

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

***HAROLD ROAD JUNIOR SCHOOL  
HAROLD ROAD  
ABERGAVENNY***

***School Number: 679-2270***

***Date of Inspection: 7-10 October 2002***

***by***

***DR ERIC PEAGAM  
Registered Inspector***

***Date: 25 November 2002***

**Under Estyn Contract Number: CT48/02P**

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## **CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES**

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

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

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

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

## **GRADE DESCRIPTIONS**

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

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

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## 1. CONTEXT

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

Harold Road School is a community junior school for up to 320 pupils aged between seven and 11 serving an averagely prosperous residential area in Abergavenny. At present there are 301 pupils taught by 13 teachers in eight classes each with an average of 28 pupils. The school is currently full, as it usually is, but with more pupils in some year groups than in others. It occupies a former secondary school building and has inherited good facilities, including a sports hall. However, the fact that the building is listed, limits the adaptations that can be made to meet present needs. Although many families are property owners, nevertheless one-fifth of its pupils are entitled to free school meals. There are a small number of pupils who are looked after by the local authority. Most pupils come from the immediate neighbourhood, although a significant minority, including pupils in the Learning Centre, come from further afield.

Nearly all pupils have English as their first language and there are no Welsh-speaking families; almost all pupils are of white ethnicity and there are no pupils receiving support in English as an additional language. About one-fifth of pupils are identified as having special educational needs (SEN), 22 of whom have statements of SEN. This includes 18 pupils in the two classes in the Learning Centre. Since the school was previously inspected in June 1997, a new headteacher has been appointed (September 2000) and the school has been subject to re-organisation proposals which are due to be finalised later this year.

The school mission statement declares its aspiration to be a centre of excellence within which everyone is enabled to improve on his or her previous best. This provides the basis for wide-ranging aims concerned with the academic, creative and personal development of pupils. In light of likely future changes, priorities for development are largely short-term, focusing on improvements in literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) and fostering pupils' skills for independent learning.

## 2. MAIN FINDINGS

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

- Harold Road is a very effective school that achieves very high standards. It builds well on pupils' previous experiences and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. It offers a supportive environment within which pupils are challenged to continuously improve in terms of both academic and personal development. Since the June 1997 inspection, in spite of the uncertainties around future plans for the school there has been good improvement in the quality of education, which has enabled the school to achieve higher standards in most subjects. The school gives good value for money.

- Pupils' standards of achievement are good overall. In the subjects of the National Curriculum (NC), they are as follows:

<b>Subject</b>	
English	Good; very good by Year 6
Mathematics	Good; very good by Year 6
Science	Good; very good by Year 6
Welsh	Good
Design and technology	Satisfactory
Information technology	Satisfactory
History	Good
Geography	Good
Art	Good
Music	Good
Physical education	Good
Religious education	Satisfactory

- Pupils arrive in the school with levels of attainment that are generally above average, but with significantly different curriculum experiences. The school works very effectively, with the result that standards are well above average when pupils leave at the end of Y6. Over the last five years, standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have been rising faster than those for Wales as a whole.
- Overall attainment in core subjects in 2001, measured as the proportion of pupils achieving at least the national standard (NC level 4) in all three core subjects, was well above the average for Wales as a whole. In comparison with similar schools, the school was among the highest achieving 25 per cent overall, being particularly strong in English and mathematics. Results in the school have risen over the previous five years, in line with those for Wales as a whole. Results for 2002, for which there are as yet no comparative figure were even higher than those for 2001 in all three subjects. However, in line with the national pattern, girls attain higher standards than boys, especially at the higher levels.
- Pupils achieve good standards in the use of the key skills of literacy, communication and numeracy in work in other subjects. Standards in ICT in other subjects are satisfactory and improving as pupils improve their ICT skills.
- Provision to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school provides and promotes a caring, supportive and welcoming ethos to which pupils respond well. Attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils' behaviour is good overall and occasionally very good; they have positive attitudes to their work. This reflects the very good arrangements to promote good behaviour and the very high quality pastoral support for pupils at risk. Pupils are happy and confident and feel secure as a result of the very good arrangements to eliminate oppressive behaviour of all kinds. When given the opportunity they show responsibility and initiative, but these traits are still insufficiently fostered within the school, particularly in relation to pupils taking responsibility for their own work.
- Teaching is good overall. It is almost always at least good and very good at times. It is never unsatisfactory. Teachers are well qualified, have good subject knowledge and skills and present high expectations of work and behaviour. They plan well for the pupils they teach. However, there are shortcomings in teachers' knowledge and skills in information technology and design and technology. The overall quality of assessment, recording and reporting on the pupils' progress is good. It is very good in core subjects. Assessment is well used by teachers to plan future work and enables good quality reports to be made to parents. The school provides a good quality, balanced and broad curriculum for all its pupils, as well as meeting all statutory requirements. Arrangements for enriching the curriculum,

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particularly through extra-curricular activities are very good. These include provision to achieve high standards in musical activities and in sporting competition between schools.

- The school makes good provision for pupils with SEN. The school meets the requirements of the Code of Practice well and teachers work very effectively to ensure that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Individual education plans (IEPs) are well constructed, but there is inconsistent use of them in planning and their implementation is insufficiently monitored. Withdrawal support is carefully and sensitively organised. As a result of this provision pupils make good progress to achieve good standards. The provision for welfare and guidance is good overall, including the arrangements to ensure pupils' health, safety and well-being. There are very good procedures for child protection that are well known to staff and consistently implemented. The school is developing a programme to formalise personal and social education, which currently is mainly provided informally.
- Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions is very good overall. Parents receive very good information about the school and support its activities very well. Documentation fully meets the guidelines set out in National Assembly for Wales circulars. There are good pastoral links with other schools, which are effectively used to ensure effective transition to and from the school, but there is limited liaison over what is actually taught in feeder schools in some subjects. Links with industry and the community are good and effectively used to promote higher standards.
- Self-evaluation and planning for improvement are good overall. The school uses internal and external sources of information and is now analysing achievement data well. The school is very well led; its aims and values are very clearly reflected in the work of the school and financial and other resources are carefully and efficiently used. The school is adequately and appropriately staffed for the number of pupils. Staff are generally well managed although there are shortcomings in the arrangements for deploying and supporting learning support staff. Accommodation and resources are good overall, with high quality outside play areas, including a very useful field. However, the school is in a poor decorative state, some classrooms are of inadequate size and there are insufficient power outlets in most classrooms. There is poor access to many parts of the building for disabled persons and a lack of shower facilities, for example, to support pupils with SEN.

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

#### **3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning**

Standards achieved are good overall, and they are often very good both compared with all schools in Wales and with similar schools especially when they are adjusted to take into account the additional pupils with SEN in the school. This is a significant improvement in attainment over that previously reported when standards were generally satisfactory and unsatisfactory in information technology and geography

- For the great majority of pupils, both in mainstream classes and those supported in the Learning Centre, achievement is at least good in well over nine out of ten lessons, and very good at times.
- Pupils achieve well throughout the school in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and make good progress so that the proportion of pupils attaining above expected levels is higher when pupils leave than when they arrive. By the end of Y6, standards achieved in core subjects are very good both in comparison with all schools and those with a similar population.

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- There were 70 pupils in Y6 in 2001. The proportion of pupils attaining levels 4 or above in each of the core subjects, measured by NC tests, was 85 per cent, well above the figure for Wales of 68 per cent. When the results for pupils with statements in the Learning Centre are discounted, the figure for the school is 91 per cent. Well above average results were obtained in all core subjects, and in mathematics and science, the proportion attaining a higher level (level 5) was significantly above the national figure. However, at this higher level, the results for girls exceeded those of boys, especially in English.
  - When the school's results are compared with those of schools with similar populations based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, the results are very good. The school does better than three-quarters of schools in all three subjects with results in English and mathematics being particularly high.
  - Over the previous five years, standards have risen faster than those in Wales as a whole; at the time of the previous inspection, attainment was broadly in line with that nationally and is now well above it.
  - Comparison with previous years' results to establish a year-on-year variation is not entirely reliable since overall figures are influenced by the number of pupils with statements of SEN who happen to be in any particular Y6 cohort. However, over the previous five-year period, the trend is upward and in line with the overall improvement in Wales as a whole. Results for the current year (for which no comparable figures are available) show an improvement on the very good results for 2001 in terms of level 4 and level 5, although girls still achieved better than boys.
  - Pupils with SEN, both in the Learning Centre and in mainstream classes make progress that matches that made by pupils in general. They make particularly good progress in basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as acquiring good skills in the social use of language.
  - Target setting is well established in the school. Targets are set annually based on forecast of likely achievements and assessment of the improvement that could be achieved. This results in some fluctuation in annual targets as they are related to the actual pupils. The school provides increased support for pupils identified as low attainers on entry. In 2002, all targets for mainstream pupils were met and exceeded.
  - Pupil-tracking structures are being developed and these confirm that pupils are making good progress, but they are, as yet, insufficiently established for the school to demonstrate consistent value-added outcomes.
  - Pupils acquire a good and secure basis of knowledge and develop good enquiry skills. Investigative work in mathematics and science is well developed, but the school is aware that it needs to be further developed in other subjects. In most other subjects, standards are good, but in information technology, while they are satisfactory, being in line with those expected nationally, they are below the standard that these pupils are capable of achieving. Similarly, satisfactory standards are achieved in design and technology and religious education where new curriculum or management arrangements have not had time to work through to have their full effect. However, skills and techniques for independent learning remain less well developed and pupils show limited capacity for taking responsibility for planning their own work.

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## **3.2 Standards achieved in Key Skills across the curriculum**

The overall standards achieved in the use of the key skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing and numeracy through work in other subjects are good. There is limited use of ICT but where it is used, pupils have satisfactory skills.

- Throughout the school, pupils speak clearly and confidently, demonstrating a wide vocabulary. They show great enthusiasm when participating in oral work and answer questions well. Higher attaining pupils in all classes, and particularly older pupils, talk lucidly about their work in a range of subjects, including describing what they know, understand and can do, using a good range of vocabulary, including that which is specific to particular subjects.
- For much of the time, pupils listen attentively to teachers and to each other. They use their listening skills to take turns in conversation and build on each other's contribution. They follow instructions carefully and accurately. They relate what they hear to what they already know, and use this skill to assist in understanding. They present and follow reasoned arguments and point out flaws in logic. At times, however, particularly towards the end of a long session, interest wanders and a minority of pupils find it difficult to concentrate so that the quality of listening falls off.
- Pupils read well and competently use textbooks and other sources to support work across the curriculum and they show confidence in reading and following written instructions. They use their reading skills well in researching a range of written sources, including electronically stored information.
- Pupils write in a range of forms across the curriculum. Writing in subjects such as history and geography is particularly good. Older pupils draft and revise their work effectively as a matter of course. Writing is well matched to its purpose with an appropriate and increasingly adventurous choice of vocabulary.
- Pupils use their numeracy skills well in other subjects, particularly in science, design and technology and geography. They collect and represent data, using tally sheets and block graphs, and calculate the results of investigations in science.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is limited. Teachers do not plan sufficiently to use it so that pupils' skills are insufficiently developed. Where it is used, pupils have satisfactory skills, for example, when they enter simple data into a database and print a graph of the results or extract information from CD-ROM or the Internet to support research. They use word-processing satisfactorily to draft and revise writing in English. Standards in similar work in Welsh are inhibited by the absence of Welsh fonts or a spell check programme in Welsh.

## **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 good.

- The school provides and promotes a caring, supportive and welcoming ethos. There is a clear sense of community within the school to which all members contribute.
- Acts of collective worship meet the statutory requirements and offer pupils well-ordered and meaningful opportunities for the enhancement of spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences.

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- Within the assemblies that contain the collective worship, pupils listen attentively, sing tunefully and enthusiastically and participate musically. Opportunities are taken to tell stories, deliver information and celebrate successes.
  - Other provision for pupils' spiritual development is good with opportunities provided in lessons for contemplative reflection. There are also opportunities provided for the understanding of different beliefs, traditions and cultures.
  - The school successfully promotes a set of values that is the foundation for the moral and behavioural ethos of the school. This enables pupils to understand the moral framework and values, which emphasise a sense of fairness and honesty together with a respect for themselves and others.
  - Pupils' social skills are well developed. Pupils exercise mutual respect, care, tolerance and an understanding for other people's opinions. There are opportunities for pupils to exhibit roles of responsibility by means of the process of elections of head boy and girl and the prefect system. A house system also exists for which house points are awarded for a range of productive and worthwhile activities and attitudes. However, the school recognizes that there remains a need for pupils to continue to develop an understanding of independence and initiative.
  - The quality of relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and adults is very good. Teachers and other adults who work in the school provide very good role models. Pupils are polite and courteous in their interactions with other pupils and adults.
  - Pupils regularly raise money for a number of charities. Parents are pleased with the attitudes and values promoted by the school.
  - The curriculum is enriched by the contribution of visiting speakers who attend the school and the opportunity to visit places of interest to support pupils' learning. Pupils develop an understanding and knowledge of their local heritage and culture and these visits are being extended and developed in order that pupils receive opportunities and understanding that are outside their daily experiences of life. This includes a satisfactory awareness and knowledge of a range of aspects of Welsh culture.
  - Music plays a significant part in the cultural development of pupils, both through the experiences it provides and the opportunities for the choir, for example to share their culture with others while experiencing the culture of France.

## **4.2 Behaviour**

Pupils' behaviour is good overall and occasionally very good. Parents are very pleased with the standards of behaviour and discipline achieved by the school.

- In and around the school, pupils' behaviour is very good. They move around the school in an orderly manner, and behave very well at dinner time, chatting to each other and waiting their turn to be served. In the playground, behaviour is also very good, with groups of pupils playing happily together.
- In the classroom pupils display good attitudes to learning. They are keen and work hard to complete the tasks set. Some, however, have limited concentration and are inattentive. Occasionally these pupils distract others from learning.

- Inappropriate behaviour is dealt with firmly, with often a quiet word by the teacher being all that is needed. Serious offences are handled by the headteacher as appropriate. There have been no exclusions from the school during the last 12 months.
- Pupils show respect for property and treat the school's resources with care. They show a good awareness of the need to treat the building and school grounds well, so that they derive considerable benefit from the equipment provided for their use during playtimes and the lunch period.
- The school has very good arrangements for promoting high standards of behaviour, including the elimination of any oppressive behaviour. Suitable policies are in place and a governor has responsibility for this aspect. Pupils however are not always given sufficient opportunities to exercise self-discipline.
- Pupils are familiar with the rules and the consequences of any misbehaviour. The reward system is much valued by pupils and during the inspection pupils eagerly looked forward to totalling up their marks, or saving them, to win the reward of their choice.

### **4.3 Attendance**

Attendance levels at the school are good.

- There is little unauthorised absence and the school has good routines in place to monitor attendance. A target of a consistent 96 per cent has been set for all year groups and the school has made good progress towards this. In the three terms prior to the inspection attendance levels averaged around 95 per cent. In the week prior to the inspection, attendance was just over 96 per cent.
- Parents are made fully aware of their responsibility to ensure their children attend school and, when holidays are taken in term time, they are reminded of the need to seek permission using a standard form. Any unexplained absence is followed up on the first day.
- Registration occurs twice a day and registers are neatly marked and up to date in accordance with National Assembly for Wales guidelines. Late arrival to school is rare and during the inspection none was observed.
- There is good liaison with the Education Welfare Officer, when the need arises.

## **5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **5.1 Quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is good overall and is a significant strength of the school. In lessons seen it was usually good, very good at times and never unsatisfactory.

- High quality teaching is characterised by lively pace, high expectations of pupils' achievement and a good balance between listening and practical activities. Lessons are very well organised and teachers have a good understanding of the learning needs of the age group they are working with.
- Good and very good teaching is seen in all classes and in most subjects. However, some teachers' skills in information technology and design and technology are insufficiently secure to ensure that pupils make the progress they should.
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils enable teachers to manage pupils well, with the minimum of visible control. Teachers are enthusiastic and encouraging, they have a

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very positive approach to pupils and work hard to ensure that the learning experience is a happy one.

- The quality of teaching is significantly enhanced by the work of support assistants and volunteers who work very effectively to support a variety of activities during lessons including working with pupils individually or in small groups.
- Teachers' short-term planning is good, with clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils at the outset of lessons and reviewed with them at the end. In the best lessons, there is clear planning for the development of key skills. However, planning for the use of information technology is less well established, so that pupils' skills for using information technology to support work in other subjects are insufficiently developed. There is, however, inconsistent planning by class teachers for specific SEN needs identified in pupils' IEPs.
- Informal, oral assessment and feedback are used very well during lessons to guide pupils and keep them on task and to enable the teacher to know when planning has to be modified if something has not been fully understood.
- Teaching for pupils in the Learning Centre is consistently good or very good, demonstrating secure understanding of the range of special needs found there and providing pupils with a very high level of support in gaining access to the curriculum.
- Support teaching for pupils with SEN is very well managed with a rigorous approach to the identification of needs and carefully structured programmes to address them. Where pupils are withdrawn for literacy support, they receive good or very good teaching.

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

Arrangements for assessment, recording and reporting are good overall.

- The current school policy documentation concerning assessment, planning, reporting, record keeping and marking are all very detailed and comprehensive.
- Procedures for assessment at the end of the key stage meet the statutory requirements. Pupils' work is marked consistently and day-to-day assessment is good. However, effective structures to ensure consistent short-term assessment, which is mostly formative, to ensure that work is matched to meet the next stage of pupils learning are still being developed. The school recognises this and is actively addressing the issue.
- Pupils' work in English, mathematics and science is regularly assessed both formally and informally, with the aim of enabling teachers to plan appropriate work at the correct level. In these areas there are very good procedures in place for assessing the progress and attainment of pupils. Teachers keep manageable cumulative records of pupils' progress in these core subjects. These are analysed and together with end of key stage assessments help the school to set targets for improvement.
- The use of assessment is less effective in the foundation subjects where more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged to develop to their full potential.
- Portfolios of pupils work in some subjects, particularly the core subjects, enhance the assessment process. Moderated portfolios of work in most curriculum areas ensure that teachers are clear about expectations in each year group and subjects.
- The school has good procedures for identifying pupils with SEN. Assessment is well used to ensure that all pupils are given an appropriate level of support in pursuit of the school's commitment to being fully inclusive. Individual education plans for pupils with SEN are of good quality and targets are consistently monitored and updated.

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- Reports to parents are detailed and appropriate, emphasising achievement and work covered. The reports are of extremely high quality in the core subjects. Parents are well informed of pupils' progress.

### **5.3 Curriculum**

The curriculum is good with some very good features.

- The curriculum is broadly based, balanced and relevant, and contains all subjects of the NC and religious education.
- The curriculum successfully promotes pupils' intellectual, moral, spiritual and physical development to prepare them soundly for the next stage of their education. However, independence and initiative are not fully fostered as a result of pupils being given increasing responsibility for planning and managing their own work.
- The curriculum provides a clear framework for pupils' development. The school's commitment to including all pupils in every aspect of the school's life is a significant strength, underpinning its planning.
- Appropriate amounts of time have been allocated to the foundation subjects and a large percentage is given to literacy and numeracy. In many subjects, new schemes of work have recently been introduced to help teachers plan lessons effectively with appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' knowledge and skills. Teachers in parallel classes work well together to ensure a consistent approach to the curriculum.
- There is an appropriate whole-school policy for promoting the development of key skills across the curriculum. While this is effective in supporting literacy and numeracy, there is, at present, insufficient consistent focus on promoting pupils standards of achievement in ICT.
- The school takes good care of its pupils and provision for pupils' personal, social and health is made across the curriculum. The newly formulated policy is being developed and the school's ethos contributes positively towards this aspect of its work.
- The curriculum for pupils with SEN is good and arrangements fully comply with the Code of Practice. All pupils on the school's register of SEN have IEPs that are regularly reviewed.
- There is an appropriate homework policy, the implementation of which is being standardised across the school. The effectiveness of the policy is currently being reviewed by teachers, governors, parents and pupils to ensure that it plays a full part in further improving pupils' progress.
- The school offers a wide range of high quality extra-curricular activities that significantly enhance the curriculum and which contribute well to pupils' attainment, especially in music and physical education.
- Good links have been established with the local community to support curricular opportunities. Links have been successfully forged with local churches, colleges, police, professional sports coaches, the local council, parent volunteers, and fire and ambulance services.
- The school curriculum is enriched by a variety of visitors to the school and by educational visits to local places of interest such as the Museum of Welsh Life at St Fagans and trips as far afield as London and Normandy. These experiences make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development as well as their learning.

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## 5.4 Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare

The school makes good provision for supporting and guiding pupils and for ensuring their well-being.

- Pupils' needs and requirements are identified at an early stage and all aspects of their progress are closely monitored by teachers. Academic achievement and progress of personal development, behaviour and attendance are regularly discussed.
- The headteacher and staff know the pupils well and pupils are made to feel secure and valued. Both teachers and pupils have high but realistic expectations of the pupils' performances. Discussions on moral and cultural issues help foster good relationships between pupils and staff.
- The school's personal and social education programme is not yet fully operational though many of its aspects are implicitly embedded within present structures and subjects. There is a positive approach to behaviour and a clear policy for rewarding effort, good conduct, attendance and achievement through a house points system and weekly achievement certificate presentations. Pupils are taught the principles of healthy living, the dangers of drug abuse and the need for road safety. There is a policy for sex education, which is incorporated largely within the science curriculum.
- Child protection procedures are very well established. Staff are alert to the issues and have a good understanding of their role and responsibility.
- There are very effective measures for the elimination of all forms of oppressive behaviour, including bullying and racism. These procedures are well understood by all members of staff, governors and parents.
- Appropriate health and safety policies are in place and staff are familiar with procedures relating to them. There are several members of staff qualified to give first aid support. Arrangements for the supervision of pupils during breaks and lunchtimes are good. Concern for ensuring the health and safety of pupils is apparent in planning for risk assessment in all aspects of the curriculum. Regular checks are made in order to identify potential dangers in the school buildings and grounds.
- There are good pastoral links with feeder infant schools and the secondary schools to which pupils transfer. These provide effective support for pupils' confidence and sense of well-being when moving from one phase of education to another.

## 5.5 Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. As a result, they make good progress. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection when, although it was satisfactory overall, there were shortcomings both in mainstream provision and in the resources for the Centre.

- The school has extensive SEN provision including a local education authority (LEA) - resourced Learning Centre for pupils with statements. There is a clear policy, developed to reflect the Code of Practice recommendations, which is well understood and effectively implemented. The SEN register is in place, accessible and updated as appropriate.
- The Centre was reviewed in 2000 following which improvements were made to increase teacher contact between the Centre and mainstream classes. Increased attention has also been given to lesson planning, which is now of a high standard.

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- Teachers in mainstream classes benefit from good access to the expertise located in the Centre, where the teacher in charge is also the school's special needs co-ordinator (SENCO).
  - Pupils in the Centre receive a good quality, broad and balanced curriculum that prepares them well for future inclusion in mainstream classes where this is appropriate. They receive secure teaching in literacy and numeracy skills within the Centre and benefit well from opportunities for integration into mainstream classes for foundation subjects. The Learning Centre is located centrally in the school so that pupils are enabled to mix freely with their mainstream peers.
  - Communication skills are well addressed, particularly through the Social Use of Language programme and individual support from the teacher and classroom assistant is very good.
  - The SENCO has good knowledge of the pupils and contributes well to staff training as, for example, in the use of the computer software used to write IEPs.
  - Other pupils with special needs are well integrated into the life of the school, as an active policy of inclusion is consistently followed. Support work is well organised and planned in detail to meet the literacy targets in pupils' IEPs or to address the specific learning difficulties that have been identified.
  - Short-term, focused individual and group support work is provided by the part-time SEN support teacher for pupils in mainstream classes who are identified as likely to benefit. Work is carefully planned to ensure that pupils do not miss out on learning in other subjects as a result.
  - Individual education plans are well constructed with specific and measurable targets. but there is limited evidence in teachers' planning to show how effectively they are used by mainstream teachers in planning to meet individual pupils' needs. Although the quality of the plans is monitored, there is insufficient monitoring of their implementation.
  - Good support is provided by learning support assistants within classes, but the school lacks consistent structures to support their management, training or deployment, and there is no specific guidance to class teachers on how to make best use of their skills.
  - The governing body makes good arrangements for overseeing the SEN work of the school. One governor has responsibility for the Learning Centre and another for special needs in mainstream classes. They visit most weeks to talk to staff, and meet with the SENCO.
  - Arrangements for annual reviews are good, the requirements are complied with and parents are encouraged to attend, which, in general, they do.
  - There is a good structure for meeting the needs of gifted and talented pupils. Where appropriate, additional provision is made and parents are consulted about the possibility of early transfer to secondary school. Where this is not appropriate, good links with secondary schools enable appropriate higher-level work to be set and supported. Pupils with individual skills in particular areas such as art, music or physical skills are identified through curricular and extra-curricular activities and they are given good opportunities to develop their talents further.

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

Very good links are in place with parents, the community and the local comprehensive school, other colleges and institutions; there are good pastoral links with local infant schools.

- Parents are provided with a prospectus which details fully the life and aims of the school. Governors, however, recognise that the format is somewhat dull and plan to explore the possibility of printing a more colourful version. Newsletters, in which pupils have a good input, are sent out regularly to keep parents fully up to date.
- Parents have very good opportunities to meet the teachers and headteacher; both formally at parent evenings and informally before or after school. They are kept informed about what is being taught and the school holds curriculum meetings, for example on maths, to assist parents to help their children.
- Parents make a good contribution to the life of the school, both directly, through participation in the daily life of the school and through fundraising. There is an effective home-school agreement in place.
- The positive replies to the inspectors' questionnaire were reflected in the outcome of the school's own survey, which was effectively used to enable issues to be identified and addressed.
- Very strong links are in place with the community. For example, in connection with the pupils' study of World War II, they visited the adjacent nursing home to meet people who had experienced it, while other members of the community visited to talk about their experiences. Local services, such as the police liaison officer, visit to talk to pupils about safety and their work in the community and in addition the school has very good links with the local church.
- Care is taken to ensure that new pupils transferring from the three feeder infant schools settle in quickly. Care is taken to ensure that the school has good information about each pupil's needs and any difficulties to enable them to be placed in an appropriate class. Before arriving, they have an opportunity on to spend a day in the junior school. One infant school uses the school field for sports days. Curriculum links however are not fully developed as different schemes, for example, in maths and handwriting are used by the different schools, which sometimes makes continuity and progression difficult.
- Sporting links are good with other local primary schools in the area and the school participates in a good range of inter-school activities.
- Pupils are prepared well for transition to the local secondary school. The headteacher and Y7 teachers come to talk to pupils, in addition to which pupils are given a copy of the "Moving On" booklet prepared by the local junior schools in liaison with the secondary school. Once on their way, the school receives regular feedback as to how their ex-pupils are faring. Year 6 also have the opportunity to work at the secondary school, for example there is a design and technology day and further opportunities to work on scientific projects. Sporting links are also very good.
- The school has very good links with a local university that undertakes teacher training. Good support is given to students on teaching practice by a Y6 teacher who has the role of senior mentor for all students who come into school. Pupils from the secondary school and students from the local colleges also visit for work experience. A student in school during the

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inspection spoke very highly of the school, she felt properly directed and looked after and benefited greatly from this experience.

## **5.7 Partnership with Industry**

The school's partnership with industry is good.

- The school has an appropriate policy for involvement with industry.
- There are good links with the local museum, which pupils visit in connection with their history studies, and also with the local newspaper. During the inspection a local vet visited to talk to Y3 pupils in connection with their study of carnivores, herbivores and omnivores. This was of great benefit to pupils' learning.
- Pupils have had opportunities to work with a ballet company who visited to hold a workshop, and other visits are made to the local hospital, the supermarket, and doctors' surgery in connection with their studies.
- The Education Business Partnership is very involved with the school, for example a teacher spent two days at Caldicot Castle learning about how schools can use the castle for information technology and science. Another teacher spent time with a technology company on placement to produce a resource pack for schools about the world of work.
- All teachers have benefited from time spent in local industry, particularly with a local car company, improving their information technology skills.

# **6. MANAGEMENT**

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

The overall quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is good. The school has good systems for determining how well it is doing and is coping well with a climate of uncertainty.

- The school has developed effective structures for self-review. These include taking clear soundings from staff as part of overall planning for their continuing professional development. The school consults parents through the use of questionnaires, which it analyses to establish in what ways practice can be improved.
- A similar exercise is used to provide a clear picture of pupils' views and concerns in order to formally include them in the self-review process. Overall, self-review contributes well to planning for development ensuring that there is continuity, relevance and coherence in the school development plan (SDP).
- The school's values are clearly identified in self-evaluation documentation and reflected in the SDP. These values are central to governors' planning and inform both short and medium-term objectives.
- Progress towards objectives in the plan is carefully monitored and the plan is updated accordingly. The quality of planning has made a significant contribution to the improvement in standards achieved since the previous inspection.
- The school has developed good structures for analysing and evaluating the data on pupil attainment and uses this effectively to assess the effectiveness of curriculum provision. Pupil tracking is now in place and, once the data has worked through, the school will be in a position to demonstrate clearly the value that it adds. Current data, for example, shows that

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there are more pupils attaining at levels higher than the national benchmark in Y6, than arrive achieving above the benchmark in Y3.

- The school is currently subject to area review procedures that are likely to result in a significant change in its character. This means that, for the present at least, development objectives have a more short-term focus and are, inevitably, concerned with maintaining and improving standards in a difficult and uncertain situation. In the main, these focus on improvements in literacy, numeracy, ICT and pupils' independent learning.
- Governors have considered a range of options put forward for the future of the school and have presented a coherent and consistent response based on their assessment of the school's strengths and the future needs of the community. At the time of the inspection, the outcome was not finalised, giving rise to significant concern on the part of governors about the effect of hiatus on the future of the school, including the work of the Learning Centre.
- Governors have significant concerns about the quality and condition of the building but find it difficult to address these in light of present uncertainty as well as the fact that the building is listed which limits scope for remodelling.
- There is an appropriate programme of observation to monitor teaching and learning. These observations confirm that, in spite of determined efforts by teachers, the level of initiative shown by pupils is still a cause for concern. This has resulted in the identification of promotion of pupil autonomy as a continuing objective for this year.
- Subject co-ordinators consistently monitor learning in their subjects and identify means by which standards can be improved. As a result, they have a clear idea of why standards are as they are and where they need to be improved.

## **6.2 Leadership and Efficiency**

Leadership is very good: it provides a very clear direction to the school and underpins the high standards achieved. The school's aims and values are very well reflected both in the ethos of the school and in all aspects of its work. Good management ensures that this leadership is effectively translated into practice.

- The headteacher provides clear, firm but sensitive leadership; he has clearly secured the confidence and trust of parents and staff and he is very well supported by the governors. In both teaching and management of pupils he provides a very good role model for staff.
- The school's management structure has been revised following the appointment of the present headteacher in 2000. There is now an effective senior management team that ensures the effective management of all areas of the school's work.
- The role of curriculum co-ordinators has been significantly enhanced since the previous inspection and they contribute well to the management of the curriculum. This is particularly the case for the core subjects.
- The school uses its resources effectively. The budget is clearly determined by the priorities expressed in the SDP. It is well managed with attention given to cost effectiveness and value for money. Priority areas within the curriculum are identified for improvement in resources. The school is well supported by the parents, who provide additional valuable resources. The school retains a prudent reserve, in spite of periodic difficulties in establishing its overall financial position from the forecasts it is supplied with.
- Governors are alert to their responsibilities and have set up appropriate structures to carry out and monitor them. The school meets all requirements in terms of policies and there is, in addition, a good range of clearly written policies to guide its work.

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- Routine daily administration and school organisation is good, the school runs smoothly. Items identified in the recent auditor's report have been appropriately attended to.
  - The school prospectus and the Annual Governors' Report to parents fully meet statutory requirements and National Assembly for Wales guidelines.
  - The school gives good value for money.

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

The school is generally well staffed and resourced but the condition of parts of the building give cause for concern.

- Teaching staff are well qualified and the majority have initial or subsequent qualifications that are relevant to the subjects for which they are co-ordinators.
- There are sufficient teachers for the numbers of pupils and the staffing is stable, with few teachers leaving and staff absence rates through illness are low. There is a good number of support staff who contribute well to pupils' learning overall, although there are insufficient structures for managing them.
- There are good arrangements for the continuing professional development of teachers and these contribute well to teachers' skills and confidence. Performance management structures are being developed in accordance with requirements and include school and individual targets and individual performance review meetings. The in-service training (INSET) programme reflects identified school and staff needs.
- Resources for learning are of good quality and quantity in almost all areas of the curriculum and their use has a positive effect on the pupils' standards of achievement.
- There has been significant recent improvement in ICT facilities, which has increased pupils' access considerably. However, the school has a large number of ageing computers, many of which are under used and therefore are not effective in the development of pupils' information technology skills. This includes some of those in the ICT suite, which regularly suffer breakdown or produce problems that teachers' skills are insufficient to address.
- Accommodation is good overall, being spacious and including a sports hall, dining room and a purpose-built, high quality Learning Centre. There are also high quality outside play areas, including a very useful field. Good use is made of the grounds and these are made available to other schools when appropriate. Staff, governors and parents have worked hard to develop areas of the grounds to good effect. Attractive and stimulating displays of pupils' work in the classrooms and corridors enhance the learning environment and have a positive effect on standards of achievement. However, some areas of the school are hard to manage and some classrooms are small for the number of pupils using them. The school is in a poor decorative state, and there are insufficient power outlets in many classrooms.
- There is poor access to many parts of the building for disabled persons and a lack of shower facilities, for example, to support pupils with SEN. The building itself is listed so there is limited scope for reconstruction.
- There are on-going concerns with regard to the lack of a fire escape to those classes situated on the first floor of the building. In some areas the inadequate number or inappropriate location of electrical sockets creates a health and safety concern when, for example electrical equipment is being used for teaching or demonstration purposes.

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## 7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

### Standards Achieved by Pupils

#### English

Standards of achievement in English are good throughout the school. By the end of Y6, they are very good.

#### Good features

- Speaking skills are developed well. Pupils speak with clarity, accuracy and confidence, in a wide range of contexts across the curriculum.
- Pupils' listening skills are good. They listen attentively to their teachers and other pupils and recall with accuracy what they have heard. They are then able to express their ideas and opinions with clarity and precision.
- Standards achieved in reading are good. Pupils develop good reading habits and select appropriate reading materials from a wide range of available resources.
- Pupils offer opinions about a range of books that they have read and authors that they particularly enjoy. They discuss character development and plot convincingly.
- Pupils participate in individual and group reading within classes. They make good progress through the focused reading support programme and the strong home/school reading partnership that is in operation.
- Pupils write in a variety of forms for different purposes and a range of audiences. As pupils progress they develop a fluency and creativity in their writing and respond appropriately to a range of textual stimulus including the writings of Shakespeare and the poetry of Ted Hughes. The quality of writing observed during the inspection was high.
- Pupils' work benefits well from the encouragement they are given to plan, draft and re-draft their written work. This enables them to become analytical and self-critical when reviewing their writing, leading to an enhanced quality and greater understanding of it.
- Handwriting and presentation skills are good as are spelling and punctuation. Pupils have a sound understanding of the use and function of the different parts of speech. Pupils construct complex sentences and are adventurous in their use of language.
- Pupils have good comprehension skills and organise their approach to unfamiliar materials well in order to achieve understanding of what is being conveyed.
- By the end of Y6, pupils achieve results in national tests that are significantly better than the average for schools in Wales as a whole as well as those for schools with similar pupil populations. In the process, a significant proportion attain at levels higher than the national benchmark.

#### Shortcomings

- No significant shortcomings were identified.

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## Mathematics

Standards of achievement in mathematics are good throughout the school. By the end of Y6, they are very good.

- Younger pupils have a good understanding of place value, which they use confidently to solve mental and written calculations involving the four rules of number. They differentiate between odd and even numbers and identify the rule for doing so.
- They handle information and sort objects logically as when they use Venn Diagrams to classify flags according to defined features or differentiate fellow pupils by whether they have brothers or sisters, both or none.
- They have a good recall of number facts and look for and use pattern when dealing with multiplication. Pupils confidently describe the strategies they use for solving mental and written calculations. They count on confidently in various units, starting from randomly selected numbers.
- Pupils use appropriate mathematical vocabulary and know the names of common two-dimensional shapes. They identify lines of symmetry and demonstrate these on regular shapes by folding or the use of mirrors.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress in gaining a secure understanding of number using number lines and other apparatus.
- Older pupils extend their knowledge of the number system to deal with positive and negative numbers. They confidently order large numbers, work with fractions, including improper fractions, mixed numbers and decimals and extend this to work in percentages. They understand the nature of decimal fractions and convert fractional amounts from one form to another using common fractions, tenths, hundredths and two places of decimals.
- Pupils understand the principles of measurement well. They use appropriate units for measuring length, area, volume and capacity. They know and use the rules for finding areas and volumes of regular two and three-dimensional shapes and solids.
- Their work shows evidence of systematic working when dealing with mathematical investigations with support from teachers. They apply their previous knowledge well in new situations. They use a range of ways of recording data about themselves and each other and use tally charts and frequency graphs to collect and compare information.
- The oldest pupils extend series and sequences of numbers and express general rules in appropriate mathematical language. They understand equality and inequality and work with the appropriate signs for 'more than', 'less than' and 'equals'. They deal appropriately with positive and negative numbers in contexts such as temperature.
- By the end of Y6, pupils achieve results in national tests that are significantly better than the average for schools in Wales as a whole as well as those for schools with similar pupil populations. In the process, a significant proportion attain at levels higher than the national benchmark.

## Shortcomings

- No significant shortcomings were identified.

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## Science

Standards of achievement in science are good throughout the school. By the end of Y6, they are very good.

### Good features

- Younger pupils show good understanding of living processes when they explore what is meant by a healthy diet. They show good understanding of the processes of the human body and recognise the relationship between the quality of diet and healthy living and growth. They develop understanding of the effect of exercise on their heart and pulse rate and higher-attaining pupils describe the position and functions of some major organs and bones.
- They look at how animals' teeth have developed to cope with different diets and differentiate between incisors, molars and canine teeth. They classify animals by diet and know that they can be herbivores, carnivores or omnivores. They use a range of methods for recording and comparing information.
- They understand that materials react with one another, discovering the effect of various liquids on chalk and relate this to their study of human teeth. They know that materials may be alive, dead or never alive and that where they are alive, as with teeth, they grow and can suffer damage.
- They explore the properties of light and discover that it travels in straight lines, that it will not go round corners and it can be blocked by placing objects in the way. They apply this knowledge to a study of shadows made by the sun and draw conclusions about the nature of day and night and why we have seasons.
- Pupils understand that sound is produced through vibration and that some materials conduct it well while others muffle it. They know that the pitch of a sound is affected by the length of a vibrating column or by the tension in a string and apply this to extend their knowledge of how musical notes are made and varied.
- Pupils of all ages have a good understanding of what is meant by a fair test. From their arrival in the school, in preparing for an investigation, they confidently use planning sheets to determine what changes they are going to investigate, which aspects are to be kept constant and which are to be changed. They learn to use the terms 'constant' and 'variable' appropriately.
- Older pupils show a good awareness of the nature of scientific enquiry and apply this well to their investigations. When examining the strength of various materials, they make sensible predictions and back these up by using their prior knowledge. They know the importance of repeated measurements in arriving at secure conclusions and use observation well to explore the reasons why a particular measurement might be unreliable.
- Pupils show good awareness of the different properties of materials, which they classify in relation to their degree of suitability for particular purposes. Pupils know that some materials are absorbent and others impermeable, that some materials are transparent and others opaque and that qualities such as these are important in determining the suitability of a material for a given purpose. They develop standardised measures for determining which type of paper towel will be most absorbent.
- They have a good knowledge of electricity and circuits. They know that circuits need to be complete and unbroken for electricity to flow and identify the range of possible reasons why a particular circuit fails. They record simple circuits using standardised circuit diagrams and construct specified circuits from diagrams provided.

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- By the end of Y6, pupils achieve results in national tests that are significantly better than the average for schools in Wales as a whole as well as those for schools with similar pupil populations. In the process, a significant proportion attain at levels higher than the national benchmark.

### **Shortcomings**

- No significant shortcomings were identified.

### **Welsh as a second language.**

Standards of achievement in Welsh are good overall.

### **Good features**

- Pupils make good use of the opportunity to use the language daily. They respond well to use the language informally in all classrooms demonstrating a good grasp of basic language, carrying out instructions and using simple sentence construction.
- Pupils listen attentively and carefully to teachers' presentations and to the contribution of their peers. They respond in a positive manner to what they hear, with the most able responding by conveying personal and factual information clearly.
- Across the school, pupils make good progress in their oral skills. They work purposefully as a whole class, in pairs and as individuals when responding to a good range of watching, listening and reading activities.
- Pupils reading and their use of sentence patterns and vocabulary are enhanced by imaginative use of resources and ICT. However, writing in this medium does not benefit from the availability of Welsh fonts or a spelling check in Welsh.
- Pupils have learned songs and prayers, which they use during acts of worship. They sing '*Aleliwia Ior i ti....*' And '*Diolch, Diolch am Gymru*' tunefully and with gusto in a Welsh assembly.
- Pupils demonstrate their familiarity with the language during the Welsh collective act of worship that takes place weekly and through their enjoyment of the Welsh stories for example '*Brenin Arthur a Bedwyr*' and '*Beddgelert*'.
- Younger pupils make good progress and increase their vocabulary and understanding of the language through rhyming words and writing their own couplets.
- Older pupils engage in simple dialogue working in pairs and small groups, using the sentence patterns and vocabulary to which they are familiar. They use Power Point presentation on Harri Morgan the Pirate and answer questions such as '*Beth mae Harri Morgan yn hoffi gwneud?*' confidently and with good pronunciation.
- Pupils with SEN show a clear understanding of vocabulary used in a role play activity '*Chwarae Cuddio*' and they use phrases '*o dan*', '*tu ôl*', '*ar ben*', '*mewn twll*' quite naturally.
- All pupils respond well to the strenuous and commendable efforts by the staff to speak Welsh and their sensitive use of appropriate reinforcement techniques showing increasing confidence in such settings.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils' awareness and knowledge of a range of aspects of Welsh culture are underdeveloped.

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- Pupils do not read a sufficient range of texts in the target language and the older pupils do not make enough use of writing.

## **Design and technology**

Although only two lessons were seen, evidence from previous work and discussion with pupils indicates that standards of achievement in design and technology are satisfactory.

### **Good features**

- Younger pupils explore how boxes are made when they disassemble a range of boxes and use their observations to create a 'net' for constructing their own box. They cut, shape and join materials including textiles when they design and make puppets.
- They use a simple pneumatic structure to move parts of a model when they transfer air to and from a balloon using a plastic syringe tube. Older pupils use cams and other devices when they construct moving toys. They demonstrate awareness of fitness for purpose when they design and make containers to hold money.
- Pupils' classification skills are used effectively when making judgements about taste, texture and composition of food such as biscuits or bread or assembling a sandwich snack. Older pupils apply this knowledge to the process of baking, choosing what kind of loaf they will make.
- Year 5 pupils cut, shape and join a range of materials together to make a variety of musical instruments. They use their understanding of basic electronics when they design an alarm system.
- Some Y6 pupils show an awareness of structural criteria when designing and evaluating a shelter as a result of a visit to an outdoor centre. They consider how it could have been built better and suggest modifications for any future shelter.

### **Shortcomings**

- Older pupils in particular have had insufficient experience of work in the subject to demonstrate design skills in a range of contexts and settings.
- Understanding of mechanisms and their role in design is limited and pupils do not consistently apply previously covered knowledge to their current work.
- Pupils do not sufficiently distinguish between identifying characteristics and evaluating the extent to which a design satisfies specific requirements or meets a specified purpose.

## **Information and communications technology**

Standards of achievement in ICT are satisfactory and improving.

### **Good features**

- Pupils display increasing familiarity and confidence with computers through regular use of the ICT suite. They use a range of standard applications with increasing facility as they gain experience and discover the possibilities for presentation.
- The youngest pupils learn to use a simple word-processing program, combining text and graphics with help to produce a composite poster or design a cover for a book.
- They collect data from various sources and produce tally sheets and block graphs using a simple data-handling program.

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- Older pupils use standard office packages for word-processing, spreadsheets, data handling and presentations. They use a graphics program to generate pictures in the style of Monet and combine text with pictures to create advertising posters. When working with data they use increasingly complex styles of presentation including pie charts and graphs using three-dimensions.
  - They demonstrate effective skills when interrogating a CD-ROM or navigating Internet sites to collect information on a range of topics which they download or capture for printing.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils do not sufficiently develop independent skills for using information and communications technology effectively without structured support and guidance.
- Older pupils have had insufficient experience to confidently use the applications currently being used. When difficulties are encountered, they have limited strategies to address them.

### **History**

Owing to timetabling arrangements only lessons from Y5 and Y6 were observed during the inspection. Scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' plans, discussion with pupils and with the subject co-ordinator and observations of the displays of work in classrooms and corridors and photographic evidence, provide evidence that pupils achieve good standards in history across the school.

### **Good features**

- Pupils, in the main, have a good sense of chronology. They make good use of timelines of different scales and show their understanding through their use of vocabulary related to the passing of time.
- Attractive displays of work in history and in particular visits to places of historical interest, contribute significantly to pupils' good progress in learning.
- Younger pupils recall having visited the Celtic village at St Fagans, the Caerleon Roman Museum and sites, the local museum and Llancharach Fawr in their studies of the Stuarts.
- Older pupils discuss their visits to the Golden Hind, the World War II Cabinet War Rooms in London and Normandy. They relate what they have seen to the period in history they were studying.
- Pupils understand how they can find out about and then interpret information from the past. They make good progress in their enquiry skills as they study their topics, looking at a range of evidence such as artefacts, photographs and eyewitness accounts.
- Year 5 pupils, when studying the Victorians, use local census material and other data as they select, evaluate and combine information from different sources in order to develop this topic as a local study.
- Year 6 pupils visited the County Hall to look at census returns in their study of World War II and visited the local war memorial to research a local hero. They traced the families of war veterans to talk to and then write about them.
- Older pupils show an increasing depth of factual knowledge and some understanding of the trauma of being an evacuee during World War II as they draw on accounts of first hand experiences through receiving visiting speakers. Pupils' enactment of 'rationed meal' with locals and of evacuation of trains further enhanced their learning.

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- Older pupils identify clearly, give good reasons for the different ways in which the past is represented and interpreted. They are secure in how to select and organise historical information, including dates. They have a secure knowledge of the terms necessary to describe the periods and topics studied.

### **Shortcomings**

- There is insufficient use of computer software by pupils in order to fully support this dimension of historical enquiry.

## **Geography**

Owing to timetabling arrangements only lessons from Y3 and Y4 were observed during the inspection. Scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' plans, discussion with pupils and with the subject co-ordinator and observations of the displays of work in classrooms and corridors, however, provide evidence that pupils are achieving good standards in geography across the school.

### **Good features**

- Pupils make sound progress in the development of their geographical skills, knowledge and understanding as they move through the school.
- Pupils have a positive attitude to their work. They listen carefully and respond well to questions. They work well in partner or group activities. Such an example was noted in a fieldwork study by Y3 pupils identifying the human and physical features adjacent to the school.
- Year 4 pupils accurately identify on physical maps features such as mountain ranges and estuaries and have studied the link between contour lines and varying heights. They recognise important local landmarks such as Sugar Loaf and the Usk and explain why their home town encourages visits from a large number of tourists.
- Pupils' knowledge of other parts of the world develops soundly, for example the different continents and their main physical features. They compare mountain regions such as the Alps in Switzerland with Snowdonia in Wales. In their study of Kenya and through their personal experiences of travelling abroad in Europe, Asia and Africa pupils' awareness of their own culture and that of other peoples has been effectively promoted.
- Year 6 pupils have made good use of information stored on CD-ROM. Pupils learn about features relating to the location of places in their environments. They compare and contrast living in Abergavenny with living in Llanidloes, a small rural town.
- Pupils at the end of the key stage have a good understanding of symbols used in geography and their use on Ordnance Survey Maps.

### **Shortcomings**

- Younger pupils are not always confident or sufficiently equipped to raise or explore geographical questions independently.

## **Art**

Standards of achievement in art are good.

### **Good features**

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- Pupils acquire and develop a range of skills and techniques across the age range and these enable pupils to develop good understanding in the subject.
  - Younger pupils experiment with tone and shade when mixing paint for skin colour. Shade cards are effectively used for guidance and comparison. Pupils discuss and evaluate self-portraits and compare theirs with those of other artists.
  - Pupils use a range of media to investigate various techniques for drawing on different textures. Older pupils show an increasing confidence and awareness in the use of materials and techniques in observing form as portrayed in sculpture and art.
  - Pupils paint in the style of Monet following observation and discussion of three Monet paintings. They choose appropriate colours, use a range of brush sizes and reproduce faithfully aspects of his style.
  - Pupils' work reflects their growing ability to observe patterns found in nature, and reproduce that they see through sketches and associated felt workings. They observe and record examples of shape and form through direct observation in the immediate school vicinity.
  - Older pupils compare shapes and patterns used in art forms at different times and within different cultures. Using the techniques of stipple and stamp, pupils produce work based upon repeated patterns. Pupils discuss and analyse what they find pleasing in the patterns and what they find less attractive.
  - Levels of awareness of art are emphasised and enhanced by the quality of display of pupils' own work. Pupils make good use of opportunities to improve their work through participation in National Children's Art day and by attending the after school Art Club.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no significant shortcomings.

### **Music**

Standards of achievement in music are good.

#### **Good features**

- In a variety of settings, including class lessons, pupils listen attentively to music and appraise a range of music of various styles. They show increasing awareness of form and of the different purposes for which music may be used.
- Pupils learn to perform a range of songs in English and Welsh, which they sing with energy and enthusiasm. They understand the importance of pitch, phrasing, posture and articulation in producing good singing. Singing throughout the school is tuneful and, when practising, pupils remember the words and have good intonation.
- Pupils acquire good levels of musical knowledge, skills and understanding through regular and direct interaction with a broad range of musical experiences. They benefit well from a variety of practical musical experiences including the use of tuned and un-tuned instruments. They take great pleasure in demonstrating the skills they acquire.
- Through a variety of opportunities to listen to and think about music, pupils develop good ability to listen and appraise. A range of appropriate music is usually played as pupils enter and leave assemblies. This may be either recorded or live music played by pupils or staff and enables them to develop a wider understanding of forms and genres.

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- A number of pupils benefit from formal musical tuition provided by visiting tutors, across a broad range of instruments, including brass, strings, percussion, harp and woodwind. As a consequence they gain in musical expertise and become proficient and confident performers.
  - Pupils' musical development benefits well from the opportunity to perform in groups as well as in solo performances. They make good use of the opportunity to participate in a number of musical productions throughout the year both in school and in the community. There is a large school choir and a school orchestra that are held in high esteem within the local community. Both groups are active and perform to high standard. The choir successfully performed in France in Summer 2002.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no significant shortcomings.

### **Physical education**

Not all aspects of physical education were taking place during the inspection. Standards of achievement are good in gymnastics, games and dance.

### **Good features**

- Pupils know why it is important to warm up the body prior to exercise and they demonstrate a wide range of stretching, jumping and running prior to the main lesson.
- All pupils achieve well in physical education because they are taught skills and techniques systematically. They work hard with a determination to improve their skills. They show good stamina as they sustain a good level of physical activity throughout the lesson. They dress appropriately for all activities.
- Year 3 pupils practise throwing in their work on the shoulder pass in rugby and demonstrate good ball control skills and co-operation as they work in groups of four. They improve and practise their movements as a result of evaluating their own or others' performance.
- Year 4 pupils in another lesson using rugby balls, showed a good awareness of the need to be safe as well as to work hard. This was a good example of their willingness to co-operate in mixed gender groups.
- Year 5 pupils practising hockey skills pass the ball accurately using both sides of the hockey stick and during the lesson improved their awareness of space and strategy. In dance, they make good progress in interpreting music from the musical 'Oliver' and in developing and refining a routine. They respond well to the music and the mood of the dance.
- Year 6 pupils develop gymnastic sequences both on the floor and on large apparatus. They understand and make symmetrical and asymmetrical balances using arms and legs well to control their movements. They work with an awareness of safety, and show considerable commitment and dedication.
- In both rugby and netball sessions, pupils work well together in small groups. They show good levels of balance as they feint and dodge and throw and catch with increasing accuracy and skill. They move into space in such a way as to help their teammates find them with a pass.
- Pupils, both boys and girls, respond to the disciplined approach in their football lessons, especially when working under the direction of professional coaches. They display good skills in controlling, passing and dribbling the ball.

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- All pupils complete an eight-week swimming programme in Y6. By the time they leave the school, 95 per cent of pupils achieve the minimum requirement of 25 metres. A considerable number of higher ability pupils achieve the first level of the rescue and survival skills award.
  - Older pupils develop a range of physical skills as a result of attending a residential course in outdoor education.
  - Pupils successfully take part in local leagues and competitive matches in netball, football, rugby and cricket. They are the Abergavenny and District League Football Champions and came first in the Abergavenny Schools Swimming Gala.
  - Pupils participate in County and Welsh competitions in hockey, cricket, swimming and cross-country running. They are the current Gwent Girl Champions at cross-country for the second year in succession.
  - High achieving pupils including pupils from the Learning Centre have been selected for the County and Welsh team in gymnastics, rugby, cricket and hockey.
  - High quality extra-curricular activities are provided for a wide range of games, and pupils support these with interest and appreciation. Pupils' games skills are particularly enhanced through the support of soccer and rugby professional coaching and the Dragon Sports programme.

### **Shortcomings**

- Older pupils do not sufficiently plan, improve and practise their movements as a result of evaluating their own and others performance in gymnastic lessons, as there are not enough opportunities.

### **Religious education**

Standards of achievement in religious education are satisfactory.

#### **Good features**

- Pupils make satisfactory progress through the school curriculum, which meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.
- The youngest pupils understand the idea that the Ten Commandments are a set of rules. They use this knowledge to establish the basis for a set of classroom rules.
- Pupils learn about the life of Jesus and become familiar with stories from the Bible, including the stories that Jesus told. They know that parables are simple stories designed to convey a deeper meaning.
- Throughout the school, pupils successfully develop a sound understanding of Christian beliefs and practices. They understand that there is a cycle to the Christian calendar and that this is marked by festivals such as Harvest, Christmas and Easter.
- Pupils extend their knowledge of the role of special places in religion through visits to local places of worship. They learn the specific vocabulary that is used to describe the main features, signs and symbols of a Christian place of worship.
- Pupils' knowledge of Christian belief and practice benefits also from visits to the school from local clergy.
- Pupils develop an awareness of other cultures and have knowledge and an appropriate understanding of the ceremonies and festivals of some other world religions.

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- Pupils understand and demonstrate empathy for the care of the environment. They explore the relationships between humans and other living creatures.
  - Older pupils develop an understanding of symbolism in religion through a study of Christian customs and artefacts.
  - Acts of collective worship strengthen pupils' sense of community and make a good contribution to developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious education.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils' understanding and awareness of significant aspects of other major world religions is under-developed.

## **8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

### **8.1 Progress Since the Last Inspection**

The school was last inspected in the summer term 1996 and the inspection report identified key issues for action, covering the need to:

- improve standards in information technology and geography;
- allow pupils greater initiative in planning their own work and expand the role of investigational work across the curriculum;
- improve assessment procedures and the use of assessment in planning;
- complete whole-school schemes of work to secure continuity and progression and provide guidance on teaching approaches;
- continue developing the role of curriculum co-ordinator, particularly with regard to monitoring and evaluating standards of achievement;

In addition, shortcomings were identified in the resources available for subjects and for pupils in the Learning Centre.

Since the last inspection:

Overall improvement has been good; the school has addressed most issues well and has made at least satisfactory improvement in all of them.

- Standards in information technology have improved and they are now in line with expectations, although they do not yet match the standards in other subjects. Standards in geography, which were unsatisfactory are now good as they are in many subjects where they were previously satisfactory.
- Investigational work is now well established; pupils show very good skills in constructing hypotheses and testing them and are increasingly using their developing skills to plan their own work.
- Assessment is now well established in core subjects and making an impact on foundation subjects. Target setting has been effectively developed and the school makes good use of the analysis of Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) results including data relating to gender differences in its planning.

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- Secure, soundly-based schemes of work have been developed and implemented and these are well used in guiding teachers' planning. There are consistent approaches and learning in each class builds securely on previous work without undue repetition.
  - Curriculum co-ordinators are now very effective; they have a clear role and their work has been significant in driving standards up.
  - In addition, improvements in communication with parents, including parents of pupils with SEN have resulted in a more effective partnership.
  - In particular, the adoption of a more rigorous model of self-evaluation has resulted in improved development planning based on the issues the process has thrown up.

## **8.2 Key Issues for Action**

In order further to enhance the quality of education and to continue to raise the educational standards achieved there is a need to:

- address the shortcomings in subjects where standards are otherwise satisfactory, in particular by ensuring that teachers' skills, confidence and knowledge in ICT and design and technology are sufficient to provide good learning experiences;
- continue to promote pupils' independence and self-sufficiency skills, in particular through giving them more responsibility for planning and managing longer-term pieces of work;
- improve curriculum links with feeder schools to ensure that the momentum of pupils' learning is not lost through having to learn different approaches, as for example, in handwriting;
- implement the planning in the SDP to provide a structured course in personal and social education;
- improve the condition and accessibility of the building, including addressing all identified health and safety risks.

## APPENDIX

### A. Basic Information About the School

Name of School	Harold Road Junior School
School type	Community
Age-range of pupils	7-11
Address of school	Harold Road Abergavenny
Post-Code	NP7 7DG
Telephone Number	01873 853236

Headteacher	Mr I G Morgan
Date of appointment	September 2000
Chair of Appropriate Authority	Mrs K Waters
Registered Inspector	Dr Eric Peagam
Dates of inspection	7-10 October 2002

### 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	-	-	-	-	84	60	86	71	301*

\*in addition, there are 18 pupils aged 7-11 in the Learning Centre

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	13	3	13.5

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	24.4: 1
Average teaching group size	28
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1.1: 1

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>		
	Attendance	Unauthorised absence
Spring 2002	93.5	0.51
Summer 2002	93.3	0.4
Autumn 2001	96.3	0.25

<i>Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection</i>	0
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## C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

END OF KEY STAGE 2: 2001

National Curriculum Assessment KS2 Results: 2001							Number of pupils in Y6: 70						
Percentage of pupils at each level													
			D	A	N	B	W	1	2	3	4	5	6
English	Teacher assessment	School	N/a	0	0		1	0	3	9	57	30	0
		National	0	3	6		0	1	6	19	48	25	0
	Test/Task	School	1	1	0	0			0	10	59	29	
		National	0	2	2	0			4	14	47	31	
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	N/a	0	0		0	1	1	12	51	35	0
		National	0	0	1		0	1	4	19	47	28	0
	Test/Task	School	1	1	0	0			1	7	45	45	
		National	0	2	1	1			4	18	42	32	
Science	Teacher assessment	School	N/a	0	0		0	0	3	7	55	35	0
		National	0	0	1		0	1	3	15	52	29	0
	Test/Task	School	1	1	0	0			3	3	55	37	
		National	0	2	0	1			2	13	51	31	

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

B Pupils not entered for the tests because they are working outside the set levels of the tests

W Pupils who are working towards level 1

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:	85	In the school:	85 (91 in mainstream classes)
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

B Pupils not entered for the tests because they are working outside the set levels of the tests

W Pupils who are working towards level 1

## D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection

The inspection was carried out by a team of four inspectors over a period of four days, and the report was based on evidence from:

- pre-inspection meetings held with the headteacher, staff and the governing body;
- the analysis of 51 returned parents' questionnaires and a meeting with 32 parents;
- the observation of 67 lessons or part lessons, including sessions of instrumental tuition in music, with work in each class being observed by at least two inspectors;
- a scrutiny of pupils' work and hearing pupils read;
- an examination of assessment records and reports to parents;
- observation of registration procedures;
- the scrutiny of school documentation, teachers' plans and assessment records;

- observation of pupils' behaviour in and around the school at break-times, lunch-times and before and after school;
- attendance at assemblies;
- discussions with the headteacher and other staff;
- post inspection meetings with senior management and governing body.

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

<b>Inspector</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Aspect Responsibilities</b>	
Dr E Peagam	RgI	Standards of achievement Key Skills Quality of teaching Special educational needs Self-evaluation Leadership and efficiency	mathematics science design and technology information technology
Mrs R Boardman	Lay	Behaviour Attendance Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions Partnership with industry	
Mr D B Morgan	Team	Curriculum Assessment recording and reporting	Welsh history geography physical education
Mr H M Davies	Team	Pupils' spiritual moral social and cultural development Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Resources	English art music religious education

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