are becoming increasingly aware of their local community. They know people who help them and how they can help people less fortunate than themselves.
- Pupils in KS2 also consider issues of authority and the responsibility of leadership. They have considered and can discuss such issues as the civil rights movement and the role played by Rosa Parks in America.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress since the last inspection

The last inspection identified the following key issues:

- review the long term curriculum planning to ensure subject coverage is manageable and clearly defined on a yearly, termly, fortnightly and daily basis;
- ensure that pupils use the knowledge and understanding that they acquire to further develop their skills of research, enquiry, investigation and problem-solving in independent learning across the curriculum;
- address the shortcomings identified in subjects and aspects;
- share and disseminate the good practice that already exists in the school.

Following the appointment of a new headteacher in April 2001 the school has made good progress in addressing the key issues.

- (i) The curriculum has been reviewed to ensure subject coverage including the rewriting of the curriculum for the Under 5's in line with the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. Curriculum plans are defined on a yearly, termly, fortnightly and daily basis. A suitable programme for the review of schemes of work has been identified.
- (ii) Pupils' skills of research, enquiry, investigation and problem-solving in independent learning across the curriculum is being developed. In science, for example, the curriculum is being increasingly focused on experimental and investigative work and suitable resources have been purchased. The rewritten scheme of work for mathematics incorporates more problem-solving activities and a greater focus has

been given to mental mathematics.

- (iii) Shortcomings identified in the subjects and aspects. The school has given substantial attention to improving the core areas of the curriculum and this is effectively raising standards in English, mathematics and science as the inspection findings indicate. Weaknesses in other areas are also being addressed, such as in geography, where there is an increased emphasis on Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig, and resources have been purchased to support developments in music and history. In ICT, computers have been replaced and extra computers purchased. The ICT scheme of work has been rewritten. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is now very good. Assessment of pupils' achievement and tracking their progress is now effectively undertaken in the core subjects. Key skills are being effectively used across the curriculum. A noticeable and very worthwhile development is the improvement in the school's facilities and ambience. Many improvements have been undertaken and, at present, the school is a very pleasant working environment for pupils and staff.
- (iv) A notable feature of the school is the good and very good quality of teaching despite substantial changes in staff. This good practice has been maintained since the last inspection, however the dissemination of good practice needs to continue.

8.2 Key issues for action

The school needs to:

- (i) address the shortcomings identified in subjects and aspects;
- (ii) engage in a period of consolidation incorporating suitable opportunities for reflection, monitoring and reviewing current practice and to
 - (a) fully develop the roles of the deputy headteacher and the senior management team;
 - (b) extend the roles of the curriculum co-ordinators so as to ensure greater continuity and progression in all subjects and aspects of the school's work;
 - (c) fully use teachers' professional expertise and experience.

APPENDIX

A. Basic information about the school

Name of School	Gilfach Fargoed Primary School
School type	Community
Age -range of pupils	3 – 11
Address of school	Vere Street Gilfach Bargoed
Post-Code	CF81 8LB
Telephone Number	01443 875510

Headteacher	Mrs Christine Anne Lewis
Date of appointment	April 2001
Chair of Governors	Mr Harry Andrews
Registered Inspector	Mr E R Morgan
Dates of inspection	25 th – 27 th February 2003.

B. School data and indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>									
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	6.5	25	20	25	39	28	37	35	228.5

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	9	0.5	9.5

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil : teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	24 :1
Pupil : adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	6 :1
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	26
Teacher (fte) : class ratio	1.1 :1

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>				
	R	KS1	KS2	Whole school
Term 1	91%	94%	95%	93%
Term 2	88%	91%	94%	91%
Term 3	84%	95%	92%	90%

Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection.	0
---	---

C. Results of National Curriculum assessments and public examinations

END OF KEY STAGE 1: 2002

National Curriculum Assessment KS 1 Results: 2002			Number of pupils in Y2:29					
Percentage of pupils at each level								
			D	W	1	2	3	4
ENGLISH:	Teacher Assessment	School	0	3	0	82	12	0
		National	0	4	13	62	21	0
EN: Reading	Teacher Assessment	School	0	3	5	77	15	0
		National	0	4	13	54	29	0
EN: Writing	Teacher Assessment	School	0	3	6	76	12	0
		National	0	5	13	70	12	0
EN: Speaking and listening	Teacher Assessment	School	0	3	3	82	12	0
		National	0	3	11	63	23	0
MATHEMATICS	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	6	70	21	0
		National	0	2	9	60	29	0
SCIENCE	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	3	76	18	0
		National	0	2	10	67	21	0

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment			
In the school:	91	In Wales:	81

D Pupils who have been disapplied from the statutory arrangements
W Pupils who are working towards level 1

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

D Pupils who have been disapplied from the statutory arrangements
W Pupils who are working towards level 1

END OF KEY STAGE 2: 2002

National Curriculum Assessment KS 2 Results: 2002							Number of pupils in Y6:					
Percentage of pupils at each level												
			D	A	N	W	1	2	3	4	5	6
English	Teacher assessment	School						9	24	41	26	
		National	0	0	1	0	1	6	19	48	25	0
	Test/Task	School						6	18	35	38	
		National	0	2	2	0	0	4	14	47	31	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School						4	32	38	26	
		National	0	0	1	0	1	4	19	47	28	0
	Test/Task	School						0	29	33	38	
		National	0	2	1	0	0	4	18	42	32	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School						9	15	44	32	
		National	0	0	1	0	0	3	15	52	29	0
	Test/Task	School						0	11	50	36	
		National	0	2	0	0	0	2	13	51	31	0

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school:	64	In the school:	56
In Wales:	68	In Wales:	68

- D Pupils who are exempted under statutory arrangements from part or all of the National Curriculum
 A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence
 N Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence
 W Pupils who are working towards level 1

D. Evidence base of the inspection

The inspection was carried out by a team of four inspectors over a three day period. The report was based on evidence from:

- the observation of 47 lessons or sessions;
- listening to a representative sample of pupils reading;
- discussion with groups of pupils to ascertain their knowledge and understanding of subjects and to seek their views of the school;
- the scrutiny of teachers' plans, assessment records and co-ordinators' documents;
- the scrutiny of other school documents;
- interviews with the teaching staff about their roles and responsibilities;
- discussion with the headteacher;
- pre-inspection meetings with staff, governing body and parents;
- the analysis of 59 questionnaires returned by parents;
- the observation of pupils' behaviour in lessons, in and around the school at break times, lunch times and before and after school;
- attendance at school assemblies and acts of collective worship;
- the observation of a range of extra-curricular activities;
- viewing the school building and grounds.

E. Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

	Aspects	Subjects
Mr E R Morgan Registered Inspector	The school and its priorities. Main Findings. Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning. Teaching Curriculum. Leadership and efficiency. Progress since the last inspection. Key Issues for Action.	Science Design & Technology. Art Physical education Religious education.
Mrs S James Team Inspector	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare. Provision for pupils with SEN. Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement.	Early Years English Music
Mr M Pryse Team Inspector	Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum. Assessment, recording and reporting. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources.	Mathematics. Welsh, second language. Information technology. Geography. History.
Mr C Brentnall Lay Inspector	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Behaviour and attitudes. Attendance. Partnerships with parents and community, schools and other institutions. Partnership with industry.	

The inspection team would like to thank the headteacher, staff, governing body, parents and pupils of the school for their hospitality, courtesy and co-operation throughout the inspection.