

**REPORT**

**on the**

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

**YSGOL UWCHRADD LLANIDLOES  
LLANIDLOES HIGH SCHOOL  
LLANIDLOES  
POWYS  
SY18 6EX**

School Number: 666/4002

Date of Inspection: 19 – 22 May 2003

**By**

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Registered Inspector W253/3508

Under Estyn contract number: T/37/02

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**CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES**

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

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

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

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

## **GRADE DESCRIPTIONS**

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

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

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## 1. CONTEXT

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

Llanidloes High School is a popular 11 – 19 mixed comprehensive school, situated in the small town of Llanidloes. There are 770 pupils on roll (compared with 610 in 1997), of whom 86 are in the sixth form. The annual intake is around 155 pupils, with many others seeking to attend.

Most pupils come from contributory primary schools that cover a wide rural area. About three-quarters of the pupils travel to school by bus. The school describes its ‘catchment’ as neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. About eight percent of its pupils speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard, with five percent having Welsh as the predominant language spoken at home. Very few pupils (less than 1 percent) come from minority ethnic heritages. No pupils receive support teaching in English as an additional language. Seven percent of the pupils are registered as being entitled to free school meals. This figure is below both the national average and the unitary authority (UA) figure of 10.7 percent.

The school’s intake represents the full range of ability. There are 20 pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN) (19 boys; 1 girl). There are an additional 63 pupils on the school’s SEN register who are on stages School Concern (SC), School Action (SA) or SA plus, of the Code of Practice for SEN. Seventeen pupils are disapplied from aspects of the NC. The school has two special units: one for pupils with specific learning difficulties (SpLD) and one for pupils with Asperger’s Syndrome. All pupils are integrated as much as possible, and have equal access to the curriculum.

Welsh is taught and examined as a first and a second language. A significant number of subjects are taught through the medium of Welsh.

The school’s main aim is ‘GOFAL’ – Giving Opportunities For All to Learn. It seeks to achieve this through: the environment; valuing all pupils equally; a broad and appropriate curriculum; fostering excellence in academic study & personal standards and ongoing evaluation of the school’s success.

The School’s Improvement Plan (SIP) is a comprehensive, well-organised programme that provides a firm foundation for the school to achieve its aims. The school has set itself challenging yet achievable targets for future success.

Since the previous inspection, major building work has continued and this has helped the school to provide a good learning environment.

## **2. MAIN FINDINGS**

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

Llanidloes High School is a very good, successful school. It provides pupils and students with a caring and supportive environment in which they and teachers work together purposefully to achieve high standards.

It is an effective and efficient organisation that is led very well by the headteacher, whose in-depth knowledge of the school and high expectations of success positively influence its ethos and success. The deputy head teachers, members of the school improvement group, teaching and support staff, and the governing body support him very successfully.

The school has made very good progress in addressing the key issues highlighted in the previous inspection report.

### **Educational standards achieved by the pupils**

As indicated in the tables below, standards of achievement in most subjects and in the key skills are at least good and these standards are reflected in the results in external national tests and examinations, which are, overall, well in excess of local and national averages.

Since the previous inspection the school has enhanced its high standards. In KS3 the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or above in the 2002 national tests in the three core subjects, English or Welsh, mathematics and science, exceeded the national average by a very significant figure. At the time of the previous inspection 65 percent of KS3 pupils achieved such success compared with 44 percent nationally. In 2002 the proportions were 74 and 50 percent respectively. When the KS3 test results are compared with pupils' attainment on entry to the school the comparison confirms that pupils make very good progress throughout the key stage.

Examination success at the end of KS4 also represents very good progress between the key stages for most pupils. In 2002 the percentage of pupils gaining at least five subjects at grades A\* to C in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) was well above UA and national averages. The school achieved a most noteworthy figure of 83 percent, compared with the UA average of 60 percent and the national mean of 50 percent. The school is rightly proud of this achievement that justifies its GCSE entry policy to give all pupils the opportunity to attempt these external examinations. At KS3 and GCSE level the school's figures also compare very favourably with those obtained by other establishments having similar entitlements to free school meals, being well above average on all counts.

As in KS3 and KS4, success in the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level or equivalent examinations has improved since the previous inspection. In 2002 the proportion of students achieving success at levels A to C was well above UA and national averages. The school achieved a figure of 90 percent, compared with the UA's 71 percent and the national 66 percent. Likewise, the average points scored by students in the school (23) exceeded the other comparators – 21 and 20 respectively, indicating the high quality of the results achieved. From class observations, scrutiny of work and from interviews, inspectors

found that in almost every case, sixth form students were continuing to realise their potential for success.

Throughout the curriculum, owing to the very good provision made for them, standards achieved by pupils with SEN are at least good overall.

### STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS

Subject	KS3	KS4	Sixth Form
English	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Mathematics	Very Good	Good	Very Good
Science	Very Good	Very Good	Good
Welsh (first language)	Good	Good	Good
Welsh (second language)	Good	Good	Good
Design and Technology (DT)	Good	Good	Good
Information Technology (IT)	Good	Good	n/a
History	Good	Very Good	Very Good
Geography	Good	Good	Very Good
Modern Foreign Languages	Good	Good	Good
Art	Good	Good	Good
Music	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Religious Education	Good	Good	Good
Religious Studies	n/a	Good	Good
Physical Education	Good	Good	Good
Drama	Good	Very Good	Very Good
Media Studies	n/a	Very Good	Very Good
Personal and Social Education	Good	Good	Good
Business Studies	n/a	Good	n/a
Government & Politics	n/a	n/a	Good
Law	n/a	n/a	Good
Sociology	n/a	n/a	Good
Psychology	n/a	n/a	Good
Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education	n/a	n/a	Good

### STANDARDS IN KEY SKILLS

	KS3	KS4	Sixth Form
Listening	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Speaking	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Reading	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Writing	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Numeracy	Good	Good	Good
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	Good	Good	Good
Working with others	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good
Improving own learning and performance	Good	Good	Very Good
Problem solving	Good	Good	Very Good

### **Positive features**

- Standards were good in 63 percent of classes observed and very good in a further 19 percent.
- In KS3, in 22 percent of classes inspected, pupils achieved very good standards.
- In KS4, in 13 percent of classes inspected, pupils achieved very good standards.
- Standards in sixth form classes in most subjects were good. In 92 percent of classes observed, pupils were judged as achieving good or better standards, with 18 percent as very good.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress and achieve well.
- Pupils are suitably challenged and achieve at least good standards in most subjects.
- Pupils listen attentively, speak clearly, read very well, write to very good effect and work very well with their classmates, often taking the initiative to extend their own learning.
- Pupils have good numeracy and ICT skills, and use them advantageously in many subjects.
- The most able pupils are suitably challenged and achieve very well in the majority of subjects.
- Where good or very good standards are achieved, the significant factors in promoting these standards are the high quality of teaching in the subjects, high expectations and the good attitudes to learning adopted by pupils.
- The school was successful in gaining the Basic Skills Quality Mark in March 2003.

### **Shortcomings**

- Although pupils use numeracy and ICT advantageously in many subjects, not all curricular areas make best use of them to raise standards.
- Although satisfactory, standards in music in KS3 do not match the high standards achieved in other subjects of the curriculum.

### **Quality of Education**

High quality teaching within a well-designed and inclusive curriculum is a strength of the school. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and they plan well to meet the needs of their pupils. They care deeply about the welfare and progress of their pupils and work hard to enable the school to live up to its motto 'GOFAL'. Often they give freely of their own time to provide extra help for pupils, and they make available an appropriate range of extra-curricular experiences to enhance and broaden pupils' education.

### **Positive features**

- Teaching was good in 60 percent of classes observed across all key stages, and very good in a further 22 percent. These figures are well in excess of national expectations for 2002, which targeted 50 percent of lessons as good or better. The school achieved 82 percent.
- Teaching in the sixth form was good in 69 percent of classes and very good in a further 23 percent.
- Teaching is very good throughout in English, history, physical education and media studies.

- Teachers and support staff provide appropriate and sensitive support to help pupils with SEN to achieve well.
- The KS3, KS4 and sixth form curricula are good. The school offers a wide and appropriate range of subjects and courses to allow pupils of all abilities to achieve well.
- The whole curriculum ensures that all pupils have equal access to good learning opportunities.
- There is good planning for and implementation of arrangements for the development of key skills in KS3, KS4 and the sixth form.
- The arrangements made for personal and educational guidance, including careers education and guidance, are very good throughout the school.
- The arrangements made for those pupils with SEN, especially those for whom aspects of the National Curriculum are disapplied, make a very significant and positive impact on their progress and attainment.
- The school makes very good use of analyses of data to assist in setting targets for pupils for future progress and higher standards.
- There are very good arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' achievements and progress in most subjects.
- The school provides regular, informative reports to parents.
- Pupils have many opportunities to benefit from a well-planned programme of extra-curricular activities and participation is high.

### **Shortcomings**

- In a few subjects, teachers occasionally tend to dominate lessons and fail to involve pupils sufficiently in their learning; they do not use well-designed questions to probe pupils' knowledge and understanding.

### **The Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils**

The school is a very happy, caring community where all concerned work together to create an ethos where pupils are valued as individuals.

### **Positive features**

- Pupils' spiritual development is good. Many subjects make valuable contributions to improving pupils' spiritual awareness and extending their understanding of values and beliefs.
- Regular assemblies and well-organised tutorial sessions provide good opportunities for acts of collective worship.
- The collective worship in class is characterised by teachers' positive contributions and pupils' meaningful responses.
- The school places clear emphasis on caring, fostering self-confidence, respect and consideration for others.
- Pupils' moral development is very good. The school promotes clear values and instils positive attitudes in its pupils. Most pupils have a clear understanding of right from wrong, understand and abide by the school rules, and show respect for others.
- Pupils' social development is very good. Relationships amongst the pupils themselves and between teachers and pupils are very good.
- Pupils' cultural development is very good.

- The Welsh dimension is reflected in the school's curriculum and ethos. The school makes a very good contribution to the Welsh cultural activities in the community together with pupils' cultural education generally.
- Through studies in many lessons and from visits abroad pupils broaden their knowledge and understanding of other cultures.
- Pupils feel secure and are confident that they can turn to their teachers with any problems.
- Charity work is a very significant feature of the school's activities.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no significant shortcomings.

### **Leadership, Management and Efficiency**

The headteacher's leadership is very effective. The governing body, the deputy headteachers and all staff with management responsibilities support him very well. There is a good sense of unity of purpose in the school and a strong corporate ethos, based upon a common belief that all pupils should be valued and provided with the best opportunities to achieve their potential in a caring and supportive environment. Recent results in external examinations bear testament to the fact that the school is far from complacent; it continues to seek for ways to raise standards even further. Many of the school's operative structures and practices have been recognised by national bodies as examples of good practice.

### **Positive features**

- The quality of departmental leadership is predominantly very good.
- The school operates very good procedures for measuring its effectiveness. In consequence, it sets realistic yet challenging targets for future success.
- The day-to-day administration of the school is very efficient and effective. Support staff in all areas make valuable contributions to the smooth operation of the school.
- Financial planning and control procedures are very effective. The latest auditors' report recognised the school's methods as good.
- The school manages its budget well. It takes appropriate steps to ensure value for money and financial decisions are taken in accordance with the school's educational priorities and objectives as identified in its improvement plan.
- The governors play an active and supportive role in the school. They are well informed about the school's work and have a good awareness of the school's strengths, shortcomings and targets.
- Teachers' qualifications and experience match the requirements of the national and wider curricula. Deployment of staff ensures that individual teachers' knowledge and skills are used most effectively to the pupils' benefit.
- Procedures for induction of new staff, continuing professional development and performance management are very good.
- The overall good accommodation and learning resources have a positive effect on pupils' standards of achievement.

### **Shortcomings**

- Lack of easy access to ICT amenities in a few subjects restricts teachers' ability to use such facilities to best advantage in teaching the subjects concerned.

- The accommodation provided for pupils with Asperger’s Syndrome, whilst well suited to their learning needs, does not offer sufficient space for social interaction.

**The effectiveness with which the issues identified in the previous report have been addressed**

The school has made very good progress in addressing the issues highlighted in the previous report.

Of the seven key points for action that were identified in the previous inspection report, very good progress has been made in addressing five of them and good progress in the other two.

- All faculties have addressed the issues of pupils’ oral skills and participation in lessons well and standards are now very good.
- Standards in art are now good throughout and pupils make good progress.
- All subjects now use NC levels consistently in their assessment procedures. The school provides good, informative reports for parents. Form tutors and heads of year are actively involved in monitoring pupils’ progress.
- Timetabled lessons are now provided for IT in KS3, satisfying statutory requirements, and giving pupils a firm foundation in using ICT. Pupils use better equipment than was the case previously. Considerable progress has been made in using ICT in most subjects, but there is room for further improvement.
- Improved time allowances provide for better opportunities for pupils to receive religious education. Regular assemblies and ‘thoughts for the day’ cover requirements for the act of collective worship.
- There are now clearly delineated paths to produce a school evaluation report that results in the school improvement plan (SIP), which is closely allied to faculty plans. Medium-term planning is very secure now.
- Only a few lessons are now taught by non-specialists. There are no timetable clashes between subjects commonly studied by students in the sixth form.

**Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4**

<b>3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>
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**3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning**

The school’s intake represents the full range of ability and overall is slightly above average. This is confirmed by KS2 test data and other standardised assessment information. When such data are compared with results obtained in KS3 tests and GCSE examinations, they confirm that pupils make at least good progress over both key stages.

Standards were at least satisfactory in almost 100 percent of the classes observed in KS3 and KS4. They were good in 60 percent and very good in a further 20 percent. Standards were slightly higher in KS3 where they were judged as good in 58 percent of the classes, with a further 22 percent very good. In KS4 standards were good in 65 percent of the classes and very good in a further 13 percent. These statistics are a considerable improvement on those recorded at the time of the previous inspection. The figure for satisfactory or better standards

has moved from around 90 percent to almost 100, and the percentage of good or better standards has increased from around 67 to 80 percent.

In the NC tests at the end of KS3 in 2002, 74.2 percent of pupils gained at least level 5 in each of the three core subjects, English or Welsh, mathematics and science, (the core subject indicator), compared with the all Wales figure of 50 percent. The proportion in each of English, mathematics and science for level 5 or above was also well above the national average. Likewise the percentage of pupils achieving at the higher levels of 6 and 7 in these three subjects was well in excess of the national figure, with science being the most successful.

Over time, in comparison with local and national averages, the school has maintained a very good level of success in the GCSE examinations. Since the previous inspection, there has been a steady increase in the percentage of pupils gaining five GCSE grades A\* to C. The 2002 score of 83 percent represents a significant improvement on the figure of 71 percent at the time of the previous inspection. In many subjects the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades A\* and A in 2002 was above local and national averages. For pupils gaining five grades A\* to G, the school's figures are well in excess of the comparators for the UA and the principality. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A\* to C in each of the three subjects, English, mathematics and science (core subject indicator) in 2002 was 70 percent. This figure greatly exceeds the local and national figures of 45 percent and 37 percent respectively.

When the KS3 and KS4 test and examination results are compared with those achieved in other schools in Wales having ten percent or fewer pupils entitled to free school meals, outcomes are well above average on all counts.

In KS3, standards of achievement are at least good in all subjects except in music, where they are, nevertheless, satisfactory. In KS4, at least good standards are achieved in all subjects.

All pupils make good progress and achieve well overall. This is particularly so in KS3 for abler pupils in English, Welsh, mathematics, science and geography, where these pupils achieve very high standards. In KS4, above average pupils achieve very well in English, Welsh, science, geography, physical education, drama and media studies. In all other subjects, except music in KS3, abler pupils achieve good standards in both key stages. In music their standards are satisfactory, but have a few significant shortcomings. For example, some group compositions are limited in musical interest, or evaluations made are brief and superficial. Where standards are very good, as in history for example, abler pupils listen very well to each other and to their teachers, and they undertake very good research work including accessing information from the Internet. They are also skilled at interpreting and evaluating the information obtained, and they can accurately test sources for bias, reliability and usefulness. In English, they produce high quality written work in the form of extended essays and imaginative writing. In these and many other subjects, these pupils recall a wide range of previous work and use it to good effect in coursework or when solving a variety of problems presented to them. They generally make at least good progress through each key stage achieving high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding, often exceeding expectations for their age and ability. The quality of work produced by abler pupils is reflected in the very good outcomes in the KS3 national tests at levels 6 and 7, and in GCSE examinations at grades A and A\*.

Pupils of average ability make at least good progress and achieve good or better standards in all subjects, except music in KS3 where the standards achieved are satisfactory. They achieve very good standards in English, mathematics and science in KS3, and in English, science, history, physical education, drama and media studies in KS4. The at least good standards achieved by most average pupils are accomplished through a wide range of aspects of learning. In English, for example, most pupils are able to explain the effects of the use of language, are aware of the devices used in media texts, and are comfortable with the use of specialist terminology. In media studies, they develop a good understanding of the devices and conventions of media items. They are able to use appropriate terminology in their discussion and analysis, and to produce pieces of work that use them. In many lessons, pupils ask searching questions to confirm or extend their knowledge and understanding as well as answering their teachers' probing questions articulately.

Lower ability pupils make good progress and achieve well in the majority of subjects. Standards achieved by these pupils are very good in KS3 in English and mathematics, and in KS4 in English, history, drama and media studies. Standards achieved by below average pupils in modern foreign languages and music in KS3 and KS4, Welsh and information technology (IT) in KS4, and drama in KS3 have a few shortcomings and are judged as satisfactory. For example, pupils' pronunciation in French in KS3 is unsatisfactory, and in drama some pupils' responses are insufficiently extended. Where less able pupils' standards are good or better, as in media studies, they analyse media texts, identify characters, use technical vocabulary and create their own scenarios and characters, modelling them on the originals. In a range of subjects, good standards are maintained through appropriate careful selection of tasks well matched to pupils' prior achievements and ability.

Pupils with SEN achieve at least good standards, except in modern foreign languages, music, and IT in KS4, where standards are satisfactory. Very good provision is made for those pupils for whom the National Curriculum is disapplied. Appropriate emphasis is placed upon developing pupils' literacy so that they can access the wider curriculum as they progress through the school. These pupils are helped to realise their potential by the very good learning environment provided by the SEN staff, who work effectively. In addition, pupils are helped to achieve well by extra help with many aspects of learning, and by the good support provided in mainstream classes. The well-managed use of a computer-based integrated learning system does much to help these pupils make very good progress particularly in improving their basic skills.

Girls generally perform better than boys in KS4 external examinations in most subjects, as is the case nationally. This is confirmed by the 2002 GCSE data, which indicate that 60 percent of boys in the school achieved grades A\* - C in the core subjects of English/Welsh, mathematics and science, whilst 78 percent of girls achieved this success. In dealing with classwork and homework, girls are often more conscientious, better motivated and better organised than boys, and more systematic in their approach to investigative work.

## **3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum**

Across the curriculum, standards in literacy are very good. Whole-school strategies including staff training, under the guidance of the literacy co-ordinator, have strongly supported literacy development. Standards in numeracy and the use of ICT are good. Pupils are very good at working with each other and good at improving their own learning and performance and solving problems. The recent award of the Quality Mark by the Basic Skills Agency has recognised the school's success in the development of key skills, which contribute substantially to the high standards achieved in subjects.

### **Listening, speaking, reading and writing.**

Across the curriculum, standards in listening are very good. Most pupils listen carefully to teachers' expositions, questions and instructions. They listen courteously and in silence to their peers' contributions, in whole-class activities and in pair and group work. Pupils rarely need to be reminded of the need to focus their attention, or to have instructions repeated. Pupils listen particularly well in English, drama, religious education, design and technology, history and physical education.

Overall, pupils are articulate and standards in speaking are very good. Most pupils are willing, confident and, at times, enthusiastic speakers. Their contributions to lessons are clear, audible and often extended, using language specific to the subjects. Only a small minority of pupils has difficulty in expressing ideas at length or is reluctant to make contributions unless specifically called upon.

Standards in reading across the curriculum are very good. Pupils can extract relevant information from the wide range of reading material they are given to support their answers. Many pupils take advantage of opportunities to read aloud in drama and English, doing so with clarity and expression. Many pupils make good use of independent reading and Internet research to supplement their knowledge. Wide reading for pleasure is strongly promoted in English and the school library is well used. Pupils read particularly well in English, Welsh, media studies, modern foreign languages, history, religious education, drama, design and technology and in personal, social, religious education (PSRE).

Standards in writing are very good. Pupils are required to write in different styles for a range of purposes. They record their learning well in the form of notes, organise their ideas well to answer questions and produce increasingly extended writing as they move up the school. In KS4 there are some examples of project and course work of very high quality. A minority of pupils, generally of lower ability, is not confident in spelling. The organisation of written work and correctness of expression are assisted by drafting and revising. The quality of presentation is mostly good and it is enhanced by a great deal of skilful use of ICT. Writing is particularly good in English, history, PSRE, drama and media studies.

### **Numeracy**

Standards in numeracy across the curriculum are good. Many departments have planned for the development of numeracy in their schemes of work, but some others have not. Consequently, the work on numeracy, although good, is inconsistent across the departments.

Among the departments that make positive contributions to the development of numeracy are science, geography, history, IT and mathematics. In science, the majority of pupils are confident in the use of number; they are also able to substitute correctly into formulae, and to transform formulae competently. In geography, pupils handle data well, and can draw graphs effectively. There is good use of graphs also in history, together with time lines and investigations involving statistical and census data. In IT, pupils model number well. The mathematics department is involved in strategies to improve the pupils' mental mathematical skills.

The school has already taken steps to develop the promotion of numeracy across the curriculum by carrying out an audit of departmental contributions. Currently, not all departments contribute sufficiently to improving numeracy across the curriculum.

### **Information and communication technology**

Overall standards are good. At both key stages pupils communicate information well and effectively use the Internet for research purposes. Handling and modelling information are satisfactory. Pupils have good access to computers inside and outside lessons and make good use of them to enhance their standards in many subjects. In English and design and technology very good standards are achieved at both key stages, and in Welsh, geography and art good standards are achieved. In music, drama and business, standards are good at KS4. In the remaining subjects, the use of ICT is satisfactory other than in music at KS3, where it is unsatisfactory.

Pupils develop good skills in their IT lessons at KS3, which gives them confidence to apply their skills, often autonomously, in most subjects across the curriculum. Researching and communicating information are particular strengths. Pupils use the Internet well and at KS3 and KS4 produce well researched and well presented information in a variety of forms. These skills are particularly evident in Welsh, English and geography. In design and technology pupils make very good use of computer aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM). Good use is made of digitising and manipulating images in art. Pupils with SEN significantly improve their literacy skills using reading and spelling packages, particularly in KS3.

### **Working with others**

Pupils' ability to work with others is very good overall and particularly so in English, history, religious education, modern foreign languages, design and technology, PSRE, drama and media studies. Pupils work well together in teams or small groups, engaging in meaningful debate and giving due consideration to each other's proposals or arguments. In design and technology, for example, pupils are very co-operative; they willingly share ideas and resources to mutual advantage. In geography, pupils respond very well to the department's enquiry-based teaching and learning strategies, working together effectively to improve their reasoning and decision making skills.

### **Improving own learning and performance**

Pupils are good at reviewing their own progress, as the school actively promotes such activities, and they respond enthusiastically. Within many classes across the curriculum, pupils are involved at regular intervals in evaluating their achievement and progress, often using well-prepared documents to do so. Through a variety of strategies, including good feedback on performance via marking and personal comments, pupils make informed

decisions about the next steps to take. In many cases, pupils seek to improve their own learning by making use of the ICT facilities available in the school.

### **Problem solving**

Pupils' problem solving skills are good. Good examples occur in many subjects, such as in geography where many pupils show initiative in preparing solutions to problems such as when considering a resolution of conflict of interests in fragile environments. In many subjects tasks are open-ended, requiring pupils to provide individual solutions, such as in mathematics GCSE coursework, where pupils work well and persevere when presented with a range of challenging problems.

## **4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

The school is a very happy, caring community where all concerned work together to create an ethos where pupils are valued as individuals. Spiritual development is good, and moral, social and cultural development very good.

Pupils' spiritual development is promoted by means of religious education provision and collective worship. The spiritual dimension has also been identified in aspects of the National Curriculum subjects such as English, science, music and art. On three days a week a whole school act of collective worship happens and on the other two days there is a 'thought for the day'. No whole school service took place during the week of the inspection, because the hall was needed for external examinations. From evidence collected, the worship includes appropriate presentations by pupils, members of staff and visiting speakers, together with prayers. It is Christian in nature and themes are related effectively to the life and work of the school and the community. Music is used to enrich and create a suitable ethos at the beginning. The collective worship observed in class is characterised by the positive contribution of teachers and a meaningful contribution of pupils.

Moral issues are regularly raised in collective worship and in lessons. The school places clear emphasis on caring, fostering self-confidence, respect and consideration for others. The school has a multicultural policy and issues related to prejudice, honesty, choice and responsibility are discussed with sensitivity in religious education, PSRE, English and other subjects. Pupils respect truth and justice. In a range of subjects including geography, science and PSRE, pupils reflect on wider moral and ethical concerns relating to the environment, economics and racism. Pupils show their concern for others by initiating and enthusiastically supporting events that raise substantial sums of money to support local and national charities. They include Hope House, Christian Aid, and sponsoring a child in Africa through Child Action Aid. Pupils are courteous and treat their environment with respect.

The social awareness of pupils is fostered by means of a large number of activities. A very strong community feeling is established and pupils are proud of their school. The relationship between pupils and teachers is very good. Pupils co-operate in pairs and groups naturally and happily. They mix very well socially and co-operate confidently across the age range. Pupils are confident and self-disciplined. They develop their sense of responsibility and the ability to show initiative in many ways. Year councils and the school council provide very good

opportunities for pupils to voice their opinions and to participate in decision-making. The curriculum successfully develops pupils' understanding of their place in society through work experience and extensive community and industrial links. The school has a clear and explicit policy to address issues of racial equality.

There is a good range of extra-curricular activities that extends pupils' personal, social and cultural development. There are regular visits to educational places of interest and an extensive range of sporting activities, which are well supported. The instrumental groups, choirs and the musical activities make an important contribution to the cultural life of the school. The Welsh dimension is reflected in the school's curriculum and ethos. The school makes a very good contribution to the Welsh cultural activities in the community together with pupils' cultural education generally. Pupils take part in eisteddfodau, Urdd activities, concerts and a variety of activities. European and international awareness is developed through specific aspects of the curriculum, exchanges with schools in France, Germany and Spain, and through numerous opportunities to visit different countries outside Wales. Multi-cultural education is evident in aspects of the work in many subjects, for example religious education, PSRE, music, art and geography where pupils are given the opportunity to appreciate and study cultures different from their own. The numerous displays around the school record pupils' visits, activities and successes. They indicate the commitment of pupils and teachers to the life and values of the school.

Good quality instrumental tuition, provided for one in ten of pupils on roll, together with numerous extra-curricular ensembles of good and sometimes very good standard, complement the work of the music department. These make a worthwhile contribution to the life of the school and the community.

## **4.2 Behaviour and attitudes**

The overall quality of behaviour and the attitudes to learning are very good. They make an important contribution to the very good learning environment and quality of life that all pupils enjoy.

In lessons pupils are eager to participate and work conscientiously, with sustained effort. Individually they swiftly learn to take responsibility for their own learning but they also collaborate well in pairs or groups. The great majority take a justifiable pride in their achievements.

The schools' well-defined but unobtrusive discipline procedures are respected and regarded as fair; they successfully promote good behaviour. Pupils clearly understand the benefits of the high standards of behaviour expected of them and respond in a positive manner; they are considerate and courteous, relating well to each other and to teachers and visitors. The pastoral support scheme for pupils at risk of exclusion is very effective.

No instances of bullying, sexism, racism or other forms of discrimination were seen during the inspection. Pupils throughout the school affirm that they are effectively eliminated; any suggested instance is swiftly and efficiently dealt with.

The school excludes very few pupils, and then only after all agreed procedures have been implemented and alternative strategies have been considered.

### **4.3 Attendance**

The overall attendance at school for Y7 – Y11 is good, averaging just below 94 percent for the past year. The level of unauthorised absence is extremely low.

The school makes very good progress towards meeting attendance targets. An effective merit scheme rewards improvement in attendance and pupils readily accept the challenge of their individual targets. Allied with the good support of parents and rigorous implementation of a first-day response to absence the strategies have secured a steady improvement in the overall attendance over the past few years.

Pupils are very punctual arriving at school in the morning and usually prompt for the start of individual lessons. Tutor group registration is efficiently taken at the start of morning and afternoon sessions, and subject teachers routinely take registers for their classes. The school fully complies with Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) Circular 3/99.

## **5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **5.1 Teaching**

High quality teaching is one of the school's strongest features. It has a very constructive influence on pupils' learning, behaviour and attitudes, and is thus the major contributor to the at least good standards achieved by most pupils.

Teaching was at least satisfactory in almost 100 percent of classes observed, and good or very good in 72 percent. These figures are well in excess of national expectations for 2002: 95 percent and 50 percent respectively. There was very little difference in the quality of teaching between the two key stages. These figures represent a considerable improvement since the previous inspection, when teaching was satisfactory or better in 90 percent of lessons, and good or better in 40 percent.

Teachers are suitably well qualified, and they have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. This secure base of knowledge, often kept up-to-date through continuing professional development, enables them to prepare appropriately challenging work for their pupils. Often teachers' enthusiasm motivates and encourages pupils to enjoy their learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, allowing learning to occur in a friendly and caring, but well-structured, atmosphere.

Based upon at least good schemes of work, teachers plan very well to use the teaching time available to them most effectively. They provide a very good range of activities to cater for the needs of all pupils, whether in sets or mixed ability groups. They complement these with appropriate assessment procedures to measure progress and to provide feedback to pupils on how to improve. They organise and manage their classes well and use a good range of teaching methods and strategies that are successful in maintaining pupils' interest in their work and in ensuring that they make good progress. In most lessons, based upon teachers' high expectations of success, work is very challenging and a good pace of progress is maintained. Often pupils are given tight time schedules to complete aspects of the work in lessons, and this assists in moving learning forward at a good pace. In most lessons, pupils

are informed of the learning objectives at the beginning of a lesson, and at the close they are required to highlight the main features of the session, thus determining what they have learned and what progress they have made. This is very good practice.

Within many classes, teachers use well-considered questions to probe pupils' understanding and to encourage them to think deeply about their answers before responding. Such practices do much to aid progress in lessons, and add breadth and depth to pupils' learning.

In many subjects, teachers prepare very good materials for learning and support, in addition to published texts and other items. In this way they cater for the needs of all pupils. All these resources and others, such as ICT and audio-visual aids equipment, are used effectively and efficiently to provide suitable learning opportunities.

Pupils with SEN are taught by subject specialists or by teachers with expertise in teaching pupils with SEN. Teachers know their pupils well and they provide good, and often very good, teaching, care and support for them. Teachers modify tasks and materials for pupils with SEN to make them appropriate to their needs. They use individual education plans effectively to provide work appropriate for their needs. Learning support staff also provide good care for pupils with statements of SEN, and others with SEN, and help them to achieve well.

Teachers make good use of some very good displays of pupils' work in classrooms and laboratories to motivate pupils to learn well.

In a few curricular areas a small proportion of the teaching, although exhibiting many good features, has shortcomings. For example, in modern foreign languages, lower ability pupils are sometimes inappropriately challenged; the pace is too fast and there is too much grammatical content. In some music lessons, the pace slackens because activities go on too long and pupils lose their focus on learning, and they then engage in idle chatter.

Teachers help pupils consolidate and extend their learning by setting homework of appropriate challenge and interest. The homework, often and appropriately, includes work to develop pupils' creative and investigative skills. In most subjects, teachers help pupils to make progress through the use of constructive marking that shows them how to improve.

Many teachers give generously of their time outside lessons to help individuals and to offer extra-curricular activities to extend and broaden pupils' learning.

## **5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting**

The school's policies for assessment, recording and reporting appropriately aim to highlight achievements and to further pupils' attainments and progress. They set a clear framework for individual departments to develop their own detailed policies, and the members of the senior management team are involved in monitoring closely every department's adherence to that framework. Consequently, the implementation of assessment, recording and reporting is generally very successful, with many examples of good and very good practice.

Pupils' work, including homework, is accurately marked using the whole school system. There is some variation in the quantity and quality of written comments on pupils' work, but in the main, these are good. In the best cases, constructive and accurate marking includes

helpful comments, indicating pupils' specific strengths and weaknesses, together with indications as to how they could make further progress. Good and, in some cases, very good use is made of oral feedback, including praise and encouragement. All departments make good use of pupils' self-assessments based on clear criteria, and pupils are well aware of how to improve. Regular formal assessments are related well to NC levels in KS3, and to examination grades in KS4.

Teachers' records are good; they record grades accurately. Within departments there are some very thorough procedures to ensure that standards are consistent between teachers. Good central records are kept, and form tutors use these effectively to monitor the pupils' academic progress. This feature of the form tutor's role has been substantially developed since the last inspection. Target setting by departments is good; they are given a substantial amount of statistical data by senior staff to assist the process, and these data are generally well used. Departments also set challenging individual targets for pupils. The members of the school's senior management team mentor some Y11 pupils who are suspected of underachieving. This is good practice.

The quality of reporting to parents is good on the whole. There is one report each year, together with an interim report for Y9 pupils in November. However, there is some variety in the standard of reporting between departments at present. Best practice is observed when the annual report gives an account of strengths, weaknesses and sets targets; reporting by some departments is too superficial, and comments tend not to be sufficiently specific to the subjects concerned. Although the school has improved the standard of its reports to parents since the last inspection, there is still room for further improvement, notably in the consistency of reporting across departments.

### **5.3 Curriculum**

The quality, breadth and balance of the curriculum for pupils of all abilities are good in KS3 and KS4. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements for the NC and religious education. Curricular provision is effective and pupils of all abilities have equal access and opportunity. Pupils with SEN have access to the full curriculum and examination courses, and enjoy good support for integration into the full life of the school. In total, seventeen pupils are appropriately disapplied from aspects of the NC and follow suitable alternative courses. The school curriculum meets the recommended 25-hour teaching week.

In KS3, pupils follow a curriculum that includes all subjects of the NC, religious education and personal and social education (PSRE). Subjects are allocated an appropriate number of lessons, classes being arranged in either mixed ability or setted groupings. All pupils study French as their main foreign language. In Y9, pupils can attend a short lunchtime lesson as an introduction to German and preparation for KS4. A small number of pupils with SEN are withdrawn from some Welsh and French lessons to provide support for the rest of the curriculum. The school's provision for Welsh medium courses in KS3 is appropriate. A small number of pupils follow courses in mathematics, science, history, geography and religious education. Pupils study information technology as part of an activity rotation within design and technology; drama is also delivered during English lessons. One teaching group in Y9 has the opportunity of being entered for a half GCSE qualification in religious education.

In KS4, the organisation of the common core curriculum ensures that pupils have access to English, mathematics, double award science, Welsh, physical education, PSRE and religious

education. Pupils can choose from four option columns and the introduction of media studies, business studies and Spanish in addition to the subjects studied at KS3 widens their choice and allows them to fulfil the requirements of the NC and pursue personal interests. Nearly every pupil follows a GCSE design and technology course. At present, there is no provision for vocational courses in KS4. A small number of pupils continue their studies through the medium of Welsh in mathematics, science and geography. In Y10, the school has recently organised an alternative curriculum for three pupils; they attend a work placement for four days and return to school one day per week to ensure that their curriculum meets with NC requirements.

Arrangements for teaching PSRE are very good. Pupils value the content of the course, which is closely linked to Welsh Assembly Government guidelines and includes elements relating to personal, social, physical, emotional, health and careers education. In KS4, religious education is included as part of the programme; pupils are able to complete a half GCSE qualification in the subject.

Planning for the development of key skills across the curriculum is good, overall. Significant progress has been made in literacy and ICT over the last two years, and this is reflected in almost all schemes of work. Numeracy is not as well developed, however an audit has been carried out in mathematics, science, design and technology and the humanities subjects. Planning for the development of Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig and multi-cultural education is good overall, with very good features in English, history, geography, art, Welsh, religious education and music. The school was successful in gaining the Basic Skills Quality Mark in March 2003.

In almost all subjects, schemes of work are suitably detailed, cover the requirements of the NC and provide good guidance for teaching and learning and continuity and progression between key stages. Homework is set regularly in most subjects and provides appropriate opportunities for pupils to extend and consolidate their work. There is a homework timetable and all pupils have a homework diary, which most use well to manage their learning.

Continuity in the curriculum between key stages within the school is good. Curricular links with feeder primary schools are developing, being good in English, mathematics, history and Welsh. A well-organised programme of work experience is provided for all pupils in Y10 towards the end of the summer term.

Extra-curricular provision is good in many subjects even though the large number of pupils travelling considerable distances to school affects some activities. There are many visits off-site for fieldwork, to places of interest and to venues such as theatres and galleries. A large number of pupils represent the school in musical and sporting activities with considerable success. At present, the school organises exchanges for pupils in France and Spain. Pupils benefit from the range of activities available, which broaden their experiences and promote their personal and social development.

## **5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

The quality of the provision for the support and guidance of pupils is very good. Very good procedures for health and safety ensure pupils' welfare.

The school is very mindful of its responsibilities in these areas. Its aims include creating a caring environment and valuing all pupils equally. These are reflected in clear school policies on child protection, equal opportunities, race equality, substance abuse and the prevention of and response to bullying. A social inclusion co-ordinator and a pastoral support programme promote inclusion in accordance with WAG Circular 3/99. The pastoral arrangements further the school aims by providing a warm and caring “family” atmosphere. The responsibilities of form tutors and heads of school are clearly identified within a strong pastoral structure managed by a deputy headteacher. The placing of pupils in mixed-ability tutor groups on entry, sensitively integrating pupils with special educational needs, supports care for and the valuing of the individual. Care begins before pupils arrive from the primary schools, through good liaison with them by the school’s primary/secondary transition co-ordinator.

Form tutors are responsible for pupils’ welfare and discipline. Regular contact in registration, form time and during PSRE lessons enables good relationships to develop. Tutors get to know their tutor groups well, staying with them as they move up the school. Tutors carefully monitor behaviour, attendance and progress in relation to pupils’ targets through day-to-day contact, the checking of homework diaries and regular, recorded, interviews. Form tutors’ contributions to pupils’ reports are supportive and show good knowledge and understanding of the pupils in their care. Subject teachers give good additional support to pupils in a variety of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are clear in the knowledge that they can take particular problems to staff and receive good support. The school has a strong anti-bullying policy. Any incidents are reported and action taken – the evidence of pupil interviews is that they feel safe and secure. A deputy head is the nominated person in charge of child protection, and a very clear policy document provides useful guidance to staff.

The school promotes positive attitudes and the strong house system offers the opportunity to celebrate pupils’ achievements and provides a good framework for competitions and events. The house system is only one of a number of opportunities for personal development the school offers to pupils. Pupils can enjoy a range of responsibilities as house officers, year and school council representatives.

The programme of PSRE devised by heads of year and taught by form tutors for a lesson each week supports pupils’ guidance and welfare. Units of work in PSRE lessons complement subject contributions to give good coverage of the learning outcomes identified in the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales’ (ACCAC) framework. Careers education forms part of the PSRE programme. This component, well managed by the school careers co-ordinator, is informed by the ACCAC Work-related Education Framework and gives good coverage of the identified outcomes. Pupils develop good understanding of the world of work and have a well-planned provision of advice and help with subject and career choices, supplemented by the school careers library, where information is also available on computer. There is close liaison with Careers Wales, which provides good support, advice and interviews. Pupils are well prepared for a week’s work experience in Y10 and their diaries and feedback from employers are important records of their personal development.

Procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils are very good. There is a clear school policy; the school has three qualified first-aiders and a nurse visits weekly. A health and safety co-ordinator carefully conducts a programme of safety checks and inspection of the premises. Fire and evacuation procedures are well documented and regularly practiced.

Subject departments make formal risk assessments and pupils are given clear guidelines on safe practice.

The school has maintained the high standards of support and guidance reported in the previous inspection and has instituted a good structure of form tutor interviews, more closely to monitor pupils' progress, as advocated in the report.

## **5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)**

The provision for pupils with SEN is very good and the school's response to the requirements of the Code of Practice is very good. Pupils are very well integrated into the life of the school.

In the small groups in English, Maths and Humanities, pupils with SEN make good progress. Good examples of differentiation in the teaching develop the pupils' ability to express themselves clearly and with confidence. They respond eagerly to work in class and make thoughtful contributions. They can read their own work and set texts aloud with understanding. In KS4, these pupils have access to GCSE courses and most achieve well. ICT programmes are used effectively to support the learning.

Subject departments are responsible for providing suitable work for pupils within their curricular areas. The co-ordinator distributes good information together with a Provision Record to promote the work. There are very good examples in subjects of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) being developed. They include appropriate subject specific targets. There is very good contact between the faculties and the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO).

In targeted mixed ability classes nine learning support assistants (LSAs) offer very good support. The work is well directed to ensure effective support. A record is kept of the effectiveness of the support, or if the pupil is absent, of the work done. The information is shared weekly with SENCO and used as a basis for future planning. Seventeen pupils with specific learning difficulties receive support in the resource base. They follow a relevant multi-sensory programme and are making very good progress. They are achieving good standards in their literacy skills and develop useful strategies to improve their organisational skills. In KS4, they receive good cross-curricular support.

The recently established resource base for pupils with Asperger's Syndrome is well organised and provides for the five pupils a secure base from which to integrate into mainstream. Pupils follow appropriate programmes, including specific programmes prepared by the speech and language therapist. Pupils' records show that they are making good progress in their basic skills, social skills and benefiting from inclusion in mainstream.

Twenty pupils have statements of SEN. Statements are reviewed effectively and parents, external agencies and the UA are consulted according to need. Seventeen pupils have been appropriately disapplied from an element of the National Curriculum to enable them to get additional help with their literacy and numeracy skills. Sixty-three pupils are on School Concern, School Action and School Action Plus of the SEN register. This is lower than the national average. The register of SEN is a useful working document and is reviewed regularly. Every pupil on the register has an appropriate Provision Record and there are good examples of IEPs in the subjects. These are shared with the pupils and their parents, which is good practice.

The SENCO provides very good guidance and information for the school. The headteacher and the governors offer good support and ensure quality provision for pupils with SEN. The school has a caring environment where pupils with SEN can integrate successfully into mainstream.

## **5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions**

The quality of these partnerships is very good, contributing significantly to the quality of life in school and to pupils' development.

Parents are well informed about the organisation and content of both curriculum and pastoral support through a clearly written prospectus and options booklets; newsletters keep them up-to-date and further inform of developments and achievements in school. They receive a detailed annual report from the governors reviewing school achievements, progress and ambitions. All parents happily enter into a home-school agreement. Reports on pupils' progress are satisfactory and parents benefit from well-organised parent evenings at which pupils' achievements and well-being can be discussed. Parents' views are valued by the school and constructively used in the determination of school policies. An active parent and teacher association (PTA) is an important and successful fund-raiser, and also provides other very good support for school functions.

The school has extensive links with, and is held in high regard by the community. School facilities are well used for leisure and learning, and the community enjoys school concerts and other functions. Several local enterprises benefit from help provided by pupils fulfilling the service element of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Local charities are well supported by the fund-raising efforts of pupils. Good links with a local church benefit learning in religious education, and several other departments visit local sites to support their curriculum.

KS2 to KS3 transition is very well organised. Regular meetings between the primary headteachers and Llanidloes senior staff, together with a properly timetabled programme of visits for teachers and taster days for pupils ensure a good exchange of pastoral and other information to ease transition. A wide range of curricular links, including core subject projects that span Y6 and Y7, greatly enhance educational progression.

Links with further education colleges and higher education institutes are very good. Pupils are made well aware of education opportunities available elsewhere that the school cannot provide.

There are well-established links with initial teacher training institutes and several departments make good use of trainees. These students bring fresh perspectives and different styles to the classroom to the benefit of pupils.

## **5.7 Partnership with industry**

The partnership with industry is very good; links are well focused, embrace all years and are effectively co-ordinated by staff with appropriate and clearly designed briefs. Consequently, the school has benefited from a considerable level of support and sponsorship from industry.

The school has an effective policy and good strategies for work-related education. Pupils usefully explore personal characteristics and preferences in PSRE during Y7 and Y8 and then these are constructively linked to both option choice and to the world of work in focused career education lessons, and informal interviews with a career advisor in Y9. Further development of potential career options in Y10 is profitably linked to forthcoming work-experience placements. This formal education is re-enforced by a variety of attractive activities such as a Business Forum, Exhibitions, 'Host an Employer' evenings, and Enterprise schemes for all years at the end of the school year.

Good relationships with the local training and enterprise council (TEC), Education and Learning Wales (ELWa), an Education Business Partnership (EBP) and career company help broker career education, work-experience and staff placements in industry. The school sensibly encourages placement in industry for staff development where positive benefits for school management or enhancement of curriculum delivery can be expected. A recent placement has informed the schools' appraisal and self-evaluation procedures. Career advisory staff are usefully available in school four days each week to give constructive guidance to staff and pupils.

Well-focused work experience opportunities are provided for all Y10 pupils. Pupils are well briefed beforehand, encouraged to keep a useful and well-targeted diary of their placement and benefit from de-briefing in classroom discussion afterwards. Particularly good use is made of the work-experience for developing literacy skills. Y11 pupils produce guidance booklets based on their personal experience that might help successive Y10 pupils to get the best from their work placements.

Overall the programme of work-related education in school provides a good link between employment and the curriculum and acts as a useful stimulus to learning and personal development.

## **6. MANAGEMENT**

### **6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement**

The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is very good. Based upon a wealth of information derived from its evaluation procedures the SIP contains a set of very good and appropriate objectives for further growth.

The school has clearly understood very good procedures for evaluating its performance and planning future developments. The regular and rigorous application of these measures in all areas has enabled the school to make very good progress since its previous inspection in a number of important areas, not least in the quality of teaching and learning, and the consequent standards achieved by its pupils. The school is not in any way complacent about its success.

All members of the school improvement group (SIG) have clearly defined roles and the focus of the group is clearly on improvement, rather than maintaining the status quo. They provide good management and leadership to all staff and place appropriate emphasis upon significant analyses and use of a wealth of data about pupils' performances. Pupils' achievement is reviewed regularly through analyses of public examination results, comparative data and value added data, along with comparisons with national and local information.

The monitoring and review of the work of pupils and staff are central to the process of improvement. The headteacher and other senior staff regularly monitor the work of departments and pupils. These occasions include observation of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' written work and interviews. Every year each faculty is evaluated in depth and these evaluations inform development plans, satisfy many performance management requirements and highlight areas for professional development. Regular dialogue also occurs between each head of faculty and his/her designated senior staff mentor. Thus evaluation is an ongoing process and is very effective.

Senior staff, particularly a deputy headteacher, rigorously analyse pupils' examination results and a very good range of other detailed assessment data. These analyses, as well as indications of what value could be added to pupils' previous achievements, along with individual pupils' targets for future success, are made available for all staff, either as hardcopy or from the school's central computerised system. Using the data to good effect, most teachers check for underachievement and subsequently determine the causes of good or inadequate achievement.

Most faculties and departments exhibit a strong ethos for improvement. There is a willingness to examine critically the work of pupils and teachers. Constant reviews of procedures, schemes of work and methodologies are carried out and acted upon. The monitoring of the work of teachers and pupils is effective in the departments. There is a good understanding of each department's strengths and areas for development. Teachers share good practice and pupils benefit from this. There is a real sense of teamwork in most subjects. Good use is made of the assessment data both to help pupils achieve higher standards and to ensure that the teaching programme is adjusted suitably to meet pupils' needs.

In music and modern foreign languages, systems are insufficiently rigorous to be fully effective. Lack of clear agreed criteria for improvement, along with inconsistencies in monitoring teaching, learning and pupils' work, hinder developments for raising standards.

Governors are very supportive. They regularly review the school's performance and have a good awareness of the school's strengths and shortcomings.

The school carefully considers the comments made by parents at parental consultation evenings and at other times. The views of pupils are taken into account and acted upon through the school council, and they influence the content of the school's improvement plan.

The school has made very good progress in implementing its action plan from the previous inspection. It sets challenging but achievable targets for improvement in external examination results, and for attendance.

## **6.2 Leadership and efficiency**

The headteacher provides very good leadership and this is a major influence in maintaining and improving upon the high standards achieved at the school. He knows both staff and pupils well and he has a very thorough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. He also has very clear ideas of how it can continue to improve the quality of education it provides. He receives very good support from the deputy headteachers and members of the school improvement group. With him they unite to form an active and effective management organisation. A very good team spirit exists within this structure and throughout the school. There are clearly defined roles for all staff and individuals' strengths are used to best effect in maintaining an efficient organisation. The school is an extremely orderly community.

The school's aims, which seek to give opportunities for all to learn to the best of their ability, are driven forward by the school's very good improvement plan and in consequence there is a clear vision and sense of direction in the school. All parties concerned in the life of the school work hard to provide for all pupils' academic and personal development, regardless of gender, race or ability, in a challenging yet very supportive atmosphere. The school encourages pupils to have positive attitudes towards their work, to behave well, to take part in a very good range of extra-curricular activities and to have confidence in themselves. It achieves very well in these aspects.

The effectiveness of faculty and departmental leadership and management is very good overall. Handbooks and schemes of work are very good in most cases, and they provide a secure foundation for work within areas of the curriculum. Overall, in faculties and departments, resources are managed very well, financial management is very good and routine organisation is very effective. Often there is very good liaison between teachers in departments, and a willingness to share good practice with a view to raising pupils' standards of achievement even further. Planning for progress and continuity within the curriculum is good in most departments.

Governors carry out their duties effectively and efficiently. They support the school well in all areas of its life and work. They have a wide range of valuable experience and expertise, which they use well to help move the school forward. They are involved in all aspects of planning, monitoring and evaluating the school's performance, through the work of a range

of appropriate committees. Consequently they are fully aware of the school's strengths and shortcomings, and the strategies to be employed for improvement, as seen within the very good improvement plan. The annual report of governors to parents is detailed and thorough.

Teachers set achievable but challenging targets to maintain progress and they use resources effectively. Appropriately there is a very strong emphasis upon continuing professional development, so that pupils can receive the best teaching to help them improve.

Financial planning and management are very good. Governors and senior staff work well together to achieve this. The school handles its income of around £2.3 million prudently and efficiently and maintains an appropriate surplus year on year. The budget is set by correct reference to the agreed curriculum and the consequent staffing, accommodation and learning resource needs. Daily management of finances, especially that undertaken by the school's bursar, is very efficient. Spending decisions are taken only after proper consideration of the school's agreed priorities for improvement, and then the personnel concerned take particular care to ensure that best value for money is obtained. The governing body also exercises careful oversight of the school's finances, staffing provision and appointments. The latest auditors' report received by the school commended it on its good practice.

Staffing costs per pupil are around the national average. The school's pupil to teacher ratio and its average class size are better than national norms. Expenditure per pupil on books and equipment is around the national figure. Capitation is awarded to departments by an equitable formulaic system, and in most cases the allowances are good, enabling subjects to provide well for their pupils. Overall, all resources are used to very good effect and efficiently. Staff are well deployed across the age and ability range, time in class is used well and teaching time meets national recommendations.

Day-to-day organisation and administration are very efficient and effective. Support staff in all areas make a positive and valuable contribution to the smooth running and very good ethos of the school.

The school meets statutory requirements relating to pupils' entitlement to subjects in the curriculum. It follows the guidelines of the Wales Assembly Government's circulars and takes due note of advice received from ACCAC.

### **6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

#### **Staffing**

The school is well staffed with the equivalent of 49.8 teachers. This allows the school to benefit from a pupil to teacher ratio of 15.5 to 1, better than the national average of 16.7 to 1, but greater than the UA average of 14.7 to 1. Overall there is a good balance of age and experience within the staff and their expertise matches the requirements of the national and wider curricula. In a few subjects, though, such as in religious education, some teachers do not have formal qualifications in the subjects concerned. Nevertheless there is no measurable detrimental effect on learning and standards. In almost all subjects deployment of staff ensures that individual teachers' knowledge and skills are used most effectively, to pupils' benefit.

Technical support is good throughout the school and the personnel concerned help teaching staff provide meaningful learning opportunities for pupils to make progress and achieve well. The provision and activities of support staff for pupils with SEN are very good.

In the areas of administration and site maintenance the school is staffed very well. The caretakers and the cleaning staff do their best to ensure that the building is kept in good repair, very clean and as safe as possible for pupils. Likewise, administration personnel undertake their duties very well, and they respond willingly to extra demands upon their time, to provide the school with an effective and efficient support system.

The induction programme for all new staff to the school is very good and has been recognised nationally as an example of good practice for early professional development. This, along with other aspects of support for staff, such as monitoring of teaching and learning, do much to provide a very good ongoing structure for continuing professional development that leads to improved standards. The school operates a very effective professional development review system, and accurate, up-to-date, records of staff development are kept. All members of staff are required to complete formal evaluations of such activities and to indicate what positive effects on teaching and learning should ensue following the training session(s). This is very good practice.

All teachers take advantage of the good range of in-house and externally provided programmes to extend their expertise. The school has taken advantage of the financial support available through the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) to train all teachers in use of ICT to support the whole curriculum. This is having a substantial positive effect on improving the already good use of ICT in the school.

### **Accommodation**

The accommodation is good for the number of pupils on roll and the curriculum provided. The quality of specialist accommodation varies from very good to satisfactory. Nowhere was the accommodation judged to be unsatisfactory. Overall the accommodation has a good effect on pupils' standards of achievement.

Since the previous inspection, a number of improvements have been carried out. These have helped the school to provide a safe and welcoming environment in which pupils achieve considerable success.

The school has managed to arrange departments in suites of rooms as far as possible and, on the whole, this enables effective communication and the sharing of resources to take place.

Many classrooms throughout the school are enhanced by interesting displays, which create a subject identity and provide a stimulating environment for learning. Most corridors in the school contain good quality displays celebrating the efforts and achievements of pupils or good examples of the work of professional artists.

The internal fabric of the accommodation is very good overall. The caretakers and the cleaners work hard to keep it that way and to ensure a very good level of cleanliness throughout the school. The site is noticeably free of graffiti and litter.

However, there are still a few shortcomings. In physical education, there is a shortage of large teaching spaces both indoors and outdoors and this restricts the teaching of a small number of aspects of the subject. Activities in drama are restricted at times because classrooms have to be cleared of desks and chairs before lessons can begin. In music, lack of soundproofing occasionally causes concern when instrumental or vocal activities interfere with teaching in adjacent rooms.

The accommodation provided for pupils with Asperger's Syndrome, whilst well suited to their learning needs, does not offer sufficient space for social interaction.

### **Resources for learning**

The provision and use of resources are good overall. Resources are at least sufficient and appropriate to support the curriculum, with very few shortcomings. These, however, include lack of easy access to ICT amenities in a few subjects and, in music, an inadequate number of classroom instruments.

On the whole there are good supplies of up-to-date textbooks available for most pupils, and teachers often prepare worksheets and other materials to supplement these to enhance learning.

The ratio of pupils to computers is good at just under 5 to 1. The school has made a significant investment to develop computer facilities throughout most of the school. In IT and other lessons the use of interactive white board facilities impacts positively on the ability of pupils to understand aspects of the tasks presented.

The library functions well as a central resource. It is located in the newest part of the buildings and provides a pleasant and well-furnished environment for learning. It is often timetabled for lessons, particularly for English, Welsh and science. In the library, pupils have good access to texts, CD ROMs and computer facilities and they use these to good advantage.

## **7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING**

### **Standards achieved by pupils**

#### **English**

##### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are very good

## **Good features**

- Results in the 2002 KS3 national tests at level 5 or better were above national and local averages.
- In lessons, most pupils listen quietly and attentively to teachers and to their classmates.
- Responses to questions are mostly confident and articulate. Pupils are willing and often enthusiastic speakers.
- Pupils work co-operatively in pair and group speaking activities and prepare conscientiously for oral presentations.
- Reading standards are very good. Pupils have the skills to find information in both fiction and non-fiction texts to support oral and written answers.
- Pupils read widely for pleasure and make good evaluative records of their reading.
- Most pupils respond perceptively to their reading, showing very good understanding of the use of language, and of the terminology and conventions of poetry, drama and the media.
- Pupils undertake a very good range and volume of increasingly extended writing for different purposes, showing the capacity to discuss, analyse and create, mostly expressing themselves with care. They show very good ICT skills.
- Pupils with SEN are able to follow a programme similar to that of their peers and achieve very well.

## **Shortcomings**

- No significant shortcomings were noted, other than some uncertainty in correctness of expression, particularly spelling, by lower ability pupils.

## **KS4**

Standards of achievement are very good

## **Good features**

- In 2002 the GCSE results at grades A\* to C in both English and English Literature were well above national and local averages. The English Literature results were particularly good.
- Pupils work quietly and with concentration and listen very attentively.
- Most pupils are confident speakers who offer articulate and often extended contributions in class, showing good recall of previous work.
- Pupils show very good reading skills, responding very perceptively to set texts and lesson materials. They are able to discuss, analyse and draw conclusions, supporting their views with appropriate evidence.
- Most pupils are able to explain the effects of the use of language, are aware of the devices used in media texts, and are comfortable with the use of specialist terminology.
- Pupils build up an impressive body of extended and well-organised writing, mostly correctly expressed and very carefully presented as a result of conscientious redrafting.
- They show very good ICT skills in the use of word-processing and desktop publishing.
- Lower ability pupils and those with SEN benefit from the good support they are given and achieve well enough to enter successfully for the GCSE.

## **Shortcomings**

- No significant shortcomings were noted, other than some uncertainty in correctness of expression, particularly spelling, by lower ability pupils.

Progress since the previous inspection is very good. The department has successfully addressed the issues identified in the previous report. The high standards in KS3 have been maintained and standards in KS4 have been raised.

## **Mathematics**

### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are very good.

#### **Good features**

- In the national test results in 2002, 86 percent of Y9 pupils achieved level 5 or better. All results were well above national and local averages.
- Pupils consolidate their ability to do basic arithmetical operations. The work on number is very good, and is constantly strengthened by the use of short oral mathematics tests.
- All pupils can draw and investigate the properties of geometric shapes at an appropriate level.
- The work on algebra is developing well across the ability range, but particularly amongst the more able pupils.
- All pupils can collect and represent statistical data.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, and achieve very good standards.
- Pupils' competence in using IT to enhance their understanding of mathematics is good.

#### **Shortcomings**

- There are no significant shortcomings.

### **KS4**

Standards of achievement are good.

#### **Good features**

- In the GCSE at 2002, 72.1 percent of the Y11 cohort achieved a grade A\* - C. This was significantly above the figures for the whole of Wales and the UA.
- The work on number continues to develop satisfactorily, but there is still room to improve mental agility across the ability range.
- The standard of work in algebra is good amongst the more able pupils, but only satisfactory amongst the middle and lower ability pupils.

- Pupils of all abilities learn to draw geometric shapes competently, and they investigate their properties at an appropriate level. The work on trigonometry is good amongst the more able pupils.
- All the pupils learn how to collect and represent statistical data, and the more able learn to interpret data well. The work on probability is also good.

### **Shortcomings**

- There is some inappropriate use of calculators by pupils.
- Pupils do not practice mental mathematics sufficiently.

Since the previous inspection, the department has developed well. Standards of achievement have improved, and this is borne out by the steady improvement in test and examination results, which are well above national norms.

## **Science**

### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are very good.

### **Good features**

- In 2002 the percentage of pupils obtaining level 5 and above in the KS3 tests was 26 percent above the national average. This was very good attainment by the cohort entered.
- The vast majority of pupils have a very good understanding of a wide range of topics covering all aspects of the NC.
- They have a good recall of key concepts and ideas and apply them with confidence to a range of problems and applications in everyday life.
- The development of investigative skills is very good. From Y7, pupils have a good understanding of the skills of planning, observing, analysing and evaluating. Regular assessments help to inform pupils of the progress they are making.
- The majority of pupils with SEN make good progress in relation to their abilities.

### **Shortcomings**

- A small minority of lower ability pupils has a less secure understanding of current and previous work, and have difficulty in applying scientific principles to a range of tasks and applications related to everyday life.
- Although there are examples of the use of ICT by pupils to research information and record observations in some investigations, progress in this area is still only satisfactory.

### **KS4**

Standards of achievement are very good.

## **Good features**

- The percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*- C in the 2002 examinations was over 30 per cent above the national average for all science subjects. This was very good attainment.
- The vast majority of pupils have a very good understanding of the more complex principles developed in the key stage in life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes.
- They can apply their understanding to a range of problems, many related to the application of science in issues related to health and the environment.
- They apply their knowledge and understanding to explain industrial processes.
- All pupils in Y11 have submitted completed items of coursework for moderation. The quality of a significant minority is very good. Overall, this is a strength of the work of the faculty, pupils achieving at least good standards in all skill areas.
- In both key stages, the majority of pupils make good use of mathematical skills in a range of problem solving applications in scientific contexts.
- Pupils are encouraged to write at length in a range of tasks in the scheme of work and for investigational reports. Pupils achieve good standards.
- Pupils work safely; collaboration is very good in practical work.

## **Shortcomings**

- A small minority of lower ability pupils has a less secure understanding of current and previous work, and have difficulty in applying scientific principles to a range of tasks and applications related to everyday life.

Overall, the faculty has continued to make progress since the last inspection. Examination results are very good in KS3 and KS4, and any unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated.

## **Welsh**

### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- NC test results in KS3 are slightly lower than the national average but the numbers of pupils entered are increasing in line with the school's KS2/3 transition policy to first language groupings.
- Pupils speak with confidence and are keen to participate in group and class discussions. Most pupils speak articulately both to develop their answers and to justify their opinions.
- The majority of pupils read fluently with good understanding and expression.
- They often use ICT to redraft their written work for spelling and punctuation and also for style and effective presentation.

### **Shortcomings**

- A minority of pupils do not express themselves orally or in writing with clarity and accuracy of expression that matches their age and ability.

### **KS4**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- KS4 results have improved steadily during the past five years and the percentage of pupils attaining grades A\*-C in 2002 was higher than the national average.
- Pupils speak with confidence and are keen to participate in group and class discussions. Most pupils speak articulately both to develop their answers and to justify their opinions.
- Pupils are conscious of the audience for whom they are writing either to persuade or to inform. More able pupils write imaginatively and at length in a variety of forms.
- They often use ICT to redraft their written work for spelling and punctuation and also for style and effective presentation.
- Pupils read well independently and some individuals read challenging texts.

### **Shortcomings**

- A minority of pupils do not express themselves orally or in writing with clarity and accuracy of expression that matches their age and ability.

Standards have improved since the previous inspection.

## **Welsh second language**

### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Pupils participate enthusiastically in oral work. Most pupils speak confidently as individuals, in groups and whole-class situations.
- The majority of pupils read fluently and with good understanding and expression.
- The independent reading scheme extends the pupils' vocabulary and increases their interest in Welsh books and magazines.
- Good use is made of ICT to produce written work across the ability range.

### **Shortcomings**

- Inaccuracies in spelling and syntax hinder the progression of the written work of a minority of pupils from middle and lower ability groups.

## **KS4**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- 78 percent of pupils attained grades A\*-C in the 2002 GCSE examination, which is higher than the national average.
- The majority of pupils speak with good pronunciation and intonation and respond well to a range of opportunities to demonstrate their speaking skills.
- Middle and higher ability pupils make good progress is made in written work. They use a range of vocabulary and sentence patterns for creative work, expressing opinions and factual work.
- Reading aloud is well developed and pupils of all abilities are confident when participating in paired and whole-class reading tasks.

### **Shortcomings**

- Some middle ability pupils in KS4 lack confidence in oral work even though their written work and reading skills are good.
- Inaccuracies in spelling and syntax hinder the progression of the written work of a minority of pupils from middle and lower ability groups.

Standards in KS3 and KS4 have improved from satisfactory to good since the previous inspection.

## **Design and technology**

### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Pupils have a sound understanding of a design process and apply it satisfactorily. In project work, most pupils understand and develop specifications to guide their designing.
- The generation and development of ideas vary across modules but are good overall.
- Making skills are good. Pupils work with a wide range of materials and components in the production of products that are accurate and well finished.
- Knowledge and understanding of materials and components and their use are good.
- The application of mechanical, electronic and microprocessor control principles in project work is satisfactory.
- In a number of modules very good use is made of a wide range of ICT skills in CAD/CAM, design applications, research, and general applications to achieve good standards.
- Pupils have a sound understanding of structures and are able to apply structural principles in their designs.

### **Shortcomings**

- Quick creative design drawing is underdeveloped.
- Pupils have a limited understanding of the link between design specifications and evaluations.
- In some modules over-structured projects and workbooks limit more able pupils' progress in Y8 and Y9.

### **KS4**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Standards are good at KS4 in GCSE textiles technology, food technology, resistant materials and graphic products. In systems and control they are satisfactory.
- Most elements of pupils' design work are good.
- Pupils apply a wide range of presentation techniques in their project work
- Making skills in most courses are good. Pupils mainly work accurately and finish their work well. They have a sound understanding of manufacturing and mass production techniques appropriate to the course they are following.
- Project work is often innovative.
- Very good use is made of ICT for computer-aided design, CAD/CAM, modelling, research and presentation to raise standards.
- Examination results in 2002 were well above national averages in resistant materials and graphic products for grades A\*-C, and exceptionally so in food technology and textiles technology.

### **Shortcomings**

- Quick creative design drawing is underdeveloped.
- Making skills are weaker in systems and control than in other GCSE courses.

Standards have improved since the previous inspection.

### **Information technology**

#### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Pupils manage computers effectively. In Y7 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 individual designs.
- Design work is good and pupils apply a wide range of communicating information techniques, including importing images and text from the Internet and modifying them to suit requirements.
- Pupils are able to capture information, set up databases, and carry out simple interrogations.
- Pupils understand the function of a spreadsheet and are able to set up basic spreadsheets, present numerical information in a variety of forms and conduct calculations using appropriate formulae.
- Modelling techniques using spreadsheets are effectively used in problem solving contexts.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils insufficiently consider social, economic, ethical and moral issues related to the use of IT.
- Pupils' good IT skills, developed in the short courses at KS3, are insufficiently extended in handling and modelling information across the curriculum.

### **KS4**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Pupils' project work displays confidence in communicating, handling and modelling information using databases, spreadsheets and desktop publishing techniques.
- Research, analysis and problem solving skills are often well developed through contextualised project briefs developed by the pupils. Good use is made of the Internet to support their research.
- Pupils present their work well and are able to explain clearly why they have chosen specific IT applications.
- In the portfolio section of the course, the standard of skills varies in communicating, handling and modelling information. The skills are often good, but they are not as well developed as those in the project work component.
- Pupils have a good understanding of theory.
- Examination results in 2002 were above national averages for grades A\*-C.

### **Shortcomings**

- Portfolio work is generally less well developed than project work.
- Some middle and lower ability pupils in Y10 are making slow progress in the completion of their project work.

Good progress has been made in the development of IT at both key stages since the last inspection.

## **History**

### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are good.

#### **Good features**

- Pupils have good levels of background knowledge and understanding; their recall skills are secure.
- Pupils are developing good investigative approaches when examining historical problems; they use sources of evidence confidently to compare and contrast differing interpretations of historical problems and they provide good reasons to explain the changes that take place over time.
- Pupils recognise that historical sources are often incomplete and that they can be used to produce differing interpretations of historical issues.
- They have very good listening skills; they are keen to achieve good standards in attaining the learning objectives and the key skills identified for them in every lesson.
- They have well developed oral skills; their responses to rigorous and challenging questioning during lessons are articulate and confident.
- Pupils have good levels of chronological awareness and they have a good and often very good ability to read and evaluate a variety of sources of historical evidence.
- They are successful in making meaningful links between the evidence and their own background knowledge of a topic or an historical problem.
- They achieve good and often very good standards in historical enquiry.
- By Y9, pupils can distinguish between long-term and short-term causes for change and they are skilled in tracing the consequences of those changes.
- Y9 pupils produce some very convincing conclusions in their investigations into the circumstances surrounding the death of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, looking critically at the allegations of a conspiracy that followed it.

#### **Shortcomings**

- Although ICT tools are well used for individual project and research work, ICT resources are underused to enhance presentation of work and to develop skills of data analysis.

### **KS4**

Standards of achievement are very good.

#### **Good features**

- In 2002, 82 percent of the sizeable number of pupils who opted to study history at GCSE gained grades A\*-C, which is above both the local and national averages.
- Pupils produce good and often very good quality written work; pieces of extended writing are neatly presented, well planned and logically argued.
- They record their learning in a range of styles and develop their literacy skills by writing in styles designed to appeal to different audiences, such as letters, reports and essays.

- They select relevant material thoughtfully and organise their arguments logically and persuasively.
- Good planning ensures that the small numbers of pupils who receive their education through the medium of Welsh are rigorously challenged and they achieve well.
- Pupils successfully build upon the wide range of skills acquired in KS3; their oral and written work shows a growing maturity in the depth of their response and their insights into the motivation and attitudes of people in the past.
- Pupils develop very good skills in testing their sources of evidence for bias, reliability and usefulness. They successfully detect propaganda in the sources, for instance in their investigation into the significance of Malcolm X in the Black Power movement in the United States.
- Pupils successfully apply the knowledge and understanding gained from other curricular areas, such as literacy and numeracy to extend their historical skills and to enhance their learning.
- Pupils provide extended answers and use subject-specific vocabulary accurately and in the correct context.

### **Shortcomings**

- No significant shortcomings.

The department has continued to make significant progress in raising standards of achievement since the previous inspection.

## **Geography**

### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Pupils make good progress in acquiring the skills of geographical enquiry, benefiting from a programme of extra-curricular visits; they possess a wide range of skills and techniques, particularly those associated with the use of atlases, maps, annotated sketch maps and diagrams.
- They offer explanations for a range of physical processes and discuss the global distribution of tectonic activity with confidence; they are keenly aware of dangers posed to local inhabitants by volcanoes and earthquakes.
- They recognise the inequality in the economic development of nations and can compare the characteristics of a named country with other areas.
- They increase their knowledge about the sources and supply of energy and how the importance of sustainable development, as in the development of wind farms, can affect resource planning and management.

## **Shortcomings**

- Lower achieving pupils are sometimes reluctant to volunteer answers until targeted by the teacher.
- Their progress in class is restricted by uncertainty in the use of key words, and occasionally by a lack of concentration or inattention.

## **KS4**

Standards of achievement are good.

## **Good features**

- In recent years, results at GCSE level have usually been above national figures for the higher grades A\* to C. Approximately 80 percent of the current cohort is entered for the examination and past results indicate positive progress for candidates in this subject.
- Pupils possess a wide range of subject skills; the benefit gained from fieldwork is reflected in coursework assignments some of which are of outstanding quality.
- They acquire an increasing vocabulary of geographical terms, which they apply with precision.
- They have a very good understanding of the work of rivers and make use of local examples to extend their knowledge of physical processes in areas further afield; their grasp of Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig is very good.

## **Shortcomings**

- The work of a small minority lacks detail, with salient points not fully developed; their written work reflects received information rather than the product of their own research.

There has been an improvement in standards in both key stages since the previous inspection. The department has addressed the main issues noted successfully.

## **Modern foreign languages**

### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are good.

## **Good features**

- Pupils demonstrate attainment corresponding to the appropriate National Curriculum level descriptions.
- Increasing use is made of the target language when working in small groups.
- Pair work is especially well executed.
- Pupils demonstrate an understanding of the target language and respond appropriately to the questions asked.
- They strive to understand more complex phrases.
- A desire to succeed is evident in the pupils' response and commitment to a set task.

## **Shortcomings**

- While the skills of reading, writing and listening are good; oral fluency is not equally well developed.
- Communication takes place in the target language but there is insufficient accuracy in pronunciation.

## **KS4**

Standards are consistently good in all three languages: French, German and Spanish.

## **Good features**

- The results at GCSE are good: 76.5 percent achieved grades A\* to C in French; 100 percent achieved grades A\* to C in German; 74 percent achieved grades A\* to C in Spanish.
- In German, progress is rapid in the first year of its study. Towards the end of the year, confident communication and a developing ability to manipulate language is evident.
- Numbers have increased in 2003/4, thus enabling good dialogue to be composed and practised.
- In all three modern languages studied, course work is of a good standard.
- The skills of listening and writing in particular are well developed in all three languages at this key stage.

## **Shortcomings**

- Pupils undertake insufficient personal research through the use of dictionaries and reading resources in order to enrich existing vocabulary and to vary the phrases and sentences that have been learned in the course of the lessons.

Overall standards have been maintained and some improvements have been made. In KS3, good opportunity is now given for pupils to converse with one another and with the teacher, and detailed dialogues are being produced. In KS4, the skill of reading has improved through the introduction of more reading material.

## **Art**

### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- In the end of KS3 tests, a significant majority of pupils achieved or exceeded the nationally expected level.
- Understanding of shape, colour and form are developed well in closely observed watercolour and pen drawings.
- Working with clay and other materials develops three-dimensional skills.

- Pupils understand how to use their sketchbooks to experiment and explore new ideas.
- Pupils use carefully drawn Celtic art forms in their practical work and develop an appreciation of a range of artists associated with Wales.
- Pupils enrich their own work with study of the art of other cultures.
- Pupils use their art skills to express their thoughts on social and moral issues.
- They are able to use computers to generate creative art.
- Pupils regularly annotate their own work and research and write about art.
- Pupils are developing personal responses to art from looking analytically at paintings.
- Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well due to the regular individual attention each pupil receives.

### **Shortcomings**

- Appreciation of art is limited by the lack of visits to art galleries.
- Pupils do not use the art vocabulary to which they are exposed.
- Pupils' observational drawings skills are insufficiently developed in the early years.

### **KS4**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- In the most recent GCSE examination, results were well above the national average for both girls and boys. Results have regularly improved.
- Pupils draw and paint well directly from nature.
- Sketchbook work shows skill and imagination.
- Pupils' craft skills are improved by the regular teacher practical demonstrations.
- Pupils learn new techniques from the study of artists such as Picasso or Braque.
- Pupils appreciate the visual culture of Wales from study of artists such as Keith Bowen.
- Pupils express opinions and judgement about standards in group reviews.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of examination requirements from exposure to exemplar artwork.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils do not regularly use an appropriate art vocabulary when discussing art.

There has been outstanding improvement since the previous report.

## **Music**

### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

### **Good features**

- Standards of singing are satisfactory, overall. Pupils in certain classes sing with enthusiasm and produce a pleasing tone when singing in unison.
- Pupils in most classes perform various pieces and their own compositions confidently and with a good degree of accuracy.
- Pupils compose in response to a suitable range of stimuli. Some “sound pictures” based on the “Afon Hafren”, Ragas and Blues compositions show imagination with pupils combining sounds effectively.
- When appraising pupils display an awareness of musical elements and can identify instruments and features in recorded extracts. More able pupils make perceptive comments about their own music making.

### **Shortcomings**

- Singing in certain classes is not always secure; it is lacking in refinement and conviction and standards are depressed.
- Certain pupils, in instrumental performance, are unable to play in time with others.
- Some group compositions are limited in musical interest. Melodic work is occasionally prescriptive and, in general, not well developed.
- Evaluations made by some pupils when appraising their own practical work are brief and superficial.

### **KS4**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Most pupils are able and experienced performers and achieve very good standards.
- One pupil in Y10 is making suitable progress in other aspects of the course.
- Much of the work in composing by Y11 pupils reflects the personal interests of the pupils. Many compositions display interesting treatment of ideas and a good understanding of style and structure. Good use is made of ICT to enhance the quality of the work.
- Most Y11 pupils can discern technical and expressive features well when appraising extracts of music from different styles and periods.

### **Shortcomings**

- GCSE results in 2002 were below the UA and national averages.
- The performing skills of certain Y10 pupils are limited. They find composing difficult and need considerable teacher support to make progress.

Since the previous inspection standards in KS3 have been consolidated. In KS4 standards have improved.

## **Religious education**

### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are good.

#### **Good features**

- Pupils across the ability range have good knowledge and understanding of the units of work studied, which reflect the requirements of the local agreed syllabus.
- They have sound knowledge and understanding of Christian beliefs and practices and the main symbols associated with other religions represented in Wales.
- Less able pupils show good knowledge of the unique features of religious traditions they study.
- In Y9 the more able pupils who are entered for the GCSE short course have good knowledge and understanding of the syllabus.
- In their written and oral work they express clearly information gained and are able to use it in different contexts.
- Across the ability range pupils write short purposeful answers and they are developing the skills of looking for, organising and presenting information, often using ICT.

#### **Shortcomings**

- Lower achieving pupils are not always confident orally and are sometimes reluctant to volunteer answers until targeted by the teacher.
- The progress of some pupils is limited by the narrow tasks and closed questions asked.

### **KS4**

Standards of achievement are good.

#### **Good features**

- The results of the GCSE short course last year were good with 88 percent of the pupils entered gaining A\* to C grades.
- They have good knowledge about key figures in the history of religions and the way they have influenced their communities with their religious beliefs.
- Most pupils offer valid reasons for their personal responses to religious beliefs and they know how individual beliefs influence their lifestyle.
- They know that people have different beliefs and values based on religious traditions and understand that religious teaching provides a basis for moral and social values.

#### **Shortcomings**

- Some pupils possess the relevant knowledge but find it difficult to apply it to a new context.

Since the previous inspection, the standards of achievement have risen from satisfactory to good, and the short course has been successfully introduced.

## **Religious Studies**

### **KS4**

Standards of achievement are good.

#### **Good features**

- In the main, GCSE examination results reflect the ability of the pupils taking the course.
- In their written work pupils demonstrate good knowledge of worship in the religions they study.
- They have sound knowledge of different worship within the Christian Church, and they understand the authority that believers give to religious texts and traditions.
- They are able to recall factual information from previous learning and use it in different contexts.
- They produce interesting written work, making clear connections between their own experience of the world and how religious beliefs and practices influence our daily lives.

#### **Shortcomings**

- In their written work there is little evidence of pupils evaluating information researched and sharing it with the rest of the group.

Standards have improved since the previous inspection.

## **Physical education**

### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are good

#### **Good features**

- Pupils understand the effect of exercise on the body and they warm up and cool down conscientiously.
- Some pupils in Y7 have limited prior experiences of physical education, but all make good progress across the range of activities and particularly in gymnastics.
- Throughout the key stage, pupils are able to plan aspects of their own work, observe others and comment constructively on the performance of their peers.
- Pupils in Y9 achieve good standards across all areas of the curriculum including swimming.
- All pupils work well together. They are attentive and respond positively to what they hear. Their very good attitudes and exemplary behaviour make an important contribution to the standards achieved.
- Some individual pupils reach standards that are well above average in gymnastics, football and swimming.

## **Shortcomings**

- Some pupils have underdeveloped athletics techniques.

## **KS4**

Standards of achievement are good in the core subject and very good in the GCSE classes.

- Results at GCSE level are consistently above the national average.
- Standards among examination pupils in the present Y11 are very good in both the theoretical and practical elements of the syllabus.
- Pupils are able to successfully build on work undertaken earlier to further develop their level of expertise, especially in athletics.
- Pupils following the GCSE course in Y10 work with maturity and commitment. They have a good understanding of technical terms and they can link the theoretical and practical aspects of their studies very effectively, for example in relation to risk assessment.
- Pupils can sustain physical activity and they are able to practise, repeat and refine actions in order to improve.
- They can evaluate the work of others and suggest ways of improving performance.
- Some individual pupils achieve well above average standards in athletics, football, rugby and golf.

## **Shortcomings**

- Some pupils lack an efficient and effective running technique.

Starting from a good base, standards overall have improved since the previous inspection.

The department provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. These include annual inter-house competitions in six different sports. Pupils are given the opportunity to take part in Urdd and County tournaments in a variety of activities.

## **Drama**

### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Most pupils respond imaginatively to challenging teachers' prompts and can plan tableaux exemplifying a good range of human emotions.
- Pupils are aware of the potential of pauses, repetition and crescendos. Most pupils can incorporate a good range of techniques in their role-play.
- Pupils can script and record their own radio plays using appropriate cues.
- Pupils' listening skills are very good and most pupils provide appropriate extended oral responses to teacher questions.

- By the end of the key stage, most pupils can provide in-depth, sophisticated analysis of pupils' performances, using a good range of subject specific terminology.

### **Shortcomings**

- In a minority of lessons, availability of space hinders some aspects of pupils' performance and poor acoustics adversely affect pupils' listening skills.
- A small minority of pupils do not provide sufficiently clear, extended oral responses in whole class and group activities.

### **KS4**

Standards of achievement are very good.

### **Good features**

- The small cohorts entered for GCSE drama attain good standards: 69 percent gained grades A\* - C in 2002, though slightly below the national average for drama.
- Pupils show a good understanding of set texts and their oral and written responses are thoughtful, analytical and mature.
- Pupils' performing skills are consistently good. They can create dramatic effects, improvise, and interpret characters – using appropriate language and a very good range of theatrical techniques.
- Pupils' evaluation skills are highly developed. They can provide constructive in-depth adjudications of peers' performances – often justifying their opinions by cross-referencing effectively to set texts.
- Pupils have a wide knowledge and skill base. They have made good progress since KS3 and are developing into powerful performers.
- Pupils access suitable web sites to glean relevant background information to set texts.
- Pupils' coursework is detailed and well structured.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no shortcomings

Good standards have been maintained, and improved on in KS4.

## **Media Studies**

### **KS4**

Standards of achievement are very good.

### **Good features**

- In 2002 the GCSE results for grades A\* to C were well above national and local averages.
- Pupils work co-operatively and show enjoyment in planning and producing responses to set tasks.
- They develop a good understanding of the devices and conventions of media items. They are able to use appropriate terminology in their discussion and analysis, and to produce pieces of work that use them.
- Pupils show very good ICT skills in the completion of tasks, producing accomplished and professionally finished items.
- They respond imaginatively to practical tasks such as preparing animations, creating magazine covers and producing leaflets.
- Pupils keep good records of their viewing of film and television, analysing the use of techniques observed.
- They are able to record the process of preparation of their coursework pieces and evaluate their productions.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no significant shortcomings.

High standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

## **Personal and social education**

### **KS3**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Pupils develop good practice that helps them to fulfil their educational potential.
- When completing their progress files, they develop skills of self-description and self-appraisal well in co-operation with their teachers.
- They are developing the ability to set qualitative targets for themselves.
- Pupils have well-developed abilities, and personal and social skills.
- They recognise their own strengths and weaknesses and make sensible decisions based on the information provided.

### **Shortcomings**

- A minority of pupils are less forthcoming in their responses and, when asked, offer only brief answers.

### **KS4**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Most pupils contribute enthusiastically and co-operate well in groups to share ideas and viewpoints, to reach a consensus and to feed back their conclusions to the whole class.
- They are aware of issues affecting their social responsibilities regarding discrimination and community.
- Pupils consider careers advice to inform their career choices.
- Through the process of recording achievement, they develop skills of monitoring their progress and of taking responsibility for their personal development.

### **Shortcomings**

- A few pupils are reluctant to contribute to class questions and discussion.
- In a minority of lessons pupils do not show their understanding of skills required for an activity such as work experience.

Overall, good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

## **Business studies**

### **KS4**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- GCSE results at grades A\* to C have improved over the past three years and are now just below the national average.
- Pupils apply their theoretical knowledge of cash flow, market resources, questionnaire design and sources of finance to plan a small business of their choice. They are able to justify their approaches and present their coursework using good ICT and research skills.
- Most high and some middle and lower ability pupils communicate well, using subject specific language to talk knowledgeably about previous work.
- Pupils with SEN grasp quite difficult concepts such as 'break even' and communicate their understanding very well verbally.
- Pupils are able to illustrate their understanding, application of knowledge and analytical skills by quoting local examples. Many relate their interest in business concepts to specific career aspirations.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils across the ability range have difficulty with the evaluation aspect of their work. Low and middle ability pupils tend to omit evaluation totally and lose vital marks.
- A minority of low ability pupils submit brief coursework, spell poorly and lack self-esteem.

Since the previous inspection the business studies course has changed and standards have improved.

## 8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

### 8.1 Progress since the last inspection

- Key Issue 1**     **Improve pupils' oral skills and level of active participation in lessons**  
**Very good progress.** All faculties have addressed the issue well and standards are now very good. An audit undertaken by the UA also confirms improved standards across the curriculum. KS3 and KS4 oral tests also attest to this improvement.
- Key Issue 2**     **Improve standards in art**  
**Very good progress.** Standards are now good throughout and pupils make good progress.
- Key Issue 3**     **Improve recording and reporting arrangements in order to achieve consistency, clarity and simplicity across departments: in reporting to parents; in grading pupils' work; in negotiating targets for pupils**  
**Very good progress.** All subjects use NC levels consistently in their assessment procedures. The school provides good, informative reports for parents. Form tutors and heads of year are actively involved in monitoring pupils' progress.
- Key Issue 4**     **Meet statutory requirements for teaching information technology and improve pupils' ability to apply information technology skills across the curriculum**  
**Good progress.** Timetabled lessons are now provided in KS3 and statutory requirements are met. These lessons give pupils a firm foundation in using ICT. Pupils use better equipment than was the case previously. Considerable progress has been made in using ICT in most subjects, but there is room for further improvement.
- Key Issue 5**     **Meet statutory requirements for teaching religious education and improve the quality of collective worship**  
**Good progress.** Improved time allowances provide for better opportunities to learn religious education. GCSE (short course) results at 88 percent grades A\* - C in 2002 were good. Regular assemblies and 'thoughts for the day' cover act of collective worship requirements.
- Key Issue 6**     **Establish clear development priorities for the school over the medium term**  
**Very good progress.** There are clearly delineated paths to produce a school evaluation report that results in the SIP, which is closely allied to faculty plans. Medium-term planning is very secure now.
- Key Issue 7**     **Reduce the proportion of lessons taught by teachers outside their specialism and reduce clashes between subjects commonly studied by students in the sixth form**

**Very good progress.** Very few lessons are taught by non-specialists. There are no timetable clashes between subjects commonly studied by students in the sixth form.

## **8.2 Key issues for action**

1. Continue to raise standards in all subjects, but particularly in those where standards of achievement are currently assessed as satisfactory and/or where shortcomings have been highlighted.
2. Improve the use of numeracy and ICT across the curriculum to match the high standards of literacy and communication.
3. Working together with the unitary authority, extend and improve the provision made for those pupils with Asperger's Syndrome by creating a social area adjacent to, but removed from, their working environment.

### ***Acknowledgement***

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

## APPENDIX

### A. Basic information about the school

Name of School	Ysgol Uwchradd Llanidloes High School
School type	LEA maintained
Age -range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Llanidloes Powys
Post-Code	SY18 6EX
Telephone Number	01686 412289
Headteacher	Dr J Hughes
Date of appointment	1984
Chair of Governors	Mr D Jones
Registered Inspector	Mr B Medhurst
Dates of inspection	19 – 22 May 2003

### B. School data and indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>								
Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	155	155	133	132	109	52	34	770

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	47	9	49.77

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	15.5:1
Average teaching group size	19.6
Overall contact ratio	79%

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	93.3	93.3	93.8	90.8	90.0	84.5	76.0	91.2
Term 2	94.6	93.9	92.7	91.0	95.5	71.7	72.6	91.5
Term 3	94.8	94.0	95.0	93.1	91.2	80.5	84.3	92.4

<i>Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection.</i>	19
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### C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results:														
Total number of pupils in Y9: 132														
Percentage of pupils at each level														
			D	A	N	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	EP
EN	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	14	36	36	11	0
		National	0	1	0	0	0	2	9	22	34	21	9	0
	Test	School	1	1	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	17	30	33	16	n/a
		National	0	4	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	8	23	31	21	9	n/a
WE	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	5	0	0	0	5	24	33	19	14	0
		National	0	0	1	0	0	1	7	20	33	28	11	0
	Test	School	5	0	5	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	24	33	19	14	n/a
		National	0	2	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	5	20	33	27	10	n/a
MA	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	4	29	41	24	0
		National	0	1	0	0	0	1	9	22	26	27	13	1
	Test	School	1	1	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	11	26	38	21	n/a
		National	0	6	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	8	22	23	27	12	n/a
SC	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	4	0	0	0	8	30	45	12	0	
		National	0	1	0	0	0	1	9	22	32	24	10	0
	Test	School	1	0	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	5	23	47	23	n/a
		National	0	4	0	n/a	n/a	n/a	7	20	32	24	11	n/a

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:	76.5	In the school:	74.2
In Wales:	52	In Wales:	50

D - Pupils exempted under statutory arrangements from part of the National Curriculum  
A - Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence  
N - Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence  
W - Pupils who are working towards level 1  
EP - Exceptional Performance, where pupils in Key Stage 3 perform above level 7.

<b>For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, ELQ, GNVQ and NVQ</b>			
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2001: 170			
<b>The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2002:</b>			
	School	UA	Wales
were entered for 5 or more GCSEs	99	89	86
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C	83	60	50
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-G	99	88	85
achieved GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language)	70	45	37
entered at least one CoE, GCSE short course or GCSE	99	96	97
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-C	91	79	74
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-G	99	94	92
achieved no graded GCSE	1	6	8
achieved one or more ELQ only	0	1	3
achieved a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	0		
achieved a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	0		
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	83		
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	99		

<b>For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs</b>			
Number of pupils aged 17 in January 2002: 35			
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2001: 30			
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2001: 4			
	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	90	71	66
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	100	96	94
Average points score per candidate	23	21	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	0		
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	0		

## **D. The evidence base of the inspection**

- 18 inspectors spent the equivalent of 53 days at the school.
- 191 lessons, including full and part-time sessions were observed covering all curricular areas and, additionally, a large sample of PSRE lessons was inspected.
- Inspectors attended tutorial sessions, registrations, and observed a range of extra-curricular activities.
- Inspectors held many discussions with the headteacher, members of the school's management team, heads of department, some heads of year, staff with whole-school responsibilities, and members of support staff.
- The registered inspector and a core team inspector met with the governing body prior to the inspection week.
- Work across the curriculum, from representative pupils from each year group was examined. Pupils' work was also scrutinised during lesson observations.
- Inspectors held formal discussions with groups of pupils selected from Y7 to Y13. They also talked with many pupils informally.
- The registered inspector met the staff and some pupils prior to the inspection.
- 24 parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. 112 replies to the questionnaire were received and analysed. Some parents also wrote to the registered inspector.
- External agencies associated with the school also wrote to the registered inspector.
- Comprehensive documentation provided by the school was scrutinised before and during the inspection.

## E. Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr B W Medhurst Registered Inspector		Context, Main findings, Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning, Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum, Teaching, Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement, Leadership and efficiency, Staffing, accommodation and learning resources, Progress since the previous inspection, Key issues for action, sixth form annex.
Dr M H L Snow Lay Inspector		Behaviour and attitudes, Attendance, Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions, Partnership with industry
Mr S G Davies	Science (Physics and Chemistry)	Curriculum
Mr G W Leech	English, Media studies	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
Dr E Price-Jones	Mathematics	Assessment, recording and reporting
Mr H Evans	Religious education, PSRE	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)
Mr E Bowyer	Geography	
Mrs B Roderick	Modern foreign languages	
Mr J B Z Davies	Drama	
Mr S I Gale	Design & technology, Information technology	
Mrs G Jones	Welsh	
Mr D Jones	Biology	
Mr E Forster	Art	
Mrs M Herbert	Design and technology, Health and social care	
Mrs A Newman	History, Law, Government and Politics, Psychology, Sociology	
Mr. A W Jones	Music	
Dr P Evans	Business studies, AVCE	
Mr B M <sup>c</sup> Cann	Physical education	

## **ANNEX: The Sixth Form**

### **CONTEXT**

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

Llanidloes High School is a popular 11 – 19 mixed comprehensive school, situated in the small town of Llanidloes. There are 770 students on roll (compared with 610 in 1997), of whom 86 are in the sixth form. The annual intake is around 155 students, with many others seeking to attend.

Most students come from contributory primary schools that cover a wide rural area. About three-quarters of the students travel to school by bus. The school describes its ‘catchment’ as neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged. About eight percent of its students speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard, with five percent having Welsh as the predominant language spoken at home. Very few students (less than 1 percent) come from minority ethnic heritages. No students receive support teaching in English as an additional language. Seven percent of the students are registered as being entitled to free school meals, below the unitary authority (UA) figure of 10.7 percent.

The school’s intake represents the full range of ability. There are 20 students with statements of special educational needs (SEN) (19 boys; 1 girl). Of these, seventeen statements include modification of the National Curriculum (NC). There are an additional 123 students on the school’s SEN register who are on stages School Concern (SC), School Action (SA) or SA plus, of the Code of Practice for SEN. Twenty-two students are disapplied from aspects of the NC. The school has two special units: one for students with specific learning difficulties (SpLD) and one for students with Asperger’s Syndrome. All students are integrated as much as possible, and have equal access to the curriculum.

Welsh is taught and examined as a first and a second language. A significant number of subjects are taught through the medium of Welsh.

The school’s main aim is ‘GOFAL’ – Giving Opportunities For All to Learn. It seeks to achieve this through: the environment; valuing all students equally; a broad and appropriate curriculum; fostering excellence in academic study & personal standards and ongoing evaluation of the school’s success.

The School’s Improvement Plan (SIP) is a comprehensive, well-organised programme that provides a firm foundation for the school to achieve its aims. The school has set itself challenging yet achievable targets for future success.

Since the previous inspection, major building work has continued and this has helped the school to provide a good learning environment.

## MAIN FINDINGS

### The main findings of the report

As part of a very good, successful school, the sixth form of Llanidloes High School is itself very good. It provides students with a supportive yet challenging environment in which they and teachers work together purposefully to achieve high standards.

It is an effective and efficient organisation that is managed very well by the head of Y12 and Y13, who works well with his senior colleagues and the headteacher as part of the school improvement group.

Sixth form students are particularly active in the school and their own local community. They are developing into mature and articulate adults and are very good role models for younger pupils. They have very good moral and social values and they display respect, care and concern for others and the environment. Students take on and exercise responsibility with maturity, work very well together and show good initiative.

### Educational standards achieved by the students

As indicated in the tables below, standards of achievement in most subjects and in the key skills are at least good and these standards are reflected in the results in external examinations, which are, overall, in excess of local and national averages.

Success in the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced (A) level or equivalent examinations has improved since the previous inspection. In 2002 the proportion of students achieving success at levels A to C was well above UA and national averages. The school achieved a figure of 90 percent, compared with the UA's 71 percent and the national 66 percent. Likewise, the average points scored by students in the school (23) exceeded the other comparators – 21 and 20 respectively, indicating the high quality of the results achieved. From class observations, scrutiny of work and from interviews, inspectors found that sixth form students were continuing to realise their potential for success.

### STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS

English	Very Good
Mathematics	Very Good
Science	Good
Welsh (first language)	Good
Welsh (second language)	Good
Design and Technology (DT)	Good
History	Very Good
Geography	Very Good
Modern Foreign Languages	Good
Art	Good
Music	Good
Religious Education	Good
Religious Studies	Good
Physical Education	Good
Drama	Very Good

Media Studies	Very Good
Personal and Social Education	Good
Government & Politics	Good
Law	Good
Sociology	Good
Psychology	Good
Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education	Good

## STANDARDS IN KEY SKILLS

Listening	Very Good
Speaking	Very Good
Reading	Very Good
Writing	Very Good
Numeracy	Good
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	Good
Working with others	Very Good
Improving own learning and performance	Very Good
Problem solving	Very Good

### Positive features

- Standards in most subjects are good. Students in 92 percent of classes were judged as achieving good or better standards, and in 18 percent they were judged as achieving very good standards.
- Students achieve very good standards in almost one-third of subjects.
- They listen attentively, speak clearly, read very well, write to very good effect and work very well with their colleagues, often taking the initiative to extend their own learning.
- They have good numeracy and ICT skills, and use them advantageously in many subjects.

### Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

### Quality of Education

Students receive high quality teaching within a well-designed and inclusive sixth form curriculum. They benefit from a good range of challenging learning experiences and often take the initiative to extend their knowledge and understanding. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and they plan well to meet the needs of their students.

### Positive features

- Teaching in the sixth form was good in 69 percent of classes observed and very good in a further 23 percent.
- Teaching is very good in English, mathematics, geography, history, physical education, drama and media studies.

- The school offers a wide and appropriate range of subjects and courses to allow students of all abilities to achieve well.
- There is good planning for and implementation of arrangements for the development of key skills.
- The arrangements made for personal and educational guidance, including that for higher education, and careers education and guidance, are very good.
- The school makes very good use of analyses of data to assist in setting targets for future progress and higher standards.
- There are very good arrangements for assessing, monitoring and recording students' achievements and progress in most subjects.
- The school provides regular, informative reports to parents.
- Students have many opportunities to benefit from a well-planned programme of extra-curricular activities and participation is high.

### **Shortcomings**

- The attendance at religious education lessons and physical recreation sessions is frequently unsatisfactory.

### **Leadership and management**

The head of Y12 and Y13 manages the sixth form, as an integral part of the whole school, very well. He fulfils his role successfully, leading a team of tutors who work very hard to give all students every opportunity to achieve their potential for academic and personal success. Overall, the sixth form is an effective and efficient unit.

### **Positive features**

- The head of Y12 and Y13 works well with the school's other senior managers and with other staff in operating its structured monitoring and self-evaluating systems.
- A good team spirit is evident within the sixth form organisation.
- The school manages its sixth form budget allocation very well. Financial decisions are taken in accordance with the school's educational priorities as identified in its school improvement plan and every effort is made to obtain best value for money.
- The day-to-day administration of the sixth form is very efficient and effective.
- The governors play an active and supportive role in the school. They are well informed about the sixth form's work and have a very good understanding of its strengths and shortcomings.
- A well-managed programme of continuing staff development, based upon the school's development plan, helps all staff to focus upon ways of raising standards in all aspects of sixth form life.
- Teachers' qualifications and experience match the requirements of the sixth form curriculum. Deployment of staff ensures that individual teachers' knowledge and skills are used most effectively to the students' benefit.
- Study areas and the school library, both with computer facilities, give students ample opportunities for private study.

## **Shortcomings**

- The accommodation provided as a students' social area is at best satisfactory.

### **The effectiveness with which the issues identified in the previous report have been addressed**

The school has made very good progress in addressing the issues highlighted in the previous report.

Of the seven key issues for action highlighted in the previous inspection's report, four had application in the sixth form.

- Standards in art are now good.
- The school provides good, informative reports for parents. Form tutors and the head of the sixth form are actively involved in monitoring students' progress.
- Improved time allowances provide for better opportunities for students to receive religious education. Regular assemblies and the 'thought for the day' cover act of collective worship requirements.
- There are now no timetable clashes in the sixth form.

## **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS**

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

Standards were at least satisfactory in 100 percent of the classes observed. They were good in 74 percent and very good in a further 18 percent. These statistics represent a substantial improvement on the standards recorded at the time of the previous inspection.

Over time, in comparison with local and national averages, the school has maintained a good level of success in the GCE A level examinations. In the 2002 A level (or equivalent) examinations, results achieved by students were a great improvement on those attained at the time of the previous inspection. In 1997 the percentage of students achieving at least two A level grades A to C was 56, and the corresponding figure for grades A to E was 94. These rose to 90 percent and 100 percent respectively in 2002. Likewise the average points score per candidate rose from 17.5 to 23. The school's figures are well in excess of the averages achieved in the UA and Wales.

Most students make at least good progress from KS4 and many of them take much of the responsibility to maintain this progress through independent research.

In a good number of subjects, students' learning is improved through links with outside organisations and/or other educational establishments. Such activities include: visits to lead mines in history, work experience in design and technology, use of current media publications in media studies, working with local dramatic/theatre groups in drama and structured fieldwork in geography.

## **Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum**

In the sixth form, standards in literacy are very good. Standards in numeracy and ICT are good. Students are very good at working with each other and good at improving their own learning and performance and solving problems. In the curriculum there are some Key Skills lessons and students have the opportunity to prepare portfolios and take the examinations to obtain Key Skills qualifications although in practice few choose to do so.

Students' skills in speaking and listening are very good. Working mainly in small class groups, students receive information and exchange ideas freely. Speaking and listening are particularly good in English, geography, history, religious education, design and technology, PSRE, drama and media studies.

Reading skills are very good. Students are able to obtain information from a very wide range of sources, including the Internet, to inform their work. Reading is particularly good in English, geography, history, religious education, modern foreign languages, design and technology, drama, media studies and politics.

Students' writing skills are very good, enabling them to take extensive notes and produce some admirable project and course work, informed by good research. Writing is particularly good in English, geography, history, religious education, drama, media studies and politics.

In the sixth form very good use is made of ICT in English, design and technology, and drama. Standards are satisfactory in mathematics, science, history and physical education. In all other subjects good use is made of a wide variety of ICT packages to enhance standards.

As in KS3 and KS4, the departments that make positive contributions to the development of numeracy are science, geography, history and mathematics. Otherwise, most students are confident when handling number or calculating when required to do so. Numeracy lessons are provided for those students wishing to obtain Key Skills accreditation and provide good opportunities for students to refine their skills in this area.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **Teaching and Assessment**

High quality teaching is a key strength of the sixth form. It is the foremost contributor to the at least good standards achieved by most students. Comments made by students during interviews indicated as such. They mentioned how much they appreciated being treated as young adults and that they were constantly encouraged to succeed. In consequence, they said that they enjoyed learning in the sixth form.

Teaching was good or very good in 92 percent of classes observed, including 23 percent that were graded as very good. These figures represent a considerable improvement since the previous inspection.

Teachers are well qualified, and they have very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. This secure base of knowledge, along with up-to-date expertise, enables them to prepare suitably challenging work for their students. Often teachers' enthusiasm for their chosen subjects motivates and encourages students to enjoy their learning. Relationships

between teachers and students are very good, allowing learning to occur in a relaxed atmosphere of mutual respect.

There is a very good emphasis on encouraging students to take upon themselves work or research to extend their knowledge and understanding. In this way not only do they achieve high standards, but also they become well prepared for life and learning in further or higher education.

On most occasions, teachers share learning objectives with students at the beginning of lessons and spend time at the end reviewing what has been learned. Based upon teachers' high expectations of success, work is very challenging and a good pace of progress is maintained in most classes.

Teachers generally help students consolidate and extend their learning by setting homework of appropriate challenge and interest. This often includes work to develop students' research and investigative skills.

Many teachers give generously of their time outside lessons to help individuals and to offer extra-curricular activities to extend and broaden students' learning.

Allied to these very good features of teaching and learning are good assessment, recording and reporting practices. In most subjects, students' work is marked consistently, constructively and with care. Additionally, teachers provide regular oral feedback to inform and guide their students. Students themselves are also fully involved in reviewing their own progress, analysing their strengths and shortcomings, and in setting targets for future success. Their tutors also play a pivotal role in monitoring progress. Such good practice does much to maintain standards at a high level.

### **Learning Experiences**

The quality of the sixth form curriculum is good overall.

The school offers a wide choice of twenty-two AS and A2 courses to GCE level. In addition AVCE courses are available in health and social care and business studies. There is continuity of subjects from KS4 as well as new courses in politics, psychology, law and sociology. The distance-learning programme in psychology, law and sociology using the school's video-conferencing facilities has been a successful initiative, offering students a more diverse curriculum and opportunities to study subjects they may want to pursue in higher education. Students are able to choose from the full range of subjects, considerable effort is then made to timetable all combinations. There are no significant clashes in the sixth form curriculum. In the majority of subjects, there are separate classes in Y12 and Y13; there is some shared provision in art, design and technology, French, music, drama, health and social care and business studies.

The school meets statutory requirements by timetabling a religious education lesson for all students. The attendance in these lessons and in physical recreation sessions is frequently unsatisfactory.

The planning for the development of key skills in the sixth form is good. Lessons are timetabled weekly for numeracy, communication and information technology. Approximately forty percent of the cohort sit examinations in Y12, a smaller number submit portfolios in Y13.

The arrangements for PSRE are very good. There is continuity in the programme from KS4. All students have the opportunity of an interview with the school's careers adviser and are given detailed guidance in preparation for application to higher education. Speakers advising on finance and tax and visits to local universities alert sixth form students to issues associated with full time education after school.

Extra-curricular provision is good in many subjects. There are many visits off-site to further studies and to venues such as theatres and galleries. The school has a successful Duke of Edinburgh scheme in operation. Students benefit from the range of activities available, which broaden their experiences and promote their personal and educational development.

Very good work experience opportunities are provided for Y12 students. For many in Y12, where professional careers are likely, more beneficial work-shadowing opportunities are arranged.

### **Support and Guidance**

The very good quality of provision for the support, guidance and welfare of students in KS3 and KS4 is maintained in the sixth form, where the same policies and procedures inform and support the same school aims.

In the same way that care for students in Y7 begins before they arrive in the school, care for sixth form students begins with advice on post-16 choices in Y11. The head of the sixth form manages a very good comprehensive PSRE programme, which includes planned group tutorials, religious, moral and ethical discussions and lessons on a range of topics contributing to students' continuing development. Students have the opportunity to develop their key skills and to prepare portfolios and take the examinations to obtain Key Skills qualifications although in practice few choose to do so. The PSRE programme continues to include very good careers education and guidance. Students receive good careers advice and interviews, preparation for the world of work and for entry into further education.

Support, guidance and welfare in the sixth form were not reported on in the previous inspection.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The headteacher provides very good leadership for the whole school, and this is a major influence in maintaining and improving upon the high standards achieved in the sixth form. General responsibility for the sixth form with reference to students, tutors and accommodation rests with the head of years 12 and 13. He fulfils this demanding role successfully, leading a team of tutors who work very hard to give all students every opportunity to achieve their potential for academic and personal success. He has a very thorough understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the sixth form. Overall, the sixth form is an effective and efficient unit.

The school's aims, which seek to give opportunities for all to learn to the best of their ability, are driven forward by the school's very good improvement plan and in consequence there is a clear vision and sense of direction in the sixth form, as in the rest of the school.

The succinct yet instructive sixth form staff handbook provides very good guidance for all who work within this section of the school. The sixth form prospectus is equally as informative for parents and students.

With an average class size of 15 and a good curriculum, the sixth form is cost effective and does not make undue demands on the school's budget. Additionally, the introduction of distance learning packages via the video-conferencing facilities has added to this effectiveness by extending the curriculum at relatively little cost. Financial planning and management are very good. Governors and senior staff work well together to achieve this. The school handles its income of around £2.3 million prudently and efficiently and maintains an appropriate surplus year on year. The budget is set by correct reference to the agreed curriculum and the consequent staffing, accommodation and learning resource needs. Daily management of finances, especially that undertaken by the school's bursar, is very efficient. Spending decisions are taken only after proper consideration of the school's agreed priorities for improvement, and then the personnel concerned take particular care to ensure that best value for money is obtained. The governing body also exercises careful oversight of the school's finances, staffing provision and appointments. The latest auditors' report received by the school commended it on its good practice.

The school has clearly understood very good procedures for evaluating its performance and planning future developments. The regular and rigorous application of these measures in the sixth form has enabled it to make very good progress since its previous inspection in a number of important areas, not least in the quality of teaching and learning, and the consequent standards achieved by its students. The views of students are taken into account and acted upon through the school council, and they influence the content of the school's improvement plan.

Overall there is a good balance of age and experience within the staff who teach in Y12 and Y13, and their expertise matches the requirements of the sixth form curriculum. Technical support is good throughout the school and the personnel concerned help teaching staff provide meaningful learning opportunities for students to make progress and achieve well.

Students are provided with three small study areas and a modest social area. In addition, many students avail themselves of the good facilities in the school library. The caretakers and the cleaning staff do their best to ensure that the sixth form areas are kept in good repair, very clean and as safe as possible for students.

Students have access to a good range of ICT equipment and software, along with a plentiful stock of reference books in the library. Students generally make good use of all that is available. Most lessons are conducted in the specialist teaching rooms used by the main school. In addition to a good supply of appropriate textbooks, many teachers provide students with well-produced study guides and/or other useful documentation.

All staff are involved in a very good programme of continuing professional development that leads to improved standards in the sixth form, as well as in the rest of the school.

## **SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING**

### **English**

Standards of achievement are very good.

### **Good features**

- Results at A level are good. In the GCE A level examinations in 2002, all the candidates achieved the highest grades.
- Students are comfortable in their relationships with staff and each other and consequently are able to share ideas maturely.
- They participate confidently in discussion, showing familiarity with the language of literary and linguistic analysis.
- In their writing, students show the capacity to read and respond to a great variety of literary and factual texts. They understand types and genres of writing and can identify and analyse literary and linguistic features.
- Students' writing is informed by good research and they are able to create, analyse and comment on their own examples of different forms of writing.
- They show very good ICT skills, both in using it for research and in the production of their own work.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Improvements since the previous inspection are very good. Good standards have been further improved.

### **Mathematics**

Standards of achievement are very good.

### **Good features**

- Students produce work of a high standard, and are constantly urged to aim for ever-increasing standards by their teachers.
- Students are able to discuss their work maturely, and are prepared to express viewpoints with confidence.
- At AS level in 2002, results were well above national and local averages.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no significant shortcomings

Since the previous inspection, the department has consolidated its AS and A level results.

## **Science**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- In 2002, all students gained grades A-E at A-level, with a small majority gaining A/B grades.
- The majority of students have a good understanding of key concepts. They can apply their theoretical knowledge and understanding to a wide range of problems in the three subjects.
- In the practical work seen, students achieve at least good standards. Completed investigations demonstrate the use of detailed scientific knowledge, accurate measurement and well-developed skills of analysis and evaluation.
- The majority of students have well organised files of work.
- The majority of students observed in their final preparations for A/AS examinations are making good progress.

### **Shortcomings**

- A minority of students do not have a secure knowledge and understanding of certain topics and have difficulty in applying certain scientific principles to past questions during revision lessons.

Good progress has been maintained since the previous inspection.

## **Welsh**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- On the basis of the evidence produced the standard of the work is good.
- The written work shows knowledge and understanding of the texts and an appreciation of their context.

### **Shortcomings**

- Students tend to translate literally from English and do not include sufficient use of Welsh idioms.

This course has only been recently established and the numbers are small.

## **Welsh second language**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- A level results have been very good between 1999 and 2001. 100 percent of students gained grades A-C, though numbers have been relatively small.
- Students' written work is well presented and thoroughly prepared.

### **Shortcomings**

- Students have problems with idiomatic use of language in their written work.

Sound progress has been maintained in the sixth form since the previous inspection.

## **Design and technology**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Standards are good in GCE product design and food technology.
- Students' design work is good. They research, analyse and produce effective design specifications to guide their product development. Project work is innovative.
- Students' evaluation is good, both of commercial products and of those that they design and make.
- Project folios display good standards of idea development and presentation.
- Very effective use is made of ICT for research, computer aided design, CAD/CAM, modelling and presentation.
- Students' work demonstrates good making skills in a wide range of materials.
- Theoretical understanding is sound.
- Case studies display a good awareness of commercial and industrial technological developments.

### **Shortcomings**

- Creative design drawing is underdeveloped. This is particularly so in most sketchbooks.

Standards have improved since the previous inspection.

## **History**

Standards of achievement are very good.

### **Good features**

- In the A level examinations held in 2002, 100 percent of the students entered gained grades A-C.

- Students have very good levels of knowledge and understanding of the historical debates related to the origins of the First World War; they successfully investigate the extent of Britain's responsibility for the outbreak of hostilities in 1914.
- Y13 students hold very good quality debates on the extent of Hitler's power and influence in Nazi Germany after 1933 and have very good mastery of the major aspects of British attitudes to Europe between 1880 and 1980. These activities demonstrate the extent of students' background reading and of their ability to take a critical approach to the evaluation of sources of evidence.
- Students make very good progress in synthesising the views of the major professional historians with expertise in the periods they are studying.
- They can use their analytical skills effectively to explain the differences in interpretation found in their arguments.
- Students organise their material very successfully to tackle the demands of the synoptic paper set in the A level examinations.
- Their research skills are well developed through individual information seeking on the Internet and through using other sources.
- Essays and other written presentations are the result of careful research and thoughtful planning; students become increasingly analytical and self-critical in presenting their ideas and arguments.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no significant shortcomings.

The department has continued to make significant progress in raising standards of achievement since the previous inspection.

## **Geography**

Standards of achievement are very good.

### **Good features**

- Results at A level have been very good in recent years with a 100 percent pass rate.
- Students manage a wide range of geographical information in different forms and from a range of sources including ICT.
- They have very good learning skills; their proficiency in communication, numeracy and problem solving is well applied; they work productively as individuals and as a group.
- They respond well to opportunities to be responsible for their own learning and apply their knowledge constructively to named case studies; they competently discuss more complex issues such as sustainable development and global tectonic processes.

### **Shortcomings**

- No significant shortcomings were noted.

The high standards noted in the previous report have been maintained.

## **Modern foreign languages**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- The A level results for 2002 were very good – 100 percent A to C in both French and German
- Students make increasing use of the target language for most aspects of the lesson
- They demonstrate competence in adapting language to the need of the response.
- Students show initiative and are able to cope with unpredictable language.
- Pronunciation and accent are usually good.
- Project work reflects effort and understanding of the countries studied.

### **Shortcomings**

- A few students show hesitancy when replying in the target language.
- Responses, although correct, do not reveal that a deeper knowledge of the topics has been acquired during the course, and which is evident in many written tasks.

Since the previous inspection, standards have been maintained.

## **Art**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- A level results in 2002 were good.
- Students are developing well as independent artists.
- They are able to produce powerful, well-drawn expressive paintings and drawings.
- Their sketchbook work is very imaginative.
- Students are able to use computers to aid their individual researches.
- They are able to use a digital camera and computers to manipulate images creatively.
- Students succeed in exploring three-dimensional themes in a wide range of materials.
- Students are familiar with a range of male and female artists' work.
- Students use their art skills to express themselves on moral issues.
- Students talk very confidently about their own artwork and are able to speak informatively about the artists they have studied.
- Their understanding of contemporary art is broadened by visits to art galleries.

### **Shortcomings**

- Students are not able to work with artists-in-residence and thus miss opportunities to improve the standard of their work.

There has been good improvement since the previous report.

## **Music**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- In 2002, the small number of students entered for AS level examinations gained A-C grades.
- Students are confident performers; they perform with conviction and a very good sense of style.
- “Free” and Baroque style compositions by Y12 students are of a good standard and demonstrate a good awareness of the genres adopted.
- Y13 students have, in general, a good understanding of the techniques involved in “chorale” and string-quartet” style composition.
- The Y12 coursework reflects personal research and a sound acquaintance with the two Mozart operas studied. Y13 students have good knowledge and understanding overall of their set-work and the associated topic.
- Aural skills, though uneven, are good, overall.

### **Shortcomings**

- Some slight insecurity is apparent at times in Y13 “style” composition work.
- The Y12 coursework is rather restricted in the breadth of aspects covered.
- The aural perception skills of a minority of students are not always secure.

Standards have improved since the previous inspection.

## **Religious education**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- A suitable course is provided that gives appropriate opportunities for students to discuss religious, moral and social contemporary issues. Through this course many students achieve good standards.

### **Shortcomings**

- Not all students attend the lessons and miss valuable opportunities to reach high standards.

Standards have improved since the previous inspection.

## **Religious studies**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Students' write in an appropriate form and they make good use made of specialist vocabulary.
- They show the ability to form their own views of religious issues through an exploration of life's meaning and purpose.
- Students are able to select and present relevant factual information, ideas, descriptions and arguments in an organised manner.

### **Shortcomings**

- Some written work of students includes sufficient factual information from different sources but relies too greatly on narrative rather than evaluation.

## **Physical education**

Standards of achievement are good.

- This is the first year in which students have been involved in examination work. Those following the AS course show a mature and positive attitude towards their studies and they are making good progress.
- Students work well together and their recall of earlier parts of the course is good.
- Most students demonstrate a sound understanding of issues related to observing and analysing performance and to the historical, social and cultural development of sport.
- The quality of some independently researched assignments is very good, with careful attention given to both content and presentation.
- Students' written work shows that they have made clear gains in their knowledge and understanding of factors that can influence and improve performance.

### **Shortcomings**

- One or two students do not involve themselves sufficiently well in class discussions and thus make less than best progress.

The recent introduction of examination work is resulting in improved standards and represents good progress since the previous inspection.

## **Drama**

Standards of achievement are very good.

### **Good features**

- Students show a detailed understanding and appreciation of the set texts, and are aware of literacy devices, including sub themes.

- Students can provide novel, imaginative ideas regarding staging implications of Oedipus and can discuss the allegorical elements of the play using a good range of appreciation techniques.
- Students have a good range of performance skills that they can refine and adapt to meet the demands of different situations.
- They can express opinions on relationships and emotions in their favourite plays – and can develop their hypotheses in a logical and mature way.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Good standards have been maintained and improved on in the sixth form.

### **Media studies**

This is a newly established A level course, with its first intake of students currently in Y13. Standards of achievement are very good.

### **Good features**

- In the GCE AS level examination in 2002, all candidates achieved the highest grade.
- Students show very good knowledge and understanding of media terminology and conventions and are able to use them in discussion and preparation of their own pieces of work.
- Students are able to follow a task brief by researching a wide range of examples of appropriate media pieces, identifying and analysing characteristics to inform their own productions.
- They develop an understanding of the value of creating and conducting a questionnaire to identify the tastes and opinions of prospective customers, readers or audiences which will inform the finished products.
- Students show good imagination in creating a range of media pieces – television advertisements, magazines and radio scripts, for example – which are accomplished facsimiles of the real things.
- They are able to analyse their own productions, producing detailed explanations and justifications of the processes.
- Students have very good ICT skills, which facilitate both research and the production of their own work.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no significant shortcomings.

The course was not in existence at the time of the previous inspection.

## **Personal and social education**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Students show interest and involvement in developing their key skills and appreciate the additional input from many subject departments.
- They are developing good skills to set personal targets, study skills and review their own progress.
- Students have good knowledge, enabling them to make wise choices when applying for admission to further education.
- They have very good social attitudes; they display respect, care and concern for others, and are loyal and responsible.

### **Shortcomings**

- In some lessons students do not develop some issues fully enough and they ask too few questions to extend their knowledge and understanding.

Standards have improved since the previous inspection.

## **Government and politics**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- In the A-level examinations held in 2002, results were good.
- Students have a good knowledge and understanding of the workings of the British Constitution and can develop very good arguments on the advantages and disadvantages of having a written constitution. They can point to several ways in which the devolved power of the Crown has resulted in a more powerful executive.
- Students have a secure understanding of the current proposals to reform both the House of Commons and the House of Lords; they can identify the benefits and drawbacks of the reforms that have been suggested.
- Students have a good grasp of the operation of the electoral system and can explain the intricacies of proposed reforms, such as proportional representation.
- In work scrutinised, many students produced very well informed and persuasively argued written work on pressure groups and their role in the democratic process
- Most students make good use of up-to-date information and examples of changes in the workings of government through newspaper and magazine articles and through information obtained on the Internet.
- Students are ready to consider points of view that are different from their own, for instance on the question of devolution and the operation of devolved assemblies.

## **Shortcomings**

- Scrutiny of students' work shows that a number of average and below average attaining students pay insufficient attention to the inclusion of relevant and specific examples to illustrate the general points which they make in essays and other written exercises.

This subject was not included in the report of the previous inspection.

## **Law**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Students have good levels of knowledge and understanding of legal principles and of the difference between the Common Law and Statute Law. They have a secure knowledge of the English court system and also know the difference between civil and criminal law.
- They make good use of legal terminology that they apply in the correct context. They have good levels of knowledge and understanding of the effect of equity upon the Common Law and upon delegated legislation.
- Students understand the workings of the European Economic Commission and can define the role of the Commissioner; they can successfully explain the operation and significance for the United Kingdom of directives from the European Commission.
- They have a good broad understanding of legal concepts and of the major legislative procedures; they have secure knowledge of statutory interpretation.
- Students make good use of a variety of research techniques to further their knowledge and understanding. They successfully use sources of information, such as government legal reports, to ensure that their knowledge is up-to-date. Good note-taking skills and use of the Internet further promote their progress.

## **Shortcomings**

- Students find some difficulty in recalling specific examples of case law to illustrate the general legal points that they make.

This subject was not included in the report of the previous inspection.

## **Sociology**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Students have good levels of knowledge and understanding and their recall skills are secure. They make good links with relevant contemporary attitudes and social developments.
- Students have a good command of the methodology and conceptual basis of the subject. They successfully use a variety of methods of sociological enquiry and research.

- Students use sociological terminology accurately and in the correct context. They can offer good explanations of sociological theories and ideas and can extract relevant information from a range of complex sources.
- By Y13, students develop their analytical and evaluative skills more confidently when considering a wide range of sociological problems related to the family, peer groups and social class and status.
- Essays, investigations and surveys are of good quality overall. Written work is well planned and logically argued; it is securely based upon a wide range of sociological data and relevant source material. Students make good use of evidence to support and justify their judgements and conclusions.
- Written work is well presented and is thoroughly and informatively marked according to clearly understood criteria. Very good use is made of ICT to deliver lessons and to extend students' learning.

### **Shortcomings**

- The written work of a minority of students lacks adequate detail and relevant examples in order to develop and illustrate the points being made.

This subject was not included in the report of the previous inspection.

### **Psychology**

Standards of achievement are good.

#### **Good features**

- Students' work shows a thorough coverage of the syllabus and there is good emphasis upon the use of research techniques and data analysis. Written work shows a good understanding and use of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Most students make good progress in the mathematical areas of the subject.
- Students show a good ability to plan, design and construct a variety of interesting research projects and essays on topics such as the psychological factors involved in the onset of anorexia nervosa. They reflect students' growing confidence in the use of investigative and experimental techniques.
- Most students make good progress in data analysis; they become increasingly confident in forming and testing hypotheses. They show good understanding of the differences between collectivist and individualistic cultures in the context of marriage and other close relationships.
- Note making and essay writing skills develop successfully; students develop an appropriate style in recording their investigations. Good use is made of ICT to extend learning and raise standards of achievement.
- Discussion skills are developing effectively; students are prepared to consider the strength of opposing arguments. They use subject-specific vocabulary accurately to express their ideas.
- Students select and organise their material effectively to construct logical and convincing arguments in their written work.

### **Shortcomings**

- Students' written work varies in the use of specific references to research studies in order to illustrate and strengthen the points being made.
- In a minority of cases, evaluations and conclusions in written presentations are too brief to ensure that students' arguments are fully justified and explained.

This subject was not included in the report of the previous inspection.

### **Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE)**

Standards of achievement are good in both business, and health and social care

#### **Good features**

- In the 2002 examinations, several students achieved high grade results.
- Students exhibit a growing understanding of different aspects of the business and care sectors, analyse provision well and make reasoned judgements.
- They use ICT competently to analyse numerical data and to present assignment.
- Many use their own initiative to utilise personal contacts and contact local organisations to gain relevant information to support their studies.
- Most students discuss issues in class confidently and use subject-specific terminology with good accuracy. More able students are able to form and present coherent and logical opinions, and, in business lessons, put their work into European and worldwide contexts.

#### **Shortcomings**

- Students present assignments of varying depth and quality.
- Less able students lack confidence, are unable to develop discussion points and, in business, rely too heavily upon their teacher for input.
- In health and social care, not all students follow guidelines on how to improve their work.

The AVCE courses have served to improve standards in vocational education since the previous inspection.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Continue to improve the standards achieved in all subjects in the curriculum, by eliminating the shortcomings highlighted in the report.
2. Improve attendance at religious education lessons and physical recreation sessions.
3. Seek ways of improving the social area provided for students.