

REPORT

on the

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

**GWERNLLWYN JUNIOR SCHOOL
HIGH STREET
CAEHARRIS
DOWLAIS
MERTHYR TYDFIL
CF48 3HB**

School Number: 675/2037

Date of Inspection: 23 – 25 September 2002

By

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Under Estyn contract number: T/46/02P

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CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES

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

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

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

Key stage 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.

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1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

Gwernllwyn is a Community Junior School which is situated in Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil. Pupils attend the school from the local area. There is a Unit attached to the school for pupils who have moderate learning difficulties. This unit comprises 15 pupils between the ages of 7 and 11 years. Many of these pupils travel some distance daily to school. Normally most pupils transfer from the nearby infant school in the September after their seventh birthday. There are 160 pupils on roll. Pupil numbers have remained generally static in recent years. Pupils are all from homes where English is the first language. One percent of pupils have African ethnic origins. The remainder are white.

On the whole pupils begin school with below average abilities. About 75% of pupils come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. About 24% of pupils are eligible for free school meals and about 36% of pupils are considered to have some degree of special educational needs. Two pupils in the unit have statements of special educational needs (SEN).

The headteacher was in post during the last inspection as were nearly all of the teaching staff. One teacher left the school during the last academic year.

The school has a clear and wide ranging statement of aims which stresses the importance of creating a caring community, cultivating solid attitudes and providing a secure environment for all its pupils.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

Gwernllwyn is a school with some significant strengths which has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection.

Standards achieved in the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are as follows:

Subject	KS2
English	Satisfactory
Mathematics	Good
Science	Good
Welsh as a second language	Satisfactory
Design technology	Good
Information technology	Good
History	Satisfactory
Geography	Satisfactory

Art	Satisfactory
Music	Good
Physical education	Satisfactory
Religious education	Satisfactory

- Standards of achievement were very good in 3% of lessons seen, good in 34% and satisfactory in 63%.
- Standards in the most recent National Curriculum tests for 11 year olds in 2002 were above the national average for pupils who took the tests in 2001. (The school has applied successfully to The national Assembly for Wales (NAW) to express its results in these tests without the results of pupils in the Unit who took the same tests.)
- Standards in the key skills of listening and the use of information technology are good.
- Standards in speaking and the application of number are satisfactory.
- Standards in the key skill of writing are unsatisfactory because of shortcomings in pupils' spelling and punctuation.
- Pupils' moral and social development is good. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Provision for pupils' cultural development is unsatisfactory because insufficient attention is given to the achievements of Welsh artists, and writers and to the celebration of the rich cultural diversity which forms modern society.
- Standards of behaviour are very good and a major strength of the school. Pupils are very keen to please their teachers and their often very good behaviour has a positive impact on the quality of their work and the friendly relationships which prevail across the school.
- Standards of attendance are satisfactory. Nearly all pupils arrive at school punctually. The school complies with the requirements of the National Assembly for Wales Circular 3/99.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and is a particular strength in Year 4 and Year 5. Overall, 8% of teaching was very good, 50% good and 42% of teaching was satisfactory.

Good features are:

- Purposeful beginnings to lessons where the teacher explains clearly what pupils are expected to achieve.
- Pupils are encouraged to work hard and concentrate well because of the teacher's knowledge and enthusiasm for what is being taught.
- There is a high level of care and respect for pupils.

Where teaching has weaknesses:

- The lessons lack sufficient challenge for all the abilities in the class.
- There is on occasions insufficient non-teaching support to meet all the needs of younger pupils.
- Teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly in English, mathematics and science and mark consistently and conscientiously. They are beginning to use the information from national tests and other reliable sources to look at overall strengths and weaknesses. The use of this information to predict standards individual pupils should reach year on year and to review in detail pupils' progress towards them is under-developed.
- Arrangements to assess pupils' progress in subjects other than English, mathematics and science are unsatisfactory.
- The curriculum for KS2 is satisfactory and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. All pupils have good access to and good opportunities to take part in it. However, insufficient emphasis is given to the art, music and literature of Wales and of the richness of non-European cultures.
- Provision for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils is good overall. There are effective procedures for child protection. Pupils' well being and health and safety provision are well promoted. Pupils do not receive enough guidance about what they need to do to improve their work in the shorter term.
- Provision for pupils with SEN is good overall and very good for those pupils in the unit for specific educational needs. All these pupils are well supported by teachers and their assistants and they play a full part in the life of the school.
- There are no pupils in the school who have English as an additional language. However there are appropriate arrangements available to the school to provide specialist support should it be necessary.
- Partnership with parents including a home-school agreement is good. The school provides a good amount of information to parents and there are strong links with the local community and with other schools and institutions.
- Partnership with industry is good. There are effective policies and practices to help pupils to be aware of the world of work. Links with some local industry is strong and these have enriched the curriculum and helped to improve the fabric of the school.
- The quality of self evaluation is good overall, there has been a careful analysis of the strengths and areas for development which reflect the needs of the school. The staff and governors are beginning to look more critically at the school's performance. However, there are no procedures to evaluate the progress of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.

- The headteacher provides a strong and sensitive lead and is increasingly well supported by the senior management team and staff. There is a clear sense of direction to the work of the school. The school has a very positive ethos which is supported by the attitudes and behaviour of all those connected with it.
- The governing body is well informed and works closely with the headteacher. They have a good understanding of the long term needs of the school and how to judge the success of the spending decisions taken. However the governing body has yet to update its policies for the provision of special educational needs and to meet recent changes in the code of practice so that the stages of intervention and support from within the school and from educational support agencies are clearly specified.
- The roles of some co-ordinators have been extended to enable them to judge at first hand the success of teaching and learning.
- There is an appropriate match between provision of teachers to the needs of the school and the subjects taught. However, occasionally the amount of available support from support assistants for younger pupils is inadequate.
- Resources are generally appropriate and include an impressive new computer suite. An exception is the central library which, although well stocked with reference books, is too small for many pupils to use at one time. Resources are well used to support learning. The school is bright, colourful and well maintained. It provides a stimulating environment in which pupils can learn.
- The school has made satisfactory progress towards addressing the key issues contained in the last report. However, there is still work to do in improving the use of information the school assembles about the standards pupils achieve in national tests and other assessments for example to predict the likely standards pupils should reach year on year in the future and to track their individual progress towards them. The school does not identify targets for individual pupils to aim to achieve and review their progress towards them in order to raise standards further.
- Assessment procedures in subjects other than English, mathematics and science remain unsatisfactory.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Standards are at least satisfactory in all subjects.

- Standards of achievement in lessons observed were very good in 3% of lessons seen. In 34% of lessons achievement was good. In 63% of lessons seen achievement was satisfactory,

- Starting from a lower than average base, pupils achieve standards in English which are satisfactory with the exception of spelling and punctuation where standards are unsatisfactory. The quality of pupils' personal and creative writing is satisfactory.
- Standards in mathematics and science are good and this reflects the impact of the recently introduced school policies for the teaching of numeracy and the specialist teaching of science across the school.
- The National Assembly for Wales has agreed that the school may set out its performance in the national tests for eleven year olds excluding the performance of those pupils who attend the Unit at the school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. This data shows that 84% of eleven year old pupils in the main school in 2002 reached or exceeded the expected standards in English, 75% in mathematics and 92% in science. In English 43% reached the higher level (Level 5). In mathematics, 32% reached the standard and in science 35% reached Level 5. Overall, in the school 72% of pupils attained at least Level 4 in mathematics, science and English. This picture is close to the Unitary Authority's (UA's) average and exceeds the 2001 national average in English, mathematics and science.
- There is no substantial difference in the performance of boys and girls, or between pupils of different ethnic backgrounds.
- The school reviews results carefully to look at the relative performance of boys and girls. It does not do the same to see if pupils from different ethnic backgrounds achieve appropriately.
- Standards in design technology, information technology and music are good.
- Standards of achievement in art, history, geography and physical education are satisfactory. In physical education many pupils reach an or exceed the standard expected in swimming (to swim confidently and safely).
- Standards in Welsh as a second language are satisfactory.
- Standards in religious education are satisfactory and are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus.

3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum

Pupils' progress and the standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum are satisfactory. Standards in listening and the use of ICT are good.

- Pupils listen carefully and generally respond appropriately to what is said in all subjects.
- They speak clearly and confidently and show a growing awareness that speech needs to be adapted to reflect the situation or topic under discussion.
- Pupils read with increasing accuracy and confidence as they progress through the school.

- They are able to record their work in writing but standards in spelling and punctuation are unsatisfactory and this hinders their progress.
- Standards in numeracy are satisfactory. Both boys and girls apply their number skills to studies in other subjects with increasing confidence.
- Pupils use the computer to record and present their work well; they can also use computer programmes and the internet to extract information to enhance their understanding and extend their learning.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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

- The school's mission statement and objectives as set out in the prospectus appropriately emphasise moral, social and cultural development but do not mention spiritual development.
- The daily act of collective worship helps pupils to reflect on their beliefs and attitudes and visiting clergy assist them in the exploration of the uniqueness of individuals. In plenary group discussions in lessons they are encouraged to explain their feelings and to consider the feelings of others.
- Pupils usefully explore aspects of personality in the Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme for example, in discussion of leadership qualities.
- All school policies on moral and social aspects strongly encourage dialogue to promote understanding and learning. They successfully develop self-esteem, awareness of the individual and mutual respect.
- Good classroom management promotes collaboration and consideration of others including pupils from the Unit. Pupils respond well, swiftly adopting a helpful and supportive attitude to each other. A useful code of conduct develops a good understanding of right and wrong, based on awareness of community benefit rather than personal reward or punishment.
- The school provides many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and develop social awareness. In particular, the School Council and the 'Buddy' system function well, allowing pupils to identify and discuss their collective needs, to accommodate differences of opinion and to resolve each others individual concerns.
- The school has an appropriate policy for racial equality.

- Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is under-developed. Although visits to local sites inform classroom activities in some subjects, insufficient use is made of the work of Welsh artists, writers and musicians.
- Despite the fact that few pupils attend the school from other than white ethnic backgrounds, the provision for multicultural education is limited. Pupils are not made sufficiently aware of the rich cultural diversity which makes up modern society.

4.2 Behaviour and attitudes

Throughout the school, the standard of pupils' behaviour is very good.

- Pupils understand what is expected of them and respond well to the school's rules some of which were decided upon by the pupils themselves.
- They respond well to the tasks set and work with enthusiasm and commitment.
- Good behaviour and effort are recognised and rewarded; pupils are praised for their efforts and achievements by all staff.
- Pupils are kind, courteous and considerate to each other and to staff. They work well in groups and show a high level of consideration and support for pupils with special educational needs, and from other racial backgrounds.
- They learn to take responsibility for their actions and show good levels of self-discipline.
- The school has an effective policy for dealing with bullying, and no bullying was observed during the inspection or reported.

4.3 Attendance

Attendance averages around 92%. This is satisfactory.

- Attendance during the autumn and spring terms regularly exceeds 94%, which is good. Attendance in the summer term falls significantly below 90%. Holidays taken during term-time make a major contribution to this unsatisfactory figure.
- Arrangements for providing for pupils with long term absence are adequate.
- The importance of regular attendance is appropriately stressed in information to parents and the school's procedures for encouraging attendance are good. Good progress is made in meeting targets for attendance and for reviewing patterns of absence.
- Attendance is closely monitored in the light of pupils' different backgrounds.
- Pupils arrive punctually for school and reconvene promptly for lessons after break and lunch-times.

- Procedures for registration, collection and collation of statistics, and scrutiny by an Education Welfare Officer are good and fully comply with NAW Circular 3/99.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In 50% of lessons teaching was good and in 8% of lessons teaching was very good. In 42% of lessons teaching was satisfactory. The best teaching is found in Year 4 and Year 5.

Good features

- The best lessons begin purposefully and the teacher explains clearly, using appropriate specialist vocabulary, what pupils are expected to achieve.
- Pupils' interest is very effectively caught and held for the length of the lesson by the teacher's knowledge and enthusiasm.
- Teachers show high levels of knowledge and plan carefully so that learning takes place systematically and pupils build well on what they already know and can do.
- No pupils are identified as being gifted and talented. However in the best lessons work is carefully matched to different abilities.
- Pupils are encouraged to find the work fun and as a result all are very eager to begin and they sustain concentration well.
- Pupils are praised warmly and are made well aware of how pleased the teacher is with their efforts.
- There is a high level of mutual respect between pupils and their teachers who work very effectively to ensure that all pupils feel valued.
- Teachers' questioning skills are challenging. As a result pupils think deeply about how to find solutions to the interesting questions asked.
- Teachers regularly assess pupils' work and have identified areas of general strengths and weaknesses in English, mathematics and science. However this information is not used to set individual short term targets for pupils to achieve, and to predict standards pupils should achieve year on year.

Shortcomings

- The teacher does not provide sufficient challenge for the different abilities in the room so that they do not all make the progress of which they are capable.

- The lesson is not well planned so that there is insufficient time at the end of lessons to review and consolidate what has been learnt.
- In some classes for younger pupils at some times of the day teachers are unable to give appropriate help to specific groups of pupils because there is insufficient non-teaching support available.
- The teacher does not have a clear enough idea of what specific skills pupils should learn as a result of the lessons. As a result these skills are not given sufficient emphasis.

5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting

Assessment recording and reporting arrangements are satisfactory. The assessment policy and procedures in English, mathematics and science have been improved recently and are providing valuable information which the school is beginning to use well to raise standards further. Assessments arranged for other subjects are under-developed.

- Regular assessments occur throughout the school in English, mathematics and science to provide teachers with information to judge the progress of individual pupils and to compare performance of boys and girls.
- Teachers are beginning to analyse national test data to identify where there are general areas of strengths and weaknesses. They are in the process of using this information to modify their teaching to address areas where some pupils are perceived to have weaknesses.
- Individual educational plans (IEPs) for pupils on the special educational needs (SEN) register provide specific targets which are regularly reviewed and used well by teachers in their lesson planning.
- Annual reports to parents are clear and informative.
- Some subject co-ordinators keep portfolios of annotated examples of pupils' work which helps set the standards for teachers to aim to achieve with their pupils and to indicate the range of work they should teach. However, this is not a common practice in all subject.
- Pupils receive verbal advice from teachers about their work which is marked consistently, but pupils are insufficiently involved in setting short term targets for themselves particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- Teachers do not use the information they have from assessment to set individual short term targets for pupils to achieve nor do they use this information sufficiently well to judge whether or not pupils are making at least the year on year progress anticipated for them.
- The school assessment system is used carefully to identify if any pupils are gifted.
- There are thorough procedures should they be required to assess pupils who may join the school with English as an additional language.

5.3 Curriculum

The quality and organisation of the curriculum was satisfactory. The curriculum is broad and balanced it includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. It is accessible to all pupils including those with special educational needs, and is well matched to the different abilities of pupils.

- There are detailed schemes of work and policies in place for all subjects which include suggestions as to appropriate resources and specify opportunities for assessment. An appropriate sex education policy has been devised after consultation with parents.
- The organisation of aspects of the curriculum e.g. in music, physical education and science using teachers' specialisms ensures consistency and enhances pupils' learning.
- There is planning for the development of key skills throughout the curriculum; there are whole school approaches to the development of skills in literacy and numeracy and information and communication technology.
- There is a clear policy on the setting of homework which includes daily reading; it gives individual teachers responsibility for setting homework and guidance as to appropriate tasks. It includes guidance for parents also as part of the school's home-school agreement.
- Provision for personal and social education is good; the development of skills is emphasised throughout the school day. A programme of specific events to support pupils' development is timetabled in the Summer Term for pupils in Year 5 and 6.
- The provision for pupils to learn about their culture and heritage (Cwricwlwm Cymreig) is under developed; children have too few opportunities within the school day and through educational visits to develop their knowledge and understanding of the distinctiveness of their community and of the culture and traditions of Wales.
- Effective arrangements are in place to make pupils aware of the world of work.
- The curriculum is equally available to all pupils.
- The school has policies in place to encourage racial harmony and to make pupils aware of the importance of sustainable development for example in geography.
- The curriculum does not provide pupils with enough information about and experience of the rich diversity of cultures in modern society.

5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

The school has good clear, well documented procedures for assuring pupils' well being, health and safety.

- Child protection procedures are effective and all staff are aware of their responsibilities in this area. The school has appropriate procedures for eliminating bullying, and pupils, staff and parents are aware of the policies and procedures.
- Health and safety aspects are monitored carefully; accidents are dealt with by qualified First Aiders and are recorded. The school has an appropriate policy for the administration of medicines. Sex Education is taught within the science curriculum in the lower school and older pupils have further guidance from the school nurse. Fire drills are carried out regularly.
- Pupils are provided with a wealth of opportunities to take on responsibilities and this raises their self esteem and supports their social development.
- Staff know the pupils well; they set high expectations in terms of behaviour and effort and pupils feel safe and secure. Relationships are based on mutual respect.
- Pupils from difficult home backgrounds are well supported.
- Teachers regularly assess pupils' work; however this information is not yet used to set individual short term targets for improvement.

5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)

Provision for pupils with SEN is good overall and they make good progress. It is very good for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) in the Unit.

- There are 15 pupils in the Unit for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. They are taught as a group for the majority of the curriculum and all integrate into their year groups for music and physical education. Integration for other subjects is dependant upon the individual pupil's strengths and needs.
- All pupils with SEN have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are detailed, have achievable, appropriate targets and are reviewed regularly.
- Language support sessions are effective in raising pupils' achievements in literacy; they are well planned and linked to the pupils' class work..
- The special educational needs co-ordinator performs her duties well; there is close liaison between her and the staff and parents are kept well informed.
- There is effective use of local support services.

In the Unit

- Pupils in this class make good progress; they study all the subjects of the National Curriculum.

- There is a range of appropriate resources which are accessible to the other teachers in the school.
- Although the class is situated in an outside classroom, the school ensures that the pupils are very much a part of the school; joining in all school activities and some lessons.

In the School

- Work is carefully planned and matched to the needs of the individual. IEPs are detailed and regularly reviewed and there is close home – school liaison.
- The Learning Support Assistant’s time is used effectively to listen to pupils read and to support other classroom activities.
- Relationships are very good; pupils are happy and secure.

5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions

Overall links with parents, the community, school and other institutions are good, making a positive contribution to pupils’ development, education and well-being.

- Parents are well informed about the school through a comprehensive prospectus and informative newsletters. The home/school agreement clearly outlines what parents may expect from school and what the school expects of parents.
- It is easy for parents to approach staff to discuss pastoral and educational matters. Parents find reports useful, and benefit from well-organised parent evenings at which pupils’ progress is discussed.
- Parents and other members of the community give support in listening to pupils read and in providing additional supervision on school trips.
- The school support group is small but makes positive contributions to school.
- There are a number of established links with the community. Pupils collect money for local charities, participate in church festivals and visit local places of interest. Local organisations use the school as a venue for their activities. These functions promote the school, inform classroom activities and enhance learning.
- Close links with the infant school, regular meetings with other primary school heads, and with a secondary school link teacher ensure good exchange of information and ensure smooth progress in the curriculum.
- Curriculum based projects, joint activities such as the magazine and visits by Y6 to secondary school further ease transition to KS3.

- An established link with an initial teacher training institute provides a useful variety in teaching styles for pupils. Constructive use is made of these trainees as well as of work-experience placements from local schools.
- There are close links with parents who have difficult home circumstances. Parents with children with special educational needs are kept fully involved and up to date about their progress.

5.7 Partnership with industry

The links with industry are good and provide as well as useful sponsorship positive input to classroom learning.

- Visits to local business and industry give useful insight into the nature of employment, illustrate a range of jobs, and introduce pupils to concepts like welfare, health and safety.
- The visits form a basis for classroom discussion and provide appropriate illustration to parts of the curriculum. In the PSE elements of various subjects the pupils' recollections of the visits inform discussion of personalities and their suitability for certain tasks.
- There is good and constructive relationship with an Education Business Partnership. It has helped to identify potentially useful links within the community and links with a local barrister to support individual pupils in literacy.
- The school has benefited substantially from sponsorship which has provided for example, playground fencing and gates, and the high-quality school garden which is new.
- Overall the links with industry significantly enhance the whole learning environment in school, although little advantage is taken of opportunities for staff development.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement

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

- The school uses NC assessments to judge the overall performance of pupils but this is not yet used to identify short term targets for individual pupils and to predict the standards they should reach.
- Challenging longer term targets for improvement have been set and those set for the pupils' performance in NC tests and tasks have been met.
- Thorough procedures for subject co-ordinators to monitor standards in English, mathematics and science are in place.

- The School Development Plan is detailed, with clear priorities, challenging targets and realistic timescales. Resource implications are identified and it is reviewed regularly. All members of staff contribute to the process.
- Governors are kept well informed of the school's priorities and successes.

6.2 Leadership and efficiency

The quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher and governors was good overall.

- The headteacher provides a clear and sensitive sense of direction to the work of the school and works closely and supportively with staff to ensure that the school is a purposeful place where expectations of pupils are high.
- Careful planning and leadership by the headteacher with the increasing support of the senior management team have led to the successful implementation of a range of strategies to raise the standards of pupils' achievements. In particular, it has helped to improve teaching and learning in English and mathematics through the introduction of well thought out strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy.
- The headteacher has a good overview of the standards pupils achieve and the progress they make.
- There is a detailed and relevant statement of the school's aims and vision for its future. These aims reflect the school's strong commitment to enabling each pupil to feel valued and to play a full part in the school community.
- The day to day management of the school is calm and efficient. Parents are made to feel welcome.
- The chair of governors provides a well informed and committed lead to the governing body. Many governors are actively involved in the life of the school and are able to judge its long term needs and successes.
- There are good procedures to judge the effectiveness in which resources are used to establish best value for money.
- There are good arrangements to oversee finances and a recent audit found no areas of significant weakness in the school's financial practices.
- The school development plan is well constructed. It is clear and provides easily identifiable criteria to judge its success. It is accurately focused on the needs of the school. Governors and staff are appropriately involved in drawing it up and reviewing its progress. It is carefully linked to the school's budget.
- While some co-ordinators have good opportunities to review the progress of initiatives they are introducing at first hand, other co-ordinators have not and are insufficiently informed of the outcomes of their plans and policies.

6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Overall, staffing, accommodation and learning resources are good. There are a sufficient number of qualified and experienced teaching staff.

- The SENCO and the full time support assistants provide an appropriate level of specialist teaching for pupils on the SEN list. The headteacher effectively adds to this herself.
- Good use is made of support assistants in classes where they are deployed. However, there is insufficient provision of this resource for younger pupils.
- Teaching staff have appropriate opportunities to attend courses which are linked to the school's needs as part of their professional development and to spread information and skills through staff meetings and in service training days. Training for the school's literacy and numeracy strategies has had a positive impact on standards.
- Appraisal is carried out effectively as part of the threshold assessment procedures.
- The care taken by non-teaching and cleaning staff make a valuable contribution to the life of the school and ensure that the school is a clean, bright and friendly place.
- The school premises provide sufficient space for teaching and learning and are well used to promote learning.
- Throughout the school the high standards of decoration and displays reflect well the value teachers place on pupils' work. However insufficient emphasis is given in these displays to the multi-cultural nature of modern society and to the work of Welsh writers, artists and composers.
- The outside play areas are attractive and provide a stimulating environment for pupils to use. The school has benefited significantly from the help of a local company in enhancing these facilities.
- Physical access to the site for pupils with disability is good.
- The resources to support teaching and learning are good and include a new computer suite which is already used well. The school reference library which has been built since the time of the last inspection holds a good stock of reference books but has limited space for study.
- Overall, the school's resources have a positive impact on pupils' standards of achievement.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

English

Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

Good features

- Pupils speak with confidence to each other and to adults. They are usually accurate and use appropriate language when speaking to their teachers and other staff.
- They have a developing vocabulary and are able to work purposefully in small groups sharing ideas and giving their points of view.
- Pupils listen carefully to adults and each other and respond well to instructions.
- Pupils read with increasing confidence and accuracy through the key stage; they use a variety of strategies to tackle unknown words. The use of phonics (using the sounds letters make) is particularly strong. Many pupils are able to correct their own errors.
- Most are able to gain access to reference materials including the use of ICT to do this.
- More able pupils have a clear understanding of what they have read and can predict outcomes.
- Towards the end of the key stage pupils experience a wider range of literature.
- Most pupils form letters correctly and as they progress through the school develop writing in a joined hand. Work is generally set out neatly.
- They are increasingly able to write longer pieces and to write for a range of purposes for example writing scripts for a play and writing letters.

Shortcomings

- A minority of pupils use a high level of colloquialisms in their speech and are not able to provide alternatives when asked.
- The range of pupils' reading is not sufficiently broad, they do not read texts by established authors, including authors from Wales.
- Most pupils do not show satisfactory standards in spelling.
- Pupils ability to revise and re-draft their writing is under-developed.
- Pupils only have a basic knowledge of simple punctuation.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Pupils apply their knowledge and understanding in problem solving and in investigative work to practical problems.
- They work well together to reach solutions themselves using their own ideas.
- Pupils use different methods to calculate and solve problems mentally and on paper.
- Pupils have a quick recall of number facts.
- Pupils explain their methods of working and reasoning logically.
- Pupils make appropriate estimates of angles, lengths, mass and capacity and calculate areas and perimeters of simple shapes.
- By the end of KS2 pupils estimate and measure angles accurately and are able to identify different types of angles.
- Pupils collect, interpret and represent data in a variety of ways including computer generated graphs and charts.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Science

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Pupils have a good understanding of the need to carry out a fair test and to make sensible predictions based on what they already know.
- Pupils carry out experiments methodically and demonstrate a growing understanding of scientific matters, for example, the need for constants and variables when conducting experiments.
- Older pupils work co-operatively using IT where appropriate to measure changes, for example in temperatures, which they express graphically. They successfully plan investigations with each other and listen carefully.

- Pupils build on their knowledge and understanding systematically and record their experiments appropriately.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the physical differences between liquids and solids and observe changes closely and accurately.
- Pupils have a good understanding of some biological and physical processes and use appropriate scientific language to describe them.
- Pupils are well aware of health and safety issues when carrying out experiments.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Welsh second language

Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

Good features

- Throughout the key stage pupils show an increasing confidence in speaking and are gaining a wider vocabulary. They show a positive attitude to their learning.
- They ask and respond to questions about themselves, their families, the weather, using full sentences.
- Pupils read short texts and are able to complete labelling and basic written exercises to support their oral work.

Shortcomings

- Pupils' reading and writing skills are limited.
- Pupils exposure to the language is limited because there is insufficient use of incidental Welsh during the school day.

Design and technology

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Younger pupils are able to evaluate the qualities of different materials and systematically record their evaluations.
- Pupils plan original detailed designs and make good quality products.

- Pupils make good use of a wide range of materials.
- They show precision when cutting and joining materials and measuring.
- Pupils carefully evaluate planning and making and test finished products against intended designs.
- Pupils use IT well to help plan what they are going to make and how they are going to make it.
- Older pupils apply their research skills to plan, make and evaluate products to fill specific needs.
- Older pupils are aware of how linkages function.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Information technology

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Pupils use IT to organise and present their ideas in a variety of different ways.
- Pupils use CD-ROMs and the Internet confidently to access and retrieve information.
- Pupils use data handling programs well to store and retrieve data and to create a range of graphical representations of that information.
- Older pupils use spreadsheets confidently.
- Older pupils use IT to explore and solve problems in other subjects for example, in design and technology.
- Good use is made of the key skills of ICT in literacy and numeracy, for example. Many older pupils are able to use their skills to produce their own documents.
- Older pupils are beginning to make good use of laptop computers and have a growing understanding of their uses.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

History

Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

Good features

- Pupils have a good understanding of life in Victorian society and the unpleasant working conditions of many involved in industry at that time.
- Pupils have a good awareness of the way sea transport has developed from early times, and have an increasing awareness of chronology.
- Older pupils are aware of the development of the South Wales Valleys and the problems in public health during this period.
- Older pupils use a range of historical sources effectively to increase their knowledge and understanding of World War II and they have an empathy for children who were evacuees.
- Older pupils have confidence in and can use effectively IT to obtain information when researching a subject.

Shortcomings

- Pupils lack the ability to interpret and evaluate evidence with sufficient understanding, because insufficient attention is given to using local resources.
- Pupils are not made sufficiently aware of the achievements of famous Welsh people both locally and in the wider world.
- In some lessons the historical knowledge and understanding pupils gain is limited because the major focus of the lesson is upon achieving skills in literacy.

Geography

Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

Good features

- Younger pupils are able to draw a simple plan of their route to school and are beginning to appreciate the significance of scale in drawing and interpreting maps.
- Older pupils are able to record weather patterns and interpret data from this using IT.
- Pupils have a good understanding of river courses.

- Pupils know about how their lives have similarities and differences with a contrasting area such as Porthcawl.
- Pupils are able to compare life in their town with that in an equatorial rain forest.
- Older pupils have an increasing awareness and understanding of the impact of deforestation on the economy and the climate of a region. They have a growing awareness of the need to practise sustainable development.

Shortcomings

- Pupils are insufficiently aware of how their locality changes and they have insufficient opportunities to express their views on these changes.
- Pupils have limited understanding of why changes in localities occur in general and how similarities and differences between places arise.

Art

Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

Good features

- Pupils have a good understanding of how to draw accurately using observation and use their sketch books to experiment with line.
- They know how to blend colour to match tones e.g. when painting drawings of sea shells.
- Pupils show confidence in describing and illustrating shape and pattern.
- They use a range of tools and media; pupils have produced imaginative stained glass panels and plaster masks from clay moulds.
- Pupils achieve well because they have benefited from working with a visiting artist.

Shortcomings

- Pupils' ability to study and work in the style of famous artists is limited.
- There are insufficient opportunities to experience the work of Welsh artists and the arts and crafts of other cultures.

Music

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Pupils sing with enthusiasm, tunefully and confidently. They have a large repertoire of songs and hymns. The school choir performs in the community and has had success in competitions.
- Pupils have a good understanding of musical elements, for example, pitch, duration and pace and a growing awareness of quality of sound and structure.
- They have a range of opportunities to perform on a variety of both tuned and untuned instruments. They do this with confidence working co-operatively with others.
- Pupils for example improvise and compose music using instruments and other resources e.g. their bodies, their voices and are successful in creating sounds in response to poems and stories.
- Older pupils listen to and are able to discuss the main elements of a wide range of music including the music of Wales.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Physical education

Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

Good features

- Pupils show a good understanding of the basic actions of travelling including stepping, jumping and landing; they successfully transfer weight and can demonstrate a variety of balancing stances.
- With direction, pupils can build up a personal sequence of basic actions and perform it successfully.
- Records indicate that pupils are making good progress in swimming.
- Older pupils understand the short term effects of exercise on their bodies.
- Pupils work well together; there is a high level of co-operation in group and team work.
- All pupils recognise the need for rules and standards of dress are appropriate.

Shortcomings

- Pupils are not always aware of what is required of them.
- Pupils' ability to plan and evaluate their performance and the performance of others are limited.

Religious education

Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

Good features

- Pupils know the story of Jesus and can describe the main Christian festivals and their purposes.
- They know that people worship in different ways in the Christian Religion.
- Pupils know that there are a variety of religions in the world.
- They have enhanced their understanding of religious ideas by studying artefacts.

Shortcomings

- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of religions other than Christianity are limited.
- Pupils' ability to reflect on their own and other peoples lives and beliefs is restricted.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress since the last inspection

Overall satisfactory progress has been made in implementing the main recommendations of the last report.

The previous inspection report published in the Summer Term 1997 identified the following key issues for action.

1. Raise standards of achievement in Welsh, design technology, music and written English.
2. Improve the achievements of some pupils in their reading.
3. Improve assessment and recording procedures in subjects other than English, mathematics and science.

4. Improve marking procedures and make them more helpful to pupils.
 5. Set targets for raising standards of performance that can be measured against measurable criteria.
- Since the last inspection some very good progress has been made in raising standards in design technology and music and good progress has been made in raising standards in Welsh. Standards in pupils' spelling and punctuation remain unsatisfactory, although standards in pupils' creative and imaginative writing are now satisfactory.
 - Pupils' standards of achievement in reading are satisfactory across the school and the impact of the recently introduced literacy strategy is beginning to have a beneficial effect.
 - The school has worked hard to begin the process of analysing information about overall pupils' performance in the national tests and other reliable information. However assessment procedures in subjects other than English, mathematics and science are unsatisfactory, which the school is in the early stages of beginning to address.
 - There is now a detailed marking policy and teachers conscientiously mark pupils' work. While teachers often advise pupils orally on what they need to do to improve, this is not expressed in written targets setting out the shorter term objectives pupils should aim to achieve. There is no procedure in place to involve parents and pupils in reviewing the progress pupils make towards these goals.
 - The school has thorough systems in place to set ambitious overall targets for the school to reach. There are effective arrangements with the UA to evaluate the school's performance against these. However, while the school is using the information it is assembling to judge overall school performance it does not use the data to predict standards individual pupils should achieve year on year in the future. The school is only beginning to put in place a system to judge whether or not pupils are making appropriate progress and to identify when additional help may be necessary.

8.2 Key issues for action

The governing body, headteacher and staff with the help of the UA should:

1. Raise standards in subjects and in key skills where they are currently satisfactory.
2. Make better use of the information the school is now assembling about the rate at which pupils learn to raise standards further in English, mathematics and science further by –
 - i identifying where individual pupils have areas of weakness;
 - ii setting and monitoring short term, achievable targets to help address these weaknesses;
 - iii reviewing regularly pupils' progress towards the standards predicted for them to achieve year on year, and by evaluating regularly the performance of different groups of pupils.

3. Put in place appropriate systems to assess pupils' learning in all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education and use that information to inform future planning (which the school has recognised as a priority).
4. Improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of the rich cultural diversity which forms modern society and of the art, and literature of Wales.
5. Update the school's SEN policy so that the stages of intervention and support from within the school and from external support services are clearly specified.

Acknowledgement

The registered inspector and team wish to thank the governors, headteacher, staff and pupils for their co-operation and courtesy before and during the inspection.

APPENDIX

A. Basic information about the school

Name of School	Gwernllwyn Junior School
School type	Community
Age -range of pupils	7 - 11
Address of school	High Street Caeharris Dowlais Merthyr Tydfil
Post-Code	CF48 3HB
Telephone Number	01683 722286

Headteacher	Mrs Margaret Dickson
Date of appointment	September 1995
Chair of Governors/ Appropriate Authority	Mr David Jones
Registered Inspector	Mr Peter Mathias
Dates of inspection	23 rd – 25 th September 2002

B. School data and indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>					
Year group	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	40	39	39	42	160

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	6	2	7

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

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>		
	KS2	Whole School
Term 1	92.31	92.31
Term 2	89.6	89.6
Term 3	94.31	94.31

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	24%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	0

C. Results of National Curriculum assessments and public examinations

END OF KEY STAGE 2: 2001

National Curriculum Assessment KS 2 Results: 2001							Number of pupils in Y6: 37					
Percentage of pupils at each level												
			D	A	N	B	W	1	2	3	4	5
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	X	0	0	3	19	43	35
		National	0	0	0	X	1	1	6	19	48	25
	Test/Task	School	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	11	41	43
		National	0	2	1	1	0	0	5	14	47	30
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	19	35	43
		National	0	0	0	X	0	1	4	20	47	28
	Test/Task	School	0	0	0	0	X	X	5	19	43	32
		National	0	2	1	1	0	0	4	18	42	32
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	X	0	0	3	5	73	19
		National	1	0	0	X	0	0	3	15	52	29
	Test/Task	School	0	3	0	0	X	X	0	5	37	35
		National	0	2	0	1	0	0	2	13	51	31

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:	72	In the school:	72
In Wales:	68	In Wales:	68

- D Pupils who are exempted or disapplied under sections 364 or 365 of the Education Reform Act 1996
A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence
N For Tests: Not enough marks for level to be awarded
For TA: No level submitted by the school (includes missing results)
B Pupils not entered for the tests because they are working outside the level of the test
W Pupils who are working towards level 1

The school has permission from the NAW to express the results in these tests without the results of pupils who took the test in 2002 and were part of the Unit for Pupils with Moderate Learning difficulties.

The school's results for 2002 are compared with the national averages for 2001 as 2002 data was not available at the time of this inspection.

D. Evidence base of the inspection

The inspection was carried out by a team of three inspectors over a period of 3½ days.

- Pre-inspection meetings were held with the headteacher, staff and governing body.
- Eighteen parents attended a meeting with registered inspector.
- Forty questionnaire responses were analysed and summarised.
- All documentation submitted by the school was analysed and discussed, including the school development plan, policy and curriculum documents and teachers' planning files.
- Pupils were observed as they arrived and departed from school and during the mid-day and other breaks.
- At various times during the day, inspectors talked to pupils about their work.
- Thirty eight lessons or part-lessons were observed.
- Pupils were heard reading and were examined in their knowledge and understanding of all subjects.
- A wide range of pupils' written work and other work was examined in each class.
- Inspectors discussed pupils' work with class teachers and examined assessment records.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and staff.
- The work of pupils with special educational needs was examined.
- Minutes of meetings and documents relating to the financial management of the school were scrutinised and discussed.
- Budget figures were examined and discussed with the headteacher.
- Attendance and pupils' records were inspected.
- Inspectors attended acts of collective worship.
- There were post inspection meetings with the headteacher, staff and the governing body.

E. Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team Member	Type	Subject Responsibilities	Aspect Responsibilities
Mr Peter Mathias	RgI	Mathematics Science Design technology Information technology History Geography	The school and its priorities Main findings Standards of achievement in subjects and areas of learning Assessment recording and reporting Leadership and efficiency Staffing, accommodation and learning resources Progress since the last inspection Key issues for action
Mrs Ann Neal	Team	Welsh as a second language English Music Art Physical education Religious education	Standards in key skills Behaviour and attitudes Curriculum Special educational needs The quality of self evaluation and planning for improvement
Dr Michael Snow	Lay		Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Partnership with parents, community, schools and other institutions Partnership with industry