

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

**YSGOL JOHN BRIGHT
OXFORD ROAD
LLANDUDNO
CONWY
LL30 1DL**

SCHOOL NUMBER: 662/4022

DATE OF INSPECTION: 28 APRIL - 2 MAY 2003

BY

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UNDER ESTYN CONTRACT NUMBER: C/T/32/02

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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.

LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THE REPORT IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER :

ACCAC	-	Awdurdod Cymwysterau Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru (The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales)
A level	-	Advanced level
AS	-	Advanced Subsidiary
AVCE	-	Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education
CAD	-	Computer Aided Design
CAT	-	Cognitive Assessment Test
CAM	-	Computer Aided Manufacture
CoEA	-	Certificate of Educational Achievement
CoP	-	Code of Practice
DARA	-	Defence Astronaut Research Agency
DASH	-	Drugs and Alcohol Self Help
EBP	-	Education Business Partnership
GB	-	Governing Body
GCE	-	General Certificate of Education
GCSE	-	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	-	General National Vocational Qualification
HoD	-	Head of Department
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
IEP	-	Individual Education Plan
INSET	-	In-Service Education and Training
MLD	-	Moderate Learning Difficulties
NFER	-	National Foundation for Education and Research
NVQ	-	National Vocational Qualification
PSE	-	Personal and Social Education
RoA	-	Record of Achievement
SAT	-	Standard Assessment Tests
SDP	-	School Development Plan
SEN	-	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	-	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SMT	-	Senior Management Team
UA	-	Unitary Authority

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PART 2: THE INSPECTION SCHEDULE

1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

Ysgol John Bright is an 11-18, mixed, community school in Llandudno, Conwy. There are 1186 pupils on roll, compared to 1006 at the time of the last inspection. Of these, there are currently 138 students in the sixth form, compared to 129 at that time. Numbers are continuing to increase.

Pupils come mainly from the town of Llandudno but also from Penrhyn Bay and Deganwy. There are both prosperous and economically deprived wards within the school's catchment area and the intake is fully comprehensive. Sixteen per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, compared to 20 per cent nationally. English is the first language of nearly all pupils. There are a few pupils from other ethnic heritages and from Welsh-speaking homes.

Pupils represent the full range of ability with sizeable groups of both able and less able pupils. Fifty-one pupils have statements of SEN and a further 233 pupils are on the SEN register, an above average proportion in the school as a whole. In 1998 the unit for pupils with MLD was set up on the school's site for up to 15 pupils at KS3, maintained by the UA.

The headteacher, two deputy headteachers and one assistant headteacher were in post at the time of the last inspection. One assistant headteacher has been appointed since. The school has clear aims and an annual and longer-term development plan to translate these aims into practice. Currently, the school is planning to move to a new site in September 2004 and building work has begun.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

Ysgol John Bright has made significant progress since the last inspection and there is now much good practice. Overall, standards and examination results have improved and the school has maintained its caring ethos. It is very well led, innovative in piloting a number of educational initiatives with success, and reflective of current practice. This has all been achieved during a period of not inconsiderable difficulties of accommodation and some staff illness, and with the responsibilities of planning for the new school buildings.

Educational Standards Achieved

Good features

- Standards were at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of classes observed and good or very good in 64 per cent. These figures are a considerable improvement on those of the last inspection when the percentage of good and very good work was 41 per cent.
- Standards are good in all key stages in English, mathematics, design and technology, Welsh second language, geography, music and religious education/studies.
- Standards are also good in most other subjects at some key stages.
- Standards in the key skills of communication and numeracy are good overall.

- The large majority of pupils of differing abilities make steady progress across the curriculum.
- Pupils with SEN in small groups, with learning support assistants and in the MLD unit, make good progress generally.
- Results in the NC tests at the end of KS3 have improved year on year, and peaked in 2002, above local and national averages, and placed the school in the top 25 per cent of schools with a similar intake.
- GCSE results improved steadily until 2001, when 57 per cent of pupils gained five or more grades A*-C. In 2002, although results dipped, they were still in line with the national average, and, across the full range of grades (A*-G), they were above. Results were also above average for schools of a similar intake.
- Only three per cent of pupils left school without qualifications, compared to five per cent nationally.
- Results in the A level examinations were in line with the national average in 2001.

Shortcomings

- Standards were judged very good in only a small proportion of classes observed across all key stages.
- A level results in 2002 were below the national average, particularly in the percentage of top grades.
- Pupils and students do not pursue independent lines of enquiry, undertake research and think critically as a regular part of their learning.
- Standards achieved in class are not always translated into examination results as pupils and students do not take sufficient responsibility for consolidating their learning through revision.
- The behaviour of a small minority of pupils can interrupt the learning of the class and result in underachievement, particularly in Y8 and Y9.
- Only half the students in the sixth form complete their portfolios to gain qualifications in Key Skills.

Standards in subjects

Subject	KS3	KS4	Sixth form
English	Good	Good	Good
Mathematics	Good	Good	Good
Science	Good	Satisfactory	Good
Design & Technology	Good	Good	Good
Information Technology	Satisfactory	Good	-
Welsh second language	Good	Good	Good
History	Good	Satisfactory	Good
Geography	Good	Good	Good
Modern Foreign Languages	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Art	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Music	Good	Good	Good
Physical Education	Good	Good	Satisfactory
Religious Education/Studies	Good	Good	Good
Personal and Social Education	Good	Good	Satisfactory
Business Studies	-	Good	Satisfactory

Key Skills	-	Good	-
Economics	-	-	Very Good
Psychology	-	-	Satisfactory
Geology	-	-	Satisfactory
Health & Social Care	-	-	Good

Standards in Key Skills

Key Skill	KS3 and KS4	Key Skill	Sixth Form
Listening	Good	Communication	Good
Speaking	Satisfactory	Application of Number	Good
Reading	Good	ICT	Satisfactory
Writing	Good	Improving own learning and Performance	Satisfactory
Numeracy	Good	Working with Others	Good
ICT	Satisfactory	Problem solving	Good

Quality of Education Provided

Good features

- Teaching was at least satisfactory in 97 per cent of classes observed and good or very good in 71 per cent. These are high figures and an improvement on those of the last inspection, of 93 per cent and 58 per cent respectively.
- Teaching is becoming increasingly innovative, with the introduction of interactive whiteboard technology and greater emphasis on accelerated learning and thinking skills.
- The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, with a good range of examination courses at KS4 and in the sixth form, for pupils and students of differing abilities and aptitudes.
- The good links with other local schools and the college have enlarged the range of option choices.
- The curriculum is extended by a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, particularly strong in music and sport and by visits to places of interest in the UK and abroad. Teachers also give generously of their time to help those taking examinations, through extra classes after school. Homework clubs also encourage good study habits.
- The good links with primary schools both ease transition and ensure continuity in pupils' learning experiences.
- Careers education and guidance are very good and prepare pupils well for the world of work and/or the next stage of their education.
- For pupils who are in danger of becoming disaffected, very good support is offered to enable them to make the most of the learning opportunities available.
- The MLD unit offers good educational and pastoral provision.

Shortcomings

- Teaching is sometimes over-prescriptive and does not fully challenge pupils and students by probing their understanding rigorously.
- Pupils and students do not have easy and regular access to ICT facilities in each subject as there are few resources in departmental bases. Difficulty of access to ICT facilities and the limited accommodation hamper the best use of private study time by sixth formers.

- Opportunities for research are restricted by the lack of access to good library facilities.
- Target-setting has begun, but is not yet sufficiently specific or embedded to raise motivation and standards significantly, especially in the sixth form.
- IEPs are not sufficiently detailed nor used effectively to promote the learning of pupils with SEN in mainstream classes.

Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Good features

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and good in each of these aspects.
- The school's commitment to supporting and valuing each pupil as an individual is at the heart of the school's ethos and successful in practice.
- Relationships throughout the school are good and pupils are polite and friendly to visitors.
- The behaviour of the large majority of pupils is good in class and behaviour around the school is also good overall.
- Sixth formers are mature and responsible and take a lead in helping younger pupils.
- The school is a comprehensive and inclusive community. All those involved in pupils' welfare work collaboratively to support individuals.
- Pastoral care is a strength of the school. The PSE programme is well planned and generally well delivered. It is effectively supplemented in form tutor periods.
- The emphasis on praise and rewards, and the celebration of pupils' success in awards assemblies has encouraged pupils' personal development and created a positive culture of achievement.
- Arrangements to prevent bullying are well considered and embedded in the school's pastoral care.
- Assemblies are very good. They, and religious education, have a significant impact on pupils' spiritual development.
- Pupils show concern for others, and, led by sixth formers' efforts, raise large sums of money for charities.
- Pupils' awareness of their own and other cultures is well developed.

Shortcomings

- The daily act of collective worship in tutor groups, when there is not an assembly, is not always effectively carried out and statutory requirements are therefore not met.

Leadership and Efficiency

Good features

- The headteacher gives very good leadership, combining clear educational direction and the promotion of values, implemented with much personal warmth.
- She is very ably supported by the two deputy and two assistant headteachers. As a SMT they have introduced a number of innovations, which have resulted in school improvement.
- Governors have considerable expertise in leadership, evident in strategic planning and evaluation of performance.
- The links between senior and middle managers are effective in practice and positively influence standards and the quality of teaching and learning.

- The quality of middle management, both academic and pastoral is good.
- The management of the sixth form is very good.
- There are comprehensive systems in place for self-evaluation and planning for improvement, at both whole-school level and in each area of the school.
- Continuing professional development has been good, recognised in the award of Investors in People over a period of time, and evident in the improved quality of teaching and middle management. Arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers and staff new to the school are also good.
- Support staff make a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the school.
- Financial planning is thorough and has resulted in an appropriate surplus each year.
- The management and control of the school's finances were judged to be of a good standard in the last Auditor's report.
- The initiatives introduced to address the key issues from the last inspection have resulted in improvement in most areas; attendance is now satisfactory, the quality of middle management has improved and standards and teaching have improved.

Shortcomings

- The monitoring of classroom practice is centred in departments with less emphasis on practice across the curriculum at the three key stages and promotion of best practice.
- The sharing of resources is hindered by the current deficiencies in accommodation, which also impact on the quality of learning in some areas.
- The prospectus and governors' annual report do not contain all the necessary details, as set out in the WAG guidelines.

KS3 AND KS4

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards Achieved in Subjects and Areas of Learning

Standards are good in the large majority of subjects and represent good progress since the last inspection. In no subject are standards unsatisfactory.

At KS3, standards are good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, Welsh second language, history, geography, music, physical education and religious education. They are satisfactory in information technology, modern foreign languages and art.

At KS4, standards are good in English, mathematics, design and technology, information technology, Welsh second language, geography, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, religious studies, religious education (short course), business studies and key skills. Standards are satisfactory in science, history, art, and statutory religious education.

In classes observed at KS3 and KS4, standards were at least satisfactory in 95 per cent, and good or very good in 65 per cent. Standards are higher at KS4 than at KS3. At KS4, standards were good or very good in 71 per cent of classes, compared to 61 per cent at KS3. These

figures compare very favourably with those of the last inspection, of 40 per cent and 37 per cent respectively.

The proportion of classes in which standards were judged very good, is, however, small and in no subject are standards very good across the key stage. Whilst pupils are generally achieving well, they can be even further extended across the range of subjects, as happens in a small percentage of classes.

Results in the NC tests at the end of KS3 have improved year on year and peaked in 2002, above the local and national average. They placed the school in the top 25 per cent of schools with a similar intake. In 2002, 55 per cent of pupils reached at least level five in all three core subjects, compared to 51 per cent nationally and 46 per cent the previous year. Performance in each subject was above the national average; highest in English and higher in mathematics than in science. Both boys and girls did well, with boys outperforming girls overall, contrary to national trends, though in English girls outperformed boys to a considerable degree.

Results in GCSE examinations at the end of KS4 improved steadily until 2001, when 57 per cent of pupils gained at least five grades A*-C and 93 per cent, at least five grades A*-G. Whilst results dipped in 2002, to 50 per cent of pupils gaining at least five grades A*-C, this figure was still in line with the national average, and, across the full range of grades, the percentage was above. Results were also above average in comparison with schools of a similar intake. In a number of option groups, results have been good in recent years, in particular in design and technology, modern foreign languages, Welsh second language, information technology, geography, business studies and physical education. In the core subjects, there has been some variation, with results in English and science below the national average in 2002, and those in mathematics above, resulting in the percentage of pupils gaining a grade A*-C in all three being below the national average. Nearly all pupils have left school with qualifications, (97 per cent in 2002, and above that nationally), and Entry level qualifications for the small minority have been good. Results in accredited courses with a vocational bias have also been good, and have contributed significantly to pupils' self-esteem as well as qualifications. Over recent years girls have done better than boys overall, and particularly in English. However, boys' results at GCSE were better than boys' results nationally in 2001 and 2002 and the gap between girls and boys is no worse than the gap nationally, and sometimes less evident.

In classes observed, the gender gap in English was apparent and significantly more girls than boys choose to continue with their studies in modern languages, at KS4. Generally, girls' written work is better and their application in class is more sustained. Among boys of average to lower ability, there is some lack of concentration and, in Y9 in particular, some disruption in class.

The large majority of pupils of differing abilities make steady progress across the curriculum. Able pupils generally make the most consistent progress, in mixed ability and setted arrangements, though this varies between subjects and teachers to some extent. Whilst progress is good, able pupils do not pursue independent lines of enquiry, undertake research and think critically as a regular part of their learning and do not reach the very high standards of which they are capable across the curriculum. Also, among the most able, there is little extension work for the gifted and talented individuals as a regular part of classroom practice to extend them further.

The large majority of average to lower ability pupils also make steady progress, though they could be further challenged in their understanding and in independent learning. Too often they are passive in class and contribute only brief answers to questions. Their written work is often more extended, though errors of spelling and grammar adversely affect the standards of some. There is a small minority of pupils whose attitudes range from inattention to lack of co-operation and they have an impact on the standards achieved by the group as a whole in a significant minority of average to lower ability groups. Examples were seen in science, history, geography, modern foreign languages, art and music.

Pupils with SEN in small, designated classes, with learning support, and in the MLD unit make good progress. They are supported and encouraged to achieve well and there is a very good record of pupils in the MLD unit returning to mainstream classes and reaching level five in the NC tests at the end of KS3. However, in mainstream classes at KS3, pupils with SEN make less consistent progress, as IEPs are not sufficiently subject-specific and pupils' progress is not monitored regularly. At KS4, the standards achieved in some appropriate option courses of a more vocational nature are better, and nearly all leave school with qualifications. The overall figures of 95 per cent of pupils gaining at least one GCSE and 92 per cent gaining at least five are testament to the good progress overall, as the school has an above average proportion of pupils with SEN.

3.2 Standards Achieved in Key Skills across the Curriculum

The school is placing increasing emphasis on key skills. There is an established course leading to accreditation at KS4 in key skills, which is a popular option mainly, but not exclusively, among pupils of lower ability. There is also a course on Skills for Working Life among the choices in design and technology. There is a cross-curricular policy on language for learning and a policy for ICT with reference to key skills in most departments' schemes of work. The recently appointed co-ordinator for literacy and numeracy has drafted a policy on numeracy, and is completing a cross-curricular audit on key skills in practice. The development of key skills is appropriately planned, and involves INSET for staff and the co-operation of parents in encouraging pupils to read.

Communication

Pupils' skills in communication are good overall, with standards in listening, reading and writing good, and standards in speaking satisfactory.

The large majority of pupils listen attentively to the teacher and to each other. However, in listening, they appear passive and do not regularly question their teachers about the contents of presentations. A small minority of pupils do not listen and prevent others from listening, across all subjects of the curriculum.

Standards in oral work are satisfactory. Whilst pupils will answer questions with subject-specific terminology, they often give brief answers. Extended speech is not used sufficiently in mathematics, science, design and technology, information technology, physical education and personal and social education. In modern foreign languages extended speech is developing well in some classes at KS3 and KS4. In group and pair work in a number of subjects pupils respond well to planning, carrying out and evaluating problem-solving activities. There are also some good standards in presentations to the class in history and in

explaining solutions to questions at the board or overhead projector in mathematics and modern foreign languages.

Standards of reading are good. Those with reading difficulties are given good support in small groups or individually and they make clear progress. Reading aloud practises those skills in some lessons and, generally, pupils have little difficulty in comprehension of texts across the range of subjects. However, pupils are not expected to do much extended reading in preparation for lessons. There is not access to good library facilities and whilst some pupils make good use of the Internet for research purposes, this does not develop the skills of all pupils in skimming, scanning and extraction of information on a regular basis.

Standards of writing by the large majority of pupils are good. Many take care with presentation, particularly girls, and standards of spelling are good on the whole, though spelling errors and poor presentation mar the work of a minority of lower ability pupils. This was particularly evident in mathematics, science and history. Whilst some subjects encourage extended writing, and some very good work was seen in religious education and modern foreign languages in particular, this is not developed sufficiently in design and technology and geography.

Numeracy

Most pupils' numeracy skills are good and they use basic mathematics with understanding to solve simple problems in a range of contexts and subjects. The mathematics department has carried out an audit of needs in other subjects in order to ascertain what basic numerical skills pupils will need to make progress in those subjects. An effort is also being made to ensure that pupils understand the terminology used in other subjects. For example, pupils are taught that a net in mathematics is more usually referred to as a development in design and technology. Some departments plan and implement ways to help pupils improve their numerical skills and to use them in purposeful situations. In design and technology, for example, pupils weigh, measure, and cost various items and show understanding of proportion. In, for example, science, information technology, geography and history, realistic data are analysed and appropriate tables and charts drawn to depict results. Pie diagrams are used correctly in history to depict the percentage of people following different religions. In KS4 these skills are generally used well to enhance the quality of course work. The mathematics department is very supportive of all pupils and students and holds lunch-time and after-school sessions for revision and extra tuition.

ICT

Standards are satisfactory. There is good practice in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, business studies and PSE. For example, in mathematics and science pupils use ICT effectively in investigative work, using spreadsheets and graphics packages. In design and technology they use computer-aided design software to help in the design aspects of their work. In business studies, the use of ICT helps pupils manipulate data and in PSE they research background information for discussion of topics.

In most other subjects pupils use ICT to present their work attractively and sometimes for re-drafting. However, there is insufficient progression in the use of word-processing and desktop publishing. In art, modern foreign languages and physical education, standards in ICT are

unsatisfactory as there is limited application of ICT and it does not raise standards in the subject.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and good in each of these aspects.

Pupils' spiritual development is good. Assemblies are of very good quality and together with religious education in particular have a significant impact on pupils' spiritual development. Year assemblies are held on particular days of the week, are well planned and follow interesting and appropriate themes, greatly enhancing pupils' spiritual and moral understanding. The acts of collective worship, which are of a Christian nature, include a good level of pupil participation. A hymn, sometimes sung in Welsh, is followed by a Bible reading and a prayer. In religious education, pupils have regular opportunities to explore beliefs and how these relate to their own lives and experience. In art, younger pupils access spiritual aspects through study of calligraphy and illuminated manuscripts with scriptural references. On non-assembly days classes attend form periods and follow a structured pastoral programme including the thought for the day which in some instances is followed by a suitable period of reflection. However, the daily act of worship is not always effectively carried out and statutory requirements are therefore not met.

Pupils' moral development is good. Through work in subjects, pupils have a sound moral framework and moral issues are presented and promoted in programmes of study and in class discussions. In history, moral development is advanced through syllabus elements such as discussions on slavery, conditions in the trenches and racial discrimination in the southern states of America. In geography, there are many inputs in lessons which support pupils' moral developments. In religious education, pupils reflect on moral and ethical issues in a fair and considered fashion. Moral and ethical issues are included and examined in some detail in the school's comprehensive PSE programme and in the well-structured pastoral programme.

The social development of pupils is good. The school's commitment to supporting and valuing each pupil as an individual is at the heart of the school's ethos and is successful in practice. Pupils mix easily with one another. Relationships throughout the school are good and pupils are friendly and polite to visitors. Respect for others is actively promoted by staff in classes and around the school and the policy of social inclusion is clearly effective in promoting the aims and values of the school. Pupils are encouraged to be involved in the school council which gives them an effective role in the decision-making process within the school and they respond with maturity.

Pupils' cultural development is good. Overall, pupils' awareness of their own and other cultures is well developed and multi-cultural and racial equality issues are effectively promoted. The school has a racial equality policy in place. The Welsh culture and heritage are celebrated in a range of contexts across the curriculum. Good cultural links with France are forged through several trips to various parts of the country on an annual basis. Lunch-time and after-school extra-curricular activities are available to all pupils and are well supported.

4.2 Behaviour and Attitudes

Pupils' behaviour is good overall. They generally have good attitudes to learning in class but a small minority, particularly boys in lower to middle ability sets at KS3, display unacceptable and immature behaviour. In some cases, this unsatisfactory behaviour is not adequately controlled by teachers so that the learning of others is adversely affected. During assemblies, at break times and in their movement around the school, pupils normally behave in an orderly manner, although some pushing and jostling in the passageways were observed during the inspection. There is little evidence of litter around the school. Pupils' relationships with staff and with each other are good.

The school, which follows an all-inclusive policy, has developed good procedures for the handling of misbehaviour by pupils. These consist of various stages to address indiscipline, including an 'on call' system by SMT and the use of a 'Remove' room for isolation. At each stage, staff involve extensive pastoral support, often with help from external agencies, in order to correct any behavioural problems. During the past twelve months there have been 67 temporary exclusions, involving 45 pupils, and two boys have been permanently excluded. Governors and parents were informed as appropriate. Disciplinary records, which include the use of a detention book, are good.

The school provides useful opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities. Pupils in each class elect one of their number to communicate relevant matters to either of two year group representatives who are members of the school council. Meetings of this group, chaired by a senior member of staff, are held at least twice termly. Pupils discuss possible improvements to the school, sometimes financed by sponsorship from local businesses. KS3 pupils are given good support by nominated students from Y12 as part of the buddy system which covers both anti-bullying measures and help with reading.

As part of the school's merit scheme, pupils receive bronze, silver and gold certificates for good work, improved behaviour, helpfulness and good citizenship at special half-termly assemblies. In addition, head teacher awards on a variety of issues are presented on a weekly basis. Parents are kept well informed of their children's successes and all concerned value this scheme.

The school's documentation clearly details the measures necessary to prevent any instances of bullying or racial harassment, none of which was witnessed during the inspection. Pupils and their parents are confident that the school takes speedy and effective action to correct any such situation should it occur.

4.3 Attendance

Attendance levels for the pupils of statutory school age are satisfactory, having averaged 90.4 per cent during the first two terms of the current school year. This figure is similar to the previous school year and represents an improvement since the last inspection. Unauthorised absence was 2.3 per cent over the same period which, though higher than the Welsh average, can be partly explained by the school's stated firm policy of not authorising absence for holiday-taking during term time unless parents put forward exceptional reasons for this. Nevertheless, in the current school year to date, one fifth of these parents have already taken

their children out of school for family holidays. Not only does this interrupt their education but also reduces the learning opportunities for others in the same class because of the consequent need for teachers to spend extra time for them to catch up on work missed.

Since the last inspection, the school has introduced a range of good initiatives in an attempt to raise attendance levels. These include:

- the use of an updated computerised monitoring system
- the quick supply of the previous week's attendance statistics to form tutors and senior staff with pastoral responsibilities
- the appointment of a clerk to concentrate on attendance matters
- the rapid follow-up by the school with parents in the event of their child's unexplained absence as part of a first day call system
- valuable assistance from and very good co-operation with the Education Social Worker, resident at the school
- operation of 'good attendance' incentive schemes with appropriate rewards for pupils. Gift tokens and certificates are presented half-termly and annually.
- the operation of a Compact scheme.

Punctuality of pupils to lessons is generally good in spite of the distances between school buildings. However, a small minority of pupils are late at the start of the school day, though this lateness is sometimes caused by delayed buses.

Registration procedures do not fully comply with WAG Circular 3/99 because pupils' attendance at the statutory registration sessions is not always accurately recorded and/or transmitted to the computer system.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

The quality of teaching is good overall and it has improved since the last inspection. In the 193 classes observed at KS3 and KS4, teaching was at least satisfactory in 96 per cent and good or very good in 72 per cent. These figures are an improvement on those of the last inspection, of 93 per cent and 58 per cent respectively. Teaching is better at KS4 than at KS3, with 77 per cent of the teaching judged good or very good, compared to 68 per cent at KS3.

The improvement in teaching owes much to the headteacher's commitment to the highest standards and the means by which this might be achieved. The innovations of running a pilot scheme on accelerated learning and active learning skills, and the introduction of interactive whiteboard technology have led to increased enthusiasm and sharing of good practice. The calibre of staff and deployment to subject specialisms are also strong contributory factors, as are good self-evaluation systems and support in behaviour management.

Yet some of these innovations are relatively recent and are not having consistently good effects to date. The proportion of teaching judged very good is not widespread or evident in all subjects. Teaching is too prescriptive and pupils too passive in a significant minority of lessons, with insufficient emphasis on rigorous questioning to encourage pupils to think

independently, on the use of extended speech in discussions and presentations and on pupils undertaking research for themselves.

Relationships between teachers and pupils are generally good and there is a good working atmosphere in most classes. Whilst the challenging behaviour of a small minority of pupils is demanding of teachers, they make consistently good use of the positive discipline system on the whole though not in all middle-lower ability classes. In cases of extreme behaviour, senior managers are supportive in an on-call system.

Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and plan lessons carefully. Work is matched to pupils' abilities and aptitudes on the whole, though the lack of extension work for the most able and supportive materials for pupils with SEN does not cater for the spread of ability in a significant number of classes.

Individual needs are, however, well met through the generous provision of extra-curricular and homework clubs which teachers arrange for their pupils. The sessions for those taking national tests and examinations have been much appreciated by pupils and parents. Pupils also spoke of their confidence in approaching teachers for individual help. Whilst this is commendable, there is a significant number of pupils who are too reliant on their teachers and who do not consolidate the good teaching and support they receive by revising thoroughly themselves. The grades awarded for the quality of teaching in classes observed were higher than for the standards achieved because pupils do not always respond adequately, and, for similar reasons, examination results do not always reflect the standards achieved in class.

5.2 Assessment, Recording and Reporting

The standard of assessment, recording and reporting is satisfactory overall.

The school is currently involved in a 'Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting' (MAR) project which is a major school initiative, funded by the General Teaching Council, Wales, to pilot new approaches, establish databases of pupil performance and facilitate individual target setting. The project leaders have visited schools to observe recognised good practice and are now reviewing their own policies and practice. Recommendations are being implemented in Y7 and, to a lesser extent, in Y10 and will gradually feed through into other cohorts. A process of review and reform is therefore in progress. The school is in a position of some strength in this area through its acquisition of information and expertise and its commitment to innovation in respect of the use of assessment data, the monitoring of pupils' progress and the setting of targets for improvement.

Assessment is carried out accurately and consistently across the curriculum and at both key stages. In most subjects good practice is a consequence of regular and systematic assessment, explicit criteria and helpful feedback. Subjects use a range of strategies including assessment of work in progress, self-assessment by pupils and monitoring performance. Where shortcomings occur they tend to be associated with variability in the quality of feedback where effort is stressed rather than the development of knowledge, skill or understanding.

The use made of assessment to promote higher standards of achievement is satisfactory overall and good in English, Welsh second language, mathematics, science and physical education. Where practice is good, effective use is made of baseline development data from

CAT scores and KS2 SATs. Good practice is seen in KS4 examination classes where data analysis is used to provide pupils with information about predicted and potential grades. The use made of assessment data to inform on pupils' progress, set specific targets for improvement and select appropriate teaching strategies is in the process of development and at present there is some inconsistency between subjects. Where there are shortcomings, the diagnostic use of assessment is imprecise. Pupils are often exhorted to try harder but are provided with insufficient guidance about how they might improve particular aspects of their performance. Target-setting has begun but is not yet sufficiently specific to raise motivation and standards significantly.

A whole-school assessment policy is in place which is comprehensive and provides useful guidance in all areas of practice. It makes a significant contribution to the quality of assessment, recording and reporting across the school. Procedures for systematically recording learners' efforts and attainment are implemented consistently by teachers and are understood by the great majority of pupils. The school complies with requirements for NC assessing and recording of pupils' performance. The assessment of pupils with SEN is satisfactory and arrangements help in recognising individual needs. Records are used in preparing IEPs in line with the requirements of the CoP.

Reports to parents are issued each year. The design and format of the reports are good and the completed reports frequently contain much good information about effort, attendance and performance in each subject. Pupils are involved in this process and contribute reviews of their own performance. Form tutors, heads of year and the headteacher also provide insights and comments in each report. There is some variation in the quality of information provided in some subject reports, particularly in respect of advice about what pupils should do to make progress. Although many reports are comprehensive and informative, in some cases advice offered is bland and vague.

5.3 Curriculum

The quality of curricular provision is good with appropriate breadth and balance. The full range of NC core and foundation subjects is provided at KS3 and KS4 and a good range of examination courses is available at KS4. With few exceptions, curricular plans and schemes of work are good and in no subject are they less than satisfactory. All statutory requirements regarding NC Programmes of Study are met, though there is limited time for the Agreed Syllabus in religious education to be fully covered. The curriculum is generally well organised through a five-day, six-lesson timetable structure and is delivered to classes of appropriate sizes. The lesson span of fifty minutes, however, constrains the provision of practical activities in subjects such as art, science and physical education. Planned provision for the Welsh dimension of the curriculum is satisfactory overall but with some variability between subjects. Provision ranges from very good in music at KS3 to satisfactory at both key stages in science, design and technology, history and physical education. The quality of curricular planning and provision enables the school to fulfil its aims.

There is some disparity in the quality of planning for the development of key skills although overall it is satisfactory. In most subjects planning for the development of literacy and communication skills is good, and satisfactory in mathematics, history, physical education and PSE. Planning for developing pupils' reading, writing and listening skills is more effective than for their speaking skills. Planning for the development of numeracy skills is

more variable. It is satisfactory in most subjects, good in mathematics, science, design and technology and MFL but unsatisfactory in art where appropriate opportunities are not explicitly identified in plans. Planned use of ICT is satisfactory overall but also varies between subjects. It is good in mathematics, design and technology, music and religious education but unsatisfactory in art and physical education.

Curricular organisation and provision are satisfactory overall and facilitate the achievement of appropriate standards. Homework is routinely set and checked by teachers but with some variability in rigour between subjects. The great majority of pupils and parents indicate that suitable homework is set regularly across the curriculum which helps pupils to consolidate and extend their learning.

The school has made effective arrangements for the delivery of PSE through timetabled lessons and form periods. Overall provision is satisfactory with pupils following relevant schemes of work and using appropriate resources but there are few clear links between this programme and the content of form periods. Good arrangements are in place for pupils at KS4 to participate in Work Related Education. Pupils engage with relevant issues in some PSE lessons, for example those which focus on careers education. At KS4 they develop their understanding in this area through involvement in a good range of Work Experience placements. Y11 pupils who have experienced these placements regard them as interesting and beneficial.

The curriculum is extended by a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, particularly strong in music and sport, which are accessible to all pupils, and by visits to places of interest in the UK and abroad. Teachers of many subjects give generously of their time to help those taking examinations through extra classes after school. Homework clubs also encourage good study habits. Particularly good practice is evident in music where a range of extra-curricular activities lead to concerts in which high levels of enthusiasm are demonstrated and good and very good standards are exemplified. In sport, extra-curricular activities have led a number of pupils to perform at the highest levels.

Overall the whole curriculum is equally accessible to all pupils, irrespective of gender, ability or social background, including those for whom the NC is modified or disapplied.

5.4 Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare

The quality of support, guidance and pupils' welfare is very good and is a strong feature of the school. Both pupils and parents consider the school to be a caring community which gives clear guidance and support to each individual. The relationships between staff and pupils are good. The large majority of pupils are well behaved and respectful.

The pastoral care system is very well structured within the faculty of guidance and headed by the head of guidance. It is effective and provides clear personal guidance to pupils. Pupils are very well supported by a form tutor and by heads and assistant heads of year. The head and assistant head of Y7 are permanent roles. Other heads and assistant heads of year remain with their groups as they progress through from Y8 to Y11. Staff, therefore, know their pupils very well, build a close relationship and pupils' individual needs are understood and appreciated. Daily support is provided through contact with form tutors in a form tutor period. The head of Y7 has developed strong and productive links with the feeder primary schools. The pastoral

team has close links within the school with the SEN department, the achievement co-ordinator and the PSE co-ordinator, as well as with outside school agencies.

The school has established a number of effective initiatives and policies to embrace several aspects of personal care. These include a positive discipline policy, a policy on bullying and a social inclusion policy. These policies, together with an amended and a condensed list of school rules, are made clear to all pupils. Some of these policies are at an early stage but have been very well received and understood by pupils. Pupils in both the MLD unit and Learning Support Centre are well supported.

The out-of-school hours learning activities clubs (OOSH) are well attended. They include a coursework club, a homework club as well as a Y6/7 basic skills club popular with both pupils and parents. The introduction of a pupil advisory link (PAL) dealing with upsets, illness, uniform and advice has been well received by pupils.

Pupils receive their entitlement of PSE. The programme covers health and sex education and a number of social issues. Pupils' awareness of citizenship and their personal development planning are achieved in these sessions. Careers advice for pupils is very good and develops pupils' awareness of work opportunities. The school has good links with Careers Wales.

The school has well understood procedures for child protection. A child protection policy is in place with the head of Y11 as the identified contact person. Procedures are clear and effectively implemented. The school is aware of health and safety issues and of deficiencies in accommodation and is vigilant in promoting the safety of its pupils.

Overall, all staff play a significant role in providing support, guidance and welfare of a high standard.

5.5 Provision for Pupils with SEN

The school's provision for pupils with SEN is satisfactory.

284 pupils are currently identified as having SEN. This constitutes 24 per cent of the total school population of whom 51 have a statement of special needs. Sixty-six pupils have been placed on school action plus and 167 on school action programmes.

The new CoP has been introduced to all staff and the basics of the system have been satisfactorily established. The SENCO has been allocated 0.5 of his timetable to administer the CoP and to monitor the SEN provision for pupils in mainstream classes. There are six learning assistants, two funded by the school and four funded by the UA. Most make a valuable contribution.

The unit for pupils having a statement for MLD is financed and resourced by the UA. It can provide for 15 pupils but currently 11 KS3 pupils attend. These pupils are disapplied from Welsh in order to "catch up" on literacy and numeracy skills. They make at least satisfactory, generally good, progress. The first cohort from the unit achieved well in the 2002 NC tests.

Pupils who have been disappled from the NC and who attend the “Learning Support Centre”, (the Social and Educational Inclusion Unit recently established) are making steady progress in developing their confidence, self-esteem and independent learning skills.

Other pupils with SEN have full access to a broad and balanced curriculum and integrate well with the pupils from main school, particularly in tutor sessions, PSE and physical education.

The corrective reading and paired reading schemes have also contributed well to pupils’ achievement.

Since the last report, small SEN groups have been set up in Y7 and Y8. Pupils taught in these sets make steady, often good, progress and work is, in most subjects, well matched to their abilities. Some pupils, including those who are entered for KS3 NC tests and Entry level examinations achieve well.

Pupils on the SEN register who are taught in mainstream classes make satisfactory progress overall. Departments are responsible for preparing and presenting work for pupils with SEN. During the inspection examples of good provision were observed in most subjects, in particular English, Welsh second language, and geography in KS4. However the IEPs are not specific to the subjects and, therefore, do not cater for the pupils’ needs in those lessons, for example in mathematics, modern foreign languages, history, geography and art.

Although assessment is regular there is need for closer monitoring of individuals’ progress and evaluation of the provision made for them. IEPs are written by the SEN team and distributed to all members of staff. These give clear targets for improvement in literacy and provide constructive advice on teaching strategies. However there has been a disruption to the effectiveness and efficiency of the IEP system this academic year resulting in a number of pupils remaining on IEPs when they have clearly progressed beyond them.

In the absence of the SENCO it has not been possible to re-assign all the responsibilities of the role. Furthermore, although a Special Needs panel of subject teachers has been nominated in response to the previous report, it is not yet functioning. Consequently there has been minimal monitoring of the progress of pupils with SEN, especially those in the mainstream. Provision in the classroom to meet the different needs of pupils is inconsistent across the curriculum. There is insufficient dissemination of examples of good practice in teaching pupils with SEN in the school.

The school works closely with, and is well supported by, a number of outside agencies.

Although teachers know of the special needs of their pupils the school is aware that staff, including the LSAs, have received little INSET on dealing with pupils with SEN in mainstream classes.

Since the last inspection there has been improvement in the size of classes, in the recording of pupils’ achievements and in targeting. However, there has been very little advance in the use of information technology for reinforcing literacy and numeracy, using the SEN department as a source of advice and resources and keen monitoring of the implementation of appropriate strategies for pupils with SEN in mainstream classes.

Overall, although many departments have identified pupils of high ability and offer encouragement and extension, there are no whole school identification procedures and agreed strategies across the curriculum.

5.6 Partnership with Parents and Community, Schools and Other Institutions

Overall, partnerships are good.

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents. Although only about one eighth of parents replied to the pre-inspection questionnaire and very few attended the meeting, a large majority of their responses expressed support for the school. However, some parents' concern about pupils' standards of behaviour was found during the inspection to be partially justified. Information provided by the school through newsletters, reports, meetings, handbooks and letters is mainly of good quality but the governors' annual report to parents and the school prospectus do not contain all the information statutorily required. Most parents have responded to the home/school agreement. The PTA helps at functions and runs social events which raise significant funds to help the school, including the provision of prizes.

The school has good relationships with local agencies including the Education Welfare Service, social and medical services such as a physiotherapist and the education psychologist. The school nurse monitors pupils' general health and runs a lunch-time drop-in session for both staff and pupils twice weekly. She also helps to deliver the sex education programme. The school receives particularly effective support from the UA for its pupils requiring additional help through the youth work and schools partnership, the agency for looked-after children and the youth offending team. The pupil advisory link officer (PAL) helps pupils in their contact with outside agencies. She is also a qualified first-aider.

The school has a very good relationship with the community police officer who visits twice weekly. He advises both staff and pupils about crime prevention and also gives valuable support by talking to pupil groups about matters concerning their personal safety and substance misuse. He also runs a bicycle repair project which provides useful and practical experience for pupils. A police liaison officer supports the school with other more crime-related matters. Other members of the local community provide effective support for the school's PSE programme.

There are some links with local churches and other faith communities. The school's annual carol service is held at a nearby Methodist Church and Y7 pupils join with those from local primary schools for a Christmas service at the local Church in Wales church.

There are good links with the nine feeder and other primary schools. The head of Y7, subject co-ordinators and the SENCO regularly visit to talk to Y6 pupils and their parents. These pupils attend taster days, lessons and social events at Ysgol John Bright and their teachers visit the school to share subject expertise. The transfer of other good quality information, both curricular and personal, enables pupils to make as smooth a transfer as possible to the secondary school. Some Y10 pupils take part in work experience placements at the primary schools. There are particularly good links with the local College, with about 35 per cent of the Y11 pupils continuing their education there. They, their parents and form tutors attend open days/evenings there which are followed by members of the college staff returning to the

school to enrol them and discuss their future. There are also good links with the nearby special school.

Every year, all Y7 pupils spend a day supporting the town's anti-litter campaign. Music pupils go every Christmas to play carols at several nursing and retired persons' homes and the school invites their residents to attend school productions. The school participates every year in a debating competition run by the local business and professional women's club.

5.7 Partnership with Industry

The school has a good partnership with local companies which gives pupils an introduction to the world of work around them. It has received the Recognition of Quality Award for its business - education links.

About one hundred and twenty local businesses and other concerns provide industrial placements to enable all Y10 pupils to undertake one week's work experience. The school effectively administers this programme and most pupils not only obtain practical experience of the workings of business, but also increase their sense of responsibility, self-esteem and personal and social skills.

The adviser from Careers Wales attends the school weekly and gives good quality support. She encourages KS3 pupils to assess their strengths and interests for future employment and introduces them to the good quality careers library. She also advises them and their parents on options choices and future career possibilities. All pupils in KS4 receive individual help with the development of a career plan and advice about the world of work. The careers adviser also arranges for some pupils requiring additional support to obtain extra careers advice, and the school has recently received an award for the provision of careers guidance. At an advisory day each July, 30 local business people and representatives from services and agencies set pupils tasks related to aspects of the world of work such as marketing, costing and quality control. These activities give pupils good opportunities to develop their teamwork, decision-making, planning and entrepreneurial skills.

The school receives valuable support from about forty local organisations through the donation of money and/or materials. For example, a local superstore has recently sponsored a crime prevention project following an initiative by the school council. The local branch of a national bank helps with the management of the school bank.

In the areas above, the school meets the recommendations of the ACCAC WRE Framework.

Although some school departments have a few links with local companies, pupils have opportunities to learn about work through a range of industrial visits.

Several members of staff have industrial experience and a few have recently attended business-related courses to support the teaching of their subjects.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of Self-Evaluation and Planning for Improvement

The quality of self-evaluation and planning is good.

There is a clear commitment to continuous improvement by all sections of the school and good systems are in place in order to achieve this. The various processes have been incorporated into an annual review calendar which is consultative and effective. The headteacher has a detailed knowledge of all aspects of the school and her annual self-evaluation document clearly identifies strengths and areas for improvement. Each member of the senior management team has responsibility for at least one area for development and progress is regularly reviewed.

Each member of senior management is linked to a cluster of departments and particular year groups. These links work well in practice as communication is regular and all work together to solve issues raised. The SMT reviews each department in turn, with a clear focus on standards, teaching and learning, with the aim of covering a core and foundation subject each year. They also review one whole-school theme each year. In addition, all heads of department produce a detailed review of the previous year's performance for the headteacher at the beginning of each academic year, which is discussed at a meeting which the link member of SMT also attends. Members of SMT have a good knowledge of the work in departments and are pro-active in helping to plan for improvement. However, current monitoring is centred largely on the work in departments, and insufficient emphasis is placed on cross-curricular themes and performance across each key stage. Whilst the KS3 project has focused on some aspects of work at this key stage, there has been less focus on monitoring standards and the factors which influence performance across KS4.

Heads of department and middle managers in the support and guidance team also regularly review practice in their areas. Whilst middle managers are fully accountable, there is also much peer observation which takes place and contributes to the sharing of good practice. The good overview which middle managers have contributes effectively to planning for improvement.

Data are analysed at both senior and middle management level and, increasingly, these data are being used to set targets for individual pupils, particularly in Y7. Attendance data are analysed to follow up non-attenders quickly.

School development planning is, appropriately, structured on an annual and longer-term basis, with clear emphasis on standards, teaching and learning and factors which will positively influence them. Responsibilities, success criteria, and resource implications are clearly listed. Governors are fully involved in strategic planning and in monitoring progress in each aspect. There has also been considerable planning in preparation for the new school, at governor and senior management level. Departmental planning is effectively linked to whole-school planning, for aims to be implemented. The results of the monitoring processes feed into development planning at all levels and the school has been innovative in becoming involved in development projects, with appropriate resource funding attached. The projects to raise achievement at KS3, to promote social inclusion and to improve monitoring, assessment and recording are all having positive results, though some are recent initiatives which are not yet fully embedded in practice.

6.2 Leadership and Efficiency

The quality of leadership is very good. The school is fully comprehensive in nature and there is a clear commitment to valuing each pupil as an individual, which is effective in practice. There is an equal commitment to continuous improvement in standards, teaching and learning and to this end the school is innovative and reflective. Significant progress has been made since the last inspection.

The headteacher gives very good leadership, combining clear educational direction and the promotion of values, with much personal warmth. Both the progress and the current good practice are testament to her very good leadership, at a time of constraints of current accommodation, of detailed planning for the new school and of not inconsiderable difficulties of staff illness. In her efforts she is very ably supported by the two deputy headteachers and two assistant headteachers. Each has clearly defined responsibilities within a well-planned scheme, so that they each have particular insight into the whole range of management responsibilities. As a team, they thus work very effectively, and with middle managers to whom they are linked. These links have been instrumental in moving the school forward. The headteacher, deputy and assistant headteachers have also embraced new initiatives with enthusiasm and implemented them with success.

The GB has considerable expertise in leadership. They have carried out their role in strategic planning effectively, with the new school about to be constructed, and all governors well aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are strongly supportive of the school, whilst rigorously evaluating its performance through a clear system of committees and meetings of the full governing body. The chairman gives strong leadership to the work of the governing body.

The quality of middle management has improved since the last inspection and is now good overall, with good leadership in most areas, and some variation between very good and satisfactory. Heads of department have accepted greater responsibility for standards in their area, with good systems in place for monitoring, evaluating and planning. There is also good leadership and team work in pastoral areas. Currently, staff illness is affecting the management of SEN provision. At KS3, the management of information technology and its assessment is not fully effective, though the collaboration between staff generally is a positive factor in promoting consistency across the curriculum.

The school's resources are generally well managed. The recommendations of the last report have been implemented and the allocation and use of time are now good. Staff are deployed effectively and the accommodation, though with deficiencies, is used well and made as attractive a learning environment as possible. The stock in the library is, however, small and the library is not well used for regular research. Access to ICT facilities for research is also restricted at times, though the homework clubs after school are a good use of resources.

Financial planning by governors and senior management is careful and has resulted in an appropriate surplus each year. Funds are delegated sensibly, in line with the school and departmental development plans, as well as for maintenance of good practice. At middle management level, there is also good financial planning. Control procedures are in place, with good administrative support. The latest auditor's report found that the general management

and control of the school's finances was of a good standard with well maintained, detailed records. There were a few recommendations to be implemented.

The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Channels of communication are good, with staff briefings, bulletins, a handbook and a regular cycle of meetings of staff teams. Administrative support is very efficient and contributes significantly to the smooth running of the school.

The daily act of collective worship does not fully meet statutory requirements; registration procedures, and the contents of the governors' annual report and the prospectus do not fully meet WAG guidelines. In all other respects the school meets statutory requirements.

6.3 Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources

Staffing

Staffing is good. There is a sufficient number of teaching staff to deliver the requirements of the national curriculum, a good mix of experienced teachers and newcomers to the profession and a balance of male and female teachers across most subjects. All members of staff are well qualified and, with the exception of a small number of classes within a minority of subjects, teach their specialist subject. In most instances in which teachers, including supply teachers, teach outside their specialist subject, they are supported well by specialists within the subject department and there is no detrimental effect on pupils' learning or the standards they achieve. In those subjects for which support staff are available their help is effective. In particular it is very good in information technology. There are numerous INSET opportunities for staff and most have benefited from them and are continuing to develop professionally; there is a positive impact from this on pupils' learning and quality of education overall. INSET is generally linked well to departmental and pupils' needs and is of good quality as evaluated by staff. All staff are sufficiently well trained in the basic use of computers and a growing number are making use of them and of electronic white boards in their teaching. There is further scope in some subjects for INSET directly concerned with subject specific learning and teaching. Staff development has been limited in business studies and psychology, and in various aspects of SEN for both specialist and other teaching staff.

Cover for recent staff illnesses and for some staff who have taken up jobs elsewhere has been managed well. Nevertheless, there has been some impact on pupils' learning. For example, in mathematics and science pupils' continuity of work and progress overall has been temporarily affected and in other instances, such as in art, subjects in humanities in Y7, religious education in KS4 and physical education, pupils do not always receive the quality of teaching normally afforded them. The SENCO has been ill for some time. This has meant some lack of liaison with departments with respect to matters concerning pupils with SEN and an extra burden on learning support assistants. A member of the administrative staff with responsibility for helping to run the library has also been ill for some time. The library remains shut for much of the time.

All members of staff have a well-defined job description. Induction for newly appointed members of staff and for NQTs is well organised and of good quality. Systems for the regular appraisal of staff are well established and supportive of them. Good support by administrative and technical staff helps ensure the smooth running of the school. The award of Investors in

People has been regained by the school and reflects well the close working relationship of the head, SMT, governing body and all members of staff.

Accommodation

The accommodation is satisfactory overall because of the school's best efforts to make it as attractive as possible. Several temporary classrooms have been added to the school site in order to accommodate an increasing school roll and various on-going maintenance keeps the school in an adequate state of repair and safety for pupils and staff. There is very little graffiti or litter in and around the school. Sufficient money is spent in order for the problems with accommodation not to have a significantly negative impact on pupils' standards of achievement and, for the most part, the accommodation allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. Nevertheless, despite improvements carried out in order to address some of the specific and more urgent issues in the last inspection report many of the shortcomings highlighted in that report remain and the accommodation is barely adequate for the needs of all those who work in it. The shabby appearance of the school buildings does not reflect the good ethos within. The poor design and location of departmental and other buildings hampers curriculum development and the effective use of the school's available resources. In these respects pupils' quality of learning is adversely affected.

Building work has started on a new school and it should be open for use in September 2004. The headteacher and GB, together with some staff and pupils have had much input into its design and almost all accommodation and resulting resource and curricular difficulties that are present at the moment should be resolved when staff and pupils move to this new school.

Accommodation is sufficient in most subjects. It is very good in music, geography and information technology, good in design and technology, physical education and religious education and satisfactory elsewhere apart from in art, business studies, economics and psychology where it is unsatisfactory. In all subjects the available accommodation is made best use of by staff and pupils and, in most rooms, display work helps to provide a more pleasant working environment. Very good use is made of the accommodation in music. Where subjects do not have rooms that are close to one another it is difficult for them, as in design and technology for example, to build a corporate identity, to share good practice or resources and to be innovative as a department. Most subjects experience difficulty in making best use of their available resources to enhance pupils' learning because they teach in rooms that are some distance apart. In particular, the seventeen temporary classrooms scattered around the site have few up-to-date facilities and it is often difficult to take resources, such as television or ICT equipment. The MLD Unit is rather isolated in one temporary classroom this year because of accommodation difficulties.

The condition of individual teaching rooms varies considerably across and within subjects. However, there is no subject where the condition of the accommodation is very good and in most cases there are several shortcomings. They are good in music, religious education and geography, unsatisfactory in business studies, economics and psychology and poor in design and technology. In other subjects they are satisfactory. Rooms across most subjects are rather small and several have cracked walls and leaking roofs. Several facilities used by the whole school are problematic in some way. For example, some changing rooms are in a poor state of repair, the canteen is too small for the number of pupils, corridors are very narrow, staircases are steep and play areas are small. The footpath running through the school grounds

makes it easy for vandalism to occur; this continues to be costly and troublesome, and occasionally dangerous.

Good use is made by the local, and wider community of the school's grounds and other facilities and the school is innovative in how it generates, and puts to good use, funds.

Resources

Resources are satisfactory. The quantity of resources is sufficient overall for the school's curriculum and range of pupils' needs. Nevertheless, the expenditure on books, materials and equipment at approximately £92 per pupil (it was £76 at the last inspection) is below average and pupils in several subjects do not have ready access to all the resources they need for their studies. In art, for example, although satisfactory overall, the range of processes offered to pupils is limited and does not allow any significant amount of work in textiles, ceramics, print making, photography or computer-aided art and design. The quantity of resources is unsatisfactory in business studies, economics and psychology. They are satisfactory, overall, in Welsh second language, mathematics, science, art, history, French, PSE and SEN and good elsewhere.

The quality of resources is very good, overall, in music; good, overall in English, science, information technology, geography, French, physical education, and religious education; satisfactory, overall, in Welsh second language, mathematics, design and technology, history, art, PSE and SEN and unsatisfactory elsewhere. In several subjects, stocks of books are limited and some are becoming old and in need of replacement. Departmental capitation is relatively low in some subject areas to enable staff to update and extend their resources. However, bidding for extra money is possible and various departments, although not all, do this and also take part in fund-raising events or benefit from funds brought in by helping to train teachers coming into the profession.

The use of available resources is generally good overall, although in some subjects, for example in science and French, pupils are not allowed to take books home. This restricts pupils' opportunities to develop skills of reading and independent research. The library is very poorly stocked and, since the librarian has been ill, rarely open. Some departments have a limited stock of reference books and there is a move by the school to educate pupils into further use of the Internet for reference purposes. Nevertheless, pupils' quality of learning and development of key skills at all levels are restricted by a lack of books.

The number of computers in the school is about average at one for every eight pupils. The majority of them are housed in four computer rooms and one other within the design and technology department. Each room has access to the Internet and can be booked by departments; these are good quality facilities. However, booking is sometimes difficult and not all subjects take sufficient advantage of this resource when it is available. Pupils are generally not allowed in these rooms during lunch or other times unless supervised. Most departments do not have easy access to computers or other ICT resources in the rooms they teach in; often the rooms are too small to house them. In science, geography, French, art, physical education, business studies, economics and psychology provision is unsatisfactory. In mathematics and music provision is good and in other subjects and in SEN it is satisfactory. In religious education the head of department has a few computers in her room that pupils are able to use. There are seven electronic whiteboards in the school and, in design

and technology, information technology and mathematics, for example, improving use of them is being made, to aid teaching and pupils' learning.

The use of resources beyond the school is variable across departments but generally satisfactory. Use is made of local industry for work experience that is generally of good quality although there is limited scope and variety in the close vicinity. Pupils are taken on school trips of educational value and several become involved in enriching experiences within the community. Few visits, however, to, for example, art galleries and historical sites are made and there is scope for improving pupils' learning experiences by further use of external resources in most subject areas.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

English

Standards of achievement at KS3 and KS4 are good. These standards are reflected in the KS3 results. GCSE results have shown an improving trend.

Good features

KS3

- At KS3 pupils respond well to a range of stimulating activities that relate closely to the demands of the NC.
- The majority of pupils read well and demonstrate higher-order reading skills such as inference.
- Pupils generally write effectively for a range of purposes and audiences.
- Pupils respond well orally.
- There is good evidence of pupils drafting their work.

KS4

- At KS4 pupils generally write well in technically accurate language that meets the demands of GCSE.
- Pupils are able to use talk as a tool for learning in whole class, group and pair situations.
- Pupils can read proficiently and respond well to a range of appropriate texts including Shakespeare.
- The less able work well and produce good work.
- Pupils make good use of word processing skills.

Shortcomings

- Pupils do not exploit sufficiently the potential of ICT to assist research, exploration and analysis of language and literature issues.
- Boys' test and examination results are considerably lower than girls'.

Progress since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, the English department has made good progress and significant improvements in standards of pupils' work were seen in both key stages.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement at KS3 and KS4 are good. External examination results are generally commensurate with pupils' ability and, taken over the last few years, are broadly in line with UA and Wales figures.

Good features

KS3

- The vast majority of pupils make good progress through each part of the programme of study. Most pupils keep neat and complete books that show appropriate amounts of good quality work.
- Most pupils have good recall of basic number facts and use them appropriately to solve simple problems. They estimate well and most can round numbers correctly to a given number of decimal places.
- Most pupils use pattern in number well to calculate mentally the answer to simple problems. They can also extend a sequence of numbers and use the underlying pattern to find, say, the 100th term of the sequence.
- Pupils of all ability show good data handling skills and can present results of various practical or theoretical activities neatly and in appropriate tables, diagrams or graphs. They often make good use of ICT for this.
- Pupils of higher ability in Y9 can solve simultaneous equations and know how to check for correctness.
- Pupils can solve problems concerned with basic probability such as those involving mutually exclusive events. They carry out practical experiments sensibly and explain their results with understanding.

KS4

- The vast majority of pupils make good progress through each part of the programme of study and continue to recall basic number facts well. Their books are generally neat and show appropriate amounts of good quality work. Several pupils produce good quality course work, often enhanced by good use of ICT, for external examination.
- Pupils in lower ability groups, several of whom have SEN, can use a tape measure and convert actual measurements to make scale drawings to an appropriate degree of accuracy.
- Pupils show good understanding of vector notation and in finding, for example, position vectors of lines and planes.
- Higher ability pupils in Y11 use graphical calculators efficiently and effectively to investigate functions and their graphs. They also make good use of computer software packages for this purpose.
- In some classes pupils write their own sentences to show understanding of the work they have done or of a mathematical procedure they have carried out. In these cases their skills in writing are enhanced and misconceptions are often overcome.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- Several pupils in both key stages have difficulty in manipulating simple algebraic equations and a small but significant minority of them does not understand the concept of letter as variable.
- A higher proportion of pupils in lower ability groups than in other ability groups, particularly at KS4, do not reach their potential.

Progress since the last inspection

Since the last inspection standards have improved particularly in recall of multiplication tables, in application of number, and in mental agility. Girls' and boys' performance in external examinations is now comparable.

Science

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and satisfactory at KS4. These standards are reflected in examination results which were better, relatively, at KS3 than at KS4.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils follow an appropriate course of scientific study covering all aspects of the NC.
- The great majority of pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge of basic science, recall previous work accurately when questioned, use correct scientific terminology in context and keep a neat record of work in well-maintained exercise books and worksheets.
- Pupils work well in practical situations as individuals and in small groups showing due regard for safety requirements, expressing their ideas coherently and listening to the advice of others.
- Pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress relative to their abilities.

KS4

- Higher and middle range ability pupils develop good understanding in the triple sciences and satisfactory understanding in the double award sciences and use their skills well in explaining scientific principles and problem solving.
- The majority of pupils reach a good practical standard and many achieve high levels in investigation assessments, demonstrating good skills in planning, undertaking and evaluating their experiments.
- More able pupils, and to a lesser extent middle ability pupils, are able to apply their scientific knowledge to addressing problems linked to everyday life and use ICT well to present their findings.
- Pupils with SEN follow a single award science course and achieve satisfactory standards relative to their ability.

Shortcomings

KS3

- A minority of pupils have an insecure understanding of underlying scientific concepts.
- In practical work some pupils are unsure of the purpose and rationale for carrying out experiments.

KS4

- For a significant minority of lower ability pupils, sporadic attendance and poor attention span result in poorly maintained files and restless behaviour respectively.
- A significant number of less able pupils have difficulty in recalling previous work and as a consequence have difficulty in applying scientific principles to new situations.

Progress since the last inspection

Standards have improved since the last inspection.

Welsh second language

Standards of achievement at KS3 and KS4 are good. GCSE results are good.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils understand the consistent use of Welsh by teachers and the contents of both audio and video tapes. They listen attentively and participate in follow-up activities.
- Pupils gain confidence in their oral work and give correct responses to structured questions in set situations; the more able give extended responses.
- The majority of pupils have good knowledge of an acceptable range of sentence patterns and use them to convey information and express ideas.
- Pupils of all abilities interact well in pair activities. The majority remains on task and works within the set task and the set situation when asking questions and recording their answers and discussions.
- Pupils read extended unseen passages clearly and with good intonation. On the whole pronunciation is good and the better readers convey meaning and pupils understand the contents of reading passages.
- The written work of the majority is of a good standard. Pupils complete a variety of written tasks. They demonstrate good knowledge and use of sentence structures and the more able pupils compose passages of extended writing varying the use of language patterns and verbs.
- Pupils compile an impressive anthology of poetry. The range of vocabulary used is good and the work is presented using word-processing skills.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress working on differentiated work sheets.

KS4

- Pupils show clear progression in all language skills. The majority responds in a positive manner to challenging tasks in both oral and written work.
- They watch video clips and understand audio recordings and complete related tasks demonstrating good understanding.
- Pupils' good reading skills are evident when they recap the contents of a novel read in class and answer oral questions.
- Pupils use a good range of sentence patterns in their oral and written work. They gain confidence in their oral work working in pairs and in whole-class situations.
- The majority of pupils achieve good standards in their written work. They complete a variety of challenging tasks and the more able pupils express an opinion on various course topics. Completed tasks are well presented and the content is interesting and overall expression is correct.

Shortcomings

KS3

- A minority of pupils lack confidence in giving extended oral responses. Their responses are more hesitant.
- A minority of pupils are unsure of their language patterns. Their vocabulary is more limited.

KS4

- A small percentage of pupils is uncertain of the correct sentence patterns in written work and is hesitant and less confident in oral work.

Progress since last inspection

Clear progress has been made in developing pupils' language skills, in particular oral skills, with the more able giving extended responses.

Design and technology

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and KS4. These standards are reflected in the GCSE examination results, which are good in relation to pupils' abilities. At KS4, pupils opt for design and technology textiles, resistant materials, systems and control, or graphical products.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils successfully work with a good range of materials, and consistently apply the design and make processes in all specialisms.
- Pupils' understanding and application of health and safety, and hygiene procedures are good in all material areas.

- In the best folios, where standards are good, or on occasion very good, pupils trace the development of original design ideas and produce annotated drawings and final solutions. Good evaluations are carefully considered, relate well to the initial specification and are well presented.
- Pupils record their procedures and evaluations by using a good range of techniques, including star profiles, flow charts and graphs.
- The standard of practical outcomes is good, with some very good examples.
- The vast majority of pupils use correct technical terms; they measure, weigh, cost items and calculate ratios accurately.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress in relation to ability.
- In both key stages, ICT skills are appropriately used to communicate information and data, to research and analyse, for control, and for CAD/CAM. Computerised sewing machines are also competently used; pro-desktop is increasingly used in the majority of materials. Standards are good overall.

KS4

- The most successful coursework folios contain good information related to the identification of a suitable design brief, research, development, and realisation through appropriate materials.
- Isometric and anthropometric drawings, process and flow charts and graphs are consistently evident and generally presented to a good standard. Occasionally, good pro-desktop presentations further enhance designs in all material areas.
- Generally, pupils confidently use a good range of appropriate equipment, tools and machines to produce items of a good standard, with some very good outcomes.

Shortcomings

KS3

- A minority of pupils do not give adequate attention to the annotation of drawings, and the detail included in the original specification.
- Unnecessary spelling errors of well-used words, mar pupils' work in a small number of instances.

KS4

- The least successful folios display weak lettering and graphical skills.
- A small minority of pupils do not give sufficient attention to the original specification, the recording of changes made to designs, and to producing well-considered evaluations.
- In the weaker folios, there is unsatisfactory use of ICT skills to present information and enhance coursework.

Progress since the last report

Standards of achievement and examination results continue to be good. The standard and application of ICT skills, including CAD/CAM and pro-desktop, have improved in all material areas.

Information technology

Standards in information technology are satisfactory at KS3 and good at KS4. These standards are reflected in examination results for GNVQ which are good in relation to pupils' abilities.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils are able to organise information in different forms and are able to select appropriate styles of presentation to suit a particular purpose.
- Most pupils can select appropriate information and prepare it appropriately for processing using information technology, for instance, processing geographical data using a spreadsheet.
- Many pupils can utilise a computer model, understanding and exploring the effects of changing variables.
- Whilst all pupils can explain the benefits of information technology to their work, some pupils can assess its use.

KS4

- Most pupils can understand a brief and can independently respond to the specifications producing their own solution to the problem, successfully utilising appropriate software, paying attention to the intended audience.
- Most pupils have a good understanding of computer systems and their components. They are able to design suitable systems to meet a particular purpose.
- Pupils can assess their solutions and give a good account of their procedures.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Achievement is limited for the most able, with few pupils achieving at the higher levels. This is particularly evident with respect to the use of complex models or the design of models to meet a particular requirement.
- Few pupils can discuss the impact of IT in society.

KS4

- Some pupils in Y10 are less autonomous and produce superficial responses to problems.

Progress since the last inspection

Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory with the successful introduction of an information technology GNVQ course at KS4.

History

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and satisfactory at KS4. Standards at KS4 are actually better than those achieved in GCSE results over the last two years, where pupils have tended to under-achieve in relation to their ability.

Good features

KS3 and KS4

- In Y7, pupils of all abilities, including those with SEN, can interpret evidence from a wide range of source material, including artefacts.
- Those in Y8 develop a wider range of conceptual understanding, including an ability to analyse the causes of the Civil War and evaluate interpretations of the Gunpowder Plot.
- Pupils of average ability in Y9 can make complex inferences when interpreting recruitment posters from the First World War. They can use source material to develop different views about Field Marshall Haig, or to produce plausible reconstructions of living and working conditions during the Industrial Revolution.
- In Y10, where standards are generally good, higher attaining pupils can interrogate a political cartoon about pre-revolutionary Russia in considerable depth. They use contextual knowledge to assess its strengths and weaknesses as evidence of extent of opposition to the Tsarist regime.
- The most able pupils in Y11 produce good coursework essays, making critical use of a range of sources, in which they test the hypothesis that British soldiers in the First World War were “lions led by donkeys”. Lower attaining pupils using examples of poetry of the First World War understand how the value of a source depends on the kind of source that it is.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- Although pupils in Y7 and Y8 are adept at interpreting the content of sources of evidence, they are not always sure about what sources *are*, how they came to be produced, and what they can and cannot tell us about the past.
- Some of the ablest pupils in Y8 and Y9 are unaware of higher order reasoning techniques – for example, for assessing the relative importance of the causes of an event; or for determining reasons for differences in interpretations of Haig beyond the fact that “they were written by different people”.
- Pupils of all abilities at KS4 exhibit, to a greater or lesser degree, typical shortcomings: a tendency to rely on narrative rather than on analysis or explanation in longer written work or research projects; an assumption that secondary sources are more valuable than primary, or that all authors are ‘biased’; evaluations of the usefulness of source material that deal, usually uncritically, with matters of source content and do not always consider, for example, what is omitted, or how representative the information in a source might be.

Progress since the last inspection

Considerable progress has been made since the last inspection in the standards achieved by pupils at both key stages and in the range and variety of teaching methods employed within the department.

Geography

Standards of achievement at KS3 and KS4 are good. Examination results have shown a positive trend of improvement over recent years and are presently maintained at a good level.

Good features

KS3 & KS4

- Pupils generally acquire a wide range of skills and analytical techniques during these key stages, and develop an enquiry-based approach to the subject.
- Pupils display a general security in their understanding of process and patterns and in their understanding of the inter-relationships between people and their environment. They show empathy and understanding of people living in environments very different to their own and usually make sensible judgements when offered the opportunity of comparing such locations to the geography of Wales. This enhances pupils' understanding of the Welsh dimension.
- Pupils display, at best, a sound appreciation of the economic activities in less economically developed countries and more economically developed countries and display a clear knowledge and understanding of the variation between such countries.
- They develop and use an appropriately subject specific vocabulary in dealing with all topics. This applies equally to pupils across the entire ability range.
- Coursework evidence indicates that GCSE candidates acquire the skills of collecting, recording, refining and evaluating a wide range of evidence. Presentation of coursework is always commensurate with the abilities of the pupils and consequently numerous very good examples of GCSE coursework were in evidence. Pupils often demonstrate good techniques of analysis and usually represent findings through the use of appropriate graphical forms.
- Pupils exhibit good map-work skills.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- At both key stages the progress of a minority of pupils is restrained by a lack of discipline and very short concentration spans. These pupils create disruptions in lessons and hold back not only their own standards of achievement but also that of others.
- Pupils are often much less secure in their knowledge of place and contemporary issues than they are in reviewing patterns and processes.

Progress since the previous inspection

The department has been successful in raising standards at both key stages.

Modern foreign languages

Standards are satisfactory at KS3 and good at KS4. GCSE results have been very good, with a significantly high proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C.

Good features

KS3

- Standards in Y7 are good in the four language skills.
- The majority of pupils in Y8 and Y9 respond to questions in full sentences with a fair degree of accuracy and can ask questions as well as answer them. The most able use extended speech without prompts.
- There is good extended writing from Y7 onwards, some attractively presented using ICT, and the most able write with a good understanding of the rules of grammar.
- The majority of pupils can extract information from a spoken or written text in response to a question.

KS4

- Pupils in Y10 use extended speech confidently in response to questions.
- Most pupils, of varying abilities, write fluently on a variety of topics to a good level of accuracy and with understanding of grammar.
- Pupils can understand the meaning of a passage, spoken or written, and respond to specific questions.
- Pupils show good knowledge of French culture and colloquial expressions, gained through regular visits to France with the school.

Shortcomings

KS3

- There is considerable variation in standards of extended speech and, to a lesser extent, extended writing, between classes in Y8 and Y9. In some, pupils lack confidence in speaking and written responses are too brief.
- In some classes, individuals interrupt the learning of the group, resulting in their own and others' underachievement.

KS4

- Some pupils in Y11 lack confidence in oral work. Where there has been discontinuity in staffing in the previous year, pupils have insecure knowledge and lack confidence in both oral and written work.

Progress since the last inspection

There has been a considerable turn-over of staff since the last inspection and whilst standards remain good at KS4, there is less consistency at KS3 and standards are satisfactory as opposed to good.

Art

Standards of achievement at KS3 and KS4 are satisfactory. These satisfactory standards are reflected in the examination results at GCSE which are commensurate with pupils' abilities.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils work with skill and control in handling a range of graphic media in work in two-dimensions.
- They develop their knowledge and understanding of artists, craftworkers and designers including examples from Wales.
- They demonstrate satisfactory levels of ability in drawing from direct experience and secondary reference material using sketchbooks to record their observations.

KS4

- Pupils make further progress developing skills in working in two-dimensions.
- They extend their knowledge of the history and nature of art, in part through first-hand engagement with paintings exhibited at a local art gallery.
- Some pupils make good use of the Internet to carry out research into other artists and make use of word-processing effectively to present their findings.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Pupils' experiences and development of skills are limited to a restricted range of processes and, in particular, they rarely use computers creatively in art or three-dimensional materials.
- Their learning about art tends to focus on a narrow cultural context consisting mainly of 19th and 20th century Western art.
- They make limited progress in developing personal and individual responses.

KS4

- Pupils are not challenged to develop abilities in working independently and take insufficient responsibility for the direction and progress of their coursework.
- Pupils of below average ability do not make sufficient progress, their responses are more superficial and they work at a slower rate.

Progress since the last inspection

Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection in improving standards in art except in respect of the use of computers to generate artwork.

Music

Standards of achievement at KS3 and KS4 are good. There has been a significant increase in the numbers of students opting to take music at GCSE.

Good features

KS3

- When performing and composing, pupils can appraise work in progress and make positive suggestions for realistic targets for improvement.
- Pupils display a mature sense of ensemble when performing both in groups and as a class.
- The majority of pupils use electronic keyboards effectively to choose and combine appropriate timbres when composing. The results are frequently musically interesting and effectively match the set stimulus for the work.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of musical techniques and they are able to use these effectively when composing. For example, when working on a theme of 'legends' pupils combined musical ideas in groups and then as a class to depict the scene. The majority of pupils were able to discuss their musical ideas and a few used technical language to describe the working process.
- Both boys and girls sing with confidence and a sense of enthusiasm and commitment. Overall, singing is characterised by a good sense of tuning and a determination to produce musically pleasing results.

KS4

- Pupils display a good sense of empathy for other performers including the balance of individual parts. They practise and refine their performances and they are able to respond to the directions of a conductor.
- When listening to music, the majority of pupils are able to identify errors in pitch and rhythm and make logical suggestions for their correction.
- Pupils display good aural awareness and are able to relate the structure of melodies to other similar music.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Pupils do not use the National Curriculum elements of music to describe features or to help them compose or perform.
- Pupils sometimes use traditional music notation inappropriately and this does not improve their standard of performing or composing.
- There are no significant shortcomings at KS4.

Progress since the last inspection

There has been an improvement in the quality of both instrumental performing and singing at KS3.

Physical education

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and KS4. There has been an increase in the number of pupils studying the GCSE course and examination results are good.

Good features

KS3

- In gymnastics most pupils perform basic sequences with accuracy and control. The most able demonstrate good body tension and control. With the help of the video, they refine and improve the quality of their work. All pupils handle apparatus safely and efficiently
- In dance the most able girls confidently produce simple phrases of movement well.
- In games most pupils achieve standards commensurate with their ability. They use the space well when receiving and passing the ball in a variety of situations. The most able often make good decisions that demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the principles of attack and defence.

KS4

- Most pupils build on the skills they have learned at KS3 and apply them effectively in the game situation. They use their decision making skills well to outwit an opponent and distribute the ball accurately.
- The majority of pupils understand the benefits of an active lifestyle and are keen to improve fitness levels. They have a good understanding of the principles of training and confidently produce challenging programmes that demonstrate their strength, power and speed.
- Pupils following the GCSE course understand the physiological effects of exercise on the body and are able to identify ways of improving their performance. Most develop a sound understanding of how different diets impact on athletic performance. Overall, written work is good.

Shortcomings

KS3

- A small number of average and lower ability pupils find it hard to transfer the skills they have learned in practice into the game.
- In dance, less able girls have difficulty linking movements together fluently.
- A small, yet significant, minority of Y9 boys lack the necessary control to tackle an opponent safely. Their attitude to the game is immature and this affects the standards achieved by other pupils in the group.
- Very few pupils are able to accurately observe and correct each other's technique in order to improve performance.

KS4

- Very few pupils are able to critically analyse and correct each other's technique in order to improve performance.
- A small minority of average and lower ability pupils following the GCSE course sometimes have difficulty applying the theory they have learned in a practical context.

The department works hard to provide a good range of extra-curricular activities. These are mainly focused on competition and boys' participation rates are higher than girls'. School teams are successful and some have progressed to national finals. A number of pupils have gained representative honours in a range of sports at county and international level.

Progress since the last inspection

The new department has addressed most of the issues raised in the last report and good progress has been made. Overall standards have improved.

Religious education

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and satisfactory in KS4 statutory religious education.

Good features

KS3

- Standards of achievement are consistently good and sometimes very good.
- Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the religions and related topics that they study.
- They are able to identify accurately the key features of Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism and compare common elements and contrast differences across and within the religions they study.
- Pupils effectively consider beliefs and practices of these religions in relation to their own experiences and ask appropriate and intelligent questions using key religious terms.
- They are able to articulate the value of the study of religion and say how it influences the lifestyles and behaviour of people.
- Pupils exhibit critical thinking skills and apply these to challenging questions (and answers) raised by religion and life. Their responses, orally and in writing, reflect individual, local and global concerns.
- Pupils employ effective research skills using a range of resources.
- They are able to show how symbols are used as a means of religious expression.
- Written work is consistently good across the ability range and often very good.

KS4

- Most pupils are able to reflect in a thoughtful and articulate manner about their own views and feelings in relation to religious perspectives on a range of moral and ethical issues.
- They are able to show how belief impacts on behaviour, decisions and life choices.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Some pupils exhibit confusion over the religions they study.
- Some pupils are over-reliant on teachers and other pupils.

KS4

- Pupils are unable to meet fully the requirements of the agreed syllabus for religious education on account of the limited time allocated to the subject.

Progress since the last inspection

Standards at KS3 are now good with some very good written work in a variety of styles and often responding at length. The time allocated to statutory religious education still falls below that recommended by the Conwy agreed syllabus for religious education.

Religious studies

Standards of achievement in examination classes in KS4 religious studies and religious education (short course) are good and these good standards are reflected in examination results.

Good features

KS4

- Pupils are able to develop and present balanced and coherent arguments based on the topics they study.
- They have a good knowledge and understanding of Christianity and Islam and are able to discuss and counter popular media misconceptions.
- Pupils apply their learning to current issues and events in a sympathetic and considered manner.
- They use religious terms and language accurately and in context.
- They are able to consider thoughtfully a range of views on controversial topics and present their responses in a fair and impartial manner.
- Pupils ask pertinent questions related to the subject matter covered in lessons.

Shortcomings

KS4

- A minority of pupils are passive in lessons and only make a limited contribution to discussion, often being content with brief responses.

Progress since the last inspection

Standards in examination classes remain consistently good.

Personal and social education

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and KS4. Pupils follow an appropriate and wide-ranging PSE programme that is delivered through discrete timetabled lessons (apart from Y8) and effectively supplemented in form tutor periods. In addition there are designated events and activities. The PSE co-ordinator has taken account of the ACCAC PSE framework but there is no specific cross-referencing to it in the units of study. Both sex education and careers education are effectively incorporated into the PSE programme.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils are interested in the topics covered and make a positive contribution to class debate and discussion.
- They are willing to share views on sensitive topics and usually do so in a thoughtful manner.
- Most pupils confidently and articulately contribute to discussions.
- Pupils listen to and are respectful of the views of others.
- They work co-operatively, support one another and apply themselves to tasks often making important insights on the topic being considered.
- They are able to apply themselves to problem-solving activities.
- They are able to ask intelligent and relevant questions.
- Most apply themselves to the challenge of the work set and positively focus on tasks.

KS4

- Pupils find the topics covered and careers advice they receive both valuable and interesting and are able to make the connection between personal qualities and career opportunities.
- Pupils display good IT skills in using databases to access information.
- They absorb and reflect on the information gathered.
- They are able to select information and use it to inform their views.
- They are generally respectful of the views of others.
- Some pupils take responsibility for their own learning.
- Most share their thoughts and views in an articulate fashion.

Shortcomings

KS3

- A minority of pupils are inattentive and not fully involved with the lesson.
- Some are content with cursory and brief responses to questions and fail to fully participate in class discussion.
- Pupils tend not to engage in extended written responses.
- Pupils' experience in Y8 is limited to the PE programmes of study rather than the PSE framework.

KS4

- Some pupils tend to be passive during lessons.
- Pupils do not always fully explore issues raised in sufficient depth.
- Some fail to appreciate the significance of topics raised and issues covered.

Progress since last inspection

There was no subject PSE report in the last inspection. Form tutor periods, mid-morning, now make a positive contribution to PSE entitlement.

Business studies

Standards of achievement are good at KS4. Examination results are good for the range of abilities.

Good features

- Pupils show a keen interest in the course elements and are able to utilise a whole range of skills and demonstrate their understanding with clarity of purpose.
- Pupils generally demonstrate a well-developed understanding on how business uses market research to give it ideas on how to meet consumer demand.
- Pupils use a wide range of materials with developing confidence to plan their research, locate information and make good notes.
- Pupils' appraising skills are good overall. Pupils are, to varying degrees, able to discern technical shifts in demand and supply of goods and services.
- Pupils show personal initiative and a good understanding of how to co-operate in pair and group work to explore and combine knowledge effectively.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of business facts and of the current issues and problems facing industry and commerce.

Shortcomings

- Comprehension of language is mixed. The more able pupils respond at length, sustain conversation and express opinions but the less able struggle to exchange ideas.
- There is insufficient independent reading by most pupils to develop reasoned arguments.
- Absence hinders progress for a minority of pupils who struggle to make judgements of quality.
- Too few pupils complete homework for extension and enrichment of class work. A minority of pupils do not adhere to deadlines to complete work promptly.

Progress since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the subject has consolidated its standards at KS4.

Other(s)

GCSE Catering

Standards of achievement at KS4 are good. These standards are reflected in the GCSE examination results, which are good in relation to pupils' ability.

Good features

- Pupils acquire a good understanding of the catering industry and related hygiene, health and safety regulations.
- They display good knowledge of food commodities and food preparation, and generally make considered choices when planning coursework tasks.
- Pupils interpret practical tasks with understanding; they plan and evaluate their work in detail.

- They prepare an appropriate variety of dishes and develop a good range of skills; standards of practical work are generally good.
- Pupils make good use of ICT skills to communicate information and data, and to successfully analyse the nutritive content of dishes and meals.

Shortcomings

- Currently, pupils have insufficient experience of simulated industrial practices.

Progress since the last inspection

Pupils continue to achieve good standards. The standard and application of ICT skills have improved.

Entry level – Skills for Working Life

Standards of achievement are good overall in this newly introduced course.

Good features

- Pupils gain good, work-related experiences during the Hospitality and Catering, Business Administration and Retail, and Practical modules studied.
- They develop satisfactory, frequently good, ICT skills and with good teacher support, successfully apply these to present information and data.
- Practical skills and standards of outcomes are generally good.
- The identification of essential qualities, arrangements, and participation in role-play, for example, assist pupils develop good personal skills necessary for an interview.
- Pupils have satisfactory knowledge of the main food groups, they succeed in giving good reasons why safe and hygienic practices are necessary in a kitchen and successfully prepare the serving area.
- Pupils gain valuable first-hand, work-related, experience at the local college.

Shortcomings

- Incomplete work is frequently attributed to absenteeism.

Progress since the last inspection

This is a newly introduced course, not reported on previously.

Key Skills

Standards of achievement in this KS4 course are good, reflected in the examination results.

Good features

- A majority of pupils listen attentively, read well, speak clearly and articulately, write to good effect and work well. They use mathematical skills effectively.

- Pupils are articulate when responding to questions expressing opinions and challenging other pupils' hypotheses.
- Pupils develop good skills of numeracy, particularly mental mathematical skills.
- Pupils' ability to work with others is good. Some creative and original work is produced. Individual research projects are undertaken allowing pupils to make decisions. ICT is used effectively.

Shortcomings

- Pupils make occasional grammatical and spelling errors that reduce the quality of their writing. They do not make sufficient use of dictionaries.

Progress since the last inspection

Overall, there has been good curricular provision for key skills since the last inspection. Pupils' motivation and learning have been enhanced considerably by the school's commitment to key skills education.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress Since the Last Inspection

Establish greater consistency in good standards of achievement between subjects and in core skills with specific focus on the underachievement in Y9 and Y10 and amongst boys of average ability.

There has been good progress in that standards across the curriculum have improved and are now good in the large majority of subjects. There has also been improvement in pupils' core skills, which are now good overall in literacy and numeracy and satisfactory in ICT. Nevertheless, there is still some underachievement, more significant among pupils of average to lower ability and pupils with SEN in mainstream classes in Y8 and Y9.

Improve consistency of pace, challenge and expectations in the quality of teaching within and between subjects in order to meet the needs of pupils at different ability levels more effectively.

The quality of teaching has improved in all these respects but there is still room for further improvement, in order to raise the proportion of very good teaching.

Raise the quality of learning and positive attitudes of a significant minority of pupils in terms of listening, concentration, work completion and behaviour.

The school has invested much time and effort in introducing new systems to motivate pupils and manage their behaviour, such as the positive discipline system and the social inclusion project, with their related strategies. The effects have been positive and the number of pupils causing concern has reduced, though there is still a small minority who have a significant effect in some classes. The school is strongly inclusive in accepting a number of pupils excluded from other schools.

Tackle deficiencies in allocation and effective use of time, support for non stated SEN pupils and other resource shortcomings as funds allow.

There has been good progress in that the time shortages noted in the last report have been rectified and time in the pastoral period is now used well. Non-statemented pupils have IEPs, though these are not yet effective in improving and monitoring their learning and standards. The school is now at least adequately resourced except in the library, and the ratio of pupils to computers is close to the national average.

Continue and extend the setting of appropriate targets to improve pupil attendance and ensure closer partnership with the education social worker (ESW) and parents.

There has been good progress, for attendance is now satisfactory at just over 90 per cent, and there are closer partnerships with the ESW and parents.

Make appropriate curricular provision for the delivery of the agreed syllabus for religious education at KS4 and in the sixth form and monitor the effectiveness of the daily act of collective worship.

There has been satisfactory progress. Whilst there is greater time for religious education at both key stages, time is still minimal. In tutor groups there is a carefully planned programme of Thoughts for the Day, delivered effectively in some groups but not in others, and not carried out in a few.

Take further measures to improve consistency across middle management in the setting of priorities and targets for improving and monitoring standards, their evaluation and follow up.

There has been good progress. All middle managers now monitor and plan effectively to improve standards. Target-setting has been introduced but is not yet embedded.

Press for improvements of the unsatisfactory features of the site and in particular the long standing problems in the science accommodation.

There has been very good progress. Improvements have been made to the science accommodation and to the current buildings in order to make them as attractive as possible. A new school has been planned for and is about to be constructed on a nearby site.

8.2 Key Issues for Action

To build on its current success the school should address the following issues, already among the targets of its development plan:

1. Continue to raise standards and examination results with particular emphasis on subjects in which standards are satisfactory at either key stage.
2. Ensure that teaching:
 - Challenges pupils of all abilities by probing their understanding.
 - Supports the learning of pupils with SEN in mainstream classes and effectively manages the behaviour of the small minority.
 - Encourages pupils to develop good study skills, independent learning and research.
3. Continue to monitor pupils' learning, through a cross-curricular approach at each key stage and promote best practice.
4. Further develop the processes and impact of target-setting.
5. Implement the plans for the new accommodation to address current deficiencies and improve access to resources.
6. Meet statutory requirements and Welsh Assembly Government guidelines in the areas mentioned in the report.

The inspectors wish to express their thanks to the governing body, head and staff, parents, students and pupils of Ysgol John Bright for their co-operation and assistance before and during the inspection.

APPENDIX

A. Basic Information About the School

Name of School	Ysgol John Bright
School type	UA Maintained
Age -range of pupils	11 - 18 years
Address of school	Oxford Road Llandudno Conwy
Post-Code	LL30 1DL
Telephone Number	01492 860044

Headteacher	Mrs I S Perry
Date of appointment	1 st March 1994
Chair of Governors/ Appropriate Authority	Mr D Rowley
Registered Inspector	Miss G Owen
Dates of inspection	28 th April - 2 nd May 2003

B. School Data and Indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>								
Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	231	232	215	204	166	71	67	1186

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	70	2	71.3

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16.6 :1
Average teaching group size	22.6
Overall contact ratio	78%

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	90.7	88.5	90.0	88.2	93.2	88.9	91.1	89.9
Term 2	94.3	92.8	91.4	89.6	89.1	93.0	91.3	91.7
Term 3	91.0	90.4	89.9	87.2	85.1	83.3	89.8	88.7

<i>Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection</i>	2 Permanent 45 Temporary
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C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2002															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 204															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	N	B	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
EN	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0		0	0	0	11	30	43	15	0	0
		National	-	1	1	-	-	-	2	9	22	34	21	8	-
	Test	School	0	2	0	0	-	-	-	7	17	42	25	7	-
		National	-	4	2	2	-	-	-	8	23	31	21	9	-
MA	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	9	16	34	27	13	0
		National	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	9	21	26	27	13	1
	Test	School	0	4	0	0	-	-	-	8	18	30	25	14	-
		National	-	6	1	1	-	-	-	8	22	32	24	10	-
SC	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	8	41	35	15	0	0
		National	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	9	22	32	24	10	-
	Test	School	0	2	0	0	-	-	-	4	22	45	22	5	-
		National	-	4	-	1	-	-	-	7	20	32	24	11	-

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school:	42%	In the school:	53%
In Wales:	53%	In Wales:	51%

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

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, CoE, GNVQ and NVQ			
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2002: 173			
The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2002:			
	School	UA	Wales
were entered for 5 or more GCSEs	92	87	86
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C	50	54	50
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-G	91	86	85
achieved GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language)	35	40	37
entered at least one CoE, GCSE short course or GCSE	98	99	97
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-C	80	77	74
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-G	94	93	92
achieved no graded GCSE	6	7	8
achieved one or more CoE only	2	3	3
achieved a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	-	-	-
achieved a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	9		
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	50		
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	91		

For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs			
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2002: 61			
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2002: 55			
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2002: 17			
	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	41	62	66
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	95	98	94
Average points score per candidate	15	19	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	0		
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	1		

D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection

- 16 inspectors spent the equivalent of 57 days at the school.
- 193 lessons were observed at KS3 and KS4, including full and part sessions, covering all curricular areas including PSE.
- Inspectors attended a sample of assemblies, pastoral periods and extra-curricular activities.
- Inspectors held discussions with the senior management team, all heads of department, representatives of the support and guidance teams and staff with whole-school responsibilities, some members of the administrative and support staff and some representatives from outside agencies.
- Work across the curriculum, from representative pupils in Y7-Y11 was examined, together with work in each subject.
- There was formal discussion with a group of pupils from KS3 and KS4 and informal discussion with many other pupils.
- The Registered Inspector met the staff and governing body prior to the inspection.
- Six parents attended the parents' meeting and 163 replies to the questionnaire were received.

- Documentation provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection.
- Feedback was given to departments and senior management during the week of the inspection and to the SMT and governors after the inspection.

E. Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team

Inspector	Type	Subjects	Aspects
Miss G Owen	RgI	Modern Foreign Language	1. The school and its priorities 2. Main findings 3.1 Standards achieved 3.2 Key skills 5.1 Teaching 6.1 Self Evaluation 6.2 Leadership and Efficiency 8.1 Progress 8.2 Key Issues
Mr S Page	Lay		4.2 Behaviour 4.3 Attendance 5.6 Links with parents, etc. 5.7 Links with industry
Mr P Carter	Core	Art	5.2 ARR 5.3 Curriculum
Dr A Cooke	Core	Mathematics	6.3 Resources
Mrs J Longville	Core	Physical Education	Sixth Form
Mr C Rowlands	Core	Welsh 2 nd Language	4.1 SMSC 5.4 Support, guidance and welfare
Mr C Harris	Team	English	
Mr J Hanney	Team	Science	
Mr M Pickin	Team	Science, Information Technology	
Dr G Briwnant-Jones	Team	Design and Technology Health and Social Care	
Mr A Kelly	Team	History	
Mr A Pritchard	Team	Geography, Geology	
Mr P Thomas	Team	Music	
Mr M Rawle	Team	Religious Education PSE	
Dr N Carr	Team	Business Studies, Economics, Psychology Key Skills	
Mrs M Meredith-Jones	Team		SEN