

INSPECTION UNDER SECTION 10 OF THE
SCHOOL INSPECTIONS ACT 1996

LEWIS GIRLS' COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL
OAKFIELD STREET
YSTRAD MYNACH
HENGOED
CF82 7WW

SCHOOL NUMBER: 676/4077

DATE OF INSPECTION: 15TH – 19TH MARCH 2004

BY

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DATE: 6TH MAY 2004

UNDER ESTYN CONTRACT NUMBER: C/T/18/03

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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 :

A	-	Advanced
ACCAC	-	Awdurdod Cymwysterau Cwricwlwm ac Asesu Cymru (The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales)
AS	-	Advanced Subsidiary
AVCE	-	Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education
BSP	-	Behaviour Support Programme
CADCAM	-	Computer Aided Design and Manufacture
EBP	-	Education Business Partnership
ELQ	-	Entry Level Qualification
EMU	-	Exceeding, meeting and underachieving (ARR system)
EWO	-	Education Welfare Officer
GCSE	-	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	-	General National Vocational Qualification
ICT	-	Information and Communications Technology
IEP	-	Individual Educational Plan
INSET	-	In-Service Education and Training
ITT	-	Initial Teacher Training
KS	-	Key Stage
LSA	-	Learning Support Assistant
NC	-	National Curriculum
PSE	-	Personal and Social Education
PSP	-	Pastoral Support Programme
RoA	-	Record of Achievement

SDP	-	School Development Plan
SEN	-	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	-	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SMT	-	Senior Management Team
UA	-	Unitary Authority
WAG	-	Welsh Assembly Government
WRE	-	Work Related Education
Y	-	Year

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PART 2: THE INSPECTION SCHEDULE

1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

Lewis Girls' Comprehensive School is an 11-18, single-sex community school, maintained by Caerphilly County Borough Council. There are 1036 pupils on roll, including 156 in the sixth form. The school is situated in Ystrad Mynach, but pupils come from an area of about 40 square miles, as around 200 pupils choose to come from out of the catchment area. Just under a half of pupils come from areas which are neither particularly prosperous nor particularly disadvantaged, though the area as a whole is economically disadvantaged. Twenty-two per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, a figure above the national average of 18.5 per cent.

Pupils come from the full range of ability, with sizeable groups of able and less able pupils. Twenty-five pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN) and a further 57 have been identified as needing some support, a proportion below the national figure. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic heritages and no pupils have Welsh as their first language.

The school has clear aims and objectives and a development plan to translate these aims into practice. Its mission statement is to be a harmonious school within which all achieve their full potential, through a high quality education for the young women of the future. The ethos is summed up by the Welsh word 'Hedd' (peace): harmony, excellence, determination and diligence. Since the last inspection in October 1997, the headteacher, deputy and assistant headteachers have remained in post.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

Lewis Girls' School is a very good school.

Educational Standards Achieved

Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection. The grades awarded in classes observed in this inspection are very high, particularly the proportion of good and very good standards. Similarly, the proportion of subjects in which standards are good or very good is significantly high. Standards in the sixth form are very good overall.

Examination results have also risen substantially. In 2003, sixty-three per cent of pupils gained at least five grades A*-C in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) Examinations, above the national average, compared to 45 per cent at the time of the last inspection. No pupil left school without qualifications last year. GCSE results placed the

school high in the top 25 per cent of schools nationally, in comparison with schools of a similar intake.

Good Features

- Standards of achievement were at least satisfactory in 99 per cent of classes observed and good or very good in 82 per cent. These figures are a substantial improvement on those of the last report of 88 per cent and 45 per cent respectively.
- Standards were very good in 31 per cent of classes observed, also a significantly high proportion.
- Standards are very good in modern foreign languages and physical education at all three key stages.
- Standards are good or very good in the large majority of subjects.
- Standards are good or very good in all national curriculum (NC) subjects at key stage (KS) 4.
- Pupils of all abilities do well. The most able and pupils with SEN do very well.
- Pupils' key skills in communication are very good. In numeracy and information and communication technology across the curriculum they are good at KS3 and KS4 and very good in the sixth form.
- The overall result in the NC tests at the end of KS3 in 2003 was above the local average and above average for schools of a similar intake, based on the free school meals' indicator.
- Results at Advanced (A) level were in line with the local average and only just below the national comparator.

Shortcomings

- The high levels of achievement can be raised even further, particularly in subjects or key stages judged as satisfactory and in the work of some pupils of average to lower ability, particularly in the core subjects.
- Whilst attendance overall is satisfactory, the progress of a small minority of pupils is adversely affected by sporadic or longer-term absence.

Standards in Subjects

Subject	KS3	KS4	Sixth form
English	Good	Good	Very good
Mathematics	Good	Good	Good
Science	Good	Very good	Very good
Welsh second language	Good	Full: Very good Short: Good	Good
Design and Technology	Satisfactory	Good	-
Information Technology	Good	Very good	Computing; Satisfactory
History	Good	Good	Very good
Geography	Good	Good	Very good
Modern Foreign Languages	Very good	Very good	Very good
Art	Good	Very good	Very good
Music	Good	Very good	Very good
Physical Education	Very good	Very good	Very good
Religious Education	Good	RS: Very good RE: Good	RS: Very good RE: -
Personal and Social Education	Very good	Good	-
Business Studies	-	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Business and Communication Systems	-	Satisfactory	
Drama	-	Good	-
Home Economics: Child Development	-	Satisfactory	-
Home Economics: Textiles	-	Satisfactory	-
Catering	-	Good	-
Keyboarding	-	Good	-
Law	-	Very good	Very good
Leisure and Tourism	-	Very good	-
Media Studies	-	Good	-
Citizenship Studies	-	Satisfactory	-
Typewriting	-	Good	-
Economics	-	-	Very good
Government and Politics	-	-	Very good
Health and Social Care	-	GNVQ: Very good	AVCE: Very good

Standards in Key Skills

Key Skill	KS3 and KS4	Sixth Form
Listening	Very good	Very good
Speaking	Very good	Very good
Reading	Very good	Very good
Writing	Very good	Very good
Numeracy	Good	Very good
Information and communications Technology (ICT)	Good	Very good

Quality of Education Provided

Pupils receive a very good quality of education. The quality of teaching is a major strength of the school and the grades awarded for teaching in classes observed are very high. Pupils also have a wide range of opportunities both in the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities.

Good Features

- Teaching was at least satisfactory in 99 per cent of classes and good or very good in 83 per cent. These figures compare very favourably with those of the last inspection of 92 per cent and 51 per cent respectively. In 38 per cent of classes, teaching was judged to be very good. Teaching in the sixth form is very good.
- Teaching is often innovative and progressive, with the use of interactive whiteboard technology.
- The broad and balanced curriculum caters well for pupils of all abilities. At KS4 and in the sixth form, the choice of examination courses has been extended through links with the local college
- There is good emphasis on and provision for the development of pupils' key skills, with all pupils at KS3 and KS4 having lessons in ICT, and sixth formers having lessons in key skills.
- Younger pupils also develop key skills effectively through wide-spread use of computerised software – "Successmaker."
- Pupils' progress is regularly assessed and any underachievement identified at an early stage.
- Reports to parents give good feedback and identify targets for improvement.
- Provision for pupils with SEN is very good.
- The quality of careers education and guidance is good at KS3 and KS4 and very good in the sixth form. The school has been awarded the Careers Wales Quality Award.
- A homework club extends opportunities for pupils to receive support in their learning.
- The extra-curricular programme is particularly wide-ranging in music, sport, the Duke of Edinburgh's award, Young Enterprise and visits in the United Kingdom and abroad. Staff give generously of their time.
- Strong links with the local community enlarge such opportunities.
- There is smooth transition for pupils from over 30 primary schools, through very good links between the primary and secondary sector for continuity in learning. The summer school, before pupils arrive at Lewis Girls' school, is a very good initiative to ease transition and improve key skills, also enjoyed by sixth form helpers.

Shortcomings

- Accommodation is tight and there are some shortcomings which impact adversely on the life and work of the school.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The school has a strong, corporate ethos based on mutual respect. Pupils develop self-discipline within a structured, caring and inclusive atmosphere. They also develop enthusiasm and commitment to learning. Pupils are proud of their school. Sixth formers play a vital part in it, gaining experience of leadership in organising activities for younger pupils. They also contribute significantly to the wider community.

Good Features

- Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good. Their spiritual development is good.
- There is strong pastoral support for pupils.
- Pupils respect the trust shown to them in allowing them to stay in the building throughout the day.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils and amongst pupils are very good.
- Behaviour is very good both in classes and around the school.
- Pupils are polite and friendly to visitors.
- They are outward-looking and concerned about those less fortunate, locally and in the wider world.
- Large sums of money are raised for charities, many events organised by sixth formers.
- Pupils are involved in efforts to promote sustainable development and the school was the first secondary school in Wales to gain nationally recognised status as an Ecoschool.
- There are opportunities to take part in evaluating and improving provision. The school and year councils are involved in decision-making, the former with a financial budget for school improvement.
- There are well-established systems, involving pupils, to prevent bullying.
- The personal and social education (PSE) programme is well planned and well delivered by a team of specialists.
- The Welsh dimension is strong across subjects of the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils have won a substantial grant and national heritage award to develop their vision of a garden reflecting local history.

Shortcomings

- The 'Thought for the Day' in tutor groups does not extend to a daily act of collective worship in many groups and statutory requirements are thus not met.
- Tutor time in the morning is not used effectively in all groups.
- Statutory requirements are not met for religious education in the sixth form.

Leadership and Efficiency

The headteacher gives very good leadership. She is forward-thinking, dynamic and caring.

The current standards, quality of education and ethos owe much to her leadership and example. She is ably supported by all other members of the senior management team, governors, middle managers and staff, and there are very good links with parents and the wider community.

Good Features

- There is a clear vision for the future direction of the school.
- This has been effectively communicated so that there are shared values and a high level of consistency in expectations and practice.
- The school's aims are widely fulfilled.
- There is appropriate focus on standards and a strong, corporate drive for continuous improvement.
- Self-evaluation is well established, in systems and culture.
- Development planning is at the heart of practice, for the school as a whole and in each area of provision.
- The governing body is fully involved in planning and evaluating performance.
- The quality of middle management is mostly good or very good.
- Data are used effectively at an individual, departmental and whole-school level, to analyse performance and set targets.
- The calibre of the staff is good and they are effectively deployed.
- Continuous professional development has been effective in keeping staff up-to-date with developments in their subject and in whole-school initiatives.
- The school has won a number of national awards: Investor in People; Basic Skills Award; Careers Wales Quality Mark; National Heritage Award; Sportsmarc Cymru; Centre of Excellence for Interactive Whiteboard Technology, among others.
- The school is well resourced and teachers make best use of resources.
- Financial planning is careful and the latest auditor's report found financial administration to be well managed.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Progress since the last inspection

- There has been very good progress in the three key issues concerning management. Governors and middle managers are now much more involved in strategic planning and evaluation. Funds have been spent on improving accommodation and resources. There has been very good progress in curricular development and good progress in improving attendance. Overall, the school has made significant progress since the last inspection in all areas.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards Achieved in Subjects and Areas of Learning

At KS3, standards are very good in modern foreign languages and physical education. They are good in all other subjects except design and technology, where they are satisfactory. This level of consistency of performance represents good achievement. In design and technology there are some curricular issues to be resolved, but standards are considerably better than at the time of the last inspection.

In the NC test results at the end of KS3 in 2003, the proportion of pupils reaching at least level five in all three core subjects combined was above the local average and above average for schools with a similar intake, though just below the national comparator for girls. Results peaked in 2001, when they were above the national average. In the last three years, results in science have been highest, above local and national averages. Results in mathematics have been above the national average in two out of the last three years, and above the local average each year. However, English results have been below national averages and below the local average in one year. In comparison with schools with a similar intake, science results are above average, mathematics results in line and English results below.

At KS4, standards are very good in a significant number of subjects: science, Welsh second language full course GCSE, information technology, modern foreign languages, art, music, physical education, religious studies, law, leisure and tourism and health and social care. This is an unusually high level of performance. Standards are good in all other NC subjects, (English, mathematics, short course Welsh second language, design and technology, history, geography, religious education and personal and social education.) Standards are also good in drama, media studies, catering, keyboarding and typewriting. Standards are satisfactory in business studies, business and communication systems, citizenship studies, child development and textiles.

Results in GCSE examinations have improved considerably since the last inspection. In 2003, sixty-three per cent of pupils gained at least five grades A*-C, compared to 45 per cent in 1997. These were the highest results to date and six per cent above the national average for girls. Ninety-four per cent of pupils gained at least five grades A*-G, also six per cent above the national average and twelve per cent above the figure in 1997. All pupils in 2003 left school with qualifications, 98 per cent with at least one GCSE. Results in other accredited courses were also good. In all these indicators, compared to schools with a similar intake, results placed the school high in the top 25 per cent of schools nationally. Results in science, Welsh second language, information technology, modern foreign languages, art, religious education and studies, and drama have been consistently good in recent years and added a measure of progress to pupils' prior attainment. Results in history and geography have improved and also show a measure of progress.

The percentage of pupils gaining at least grade C at GCSE in all three core subjects was above the national average and, in comparison with schools of a similar intake, placed the school high in the top 25 per cent of schools nationally. Results in each of English, mathematics and science were also above both comparators, Results in science were highest

and well above the national average. Results in English have been higher than in mathematics.

The grades awarded for standards in classes observed during this inspection at KS3 and KS4 are very high, particularly the proportion of good and very good standards. Standards were at least satisfactory in 99 per cent of classes and good or very good in 80 per cent, including 26 per cent in which standards were very good. These figures represent substantial improvement since the last inspection. At that time, standards were unsatisfactory in about ten per cent of classes and the proportion of good and very good standards combined was around forty per cent. Standards of achievement are higher at KS4 than at KS3, a profile mirrored in the examination results. The percentage of classes in which standards were good or very good rises from 76 per cent at KS3 to 85 per cent at KS4.

Pupils of all abilities do well at the school. The most able and pupils with SEN do particularly well and reach very good standards relative to abilities. The banding and setting systems are effective in practice, with due consideration being given to each year's ability profile before groups are finalised. In particular, the standards achieved by pupils in the bridging classes have improved substantially. They are now very good, but were judged unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection. In the school as a whole, there is now a real commitment to achievement, with the ethos, quality of teaching and quality of pupils' attitudes making vital contributions to overall success.

The most able achieve very well. They reach very good standards in science, Welsh second language, modern foreign languages, art, music, physical education and religious education in both key stages and in information technology, geography and law at KS4. They achieve well in all other subjects except design and technology at KS3, where they are not adequately challenged in all aspects of the subject. Overall, the most able pupils are confident and articulate, with highly developed key skills and very good attitudes to independent learning. They can think for themselves, undertake research and produce some outstanding extended writing, particularly in coursework at KS4. The percentage of grades A* and A at GCSE is particularly high in Welsh second language, information technology, modern foreign languages, history, geography, art, music and religious education. In these subjects, approximately a third to over a half of pupils entered gain a top grade.

Pupils of average ability and just below achieve well overall. In modern foreign languages and in physical education, and at KS4 in information technology and law, they achieve very well. In some classes in science, art and music they also reach very good standards. In the majority of other subjects, achievement is good. However, in some classes in English, mathematics and science, in business studies, business and communication systems, design and technology and home economics, achievement is satisfactory. At this level of ability there are some shortcomings in written work in particular, through technical inaccuracies and untidy presentation, and sporadic or longer-term absence leads to some incomplete work. Expectations by teachers are not always sufficiently high. However, these shortcomings are small by comparison with the good standards overall achieved in class and in examinations.

Pupils with SEN achieve very well. The progress made by pupils who enter with reading ages of up to two years below their chronological age and leave with qualifications at 16+ is very good. In every subject, pupils with SEN, mainly in the special needs and bridging classes, make at least good progress. In science, modern foreign languages and physical education and in some classes in mathematics, information technology and art, they make very good

progress. Overall, their key skills and their attitudes to learning, and the high expectations of teachers are significant contributory factors to the standards achieved.

The school has an inclusive atmosphere where pupils of different ages and abilities help each other to achieve. Those from minority ethnic heritages do well, including individuals who entered with little knowledge of English. Not only has there been substantial improvement in standards and examination results overall, and the current level of achievement is high, but there is also a commitment to continuous improvement which augurs well for the future.

3.2 Standards Achieved in Key Skills across the Curriculum

The school has focused on improving pupils' key skills in recent years. There has been appropriate in-service training (INSET) and classroom practice has been reviewed by senior management and advisers. In 2002, the school was awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark. The introduction of computerised software "Successmaker" has made a significant impact at KS3 on pupils' basic skills. It is widely and effectively used, among pupils of differing abilities, and particularly for those who have some difficulties with literacy and numeracy. All subjects plan for the promotion of key skills in their schemes of work. More importantly, they deliver this effectively in practice and there is a high level of consistency across subjects.

Communication

Standards of listening are very good. Pupils listen purposefully and respectfully to teachers and to other pupils. They respond to what they hear, often asking questions to further their understanding. In Welsh second language and modern foreign languages they understand the gist of a passage and can extract details in response to questions. A very small number of pupils lack concentration or do not listen, interrupting the learning of others.

Standards of speaking are very good. Pupils use Standard English appropriately and are confident and articulate. Most pupils use extended speech fluently, can justify their opinions, challenge others and give presentations to the class confidently. Their use of technical terms relating to each subject is apposite. In Welsh second language and modern foreign languages they can manipulate language and use it in new contexts. Speaking was judged to be very good, at all ability levels, in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, law and personal and social education, and good in virtually all other subjects. In information technology, short answers are too readily given and there is insufficient discussion on information technology in society. In drama, and in extra-curricular dramatic activities, oral confidence and stage presence are well developed.

Standards of reading are very good. Pupils who enter the school with reading difficulties make very good progress in KS3 and reading ages improve significantly. Pupils read aloud fluently in many subjects. They have good pronunciation in Welsh second language and modern foreign languages. Pupils read texts to extract information in many subjects, with a good level of understanding. They read extensively using the library and ICT resources, for research purposes in most subjects and incorporate information into their work. The borrowing rate in the library for reading for pleasure is good. Reading was judged to be very good in English, science, modern foreign languages and law and good in other subjects.

Standards in writing are very good. The content, presentation and technical accuracy of

pupils' written work, relative to ability, are very good overall and range between good and outstanding in many subjects. The planning of written work, prior to writing is also very good. Writing is outstanding in English and modern foreign languages. Several girls have won prizes for their poems and short stories in competitions locally and nationally. Among a small minority of pupils of average to lower ability, writing is the least well developed of the four skills and they do not convey the fluency of their oral contributions in written form. Pupils with SEN draft and redraft their work successfully and achieve well. The coursework of the most able is, in many cases, outstanding.

Numeracy

Standards in numeracy are good. Pupils are competent in the use of number and make good mental calculations. In science, they use their skills in measurement, calculations and equations. Graphical work is good in mathematics, science and geography. Pupils confidently use numbers in measurement calculations in design and technology and in modelling in information technology. Data are collected efficiently in physical education and in geography fieldwork. They are analysed effectively in these and many other subjects, particularly history, health and social care and PSE.

ICT

Standards across the curriculum at both KS3 and KS4 are good. Pupils gain very good ICT skills in taught lessons at both KS3 and KS4 and confidently apply them in most subjects across the curriculum. Applications of ICT are very good in modern foreign languages, science and design and technology, in both KS3 and KS4. In modern foreign languages, word processing applications are good and there is particularly effective use of an interactive whiteboard and a digital camera. In science, very good use is made for data logging and a range of general ICT applications. Computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM), Internet research and presentation are particular strengths in design and technology. In art at KS4 there is very good use of digitising and image manipulation. Standards are satisfactory in English, music and religious education at KS3, and in religious education and studies, home economics and business studies at KS4. In all other subjects standards are good.

Other key skills

There is a strong collaborative culture within the school and pupils readily work with others. They reach good standards in pairs and small groups in class, in debating a point of view, playing roles and devising solutions to problems. They also co-operate well in extra-curricular activities such as Young Enterprise, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, and musical, sporting and dramatic activities.

Many such activities offer them creative and problem-solving activities. Creative work is good in a variety of media: in composing music, in devising sequences in gymnastics, in two and three-dimensional work in art, in writing in a variety of formats. Standards in problem-solving are also good, in mathematics, science, geography and design and technology in particular. However, other subjects also extend these skills and ICT is often used to present solutions in different formats. The school has been successful in a number of design competitions, including designing and building a racing car using computer software, and in science competitions. It has also won National Innovation Awards.

Pupils respond well to opportunities to improve their own learning and performance. Attitudes to learning are very good and pupils readily accept responsibility for their progress, attitudes effectively conveyed to visitors. The systems relating to assessment and self-assessment have become embedded in practice, so that both individuals and the school community are strongly motivated to succeed.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Pupils' spiritual development is good. Their moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school has a strong ethos based on harmony and mutual respect. Pupils develop self-discipline within a structured, caring and inclusive atmosphere. They also develop enthusiasm and commitment to learning.

Pupils' spiritual awareness is developed in religious education, collective worship and in a number of subjects across the curriculum. Pupils are given good opportunities to reflect on experiences, develop their own opinions and respect the values and beliefs of others. Fortnightly whole-school assemblies, which are of a Christian nature, make a satisfactory contribution to the development of spiritual awareness. During this time pupils have the opportunity to engage in quiet reflection on current world situations and consider messages about key moral questions such as loyalty. These assemblies make a strong contribution to the whole-school ethos. On the days when pupils do not attend an assembly they stay in tutor groups or have a year-group assembly. The school has adopted a published scheme, 'Moments of Reflection' to assist tutors to involve pupils in a daily act of collective worship, but this is not used consistently across tutor groups. In a number of cases pupils are given little opportunity to reflect on spiritual matters or to engage in collective worship. The school is therefore not fully complying with the statutory requirement for a daily act of worship.

Moral values are strongly promoted in the school. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and show respect for each other, for teachers and for the wider community. In several subject areas pupils learn about issues related to prejudice, relationships, citizenship, equality and inequality and global resources. Pupils can express opinions on moral issues and respond maturely when discussing sensitive topics. The school was the first secondary school in Wales to attain Ecoschool status, in 1997, and has been involved with the Green Dragon Environmental Award Project. The school continues to be committed to practical approaches to environmental issues and sustainability by encouraging pupils to recycle paper and other consumable products such as mobile phones. The school has also developed an organic garden, which is sponsored by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG). Pupils respond to these initiatives with enthusiasm and recognise the importance of taking care of the environment. Pupils generously support a wide range of charities and show a sense of responsibility towards others less fortunate than themselves. Many of the events are organised by sixth form students but pupils across the age range are committed to this important part of school life.

Pupils' social awareness is encouraged through a number of activities within the school and in the wider community. Pupils participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities including music, sport and drama. Pupils across the age and ability range enjoy participating

in these activities. Relationships within the school between teachers and pupils and amongst pupils are very good. Pupils respect the trust shown to them in allowing them to stay in the building throughout the day. They have a very good attitude towards good social behaviour and self-discipline. In lessons pupils show a willingness to support one another and to work collaboratively.

The school offers very good cultural opportunities for pupils. Pupils are given very good opportunities to appreciate the culture and heritage of Wales through whole-school events such as the annual Eisteddfod and also within subject areas. The school has developed a co-ordinated approach to the Cwricwlwm Cymreig. Pupils have the opportunity to be involved in a wide range of cultural events such as theatre and museum visits as well as hosting readings by contemporary poets and writers. These are well received by the pupils as they use the experiences to enhance their learning and recognise the importance of these opportunities. The school has a good racial equality policy and is successful in promoting this in practice. The school has only a small minority of pupils from racial minority groups but these pupils are well integrated into the school community. Activities such as the year (Y) 7 multicultural Christmas celebrations give pupils the opportunity to appreciate cultures different to their own. As a result of this type of event and of work completed across the curriculum, pupils show respect for people with different beliefs and traditions. The wealth of musical activities, to a very high standard, contributes substantially to pupils' cultural development. Visits abroad are a regular feature of school life. As well as music tours, skiing trips and exchange visits, the school is involved with the World Team Challenge which involved an expedition to Belize in 2002.

Pupils have very good opportunities to exercise initiative. The School Council is fully involved in improving the quality of life in the school. It meets regularly with the headteacher and manages a budget of at least £1,000 per annum. Pupils across the age range are encouraged to contribute to the decision making process by raising issues for the year councils to refer to the school council. Staff and pupils value the contribution this body makes to the life of the school, and as a result the school council has been consulted on important issues relating to school improvement. The anti-bullying initiative also encourages pupils to take initiative by training a number of pupils to become peer counsellors. Pupils have responded to this in a mature and responsible way and have established support networks for those pupils who may be experiencing difficulty. The Heritage Courtyard development has attracted a substantial grant to allow pupils to develop a vision of a garden reflecting local history.

The pupils' response to opportunities for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and contributes to the ethos of the school and their academic and personal achievement.

4.2 Behaviour and Attitudes

Behaviour and attitudes are very good throughout the school.

The school expects a high standard of behaviour from all pupils. There is a clear policy, consistently implemented, the basis of which is mutual respect, which ensures these high standards are nearly always met. The environment is well ordered and there is a very calm ethos throughout the school making the quality of life in Lewis Girls' School very good.

In KS3 and KS4 pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They concentrate, are keen to work hard and are very good listeners. They respond well to praise and to the rewards system. This has a significant impact on their standards of achievement. There is a staged system of sanctions, well known by all pupils, which is consistently applied to good effect.

Relationships throughout the school are very good. The whole community, including the feeder primaries, are involved in the school's very good schemes to eliminate and manage bullying. There is zero tolerance and pupils, key members of staff and outside agencies are appropriately involved in training.

There have been 40 temporary and two permanent exclusions in the last twelve months. Correct procedures are followed and the school works very hard to improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour, including support from the governors, before taking this final step.

All forms of discrimination are not tolerated and pupils are made aware of the need to treat everyone with respect and consideration.

Parents who replied to the inspection questionnaire are very happy with the standards of behaviour and discipline set by the school.

4.3 Attendance

Overall attendance is satisfactory. Punctuality is good.

Attendance rates for the three terms prior to the inspection average around the 90 per cent mark. There is however no room for complacency as attendance, mainly in Y10 and Y11, does sometimes fall below the 90 per cent benchmark. The school still struggles to meet its new target of 92 per cent.

Reasons for absence are mainly holidays in term time and parentally condoned non-attendance even though the school regularly informs parents of their responsibilities and guidelines are published in the school's prospectus. Most parents do telephone the school if their child is absent and permission is nearly always sought for holidays taken in term time.

The Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), who is now based in school, regularly scrutinizes attendance data and works very closely with the heads of year to identify and track pupils with unsatisfactory and sometimes poor attendance. There is a first-day response, home visits are made and, if necessary, families are prosecuted. These systems are good and are beginning to impact on attendance levels. In the Autumn 2003 term statistics show the school's attendance is above the average for the county borough and there has been some improvement since the Autumn 2002 term.

Registers are marked first thing in the morning and immediately after lunch. Most pupils are punctual to school.

Registration complies with WAG statutory requirements.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

The quality of teaching overall is very good and is a major strength of the school. In 99 per cent of classes observed at KS3 and KS4, teaching was at least satisfactory and in 81 per cent of classes, teaching was good or very good. These are very high figures and include 32 per cent of classes in which teaching was very good. They are also a substantial improvement on the figures of the last inspection of just over 90 per cent satisfactory and about a half good or very good, including six per cent very good. The shortcomings noted in the previous report have been largely eliminated. Teaching is better at KS4 than at KS3. The percentage of classes in which teaching was judged good or very good rises from 75 per cent at KS3 to 89 per cent at KS4.

There is predominantly good teaching in virtually every department, which results in good or very good standards. The fact that there is also some very good teaching in nearly every department is unusually good. Teaching was judged as very good overall in Welsh second language, modern foreign languages and art at both key stages, and in mathematics, science, information technology, music, physical education and law at KS4.

Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and are appropriately deployed to teach their specialist subject. The school has recently had an unusual period of several long-term staff absences, due to illness and maternity leave, which continues and it is all the more creditable that the quality of teaching seen during the inspection was high, with little adverse effect on standards achieved long-term.

Planning of lessons is very good. Schemes of work give due emphasis to the promotion of pupils' key skills and audits have been done, across the curriculum, on the contribution by each subject to a variety of whole-school issues. There has been a clear focus on INSET to update teachers' knowledge and increase their skills, which has been effective in practice. Teachers have also collaborated in working parties to promote consistency across the curriculum. The effects are evident in improved practice in the classroom. More significantly, there is real enthusiasm for teaching, with enthusiasm, fun and a sense of humour in the classroom becoming infectious and inspiring pupils' learning in a significant number of lessons. Teaching methods are progressive in many cases. Lesson objectives are frequently shared with pupils and progress assessed at the end. Pupils' evaluations on teaching styles are also sought in some subjects, as well as their preferred learning styles being incorporated into practice.

Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, and engender a relaxed but purposeful working atmosphere. Much praise and encouragement are given, as well as merit awards, but pupils are mostly self-motivated, at all levels of ability, and bring very good attitudes to learning. The very small minority of pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour at times are mostly dealt with effectively. In very few classes observed did behaviour adversely affect the pace of learning.

Teachers generally set high, sometimes very high, expectations for the standards pupils can achieve. The most able and pupils with SEN are challenged the most. In a small minority of subjects, pupils of average to lower ability are not sufficiently challenged. Pupils are encouraged to become independent learners, with good support from teachers. There is much

effective use of questioning to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding and good use is made of the library and ICT facilities in subjects, to provide research opportunities. Pace of lessons is mostly brisk. Strategies are varied, to include whole-class teaching, group, pair and individual work.

Departments are generously resourced on the whole and teachers make good use of resources for teaching. Audio-visual equipment is often used for presentations. Increased and increasing use of interactive whiteboard technology has made a significant impact on the quality of teachers' presentations. It has had an even greater impact on the interaction between teaching and learning, as pupils are also proficient in using it. Powerpoint software is also effectively used by both teachers and pupils in giving presentations. Teachers critically examine the effects of such technology on learning and adapt judiciously. More traditional resources, such as photocopied materials, are frequently used to inform and re-inforce pupils' understanding. They provide appropriately for revision purposes.

The shortcomings in teaching relate to some overlong presentations and overdirection by teachers in a small minority of lessons, to the occasional slowing of pace, to some cramped accommodation which restricts the variety of activities and to insufficient emphasis on the design element within some areas of design and technology and home economics.

These are, however, a small minority in comparison with the many good and outstanding features in the quality of teaching overall. Teachers give generously of their time and expertise, in planning for lessons, in providing useful feed-back to pupils, in arranging extra-curricular activities and in supporting individual pupils outside the classroom as well as within.

5.2 Assessment, Recording and Reporting

Assessment, recording and reporting in KS3 and in KS4 are good.

The school complies fully with statutory requirements in assessment, recording and reporting. It has a clear policy on assessment, recording and reporting that is generally used by subject departments. The accuracy and consistency with which teachers assess and record pupils' work is good and often very good. Marking is carried out regularly and thoroughly in the vast majority of subjects and teachers usually provide helpful comments to identify good features and set appropriate targets for pupils' improvement. In a small minority of cases, however, marking is less thorough and comments from teachers lack clarity in identifying areas for improvement. For pupils with SEN marking is very good and teachers provide valuable feedback to pupils to enhance their learning.

The school makes very good use of all available data about pupils' attainments and progress throughout all years. On entry into Y7 pupils' prior attainments in NC tests and other relevant data are scrutinised and used well to plan and inform teaching. There are well-defined whole-school systems in place for monitoring and recording pupils' progress in KS3 and in KS4. The systems record pupils' achievements in relation to their progress across all subjects and make very good use of information technology to interrogate relevant data. Pupils contribute purposefully through self-evaluation to assess their own progress and teachers take account of this in recognising their achievements. The information disseminated to pupils and parents is well received and helps to promote higher standards of

achievement. It identifies pupils who are achieving above, below or in line with their expected progress and is used effectively by senior management to identify targets for improvement. In addition to this, subject departments and teachers keep detailed records of pupils' achievements and this information is used appropriately to inform teaching.

Reports are issued annually to parents for pupils in KS3 and in Y10. The reports are detailed and provide very valuable information relating to pupils' progress. Where appropriate, details relating to national curriculum levels are included and comments from subject teachers indicate strengths and areas for pupils to develop further. Occasionally, however, comments are too general and do not give explicit information as to how pupils can improve in their subjects. For pupils in Y11 parents receive a record of achievement (RoA). These are of very good quality and contain helpful information relating to pupils' achievements within subjects and within wider school life. Pupils play an active role in constructing their RoA and most value them highly. In addition to the written reports the school also carries out annual progress reviews that are shared with pupils and parents. These are printed on a computer and contain helpful indicators to show pupils' progress in each subject together with their conduct and behaviour. The reviews take place at various times in the school year and the school organises parents' evenings for each year group that normally follow a review. Heads of Year also play an active part in communicating important issues arising from progress reviews with parents where appropriate. The procedure provides a very effective means of tracking pupils' progress and targeting those who are underachieving.

5.3 Curriculum

The curriculum in KS3 and in KS4 is good. It is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements of the NC.

The curriculum is socially inclusive and ensures quality of access and opportunity for all pupils across all subjects and in wider aspects of school life. It is planned and organised well across both key stages with only a few minor shortcomings in a small minority of subjects. Schemes of work within subject departments are of good or very good quality and reflect well the aims of the school. The full range of NC core and foundation subjects including religious education is provided for pupils in both key stages. The NC is not disapplied or modified for any pupils.

In KS3, pupils are placed in similar ability groups for most subjects and this caters well for the needs of pupils of all abilities. In KS4, pupils can choose subjects from a good range of options that includes academic and vocational subjects. In the case of the latter, the school has established effective links with a local college to enhance its provision for pupils. Hairdressing and beauty therapy is a good example of this and is a popular choice for pupils. There are some restrictions on options available for pupils in KS4. In particular, pupils can opt to study French but no other modern foreign language is currently taken. All pupils in KS3 and in KS4 have discrete lessons in information technology and this provides an effective means of enhancing their skills in ICT. There is also good provision for those at risk of disaffection, through the Youth Access scheme.

The timetable is organised well and overall gives adequate time for pupils to make progress in most subjects. Pupils with SEN are placed in separate sets and although the curriculum meets their needs very well it is not easy for them to move into a different set due to timetable

restrictions. Furthermore, there is some difficulty for pupils and teachers to meet coursework requirements for the GCSE short course in Welsh second language within the current timetable allocation. Time allocation to the different areas of work in design and technology adversely affects standards in the subject.

The quality of planning for the development of key skills is very good. There are clear whole-school policies for literacy, numeracy and ICT and effective use is made of these within most subjects. Whole-school planning for the Cwricwlwm Cymreig is also very good. Most subjects make good and often very good use of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig to enrich teaching and learning. The school also plans for sustainable development.

Homework is set regularly for pupils and in most subjects is used well to support pupils' learning. It has a positive impact on pupils' standards of achievement within subjects and enhances development of their key skills.

Arrangements for PSE and work-related education are very good. All pupils have a discrete lesson in PSE and a lesson with form tutors in the timetable cycle. Work experience and PSE lessons impact well on pupils' development and are usually highly valued by them.

There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities offered to pupils that provide very good opportunities for pupils to further their wider interests. Many departments offer support sessions to pupils outside their timetabled lessons that are well received by pupils and assists them in their learning. There is a wide range of subject-based clubs held during lunchtimes and after school and these are usually well attended by pupils. Pupils take part in geography field trips and visits to theatres and other educational establishments. Many pupils participate in various sports and also in drama and musical activities. Several pupils perform at the highest levels in various activities across the curriculum. Many pupils have achieved county and international honours in a variety of sports and have also achieved local and national awards in various instrumental competitions.

5.4 Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare

The quality of support and guidance is very good. The school has a very effective pastoral system which plays an important role in supporting pupils' academic and personal progress. Pupils feel secure in the school and feel that they can take problems to staff and receive very good support.

There is a well-established pastoral system which effectively monitors pupils' progress, personal development and behaviour. Pupils are placed in mixed ability house tutor groups on entry to the school and stay with these groups throughout their time there. Regular contact in morning and afternoon registration time helps good relationships to develop and some tutors use the fortnightly extended tutor time to reinforce aspects of the PSE programme or to deal with specific matters related to the year group. Pupils also use this time to complete a progress file which helps them consider their own learning and set personal goals. However, tutor time in the mornings is not used effectively in all groups. Each year group has a care and support file, produced by the head of year, which outlines policy and practice on how the pastoral system can operate in a purposeful way. Each file is tailored to the needs of the particular year group and is a useful document. Communication between members of the pastoral team is very good and information is regularly communicated to subject teachers

through meetings and report summaries.

Heads of year oversee the work of form tutors and are responsible for monitoring the academic and pastoral welfare of pupils in their year group. There are very good, systematic procedures for doing this. The EMU (exceeding, meeting and underachieving) system allows heads of year in KS3 to closely monitor progress and achievement and to identify any underachievement. As part of this system, success is recognised and celebrated by awarding merits and through verbal praise. Any pupil thought to be underachieving is interviewed by senior staff. Pupils understand this system and value its use. At KS4 the Achievement Review System tracks progress in a similar way. This again is a very effective way of supporting the academic progress of pupils. The Key Stage Co-ordinators play an important role in monitoring behaviour and in supporting pupils, who may be experiencing personal difficulties. The school has very good mechanisms for supporting these pupils. If they do not respond positively, a Behaviour Support Programme (BSP) is drawn up, with the support of the SEN co-ordinator (SENCO). Staff work very hard to ensure that any pupil at risk of being placed on a BSP or a Pastoral Support Programme (PSP) is given every chance to remain within the mainstream support of the school. The school has very good links with external support agencies such as the Behaviour Support Service, the Inclusion Service, Youth Gateway and Youth Access, Include and the Pupil Referral Unit. The school also makes very good efforts to fully involve parents in decision making.

Year 7 pupils are well supported during their transition from primary school. There is a comprehensive programme which helps them settle into their new environment and make new friends. A number of initiatives, such as circle time, have been introduced to aid this process.

The PSE course provides pupils with a range of learning experiences, which encourages them to develop positive attitudes, and equips them with appropriate skills. The comprehensive programme extends pupils' knowledge and understanding of what it means to be responsible in matters of health and safety, relationships, the environment, rules and study skills. Careers education forms a valuable part of the programme. Some account is taken of the Qualification, Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACCAC) Personal and Social Education framework though there is little coverage of the community aspect of the framework. A range of outside speakers and agencies, such as the Gwent police, the health authority and the Street Smart Bus, make a positive contribution to the programme.

The school has a very good anti-bullying initiative. This has a high profile within the school and has attracted external funding through the Barclays New Futures Award Scheme. By creating community links with the feeder primary schools the project has had wide reaching, positive effects. As part of the initiative, peer counsellors have been trained to support those who feel they may be experiencing bullying. Pupils, of all ages, have responded to this in a mature and sensitive way.

Careers guidance is good. Careers education and guidance form part of the PSE programme. This element is well managed by the careers co-ordinator and gives good guidance about future career pathways. This provision is well supported by Careers Wales and the school careers library. Pupils have a well-planned provision of advice and are well prepared for work experience. In June 2001, the school achieved the All Wales Quality Standard Award and is currently a pilot school for Careers Wales Online.

The school has a detailed health and safety policy and has appointed a health and safety co-ordinator who is responsible for ensuring the day-to-day operation of the policy. A health and safety committee meets termly to review and monitor any health and safety issues.

Procedures for child protection meet statutory requirements. Pupils looked after by the unitary authority (UA) have appropriate care plans. The school has very good systems for ensuring that these pupils are making good progress in school.

The school provides well for pupils through its catering arrangements which offer food and drinks before school and at break-time, as well as in the lunch-hour.

The high quality of support and guidance impacts positively on the progress and standards achieved by pupils and is a strength of the school.

5.5 Provision for Pupils with SEN

Provision for pupils with SEN is very good.

25 pupils have Statements of SEN and there are 40 pupils on School Action and 17 on School Action Plus. The Code of Practice is very effectively implemented and there is a precise updated SEN policy and very comprehensive information in the departmental handbook. SEN has a high profile in the school and pupils benefit greatly from the broad, balanced curriculum and being fully included in all aspects of school life.

Pupils with SEN are taught in Special Classes in KS3 by specialist SEN teachers and subject specialists. Timetabling however makes it difficult for a pupil who shows good progress in one or more subjects to move classes though the school makes every effort to ensure pupils are placed in the appropriate class. Assessment is thorough and ongoing and comprehensive data are regularly collated and analysed to evaluate pupils' progress. This information is used effectively to determine the provision required for individual pupils.

Most pupils with SEN achieve mainly good and often very good standards in most subjects across KS3 and 4. Records show pupils achieve very good results in relation to their ability, in GCSEs and Entry Level Qualifications (ELQs). Well-planned teaching, appropriately targeted to pupils' needs and use of good strategies in the Special Classes are a significant factor in the good progress most pupils make. The relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and pupils are enthusiastic and happy.

Individual educational plans (IEP)s are good, but they are not used to maximum effect, in planning, in a small number of mainstream subjects to ensure pupils make the best possible progress. Most pupils know their targets which are written in simple format in their planners and in the front of some workbooks. IEPs are reviewed termly on a formal basis and teachers in the Bridging and Special Classes regularly discuss with pupils the progress they are making and set new targets. This is very good practice.

The school focuses on early intervention in KS3. All Y 7 pupils and some pupils in Y 8 and Y9 access 'Successmaker' for additional reading, spelling and numeracy. Very good records are kept by a learning support assistant (LSA) and progress is monitored carefully to ensure the work is individually targeted. A second LSA gives good additional help to develop

numeracy skills particularly in the Special Classes. Twenty-three mainly statemented KS3 pupils are withdrawn for well-planned spelling and reading sessions. They make good progress which is regularly reviewed, though more detailed records could be maintained. Pupils with SEN also have cultural and educational visits which provide additional opportunities to enhance their self-esteem and confidence.

The SENCO provides very good guidance and is well supported by the senior management team (SMT), subject link teachers and a part-time specialist SEN teacher, who makes full use of his media work to enhance pupils' experiences. The SENCO is involved in a wide range of initiatives which ensure up-to-date information is available; the 'ESIS Pilot Project: SEN Monitoring and Evaluation Directory' has provided an effective tool to clarify SEN funding.

Since the last inspection the school has continued to develop its SEN provision. Two LSAs give good support for basic skills, very good use is made of 'Successmaker', and networked computers and an integrated whiteboard in the Special Classes have all had a significant impact on the very good standards achieved.

5.6 Partnership with Parents and Community, Schools and Other Institutions

Partnership with parents and community, feeder primaries and other institutions are very good.

Parents are kept very well informed about the life and work of the school and are encouraged to become fully involved in their daughter's learning. The quality of the information provided is very good, particularly the termly newsletter, the year group booklet and the prospectus. The home/school planner is also well used to keep parents up to date with their daughter's progress. Most parents have signed the very clear home/school agreement setting out the school's expectations and the part parents and pupils should play to achieve these.

Parents make a very significant contribution to school funds through the very active Friends of Lewis Girls' School and also support the school fully in its aims and objectives. This was particularly strong during the recent discussions over the future of the sixth form and the inspection questionnaires returned show that parents find the school very approachable and report that their children are happy at school.

The school plays an important role in the community. The sporting facilities are very well used, and good partnerships are also in place with music clubs, choirs and the church, all of which benefit pupils and widen their knowledge and understanding of the local community. Some use is made by the community of the school's 'Successmaker' scheme to improve literacy and numeracy.

There is very good collaboration with feeder primaries, both curricular and pastoral. A full programme is in place to enable pupils to spend time in the secondary school and many good initiatives are in place to ensure smooth transition from primary to secondary school. Pupils are given a very good induction and procedures are in place for them to integrate into the school's routines with confidence. Regular termly meetings take place between the headteachers of all the primary schools and the two secondary headteachers within the cluster. This aids the continuity of learning and is backed up by meetings between

departments and subject co-ordinators in the primaries for core subjects, modern foreign languages and information technology.

A very good initiative over the last three years has been the NOF funded Summer School project for Y6 pupils entering the secondary sector. It has eased transition and improved the basic skills of the 100 pupils who have attended each year.

Good links are in place with the local boys' school and there are currently discussions to extend curricular links locally. There are very good links with the local college, which enables a broader range of courses to be offered including beauty therapy and hairdressing.

Much close work takes place with initial teacher training (ITT) universities. A compact scheme is in place for Y7-Y11, setting out targets for pupils in relation to such matters as attendance, and the school has a formal partnership agreement with three Welsh universities. Students visit as part of their training and they are very well mentored and monitored.

5.7 Partnership with Industry

The school's strategies for work-related education are satisfactory.

Pupils have good opportunities, which are well thought out and planned, to undertake work experience. The quality of the work experience provided is good. Pupils are well prepared and have appropriate placements. Some de-briefing occurs but this is not always the case. Pupils do not all have the opportunity to learn from each others' experiences.

There is very good liaison with Careers Wales. The officer based in school is very involved with work-related education (WRE) and ably helps deliver careers education. Careers education is also part of the PSE programme. The accommodation, however, for the careers library is unsatisfactory. It is very small and there is only one computer, which is not always accessible. Pupils can, however, use other networked computers.

Links with the Education-Business Partnership (EBP), mainly due to county borough re-organisation, are under-developed. Many good initiatives are in place in some departments but others (for example information technology and business studies) make insufficient use of the business community to enhance the curriculum and broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world of work.

Some very good initiatives are in place, for example the Young Enterprise and Young Engineers projects. These give pupils a very good understanding of the skills needed to run a business and, in the case of the former, practical experience of setting up and running an enterprise for financial gain.

The school has a good policy detailing the aims and objectives of its links with business and industry and there is a comprehensive careers policy. However, not all these aims are being met and, generally, business links with departments are under-developed. In addition, teachers have not undertaken any placements in industry or industry-related courses in the past year.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of Self-Evaluation and Planning for Improvement

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

Following the last inspection, an action plan quickly addressed the key issues and the subsequent initiatives led to a significant improvement in all of those areas. The headteacher's self-evaluation document prior to this inspection gives a comprehensive and detailed picture of the current school. It is clearly focused on standards, quality of provision and management and not only shows improvements but also testifies to the commitment to on-going improvement.

Appropriate systems for monitoring provision, including classroom practice, were put in place in 1998, addressing a key issue from the last inspection. Drawn up by a working party of staff, they linked senior and middle management and enabled both to increase their accountability. The senior management team reviewed each department in turn in a five-year cycle. With the advent of performance management, a working party of staff adapted this model to involve middle management more in the review process. However, as this is the first year of the new cycle, not all the monitoring has yet been completed, by heads of department or senior managers. In most departments, monitoring has been effective in practice but where standards are satisfactory, there are some shortcomings to be eliminated. In some cases this is not only as a result of irregular monitoring, but also through lack of effective action planning. The use made of tutorial time has not yet been adequately reviewed and is not yet sufficiently consistent across the school. Reviews of aspects of practice are also carried out by external advisers. Self-evaluation procedures involve pupils, through questionnaires, through their participation in the school council's decision-making processes, and through assessment of their own progress. Parents' views are also taken into account, through surveys. The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire and attended the meeting for parents prior to the inspection, confirmed the findings of previous surveys and were supportive of the school and of its leadership.

Data are used effectively to measure performance, identify trends and plan for improvements. Data on pupils' attainment and aptitudes prior to entry are used to form groupings and to measure individual progress. The system in KS3, called "EMU", to denote exceeding, meeting and underachieving works effectively and consistently. Data are used sensibly to set realistic yet challenging numerical targets for examination performance.

The quality of development planning is very good. There is a clear focus on standards and the contributory factors which affect standards. Planning is appropriately long-term, over a three-year period, in line with the strategic plan of the UA, and with more detailed targets in the first year. Consultation is good, with governors, middle managers and all members of staff, to ensure that priorities are agreed and known by all. There is also good correlation with the departmental plans, which are drawn up to deliver whole-school priorities, as well as subject-specific initiatives.

The development plans are regularly reviewed, as is performance in meeting targets. All heads of department have two meetings a year with the headteacher and link member of the senior management team to evaluate progress and performance and plan for the following

year. Review of the school development plan is the focus of a training day and involves all staff and governors. The cycle effectively continues, with new priorities suggested and agreed among all interested parties.

Self-evaluation is not only established through systems, but also as a culture. Both senior and middle management know their strengths and shortcomings and work collaboratively for continuous improvement.

6.2 Leadership and Efficiency

The school is very well led and managed. It has a strong, corporate ethos with a shared sense of purpose within the school and support from parents and the wider community. The mission statement "Hedd", also representing harmony, excellence, diligence and determination, is prominent in the life and work of the school and understood by all associated with it. The school's aims are widely fulfilled.

The headteacher is forward-thinking, dynamic and caring. She has moved the school forward significantly in all areas and has also contributed to the wider educational scene locally and nationally. The current standards, quality of education and ethos owe much to her leadership and example. There is a clear vision of the future direction of the school, communicated effectively so that in practice there is a high level of consistency in expectations and practice. There is also much time for individuals, including many pupils, through an open-door policy. The school has won several national awards for the quality of its provision and staff development has been at the heart of progress. In this, she has been ably supported by the other members of the senior management team, who have not only led developments within their areas of responsibility but have also contributed substantially to whole-school progress and to maintaining the whole-school ethos. Many good initiatives have been introduced in recent years. The SMT is, however, a smaller team than at the time of the last inspection and only recently have some members, appropriately, devolved tasks of a more administrative nature, with more planned, in order to devote more time to promoting teaching and learning. All members of the team work well together and they are effective in practice.

Links between members of the senior management team and middle management have been effective in enlarging corporate responsibility, in supporting individuals and in improving standards, teaching and learning. Many middle managers are involved in the development group which focuses on areas of school improvement. Other members of staff have also been involved in many working parties on various new initiatives. There is a strong, corporate commitment to continuous improvement among all staff.

The quality of middle management is good overall and significantly better than at the time of the last inspection. Good documentation, planning, communication, team spirit and review have all contributed to progress in departments. Departmental management is very good in mathematics, Welsh second language, modern foreign languages, geography, art, physical education, religious education, SEN provision, law, government and politics and economics. The heads of history, music, business studies and personal and social education are currently absent, though acting heads of department have mostly carried out their role effectively. In all other subjects, management is good.

Governors are now fully involved in strategic planning and evaluating provision, and have

addressed this key issue from the last report. Together with staff, they evaluate progress in the previous school development plan and draw up new priorities, during a training day. They now have an appropriate committee structure which enables them to give due time to considering the range of issues which are their concern. In particular, they have contributed significantly to supporting the behaviour policy of the school, through early intervention when appropriate. Overall, they now have a well-balanced overview of the stage of development which the school has reached and of the way forward.

Resources are used well. Staff are deployed effectively to teach their subject specialism and money has been spent appropriately on improving resources. Although there are shortcomings in the accommodation, the facilities are used well and classrooms and corridors made as attractive as possible through good displays. The timing of the school day maximises pupils' learning opportunities.

Financial planning is careful and in line with the school development plan. Capitation is awarded appropriately through a combination of formula funding and development bids. The school is well resourced and spending has been above the national average. The latest report from the auditors stated that financial administration was well managed. Following the last inspection, the large surplus was appropriately spent on improving provision in design and technology, a key issue. Since that time, money has been spent annually on improving resources for pupils, with only a minimum amount carried forward as a reserve. The school has been successful recently in acquiring funding to improve the quality of outdoor sports facilities.

The school operates smoothly on a daily basis. There is a daily morning briefing to staff from the headteacher and communication is reinforced by written bulletins, a comprehensive staff handbook and appropriate policy documents. There are regular meetings of teams of academic and pastoral staff, with agenda and minutes. Parents are kept informed of successes and events through a well-produced newsletter at regular intervals.

Statutory requirements are met except for the daily act of collective worship.

6.3 Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources

Staffing

The school is adequately but not generously staffed. The teacher-pupil ratio is higher than the national average and higher than at the time of the last inspection. Teachers have adequate non-contact time; the contact ratio is in line with the national average.

The calibre of the staff is good. Overall, they are an experienced staff, with a third having over 25 years' teaching experience and under ten per cent having less than five years' experience. Many have chosen to stay at the school; a third have remained for over twenty years but a quarter have been appointed in the last five years.

Teachers are mostly deployed to teach their subject specialism and where there is non-specialist teaching, this rarely impacts adversely on standards achieved. Unusually, the school has recently experienced a number of staffing difficulties due to long-term absence and maternity leaves. There have been ten teachers new to the school this term, to cover absences.

These arrangements have been well handled with little disruption or adverse effects on standards achieved in most cases. However, there have been problems of illness or maternity leaves over several years in business studies, in physical education last year and several staffing problems in English, which have adversely affected continuity. Very recently, there have also been several changes in music. Staff have worked hard to minimise the disruption to pupils' learning experiences.

Professional development has been at the heart of planning and practice in recent years and has resulted in much innovative and progressive teaching and effective management at all levels. Experienced staff have kept up-to-date with the latest developments and embraced interactive whiteboard technology with such enthusiasm and success that the school was the first in Wales to gain a "Centre of Excellence" award from Promethean. All training needs are carefully identified and planned, clearly linked to whole-school, departmental and individual needs. Consultants and advisers regularly visit the school and the headteacher provides training for the staff as a whole in school. Several staff and the headteacher are also involved in providing training in other institutions. Newly-qualified teachers and those new to the school are well provided for. The school gained Investor in People status recently for the quality of its staff development.

Non-teaching staff make a valuable contribution to the life and work of the school. There are sufficient support staff in some areas, including science, the library, reprographics, site management and financial management. However, there is insufficient support in design and technology, home economics and art. The school is currently experiencing difficulties because of illness among administrative staff and available staff are taking on extra duties. Staff who support pupils with SEN offer good learning support, but there remain more pupils with SEN than can be offered the ideal provision.

Accommodation

Accommodation overall is satisfactory. The school occupies an attractive campus and offers adequate accommodation for the number of pupils on roll. However, accommodation is tight and there are a number of shortcomings in its quality.

The site houses a collection of buildings which date from 1959. The most attractive building was opened in 1993 and provides some very good accommodation for science, Welsh second language and modern foreign languages. The older, permanent buildings provide some attractive areas but there are problems of leaking roofs and rotting window frames which cause hazards in wet weather, and impact adversely on the quality of learning experiences in some subject areas, particularly religious education. There are also problems of acoustics, when sounds from one subject such as music, can be heard in adjacent areas. Since the last inspection, the school has spent a large sum of money on extending and refurbishing accommodation for design and technology, to good effect. However, not all aspects of the subject can be accommodated in this area. In some subjects across the curriculum, whilst there is a departmental base, a significant proportion of lessons are taught away from base or specialist rooms are housed in different parts of the campus. This detracts from a strong subject ambiance and the best use of resources.

The demountable classrooms which are over 25 years old have major shortcomings in their condition which adversely affect the quality of teaching and learning. The two new demountables this year provide a much more attractive environment for English and textiles. However, there are no covered walkways to the demountable classrooms.

Facilities for physical education have many shortcomings but plans for a new artificial turf pitch and extended changing facilities are in hand.

The décor and condition of the pupils' toilet areas are unusually good. The school council has recently been involved in decisions about the complete refurbishment of all the toilet areas. Each has been refurbished to a different theme and colour coding and they are treated with care.

There is limited space for office and storage accommodation in a number of areas. The library is small for a school of its size and cannot accommodate the recommended level of stock. Some classrooms are also small for the size of some groups.

Despite many shortcomings, the accommodation is attractive, with many very good displays of pupils' work and of resource materials. There are also many displays of photographs of activities involving pupils and these promote a strong corporate ethos. Success in all areas and at all age groups is celebrated and pupils ensure that such displays are treated with respect. Respect for the environment is also evident in the absence of litter and graffiti.

Resources

The school is generously resourced overall. There is an adequate supply of books and materials in most departments. Photocopied materials supplement the supply of textbooks in most subjects and pupils receive good quality resources to consolidate learning and revision.

The provision of eight interactive whiteboards, and their very good use by staff and pupils, have made a significant impact on teaching and learning.

The supply of equipment in specialist areas such as science, design and technology and art is also good and resources are used well. However, in media studies there are no editing facilities and in drama there is limited technical equipment, lights and props.

The ratio of computers to pupils is in line with the national average. These have been allocated appropriately in both specialist rooms and in subject areas across the school. All computers in curricular areas have Internet access. The access to computers is good, both through booking for central resources and in departments. The careers library in a demountable classroom has limited computer facilities, though pupils can use the library computers to access information. The careers library is also very small, for pupils at KS3 and KS4.

The library stock, at under 9,000 books, is below the recommended level, though is of good quality. The borrowing rate is good. Facilities are used well in library lessons as part of the English curriculum, in lessons in a range of other subjects and at break, lunchtimes and after school. The stock can be enlarged through the local library support services, but there are difficulties displaying additional stock, because of the size of the accommodation.

Overall, the good provision of resources and their effective use have a positive impact on standards, teaching and learning.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

English

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and KS4.

Good Features

KS3

- Pupils listen attentively. They contribute well-developed responses to teachers' questioning and in discussion. Pupils ask probing questions and work well in groups and pairs when asked to solve problems.
- Pupils express opinions clearly and confidently.
- In oral responses, pupils show an ability to recall prior learning about language forms.
- Pupils write at length and in an engaging and lively way. Written work is generally accurate in terms of spelling and punctuation. Most pupils structure their writing well and use paragraphs appropriately.
- Pupils adapt their own writing for a variety of purposes. In the writing of others, they can recognise genre and show an understanding of the intended audience and purpose of writing.
- The majority of written work is characterised by a high standard of presentation.
- Pupils read for pleasure and to find out information. When reading aloud they are fluent and confident and show a good understanding of the text. They are able to read with suitable expression and demonstrate a good level of comprehension of text.
- Pupils with SEN, and those in the bridging group, make very good progress. They achieve good standards in writing and reading. Their listening skills are very good. They approach all types of work with enthusiasm and confidence.

KS4

- Pupils demonstrate a high level of response to teachers' questioning. When responding to questions about poetry or literature, they show that they can make close reference to themes and character.
- In discussion, pupils are keen to challenge interpretations and suggest alternative meanings when engaged in text analysis. They ask thoughtful questions about stimulus material or set texts.
- When discussing texts, orally and in writing, they make good reference to other writing and draw comparisons between a range of poems or narrative forms.
- Pupils of all abilities demonstrate a good level of technical accuracy in their writing. The content of their work on literature texts shows an ability to engage with plot, character

and theme. Opinions are expressed in a sensitive and thoughtful way.

- Able pupils can recognise and compare how meaning is created in written text and in film.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Some oral responses to questioning, or contributions to discussion, can be anecdotal.
- In a minority of cases, when working in groups, some pupils are too ready to wait for an answer from teachers rather than use initiative and problem solve.
- When responding to personal reading, some pupils do not justify their opinions. They tend to describe the plot rather than comment on their reasons for enjoying books.
- Some pupils, particularly those of average ability, do not finish work.

KS4

- A small number of pupils are not secure in their recall of language terms. This hinders their progress when attempting to respond to poetry or narrative.
- Some pupils are reluctant to contribute to discussion, are passive and rely on others to participate in group or class discussions.
- A small minority of pupils are reluctant to move away from literal interpretations of poetry.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and KS4.

Good Features

KS3

- Most pupils display good standards of work across all attainment targets. Written work is nearly always of a very high standard and is generally complete
- Standards of achievement of able pupils are good. Standards of achievement of average to lower ability pupils are always satisfactory and occasionally good.
- Generally pupils make good progress in set tasks in lessons and show reasonable understanding of current work. The significant majority of pupils work well through the duration of lessons
- Most pupils are proficient in calculating mentally in a range of contexts and recall previous work with reasonable understanding
- In Y7, more able pupils apply their mathematics to solve problems in meaningful contexts. They present their ideas in an organised way and make general statements with appropriate use of symbols. Pupils of average to lower ability reflect simple shapes in a mirror line and have a competent knowledge and understanding of reflective symmetry.
- In Y8, more able pupils draw enlargements of shapes on lattice paper and solve simple problems in appropriate contexts using scale factors.
- In Y9, able pupils recognise equivalences between fractions, decimals and percentages and solve problems using ratios in relevant contexts.

- Standards of achievement of pupils with SEN are good. In Y7, pupils with SEN are competent in basic number operations, construct and interpret bar graphs from relevant simple data and have a good knowledge of the properties of simple geometrical shapes.

KS4

- Standards of achievement of pupils of all abilities are good.
- Standards of achievement of pupils with SEN are very good
- In Y10, more able pupils make effective use of tree diagrams to calculate the probability of combined events and show competence in basic algebraic work by solving linear equations and factorising simple expressions. Pupils of average ability have a reasonable knowledge of the angle properties of various polygons and use ICT effectively to enhance their understanding of them. Pupils of lower ability use a range of measures competently and accurately and give sensible estimates of the weights of everyday objects.
- In Y11, pupils of average ability construct simple algebraic expressions in a range of contexts and solve simple cases of simultaneous linear equations. Pupils of lower ability tabulate data and construct and interpret pie charts. They use calculators appropriately and use protractors to measure bearings accurately.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- A small minority of pupils in KS3 and in KS4 are hesitant in recalling previous work. They tend to rely too much on notes given to them by teachers and lack confidence in their own understanding.
- Occasionally a small minority of pupils of all abilities lose concentration in lessons and this hampers their progress

Science

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and very good in KS4.

Good Features

KS3

- The majority of pupils develop a sound body of knowledge following an appropriate course of scientific study covering all aspects of the NC.
- When questioned, pupils respond enthusiastically, using correct terminology to explain a range of scientific processes.
- The majority of pupils keep an accurate record of their work in well maintained files. Diagrams are drawn neatly and written work is often of a high standard.
- When undertaking practical work in small groups, pupils show due regard for safety requirements, support each other well and demonstrate good manipulative skills.
- Most pupils can use ICT confidently, to enhance their understanding of topics during lessons, to present the results of investigative work and to process data obtained from a study of the ecology of the local environment.

- Pupils with SEN make good progress relative to their ability.

KS4

- Pupils make very good progress, following a double or single award science course.
- Pupils respond well to questioning and can apply their knowledge successfully to explain scientific applications in everyday life, such as our dependence on fossil fuels and the need for sustainable development, and the causes of environmental problems.
- Overall presentation of work is good and pupils build up an accurate record of their studies for revision purposes.
- Practical work is of a high standard. Pupils use their knowledge to plan investigations effectively and choose suitable apparatus for experiments. Results are recorded accurately, often using appropriate ICT, and predictions matched successfully to outcomes.
- Pupils with SEN follow an entry level course and make very good progress relative to their ability.

Shortcomings

KS3

- A small minority of lower ability pupils have poor listening and writing skills and occasionally fail to complete the work set.
- A small minority of pupils have difficulty in applying their knowledge to explain their practical observations satisfactorily.

KS4

- A small minority of pupils have an incomplete record of work, which adversely affects progress.
- A small minority of pupils fails to understand the rationale for undertaking some practical work.

Welsh second language

Standards of achievement are good in KS3. In KS4, standards of achievement in the full GCSE course are very good and they are good in the short courses.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils understand the consistent use of the target language. They listen attentively and participate in follow-up activities.
- Pupils respond to structured questions in set situations. The more able give extended responses and convey information and express an opinion.
- The majority of pupils have good knowledge of an acceptable range of language patterns

and the more able gain confidence in their oral work.

- Pupils across the ability range interact very well when working in pairs and groups. They remain on task and work within the confines of the set task. They participate enthusiastically in language games. They ask and answer questions and they record their answers.
- Pupils read correctly with good pronunciation and intonation. The better readers convey meaning.
- The written work of the large majority is of a good standard. Pupils complete a variety of tasks. They display good knowledge of sentence structures and the more able compose passages of extended writing varying the tenses.
- Pupils with SEN work well, remain on task and make progress.

KS 4

- Pupils studying the full GCSE make very good progress in all language skills. They respond positively to challenging tasks.
- In oral tasks pupils discuss issues and topics in a mature manner. This is evident when they work in pairs and groups.
- Pupils' reading skills are very good and they read with meaning and understanding.
- Pupils achieve very good standards in their writing work. They write passages of an extended nature with good command of language patterns and they use appropriate vocabulary.
- Pupils studying the short courses, both GCSE and GNVQ, respond very well to a variety of tasks. Standards overall are good and commensurate to ability. The more able demonstrate good knowledge of sentence patterns.

Shortcomings

KS3

- A minority of pupils lack confidence in giving extended oral responses in particular in non-structured situations and are less sure of their language patterns in their written work.

KS4

- Pupils studying the short courses are more hesitant in their oral responses, in particular in non-structured situations.
- The vocabulary of a small percentage of pupils studying the short courses is limited and they are less sure of their language patterns.

Design and technology

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS3 and good in KS4.

Good Features

KS3

- Pupils apply a design process in their work and most pupils understand its purpose.
- Pupils are able to construct a design specification and most understand the difference between primary and secondary design criteria.
- Design drawing skills are good in resistant materials.
- Making skills are good. Pupils plan well for making, usually work with accuracy and finish their work well in all material areas.
- Pupils have a developing understanding of electronic, microprocessor and mechanical control principles.
- Pupils understand structural principles such as triangulation, stress and strain and are able to apply them in project work.
- Very good use is made of ICT for CAD/CAM and research in resistant materials and textiles. Good use is made of ICT for design and presentation.
- Knowledge and understanding of materials, their properties and applications are good in all material areas.

KS4

- Standards in GCSE graphic products and resistant materials are good.
- Pupils make good use of a design process to guide their project work.
- The link between design specifications and product evaluation is understood and applied by most pupils.
- Pupils work creatively with materials. Making skills are good and sometimes very good. Pupils plan well for making, work accurately and produce a good finish.
- Understanding of materials, their properties and working characteristics varies across groups but is good overall.
- The use of ICT for research, presentation and CAD is very well integrated into design and make assignments.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Pupils have insufficient experiences of the systems and control programme of study in their project work.
- Pupils' design drawing skills and in particular those for generating ideas are weaker than other elements of designing in both food and textiles.
- The link between a design specification and product evaluation is not understood by most pupils.
- Pupils carry out insufficient tests and calculations on the structures they build.

KS4

- Quick drawing skills to explore ideas are weaker than other elements of pupils' designing.
- The design specifications of a minority of pupils are superficial.

Information technology

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and very good in KS4.

Good Features

KS3

- In Y7, Y8 and Y9 pupils make very good progress in their development of IT competencies.
- In Y7, pupils manage computers effectively. They confidently conduct fundamental computer operations such as logging on, calling up and saving their work, and accessing appropriate applications and the Internet.
- Standards of communicating information are good. Pupils confidently combine text and images, and change and arrange fonts and layouts in appropriate combinations according to their designs.
- Pupils confidently import information and graphics from secondary sources and the Internet to resolve design problems.
- Design work is good, resulting from the use of a wide range of communicating information techniques including PowerPoint presentations.
- Pupils understand the function of a spreadsheet and are able to build numerical information and conduct calculations and model number using appropriate formulae.
- Pupils are able to set up databases, understand terminology and carry out simple and complex interrogations.

KS4

- Standards in GCSE Information Systems are very good.
- Pupils develop a comprehensive range of information technology skills in the portfolio and project components of the GCSE course. They confidently communicate, handle and model information for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Research, analysis and problem-solving skills are well developed. Pupils make appropriate use of the Internet to support their research.
- Design work is well planned and executed.
- Pupils present their work well and are able to explain clearly why they have chosen specific information technology applications.
- Pupils have a good understanding of theory.
- More able pupils are challenged, and less able pupils and those with SEN make good progress.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Pupils insufficiently consider, in discussion, social, economic, ethical and moral issues related to the use of ICT.
- In some classes, large groups result in some pupils working without a computer, which slows progress.

KS4

- There are no significant shortcomings.

History

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and KS4.

Good Features

KS3

- By the end of Y9, all pupils have a sound understanding of what sources are and of the relative strengths and limitations of different kinds of sources. They use this understanding when making critical use of sources for an enquiry, for example into the attitudes of recruits to the army in 1915.
- Most pupils understand the nature and status of historical interpretations and the ablest can test an interpretation - for example a statement about trench conditions during the First World War - by reference to primary sources interpreted in context.
- Most pupils have clear awareness of methods for evaluating sources for usefulness and reliability.

KS4

- By the end of Y11, pupils have extended and deepened their understanding of source material and of the methods of historical enquiry. This enables them to construct extended arguments, test interpretations, offer explanations and reconstruct contemporary attitudes – all based upon the critical use of primary and/or secondary source material.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Progress made by pupils with SEN is not as consistently good as that of mainstream pupils.
- The standards achieved by a minority of less able pupils in Y8 - particularly in the areas of evidence handling and extended writing - are no better than satisfactory.

KS4

- There is a tendency amongst less able pupils in KS4 to evaluate sources by reference to their content, neglecting issues relating to origin and/or purpose.

Geography

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and KS4.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils possess good knowledge and understanding of topics in physical and human geography and appreciate how the interaction of such factors can affect local populations both in the UK and on a global scale.
- They acquire a good knowledge of location and of places applying their local and Welsh studies to regions and continents on a wider scale.
- Basic subject skills such as interpreting photographs, graphs and maps and understanding patterns and processes, develop well.
- Across the key stage, pupils make very good progress in furthering the skills of geographical enquiry; they acquire relevant information from a wide range of sources including ICT.

KS4

- Pupils have a secure understanding of the relationship between people and the environment.
- Their knowledge of the changing industrial landscape of South Wales is good; they appreciate there is now an increasing tendency for people and organisations to relocate from urban to out-of-town and rural areas.
- They speak and write with increasing accuracy, interpret and represent data in maps and graphs and co-operate effectively on group tasks.
- Coursework assignments indicate high skill levels in collecting, recording and evaluating evidence acquired from primary and secondary sources; their work in presenting their findings using a range of techniques and illustrations is very good.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- The standard of work and progress in class of a small minority of pupils are restrained by an occasional lack of concentration and by inattention.
- Certain individuals are more confident orally than in writing but are sometimes reluctant to engage in discussions.
- Lower achievers experience difficulty in the use of more complex terminology.

Modern foreign languages

Standards of achievement are very good in KS3 and KS4.

Good Features

KS3

- Pupils are keen to participate orally. They respond in full sentences and often more extensively, with very good pronunciation and intonation.
- Listening skills in class are very good and developed further at home through the provision of CD ROMS and electronic worksheets.
- Pupils read for pleasure through a structured reading programme. They understand the written word easily and can extract information in response to questions.
- Extended writing is very good from Y7 onwards and pupils develop a good understanding of grammar.
- Pupils manipulate language into new contexts with ease, often using the interactive whiteboard or Powerpoint in extended speech and writing.
- Pupils of all abilities achieve well, with the most able and pupils with SEN reaching very good standards.

KS4

- Pupils' oral fluency increases. They use extended speech easily, without referring to prompts, in many and varied situations, in class and with the assistant.
- Extended writing, particularly in coursework, is outstanding, in terms of content and use of language.
- Pupils listen purposefully to the target language, to understand the gist of a passage and to extract information in response to questions.
- Pupils read with understanding, skimming, scanning and reading for pleasure and research.
- They have a good understanding of the rules of grammar and reach high standards of accuracy in speaking and writing.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Art

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and very good in KS4.

Good features

KS3 & KS4

- In both key stages, pupils handle a range of two and three dimensional media with confidence. These include pastel, paint, papier-mâché, collage, print, ceramics and computer graphics and animation. Through these activities, pupils develop good understanding of line, tone, colour, form and texture.
- As pupils progress through KS3 into KS4, they demonstrate developing capacity to work independently. In KS4, pupils produce individual responses to project briefs. The most able pupils produce sophisticated, imaginative and skilfully completed artworks, some of

them outstanding.

- In both key stages, pupils extend their understanding of art through study of other artists, craftworkers and designers, including artists living and working in Wales and the arts of other cultures. Pupils' understanding is reinforced further by working alongside visiting artists and by visits to galleries and exhibitions.
- Pupils use sketchbooks effectively to record images in preparation for project work. In KS3, they use teacher models and scaffolds to improve drawing confidence and competence.
- Pupils use project sheets very effectively to record work in progress and to modify and develop ideas. They present their ideas carefully. Pupils' project sheets develop into very good practice by the end of KS4.

Shortcomings

KS3 & KS4

- In KS3, pupils are not fully involved in setting their own targets for improvement. Some pupils rely too heavily on teacher direction.
- In KS3 and KS4, in evaluating their own work and the work of others, some pupils make limited and superficial comments.

Music

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and very good in KS4.

Good Features

KS3

- Standards of singing are usually very good. Pupils sing very musically particularly in Y7 and Y9. In response to very good teaching, they produce good tone and expressive phrasing in vocal "warm ups" and maintain individual parts successfully.
- Abler instrumentalists are occasionally well integrated into class instrumental activities and achieve very good standards. Overall, less able pupils and those with SEN achieve good performance standards in percussion activities.
- Composing standards are good overall. In Y7 African music and Y8 Gamelan compositions, several groups achieve very good standards
- Pupils achieve good standards in appraising their own work and that of other composers and make appropriate use of technical terms related to the elements of music.

KS4

- Standards achieved by abler instrumentalists are significantly enhanced by the school's peripatetic and extra-curricular provision and standards of performance are very good.
- Pupils achieve very good vocal standards.
- Less musically able pupils achieve good standards in relation to ability.
- Particularly in Y11, pupils achieve good to very good standards in composing and appraising activities.

Shortcomings

KS3

- In a very small minority of classes, instrumental and composing standards could be higher.
- A small minority of pupils experience difficulties related to keyboard technique.

KS4

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Physical education

Standards of achievement are very good in KS3 and KS4

Good Features

KS3

- All pupils construct appropriate strategies and tactics for a wide range of physical activities offered to them.
- In individual and competitive games they successfully adapt and refine their passing, striking and control skills and apply them very well in small-sided and full game situations. The most able pupils show a wide range of techniques and strategic awareness, especially in hockey and netball.
- In their co-operative team games all pupils show great appreciation of their own individual strengths and weaknesses in performance and work well to maximise their skills. All pupils recognise the importance of rules and apply them with understanding and conviction when umpiring their peers.
- In gymnastic activities, many pupils use their vaulting skills with increasing confidence and precision and all pupils can perform simple floor and apparatus work sequences with fluency and clarity. They clearly enjoy their gymnastics and some of the most able pupils show a high degree of consistency, quality and innovation in their vaulting and sequence work.
- All pupils perform well in athletic activities and understand and demonstrate a sound range of skills and techniques.
- All pupils show a very good awareness of the short-term and long-term benefits of exercise and many are confident in leading small group warm-ups.

KS4

- Pupils demonstrate increasingly refined techniques and tactical understanding in a range of team games, individual activities, gymnastics and dance.
- They naturally undertake the differing roles of performer, official, coach or analyst and occasionally, choreographer.
- They confidently use technical terms and make sound judgements in terms of tactical decision-making.

- They all respond very well to the open learning environment offered by teachers and co-operate very maturely with each other and with staff in improving their performance and problem-solving in technical or tactical situations.
- They are all able to prepare and monitor a simple exercise programme that promotes healthy living and many GCSE pupils show a developing understanding of aerobic exercise and how to develop strength and speed.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Extra-curricular activities

- Extra-curricular sport is a strong feature of the school. Some pupils across all year groups participate in a wide range of activities. Some of these demonstrate exceptional performance levels in their specialist sport. Regional and international honours have been gained by a number of pupils in hockey, netball, football, rugby, athletics, gymnastics, dance, golf and badminton.

Religious education

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and KS4.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the central features of the religions they study – Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism.
- They are able to show how symbolism is used as a means of expression in both religion and life such as the symbolic nature of artefacts and the meanings conveyed by a person's body language.
- Pupils display good recall of previous work and are able to accurately describe religious celebrations such as the Christian Eucharist and Easter. They are able to draw parallels between these and similar special occasions as well as special moments in their own lives.
- They are able to extract relevant information about the religions they study from a range of sources, such as sacred writings, video, textbooks and teacher handouts.
- They engage effectively in problem-solving exercises such as analysing a series of illustrations from the Hindu tradition and express intelligent comments in the light of previous learning.
- Pupils use religious terms correctly and in context. They do so orally in class, through dramatised role-play, and in written responses in their exercise books.
- When given the opportunity to do so, pupils produce extended pieces of creative writing such as the diary of an innkeeper and make thoughtful comments and observations on sensitive issues such as prejudice, racism and the just war.

KS4 (Short course)

- Pupils make considered and articulate responses to questions connected with their course such as the work of charitable organisations and the different types of aid provided.
- They have a good knowledge and understanding of the religions of Christianity and Islam.
- They thoughtfully consider a range of moral and ethical dilemmas and in doing so include informed comments on the religious perspectives on these issues, for example, the Christian and Moslem views on marriage, relationships and human sexuality.
- Pupils display a good understanding of the attributes and characteristics of acknowledged religious figures such as Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King and the motives for their actions. Using these as illustrations they are able to show how a person's beliefs affect the way in which they conduct and live their lives.
- They are able to show how symbols, such as candles, the cross, the fish and crescent moon, are used as a means of identification and expression within religion.

Shortcomings

KS3

- With some pupils there is a dearth of critical questioning and over-literal responses that lack balance.
- Some pupils show confusion between the religions they study and are sometimes unable to recall accurately which religion is associated with which place of pilgrimage.

KS4

- Some pupils are unable to recall key aspects of their study and are over reliant on teachers' exposition.
- Some pupils' responses to questions are brief, lacking in balance and confused with regard to the religions of Christianity and Islam.

Religious studies

Standards of achievement are very good in KS4.

Good features

- Pupils regularly and accurately use key religious words and terms when discussing topics and 'feeding back' to the rest of the class.
- They apply themselves to problem-solving activities and make productive use of prior learning when doing so, for example, drawing on their knowledge and understanding of Judaism when considering the holocaust.
- They engage productively and efficiently in research activities. This results in informed and well-written coursework.
- They are able to see how beliefs impact on the life of the believer and evaluate the

positive aspects of this such as the ways in which a person's faith and beliefs can help and guide them in leading a 'good' life.

- They are able to appreciate the religious perspective on sensitive issues such as discrimination and anti-Semitism.
- They show a good knowledge and understanding of the key aspects of both Christianity and Judaism.

Shortcomings

- A minority of pupils fail to extend and develop their initial responses.

Personal and social education

Standards of achievement are very good in KS3 and good in KS4.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils are able to apply a range of interpersonal skills effectively when engaging with aspects of the course such as role-play and simulations.
- They work productively in groups and participate enthusiastically in class discussion.
- They confidently and sensitively explore issues such as racism and conflict resolution.
- They apply reasoning to their responses such as being able to articulate how smoking is detrimental to health and why people continue to smoke despite being given this information.
- Pupils apply their learning to their own circumstances and support their views with examples from their own experiences and the wider community.
- They show an awareness of the consequences of actions and the impact these may have on others for example the effects of alcohol on a person's behaviour.
- Pupils make good notes in careers and see the relevance of their study by applying their learning to real life situations.

KS4

No Y10 lessons took place during the week of the inspection.

- Pupils in Y11 readily share informed opinions and apply appropriate reasoning when arriving at their views.
- They appreciate the value of the topics they cover and see the relevance of these to their own lives and their wider education.
- They have a good knowledge and understanding of various aspects of the programme.
- They benefit from good careers guidance from the school and outside services.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Business studies

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS4.

Good Features

- Pupils use IT to improve the visual presentation of their coursework.
- Pupils in one of the two GCSE groups initiate discussion and give their own examples to support the teacher's input.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of product life cycle graphs and provide examples to illustrate them.

Shortcomings

- Pupils do not use subject-specific terminology with confidence.
- Pupils do not convey a full understanding of business concepts in their verbal responses. For example, pupils are unable to apply their knowledge of the marketing mix to their practical assignment.

Business and Communication Systems

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS4.

Good Features

- Able pupils write extensively about the importance of good verbal communication in business.
- Pupils organise their class notes well.
- They know the importance of health and safety in the workplace, can suggest different usage of spreadsheets and understand the value of databases in business.
- Pupils use MS Word confidently.

Shortcomings

- Average and lower ability pupils lose marks because their answers are too brief and lack details.
- Pupils do not show sufficient evidence of independent thought in their written work.

Drama

Standards of achievement are good in KS4.

Good Features

- Pupils work well in groups in Making, Performing and Responding in Drama.
- Pupils respond well in all aspects of ancient Greek and medieval theatre, as well as

contemporary aspects of drama.

- Pupils display a good knowledge of drama techniques and understanding of drama concepts and conventions in line with the demands of GCSE.
- In their improvised work, pupils respond well to evaluations of their performances by peers and their teacher.
- Appropriate texts are studied and written work is also of good quality.

Shortcomings

- Pupils do not warm up with brief exercises before embarking on sustained units of work.

Home Economics: Child Development

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS4.

Good Features

- Y10 pupils demonstrate a satisfactory ability to explain key words related to the topic of a layette for a newborn baby, discussing issues related to the priority of the various items required and drawing on experiences from within their own family context.
- Y11 pupils identify safety issues related to nursery equipment to a satisfactory standard, and can explain the features required to ensure safety of this equipment in use.
- Pupils carry out in-depth child studies on a young child known to them and present their findings to a good standard, demonstrating that they enjoy this aspect of the course.
- Pupils demonstrate at least a satisfactory standard of technical vocabulary, knowledge and understanding in both oral and written work.

Shortcomings

- A significant minority of pupils make errors of spelling and grammar in their written work.
- Pupils gaining lower grades are not completing individual research and investigational work in sufficient depth.
- Lower ability pupils have difficulty understanding some of the terminology used.

GCSE Home Economics: Textiles

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS4.

Good Features

- Pupils use a range of processes to produce garments and textile items to at least a satisfactory standard, with more able pupils producing products of a good standard.
- They demonstrate a satisfactory ability to use a range of hand and electrical equipment to carry out textile processes, including the good use of computerised sewing machines to

produce decorative features for their products.

- Portfolio work is neatly presented, covering aspects of research, idea development, textile processes and evaluation to a satisfactory standard.
- Pupils use a satisfactory standard of technical vocabulary to explain a range of textile processes they are undertaking on a practical basis and in their written work, showing knowledge and understanding.

Shortcomings

- A number of pupils are not incorporating more complex processes such as a simple sleeve, collar, pocket or pleats into their textile items.
- Folio work lacks more in-depth research and investigation into fabrics, processes and decorative features.
- Pupils do not show sufficient originality in their design of coursework items.
- They are not always using ICT applications to support the development and presentation of their coursework and portfolios.

Catering

Standards of achievement are good in KS4.

Good Features

- Pupils demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of food choice and the use of small and electrical equipment for preparing, cooking and presenting food dishes.
- They are well organised and methodical in their practical work and show a good understanding of health and safety issues.
- A range of fish dishes was produced by pupils to a good quality with an attractive use of garnish ingredients for added appeal.
- Pupils can explain to a good standard the processes they are using demonstrating a good understanding of technical vocabulary.
- Coursework portfolios show that pupils carry out in-depth research on interesting topics such as the use of organic foods or a comparison of premium with value food products, and also into key aspects of the catering industry.

Shortcomings

- Less able pupils demonstrate a less rigorous approach to researching given topics.
- These pupils present their work to a satisfactory standard only with less due regard to spelling, grammar and presentation.

Keyboarding

Standards of achievement are good in KS4.

Good Features

- Pupils achieve consistently high standards. Their end products are good examples of

correct text showing good display, correct spacing and proof read work.

Shortcomings

- Pupils vary in confidence and several depend on the teacher for most steps. They therefore take a long time to achieve the results required at different accreditation levels.

Law

Standards of achievement are very good in KS4.

Good Features

- Pupils are able to give examples of cases to illustrate different types of fatal and non-fatal offences. They apply their knowledge to analyse case studies systematically, and have good structure in their written answers.
- In their coursework pupils include references to Acts and cases and form considered opinions.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of the subject matter, such as family law.

Shortcomings

- Pupils of lower ability submit written work with some spelling and grammatical errors.

Leisure and Tourism

This is a newly introduced GCSE course, followed by a small group of Y10 pupils.

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- The majority of the group has a good knowledge and understanding of the vocational area and can relate the work they are doing to a realistic setting.
- Pupils make very good use of the regular opportunities to visit centres of employment and recreation such as a leisure centre, the Millenium Stadium and Cardiff Wales Airport.
- They work productively as individuals and co-operate well in small groups.
- They accept responsibility for their own learning, enhancing their key skills by researching those regularly used in a hotel situation.
- Investigations and role-play simulations give them further insight into different customer requirements and of the importance to an organisation of a high level of customer service.

Shortcomings

- The assignments completed so far lack sufficient detail to achieve the higher grades but, for individual pupils within the group, reflect positive progress since the start of the course.

Media Studies

Standards of achievement are good in KS4.

Good features

- Pupils of a range of abilities respond well to well- conceived programmes of study that meet the demands of GCSE.
- Units of work include analyses of advertising (Victorian and contemporary) and newspapers that successfully raise pupils' awareness of key concepts in Media Education.
- The majority of pupils display good knowledge and understanding and are able to use specialist terminology (for example, pan, zoom and ident) correctly.
- Pupils produce good work in connection with both visual and printed texts.

Shortcomings

- Some pupils' evaluations lack depth.

Citizenship Studies

Standards of achievement in KS4 are satisfactory.

Good features

- Pupils are able to define key terms connected with the course and use them correctly.
- They actively engage in activities such as the consideration of the implications of the creation of their own policies, were they in a position of government. Some thoughtfully reflect on matters of education and the curricular needs of young people.
- Pupils discuss topics, ask questions and reconsider their initial responses in the light of additional information and argument such as the fairness of the voting system and election of representatives to Parliament in Britain.
- Some effectively analyse issues such as the question of style, truth and bias in newspapers.
- They accurately, if briefly, record factual information in books and, when given the opportunity to do so, make some pertinent comments on issues such as multicultural Britain.

Shortcomings

- Some pupils have poor recall of previous work and are unable to give adequate information on key aspects of the course.
- Some pupils fail to remain focussed on the work in lessons.
- A number of pupils have not yet acquired some of the basic knowledge and understanding required in order to achieve sufficiently well in this subject.
- Some pupils make little contribution to class discussion and are over reliant on teachers' exposition.

GNVQ: Health and Social Care

Standards of achievement are very good in KS4.

Good Features

- Pupils confidently research and investigate aspects of their work such as health care jobs and roles, or bacteria in food, using a very good standard of vocabulary to explain their findings.
- Year 10 pupils demonstrate a very good understanding of a range of health features that promote well-being, and carry out a clear investigation into the life-style choices of an individual to produce information and planning materials to assist life-changes for that person.
- Year 11 pupils use ICT applications and other resources to investigate a range of food bacteria as part of completion of the Foundation Certificate for Food Hygiene, which they all gain.
- Coursework demonstrates a very good standard of research and written answers to a range of issues, with a significant majority of pupils showing great pride in their work to meet the high standards expected.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Typewriting

Standards of achievement are good in KS4.

Good Features

- Pupils set margins and type with confidence. They make good progress for their ability.

Shortcomings

- Pupils do not check their work for errors sufficiently.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress Since the Last Inspection

1. The governing body should re-consider its working practices to come more closely into line with the requirements and spirit of recent legislation. This should include the establishment of working committees to give all members a greater opportunity to be fully involved in school improvement. The governors should identify the priority areas in which they need to be involved, including decisions which must be taken by the full governing body, and delegate the rest to committees, working groups or individuals. This will increase accountability and create a more effective means of influencing school development planning. The governing body will thereby strengthen its working partnership with the school's senior management and other staff.

Very good progress: there are now five committees of the governing body to deal with curriculum and staffing, pupil discipline, pay, staff appointments and performance management. Governors are now fully involved in planning and evaluation of the SDP, through whole-school INSET days with staff. They are also regularly involved in evaluating progress and have a good over-view of the school's development.

2. Governors should reduce the present accumulated funds to make significant and important improvements to benefit the education of current pupils. There is an urgent need for investment in a number of areas but especially in technology.

Very good progress: following the inspection, accumulated funds were used to improve the design and technology rooms. Since then, the budget has been spent annually on improving resources and only a small surplus is carried over from year to year.

3. Senior managers should continue to sharpen up strategic planning, increase effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, and improve the effectiveness of associated training. The part played by middle managers, especially heads of department, in influencing planned change should be increased significantly.

Very good progress: strategic planning is now firmly embedded in all areas of the school. Middle managers are involved in planning, forming a development group which meets regularly. All staff are involved in the annual review and development training day. Immediately after the last inspection, systems for monitoring standards, teaching and learning were implemented, in line with recommendations from a staff working group. These have since been up-dated, in line with performance management, again on the recommendations of a working group of staff.

4. The option system has some shortcomings. Subject option groupings for KS4 need to be reconsidered. (This is already in the school development plan.)

Very good progress: the option system of the time was reviewed and since then there has been expansion of the courses available, to cater appropriately for all abilities and aptitudes. Recently, courses in conjunction with the local college have been implemented at KS4 and in the sixth form.

5. The school should continue to pursue rigorously its drive to improve attendance.

Good progress: the school has made many efforts to improve attendance, for example by first-day calls, truancy call, a merit system and use of the EWO. The overall percentage has improved but can be improved further.

8.2 Key Issues for Action

In order to extend further the current strengths, the school should:

1. Maintain and continue improvements in standards and examination results, particularly in those subjects judged as satisfactory as opposed to good, and in the achievements of pupils of average to lower ability, particularly in the core subjects.
2. Continue efforts to improve attendance.
3. Ensure effective use of tutor time in all groups.
4. Continue to improve the accommodation.
5. Meet statutory requirements for the daily act of collective worship.

APPENDIX

A. Basic Information About the School

Name of School	Lewis Girls' Comprehensive
School type	Community
Age -range of pupils	11 – 18 years
Address of school	Oakfield Street Ystrad Mynach Hengoed
Post-Code	CF82 7WW
Telephone Number	01443 813168

Headteacher	Dr S Noake
Date of appointment	September 1996
Chair of Governors/ Appropriate Authority	Councillor L Lewis
Registered Inspector	Miss G Owen
Dates of inspection	15 – 19 March 2004

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	187	172	144	195	182	90	66	1036

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	57	4	59

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	17.6 :1
Average teaching group size	22.8
Overall contact ratio	77.8%

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	91	91	88	89	87			89.2
Term 2	90	87	85	86	97			89.0
Term 3	93	90	89	88	89			89.8

<i>Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection.</i>	<i>40 Temporary 2 Permanent</i>
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C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2003															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 200															
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	0.5	8.5	25	37	18	11	0
		National	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	5	18	35	26	11	0
	Test	School	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	11.5	27.5	27	18	12.5	0
		National	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	5	18	32	27	12	0
MA	Teacher assessment	School	0	1.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	9	15	30.5	34.5	9	0
		National	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	8	19	26	31	13	0
	Test	School	0	4.5	1.5	0	0	0	0	6.5	20.5	24	35.5	7.5	0
		National	0	5	1	1	0	0	0	7	18	22	33	13	0
SC	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	32	18.5	20	16.5	0
		National	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	7	21	33	25	11	0
	Test	School	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	5	16	32	27.5	15.5	0
		National	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	6	20	32	24	13	0

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:	51%	In the school:	53.5%
In Wales:	59%	In Wales:	58%

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 NVO			
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2003: 184			
The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2003:			
	School	UA	Wales
were entered for 5 or more GCSEs	94	89	50
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C	63	51	57
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-G	94	87	88
achieved GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language)	45	38	41
entered at least one CoE, GCSE short course or GCSE	100	97	98
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-C	84	76	80
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-G	98	94	94
achieved no graded GCSE	2	6	6
achieved one or more CoE only	2	2	2
achieved a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVO level 1	4		
achieved a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	8		
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	63		
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	94		

For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs			
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2003: 97			
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2003: 83			
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2003: 14			
	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	70	70	72
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	93	92	96
Average points score per candidate	20	20	21
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	0		

D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection

- 19 inspectors spent the equivalent of 57 days at the school.
- 242 lessons were observed, including full and part sessions, 201 at KS3 and KS4 and 41 in the sixth form.
- Inspectors attended a whole-school assembly, tutor periods and some extra-curricular activities.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, assistant headteachers, all heads of department, heads of year, key stage co-ordinators, staff with whole-school responsibilities and members of the administrative and support staff.
- Work across the curriculum, from representative pupils in Y7-Y11 was examined, together with work in each subject at all key stages.
- There was formal discussion with a group of pupils from KS3, KS4 and the sixth form and informal discussion with many other pupils and students.
- The Registered Inspector met the staff and governing body prior to the inspection.
- Eleven parents attended the parents' meeting and 90 replies to the questionnaire were received.
- Documentation provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection.
- Feedback was given to departments and the senior management team during the week of the inspection and to the senior management team and governors after the inspection.

E. Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team

Inspector	Type	No. Days	Subjects	Aspects
Miss G Owen	Rgl	5	Modern Foreign Languages	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 6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources 8.1 Progress 8.2 Key Issues
Mrs Boardman	R Lay	3		4.2 Behaviour 4.3 Attendance 5.6 Links with parents, community, schools and other institutions 5.7 Links with industry
Mr D Williams	Core	4.5	Mathematics	5.2 ARR 5.3 Curriculum
Mr C Rowlands	Core	5	Welsh Second Language	Sixth Form
Ms J Edwards	Core	4.5	Drama and English	4.1 SMSC 5.4 Support, guidance & welfare
Mr C Harris	Team	2	Media Studies & Drama	
Mr J Hanney	Team	3	Science	
Mr M Pickin	Team	3	Science	
Mr S Gale	Team	3 2	Design & Technology, Information Technology, Keyboarding, Typewriting	
Mr E Bowyer	Team	2	Geography Leisure & Tourism	
Mrs J Williams	Team	2	Art	
Mr J Jenkins	Team	2	Music	
Mr P Treadwell	Team	2	Physical Education	
Mr M Rawle	Team	3	Religious Education, Religious Studies, PSE And Citizenship Studies.	
Dr P Evans	Team	2	Business Studies, Business and Communication Systems, Government & Politics, Economics and Law	
Mr M Prankerd	Team	2.5	Design & Technology	

Mrs S J Down	Team	2	Health and Social Care, Home Economics: Child Development, Home Economics: Textiles, Catering	
Mr A Kelly	Team	2	History	
Mrs L Wilson	Team	3		5.5 Special Educational Needs

SIXTH FORM ANNEX

Context

Lewis Girls' Comprehensive School is an 11-18 community school in Ystrad Mynach, maintained by Caerphilly Borough Council. There are 156 students in the sixth form, 90 in Y12 and 66 in Y13.

About 55 per cent of Y11 return to the sixth form and are joined by some students from neighbourhood 11-16 schools. The school offers a range of courses, mostly leading to Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced (A2) level examinations, with one Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) course. It works in partnership with a local school and the nearby college, to enable students to take courses not offered in school.

Students come from areas which are not particularly prosperous nor particularly disadvantaged and also from economically disadvantaged areas. A significant number choose to come from out of the catchment area. Nearly all students have English as their first language; a few students come from minority ethnic heritages. No students speak Welsh as their first language.

Main Findings

- Students achieve very good standards. Standards were very good in 60 per cent, good in 30 per cent and satisfactory in 10 per cent of classes observed. Standards in key skills are very good.
- Students have a positive attitude to learning. They are proud of their school and participate fully in a wide variety of activities. They are mature and responsible and play a major part in the life of the school. They raise money for charities and are actively involved in the community. Attendance overall is satisfactory.
- The quality of teaching is very good. In the classes observed, teaching was very good in 68 per cent, good in 25 per cent and satisfactory in 7 per cent. Teaching is often innovative and progressive, with the introduction of interactive whiteboard technology.
- Teachers set and mark assignments thoroughly and provide constructive and positive comments. Reports to parents are detailed and clear and indicate targets on how to improve performance.
- The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum though it does not meet statutory requirements in religious education. Good links with the local college have enlarged the range of option choices. In Y12, most students study four AS subjects and key skills. In Y13, most students study three subjects for A2 Level. Many students participate in a range of extra-curricular activities.
- The overall care, support and guidance for students are very good. Form tutors and teaching staff are very supportive. Students are given good advice about the courses they should follow. Careers education and guidance are very good.

- The management of the sixth form is very good. The monitoring of students' progress is very effective. The school evaluates its sixth form provision. Courses are reviewed regularly as part of the sixth form development plan.
- Teachers are well qualified and courses are appropriately staffed and well resourced.

STANDARDS

1. How well do students achieve?

Grade 1 : Very good : many good features, some of them outstanding

In classes observed in the sixth form, standards were very good in 60 per cent, good in 30 per cent and satisfactory in 10 per cent. There were no classes in which standards were judged to be unsatisfactory. These are very high figures. They are also a substantial improvement on those of the last inspection, when standards were good or very good in fewer than 50 per cent of classes, compared to 90 per cent currently.

Standards are very good in thirteen of the seventeen courses available, good in two and satisfactory in two, as tabled below. This level of achievement and consistency is very good.

Subject	Course	Standards
English	GCE	Very good
Mathematics	GCE	Good
Science	GCE	Very good
Welsh second language	GCE	Good
Computing	GCE	Satisfactory
History	GCE	Very good
Geography	GCE	Very good
Modern Foreign Languages	GCE	Very good
Art	GCE	Very good
Music	GCE	Very good
Physical Education	GCE	Very good
Religious Education	GCE	-
Religious Studies	GCE	Very good
Business Studies	GCE	Satisfactory
Economics	GCE	Very good
Government and Politics	GCE	Very good
Law	GCE	Very good
Health and Social Care	AVCE	Very good

The standard of students' attainment in examinations has been good. Results at A level have been in line with the local average and only just below the national comparator for girls. In 2003, 70 per cent of students obtained grades A-C compared with 72 per cent nationally and 70 per cent locally. Ninety-three per cent of students obtained grades A-E compared with the national figure of 96 per cent and the local figure of 92 per cent. The average points score per candidate was 20 compared with 21 points nationally and 20 locally. In 2002, 66 per cent of students obtained grades A-C compared with 70 per cent nationally and 93 per cent of

students obtained A-E grades compared with 96 per cent nationally. The average points score per candidate was 20 compared with the national figure of 21 and the local figure of 19.

Standards achieved in the six key skills are as follows:

Key Skills	Standard
Communication	Very good
Application of Number	Very good
ICT	Very good
Improving Own Learning and Performance	Very good
Working with Others	Very good
Problem Solving	Very good

Students achieve very good standards in key skills. The school provides a detailed Key Skills programme which is delivered by specialist teachers. Students aim for a qualification in one of the three key skills areas namely Communication, Application of Number and Information and communication technology (ICT). Students receive very good support and guidance in teaching sessions. The portfolios produced by students are of good quality.

Students apply these key skills very well in their respective studies. They listen attentively and are confident when communicating in class and in public. They are articulate when expressing opinions. ICT and numeracy skills are evident and used well to enhance the quality of students' work in their chosen subjects. Students work well together and apply problem-solving skills when involved in the general life of the school and in the wide range of extra-curricular activities.

54 per cent of Y11 pupils last year returned to the sixth form compared with 55 per cent in the previous two years. The school keeps detailed records of retention figures of students who progress from Y12 to Y13. Students who leave at the end of Y12 continue their studies in college or have secured employment. The majority of students who progress to Y13 proceed to higher education. Last year, 90 per cent of students proceeded to Higher Education and there is a tradition of students gaining places at Oxford and Cambridge universities.

Students' attendance overall is satisfactory. The school reviews students' attendance each half term and informs parents if attendance levels are deemed unacceptable. Teaching staff keep a class attendance register. Students are punctual for lessons. Parents are informed when concerns arise over punctuality.

Students are mature and demonstrate a positive attitude to learning. They play a major part in the ethos and daily life of the school. In particular they develop leadership skills, through helping younger pupils. They also gain a sense of responsibility through these activities and through their involvement in voluntary work in the local community. Sixth formers are articulate, responsible young adults, with many personal qualities.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

2. How effective are teaching and assessment?

Grade 1 : Very good: many good features, some of them outstanding

The quality of teaching is very good. In the 41 classes observed in the sixth form, teaching was very good in 68 per cent, good in 25 per cent and satisfactory in 7 per cent. These are very high figures and a considerable improvement on those of the previous inspection. Teaching was judged good or very good in just over half the lessons at that time, with less than ten per cent very good, compared to 90 per cent and nearly 70 per cent respectively now.

Teaching is very good in the great majority of subjects. It is often innovative and progressive and teachers use interactive whiteboard technology effectively. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and present their lessons enthusiastically. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. The atmosphere is relaxed and friendly, but also rigorous and purposeful.

Students are encouraged to become independent learners. There is good emphasis on research and preparation for lessons and on students giving presentations to the rest of the group. Teachers have up-to-date materials, often from recent periodicals or from the Internet and they engage students in purposeful debate, encouraging them to form their own opinions.

Students are supported by being given very good resource materials to aid independent learning and revision. Tasks are appropriately graded, with suitable extension for the most able. Students respond very positively to challenging tasks and readily accept their responsibilities in making notes for themselves.

Assessment, recording and reporting are very good and comply with statutory requirements.

Most subjects assess and record students' work accurately and consistently. Generally, students' work is marked thoroughly and teachers usually identify good features and set appropriate targets for improvement.

The school makes very good use of all available data relating to students' attainments and progress throughout the sixth form. There are well-defined whole-school systems in place for monitoring and recording students' progress and these impact significantly on standards achieved. Students contribute purposefully through self-evaluation to assess their own learning and are involved fully in the assessment of their progress within most subjects. Most subject departments and teachers keep detailed records of students' achievements and this information is used appropriately to inform teaching.

Very early in Y12 the school carries out a progress review of students' performances and arranges a parents' evening to discuss any issues arising from the review. This forms an effective means of identifying students' potential problems early in their selected courses. This procedure works well and enables students to focus on areas for improvement. At the end of Y12 reports are issued to parents. For students undertaking A level course the reports are detailed and provide very valuable information relating to students' progress during the year. Teachers generally focus well on students' achievements in subjects and also identify clear targets for future improvement. Students following the AVCE course complete a file

showing their record of achievement during the year. These provide helpful and meaningful information indicating students' academic and social development throughout the year.

A similar pattern for reporting students' achievements also occurs in Y13. Progress reviews are carried out very early in the school year followed by a parents' evening about a month later. Reports towards the end of Y13 take the form of a record of achievement (RoA) and students play an active role in constructing them. The RoA gives detailed information relating to students' achievements in academic subjects and in their wider participation of school life. They are generally of a very high quality and provide good evidence of progress made during their sixth form studies.

3.How well do learning experiences meet the needs and interest of students in the wider community?

Grade 2: Good: good features and no major shortcomings

The school has implemented curriculum 2000 and students in the sixth form follow a broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum, however, does not meet statutory requirements in relation to religious education.

In Y12 the school works well in collaboration with a local college to offer students a good range of subjects and courses. Most students study four subjects at AS level selected from four option blocks. There are also six separate subjects available to students that can be studied at a local college. There is also a course in health and social care, offered as AVCE. Students complete an option form to identify their choice of subjects in Y12 and senior management shows sensitivity to students' requests, trying to cater for individual demands wherever possible. Most students in Y12 study for mainly AS qualifications and continue into Y13 to take three subjects at A2 level.

All students study key skills and are given the opportunity to be entered for a Key Skills qualification. Students' key skills are developed well and most subjects take good opportunities to enable students to use information technology effectively.

The school has an energy policy and all students understand well the need to conserve energy and to act in a sustainable way. Students make good contributions to whole-school issues involved in recycling items such as paper, mobile phones and computer printer cartridges. The scheme of work in geography provides good opportunities for promoting sustainable development.

Arrangements for careers guidance and work-related education are very good. The school finds appropriate placements for students in Y12 that enrich students' development. Those taking French undertake work experience in France.

Students play an important role in organising extra-curricular activities. They run a drama club for younger pupils and lead the house teams for the Eisteddfod and sporting events. Students are encouraged to undertake voluntary work in the community such as helping at local schools to encourage reading, or in community organisations, such as the local hospital. They approach this work enthusiastically and recognise the benefit of it in relation to their personal progress. Their involvement in the Summer School for Y6 pupils, during the holidays, is a substantial one. Y12 art students visit feeder primary schools to assist in the

teaching of ceramics to Y5 pupils. Students also take the lead in organising whole-school fund raising events for charity which are well supported and very successful. A good number of students are involved in a buddy system which is aimed at helping younger pupils cope with the academic and personal pressures of school life. The school council is a very successful and responsible body led by sixth form students. This body manages its own school improvement budget and is consulted on all aspects of school life. The school council guided the refurbishment of the school toilets, had an influence on the decision to change the catering provision in the school and also liaised with the Governing Body on changes to the school uniform. In 2002 a group of sixth form students took part in the World Team Challenge expedition to Belize. Another group is preparing to visit Thailand in 2004 as part of this initiative.

4. How well are students cared for, guided and supported?

Grade 1 : Very good: many good features, some of them outstanding

Care, support and guidance for students are very good. The head of the sixth form, and form teachers make a very effective team in monitoring the personal and academic progress of students thoroughly. Many pupils choose to return to the sixth form because of the very high quality support and guidance they receive in school. After each set of examination results, students have an interview with tutors to evaluate progress and set targets for further development. In addition to the formal interviews, students have very good opportunities to seek advice from tutors and teaching staff. The sixth form management team and teaching staff are very caring and supportive of students.

There are good induction arrangements for students entering the sixth form. An information evening is held in February, at which Y11 pupils can speak to departmental staff about subject choices. On entering the sixth form, students follow a precise induction programme. Comprehensive booklets on life in the sixth form are prepared for students.

Careers education and guidance in the sixth form are very good. Students are well prepared to make informed choices about their progression to Higher Education or into the world of work. The students benefit from very good support from Careers Wales who provide counselling and one-to-one interviews as and when needed. Useful guidance on career pathways is also provided in fortnightly extended tutorial periods.

Support and guidance are a strength of sixth form provision in the school and have a positive impact on the very high standards achieved by students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5. How effective are leadership and strategic management?

Grade 1: Very good : many good features, some of them outstanding

The leadership and management of the sixth form are led by the headteacher and all members of the senior management team, primarily the head of sixth form, who is an assistant headteacher. Provision, ethos and quality are regularly reviewed.

The sixth form development plan forms part of the school development plan. The school has recognised the need to offer courses which are financially viable, whilst also offering an appropriately wide range of courses. It has formed good links with the local college, and ensured that the timing of the school day allows students to link courses. It is also currently exploring, with three local schools, means by which courses can be provided in partnership.

The day-to-day management is led by the head of sixth form. Documentation is thorough and comprehensive, showing clear planning and a good overview of provision. There is also a well-established ethos, with clear priorities and expectations. These are communicated effectively to staff and students, resulting in a happy and purposeful community. There is a strong work ethic and also an emphasis on students' personal development.

There is good communication between the head of sixth form and sixth form tutors. Close proximity of registration groups facilitates good communication and consistency in practice. Regular meetings of tutors ensure that problems are identified at an early stage.

The head girl and her deputy are also involved in the management of the sixth form and school. They, and a team of prefects, have a high profile around the school. They also take a strong lead in managing many extra-curricular activities. The involvement of the sixth form in a management role is a strong feature of the school.

6. How well do learners and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?

Grade 1 : Very good : many good features, some of them outstanding

The school has clear strategies to evaluate the quality of its sixth form provision. The school is fully committed to maintaining and further improving both provision and standards achieved. Academic provision is kept under regular review. Each course is assessed annually and decisions taken for improvement. For example, links with other schools and the college have been extended and key skills provision has been modified. The headteacher meets heads of department each autumn as part of the school's self-evaluation procedures and the previous year's examination results are discussed. The senior management team is pro-active in planning for improvement.

Sixth form examination data are analysed in detail by the head of sixth form and senior management team to identify trends and assess the value added to students' prior attainment. Current students' progress is noted and those needing academic assistance are identified and very well supported. Attendance data are regularly monitored and action taken if there are concerns.

The quality of practice was evaluated in a five-year cycle of monitoring the work of departments, including classroom observation. This cycle has now come to an end, and the first cycle of the new arrangements has not yet finished. However, managers know the school well and follow up any concerns expressed by students.

Actions are appropriately taken in response to evaluation, within the whole-school ethos of increasing students' sense of responsibility. For example, registration arrangements have been sensibly adapted to allow students a greater measure of freedom to study at home, whilst ensuring that they take responsibility for registering their attendance on site. These arrangements are working well.

7. How effective are leaders and managers in using resources?

Grade 1: Very good: good features and no major shortcomings

Sixth form teachers are well qualified and experienced to deliver the respective courses. Teachers are effectively deployed across subjects and areas of learning.

Books and resources in general are suitable to meet students' needs. Interactive whiteboard technology greatly assists the learning process in several subjects.

Teaching rooms overall are adequate and both staff and students make the best of available accommodation. The majority of staff have their own base rooms which are well equipped. There has been an investment in the school library in recent years and a school librarian supports this development, though it is still relatively small. It houses good information on Higher Education courses.

During non-contact time students can use designated areas for private study including the school library, two rooms with computer facilities and one self-supported study room. They can also access ICT facilities in the central ICT rooms and in departmental bases. Common room provision for students is adequate.

Resources in the community are also used effectively. There are very good links with a variety of institutions, to provide courses, work experience, voluntary service opportunities and a range of other activities. Visiting speakers contribute in various fields and students widen their learning experiences in the local, national and international community.

Subjects and areas of learning

English

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good Features

- Students demonstrate very good analytical skills. They can identify the ways in which writers use language to create meaning in a range of language and literature texts.
- In discussion and in their written work, students show a confident approach to language analysis.
- Students use subject specific terminology very accurately and with full understanding of the meaning.
- When engaging in discussion about a range of texts, students contribute in a perceptive and informed way. They are able to justify points of view.
- Students approach the analysis of unseen texts confidently. They have well developed strategies which help them understand the context and structure of writing.
- Written work is fluent, well-developed and mature. Students use a very good range of textual reference to support their analysis.
- Students are able to compare and contrast literature and language texts. Their recall of

prior learning is very good and they are able to apply this knowledge across genres.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features:

- Most students show good standards of achievement in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics
- Students work very well in lessons and display a high level of independence.
- Most students are confident in current work and have a good knowledge and understanding of previous work.
- In Y12 students identify the centre and radius of a circle from its algebraic equation and use this competently to solve a range of problems relating to properties of intersecting circles.
- In Y13 students are competent in tackling problems relating to projectiles and have a good understanding of the underlying theory.

Shortcomings:

- A minority of students are hesitant in previous work and tend to rely too much on set notes. They lack confidence in their own ability and occasionally give up too easily.
- In Y13, irregular attendance of a very small number of students has a detrimental effect on their standards of achievement.

Science

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good Features

- Students build on the solid foundation established in earlier key stages and respond maturely to in-depth questioning on a variety of topics such as chemical bonding, diet and human health and the development of quantum theory.
- In students' comprehensive records of work there is considerable evidence of research skills where students have accessed a variety of sources, including ICT, to extend their notes and assist learning.
- Practical work is of a high standard. Following careful risk assessment, students use a range of scientific apparatus with confidence and are aware of the limitations such apparatus impose on accuracy. They plan, carry out and evaluate investigations successfully, using their mathematical skills to solve the resulting calculations.
- In making Powerpoint presentations on a range of scientific topics students enhance their own learning and that of their colleagues. Students regularly access distance learning packages on the internet to assess their progress.

Shortcomings

- A small minority of students, mainly in Y12, have a less secure knowledge of basic scientific concepts and have difficulty in understanding their application to new situations.

Welsh second language

Standards of achievement are good.

Good Features

- Students achieve good standards in oral and written work.
- They understand the contents of poems and comment on style and content.
- They demonstrate effective researching skills when seeking information required to understand the background of poems.
- They understand the content of a film studied and discuss, in a confident manner, issues arising from it.
- Students understand the requirements of translanguaging tasks. They highlight the main points, discuss and express an opinion on related issues.
- They display good subject knowledge and an awareness of the cultural background of texts.
- Written tasks encourage students to prepare, analyse and respond to a good range of topics. Students demonstrate good subject knowledge and the ability to analyse and use critical terminology.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Computing

Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

Good Features

- Project work is well planned and implemented, displaying evidence of effective analysis, implementation and problem solving.
- Project work is well presented and solutions are user friendly.
- The programming skills of some students are well developed.
- Problem-solving skills are good.

Shortcomings

- Absences in Y12 affect standards in all facets of the course, particularly in theoretical work.
- Students' projects based on imagination rather than on real-life contexts are weaker in the areas of investigation, evaluation and testing.

History

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good Features

- Students demonstrate extensive subject knowledge which they deploy skilfully in evaluating sources for an enquiry, for example into aspects of the career of Sir Robert Peel.
- Students speak with confidence, for example in a 'jig-saw' exercise used for collecting and classifying data - political, economic, social – for an account of the causes of urban unrest in Wales 1830-48.
- In extended coursework essays on the nature of the Rebecca riots, students show an ability to sustain an extended, complex argument, incorporating the views of different historians as well as their own.

Shortcomings

- With a few exceptions, most students lack a systematic method for demonstrating the relative importance of causal factors to an explanation.

Geography

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good Features

- Students have extensive and detailed knowledge and understanding and can express their opinions and findings orally and in extended writing of a high standard.
- Their use of relevant information obtained from a wide range of sources and applying it to unfamiliar contexts is particularly effective; they make very good use of contrasting case studies to exemplify their theoretical knowledge of sustainable development.
- The wider key skills of problem solving and working with others are promulgated by an enquiry-based approach in assignments, personal presentations and fieldwork.
- In their study of population, students display both high levels of understanding and initiative and a keen grasp of theoretical knowledge.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Modern Foreign Languages

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good Features

- Students use the target language naturally and fluently.
- They undertake considerable research, often using the Internet or during visits to France and work hard independently to improve their own performance.
- They speak confidently on a variety of topics, with an extensive knowledge of vocabulary and structures.
- Written work is outstanding in its depth, analysis and use of authentic resource materials. Students reach very good standards of grammatical accuracy.
- Students can quickly skim and scan written texts for gist and for specific information.
- Students listen perceptively and ask pertinent questions in response to ideas presented.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Art

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- Students' skills in observing, presenting and recording ideas are sophisticated and in some cases, outstanding. They use a range of visual forms in two and three dimensions and they employ varied media including paint, print, collage, textiles, ceramics and photography.
- Students develop ideas through sustained investigations. They analyse images and artefacts critically. The most able students make very good connections between the sources of ideas and the contexts in which they were originally created.
- Students confidently apply knowledge and understanding to the development of their work. They review and modify ideas and justify changes logically and critically.
- Students' work is informed by detailed knowledge and understanding of the work of other artists and craftsmen and by analysis and evaluation of the work of other students. They develop ideas further by visiting galleries and exhibitions.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

Music

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good Features

- In response to very good teaching, students produce very good standards in all aspects of courses studied.
- Instrumental performing standards are particularly impressive in Y13.

- Vocal standards are very good.
- Y12 students show a very good knowledge of musical periods and styles.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Physical Education

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good Features

- Students have a secure knowledge of the role sport plays in contemporary society and with key aspects linked to sports history, sports psychology and exercise science.
- Essays, informative poster presentations and project work are invariably of very good quality and are always well presented.
- Students' performances are of a high standard.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Religious Studies

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- Students engage in a very good standard of classroom debate by initiating and considering searching questions and further extending their initial responses.
- They present reasoned and balanced views on topics and are mindful of the danger of stereotyping.
- They fully consider the range of philosophical and ethical theories and the way in which religions utilise these to express their views on controversial issues.
- Students are able to extract relevant information from good quality teacher notes and textbooks in order to plan and write essays.
- Coursework essays are of a high standard with students extensively analysing the subject matter.

Shortcomings

- Students fail to support their written responses with sufficient reference to authorities in the field.

Business Studies

Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

Good Features

- Students recall key terms such as prototype and give clear definitions to show that they understand different concepts.
- They relate their knowledge to practical examples; in some instances they use their work experience to illustrate their knowledge.
- Students research using the Internet and textbooks to support their class notes.
- They are able to justify their decisions with knowledge of job rotation, multiskilling, management styles and motivation.

Shortcomings

- Students offer clear but insufficiently detailed definitions using business terminology.
- Students are under confident and do not demonstrate their knowledge openly without prompting.

Economics

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good Features

- Students are up to date in their knowledge and are able to explain recent economic policy changes.
- They can demonstrate their understanding graphically and also extrapolate data well.
- Students give concise definitions and their answers to set questions are precise yet detailed.
- The Y12 self-study class works with a high level of commitment and demonstrates a clear understanding in their written work.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings

Government and Politics

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good Features

- Students demonstrate a broad knowledge of the structure and function of the main political parties.
- They show high levels of deduction for example when they explain why less people vote in the current political climate.

- Students research both out of and in class. Their note-taking is very detailed and informative and motivation to achieve is high.

Shortcomings

- Lower ability students do not always illustrate their written work with sufficient examples.

Law

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good Features

- Students have an up-to-date knowledge of the subject and are able to quote the prison population in the UK for the previous week, for example.
- They are well aware of the historical facts and their recall of previous work, for example situations where bail is not agreed, is very good.
- During the two years of study, students develop structured answering techniques, and give precise definitions and case illustrations in their answers.
- Students demonstrate high level learning skills and outcomes. They are able to simulate the role of a magistrate by case analysis followed by appropriate judgements.

Shortcomings

- Lower ability students in Y12 struggle to reach AS standard in their written answers (but are confident to ask for extra tuition in this respect).

AVCE Health and Social Care

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good Features

- Students produce units of work to a very high standard covering aspects such as influences on health and disease and the cardiovascular system in-depth with well annotated diagrams, graphs and pictures used to support their work.
- They use aspects of work experience placements to aid discussion and general understanding, speaking confidently to explain hand-washing related to infection transference in catering, hospital and other health care settings.
- Small groups of students work extremely well together to create activities for young children and the elderly, to aid their development and well-being, which the students then put into practice in a range of contexts within the community.
- They demonstrate a very good underpinning knowledge and understanding of the subject and use of technical vocabulary in both oral and written work.
- The standard of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills used by students in their coursework is of a very high quality.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

Recommendations

1. Implement plans to meet statutory requirements in religious education.
2. Continue to maintain and, where appropriate, improve standards in students' achievement.

Appendix

A. Basic Information About the School

Name of School	Lewis Girls' Comprehensive
School type	Community
Age -range of pupils	11 – 18 years
Address of school	Oakfield Street Ystrad Mynach Hengoed
Post-Code	CF82 7WW
Telephone Number	01443 813168

Headteacher	Dr S Noake
Date of appointment	September 1996
Chair of Governors/ Appropriate Authority	Councillor L Lewis
Registered Inspector	Miss G Owen
Dates of inspection	15 – 19 March 2004

B. Results of Public Examinations

For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs			
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2003: 97			
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2003: 83			
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2003: 14			
	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	70	70	72
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	93	92	96
Average points score per candidate	20	20	21
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	0		

C. The Evidence Base for the inspection of the sixth form

- 41 lessons were inspected, covering all curricular areas.
- Inspectors attended tutor time and some extra-curricular activities involving sixth formers.
- There were discussions with all members of the senior management team, including the head of sixth form.
- Inspectors scrutinised students' work in all subjects.
- The co-ordinator and a colleague met a group of sixth form students formally, and there were informal discussions with many students.
- Comprehensive documentation about the sixth form was studied before and during the inspection.
- Feed-back was given to the senior management team at the end of the inspection week, and to senior managers and governors after the inspection.