

REPORT

on the

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

**LOWER RHYMNEY PRIMARY SCHOOL
EGLWYS FAN
RHYMNEY
NP22 5QA**

School Number: 676/2310

Date of Inspection: 23 – 26 February 2004

By

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Under Estyn contract number: T/108/03P

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CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES

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

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

{PRI VAT E }	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

Lower Rhymney Primary School is situated on the outskirts of Rhymney, at the head of the Rhymney Valley. The school occupies a steep, elevated site. Originally built as separate infant and junior schools, the accommodation is separated by steep flights of steps. There are currently 196 pupils on roll aged between three and eleven years. Nursery pupils attend for the morning session only. The school currently admits children to the nursery who have recently celebrated their third birthdays.

The school serves a mixture of rented and owner-occupied homes in the immediate area. In common with other schools in the area, the school roll has fallen since the last inspection. Currently, 38 per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is higher than at the time of the last inspection. This proportion is above the average for schools both in Caerphilly and in all Wales. The area is economically disadvantaged.

English is the predominant language for all pupils. Under two per cent of pupils come from ethnic minority groups. Just over 50 pupils (25 per cent of the school population) are identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN). This proportion is similar to that reported at the time of the last inspection. There are no pupils with statements outlining their entitlement to additional support. Although it takes pupils across the full ability range, the school believes that there is a higher proportion of less able than more able pupils.

The School Development Plan (SDP) details the school's priorities for the current year and outlines its plans for the future. These include raising standards, staff development and improving the accommodation.

The school was last inspected in November 1998.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

This is an improving school that takes good care of its pupils.

- The previous inspection report highlighted many shortcomings in the standards achieved, the quality of education provided and in the leadership and management of the school. Subsequent monitoring by the local education authority (LEA) found that little action had been taken to address the issues identified in the report and that standards had declined further.
- The present headteacher took over as acting headteacher in March 2001 and was appointed to the permanent post a year later. At one point, four of the five temporary staff were in their first year of teaching. With the help of the LEA, staff have worked tremendously hard to improve the school. Although much of it is recent, the school has

made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous inspection report. The school is moving forward successfully.

- Standards of achievement are satisfactory. They were good 25 per cent of the lessons seen during the inspection and satisfactory in the remaining 75 per cent.
- When they start school at the age of three, few children have a wide range of skills and experiences. Attainment varies from year to year but, over time, it is at least below average. The overall quality of the educational provision for children under five is appropriate to their needs and the children make satisfactory progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children’s Learning (DLOs). Standards in each area of learning are as follows:

Area of learning	Nursery (3-4 year olds)	Reception (4-5 year olds)
Language, literacy and communication skills	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Personal and Social Development	Satisfactory	Good
Mathematical Development	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Knowledge and Understanding of the World	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Physical Development	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Creative Development	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

- Standards of achievement in Key Stage (KS)1 and KS2 are as follows:

Subject	KS1 (Y1 and Y2)	KS2 (Y3 to Y6)
English	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Welsh second language	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Mathematics	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Science	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Design and technology	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Information technology	Satisfactory	Good
History	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Geography	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Art	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Music	Satisfactory	Good
Physical education	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Religious education	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

- Progress is uneven as pupils move through the school. Progress in the Nursery is satisfactory and good in Reception. Scrutiny of pupils’ previous work indicates that this good progress has not been maintained in Y1. Despite good efforts to make good this loss in Y2, the knock-on effect of this is evident as pupils move into KS2. Recently introduced strategies to ensure better continuity and progress in learning are starting to improve this situation.
- In the 2003 National Curriculum (NC) teacher assessments, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 in reading, writing, mathematics and science were well below the local and national averages. The KS1 core subject indicator (that is, the percentage of Y2 pupils assessed by teachers at least Level 2 in English, mathematics and

science in combination) was 47 per cent, compared to 79 per cent in all schools nationally. Compared with similar schools (on the basis of free school meal entitlement), pupils' results are in the lower 25 per cent. Results at the end of KS1 show a significant decline over the last three years.

- The school's 2003 NC test results at the end of KS2 show that the proportions of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science were below the local and national averages. The 2003 core subject indicator (that is, the percentage of Y6 pupils attaining at least Level 4 in English, mathematics and science in combination) was 46 per cent. This is below the national average of 63 per cent. Although trends over time show that the results are improving, results were below the median in English, and the science and mathematics results in the lower 25 per cent of similar schools.
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) make satisfactory progress in relation to the targets in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The school successfully identifies the needs of abler pupils; setting for English and mathematics is an effective means of meeting their needs.
- Standards of achievement in the key skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing and numeracy across the curriculum are satisfactory in the Early Years and in both key stages. Standards of achievement in the use of information and communications technology (ICT) are satisfactory in KS1 and good in KS2. Long term planning for the development of key skills across all subjects is comprehensive and detailed.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils' achievements in and out of school are celebrated in the weekly whole school assembly. Teachers and other adults are very good role models. Pupils benefit from the caring and supportive staff. Effective provision is made for the development of pupils' understanding of the Welsh culture. However, overall, pupils' multi-cultural experiences are limited.
- The standards of behaviour and pupils' attitudes to learning are good overall. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Most pupils respond well; they know what is expected of them and the consequences of misbehaviour. Their achievements in and out of school are celebrated at a weekly assembly. A small but significant minority of pupils present their teachers with challenging behaviour; the management of these pupils is good overall. There was one temporary exclusion in the last twelve months.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory. The average rate of attendance over the past twelve months at 88.86% is well below the LEA and national averages. Attendance figures are adversely affected by the frequent – and often condoned - absences of a significant number of pupils.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory. It has improved since the previous inspection. During the inspection, teaching was very good in 4 per cent of the 36 lessons or part lessons observed, good in 41 per cent and satisfactory in 48 per cent of lessons. Two unsatisfactory lessons (7%) were seen.
- Teaching is good in Reception and promotes good progress. It is satisfactory in the Nursery; activities for the four-year-old children are suitably matched to their needs and good working habits are actively encouraged. However, the teaching of the younger

three-year-olds does not actively establish clear routines and the boundaries of acceptable learning behaviour.

- In KS1, teaching is at least satisfactory. Teachers make good use of questions to check what children know and can do, and provide suitably varied work for those who learn at different rates. In KS2, teaching ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Overall, it is satisfactory. Shortcomings relate to the use of teaching time coupled with expectations that are not high enough.
- Throughout the school, the progressive development of skills and knowledge is not yet secure. Teachers' expectations of what children can achieve are not always sharp enough; gaps in pupils' earlier learning often contribute to this. There are times when teachers tend to over-direct pupils' learning, rather than actively promoting their independent learning skills. There is too heavy a reliance on worksheets. Pupils sometimes sit for too long on the carpet during introductory sessions. Some lessons are too long, slowing the pace of pupils' learning.
- The school's arrangements for assessment, recording and reporting are satisfactory. Good use is made of a range of assessment materials to assess attainment in the core subjects, and pupil progress is recorded and carefully tracked. Assessment in the foundation subjects is at an early stage of development; assessment and recording procedures are not yet consistent.
- The curriculum is satisfactory. There are suitably tailored policies and schemes of work in place for nearly all subjects. Arrangements for personal and social education are sound. The school's coverage of *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is satisfactory. In the last academic year, there was no pupil for whom the NC was modified or disapplied.
- The quality of support and guidance given to pupils is good. The school provides a welcoming and caring environment where children feel safe, happy and secure. There is a strong ethos of inclusion at the school and support is provided to ensure that all pupils have access to all areas of the curriculum.
- The school's provision for pupils with SEN is satisfactory. Pupils identified as having SEN make satisfactory progress in relation to the targets set for them. Detailed individual education plans (IEPs) have clear objectives against which the progress of each pupil can be assessed. Progress is reviewed each term and IEPs amended accordingly, though comments on pupil progress do not always include sufficient detail. There is suitable support for those pupils with special needs and, in most classes, effective challenge for abler pupils. Support staff make a good contribution to the quality of pupils' learning.
- The overall quality of the partnerships with parents and community, schools and other institutions is good. Regular newsletters and other communications both formal and informal keep parents well informed about activities and events. All parents have signed the home/school agreement. The school prospectus provides useful information about the school; however, neither it nor the Governors' annual report to parents comply fully with statutory requirements. The school plays an active part in the community. Concerts and celebrations are very well attended.
- The quality of partnership with industry is satisfactory. Visits and visitors help to raise the pupils' awareness of the world of work both past and present. Pupils are involved in a

paper-recycling scheme. They benefit from professional football coaching and work with professionals on road and railway safety issues. There is no written industry policy and no staff have benefited from industrial placements.

- The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is satisfactory. The school has recently made good progress in developing procedures for self-evaluation and enhancing the monitoring roles of subject leaders. The School Development Plan (SDP) is a detailed document. There are, however, too many targets and only some are costed. Analysis of NC results has helped to inform planning for improvement.
- The leadership and efficiency of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher is successfully leading the school out of a difficult period. She knows what needs to be done to improve the school and, with the ready support of the deputy headteacher, gives a purposeful and positive lead. Subject co-ordinators are successfully developing their roles. The school has not yet established a planned programme for monitoring and evaluating its policies and schemes of work.
- The governing body conducts its business efficiently and decisions are suitably recorded in the minutes. Governors are starting to take a greater role in evaluating outcomes. Day-to-day routines are well established and the school runs smoothly. The headteacher and governing body seek *best value* in their purchases. The caretaker's role in maintaining the building makes a valuable contribution to the school's budget management. The school secretary carries out her duties efficiently and effectively.
- The overall provision for staffing, resources and accommodation is satisfactory. There are sufficient teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum and there is an effective staff development policy in place. The accommodation is adequate for the number of pupils but there are shortcomings in the nursery accommodation that affect standards of achievement, teaching and learning. The core and some foundation subjects are well resourced. The provision for outdoor equipment for the Nursery and Reception classes is satisfactory.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Standards are satisfactory overall.

- Standards of pupils' achievement were good in a quarter of the thirty-six lessons or part lessons seen during the inspection and satisfactory in the remaining three-quarters.
- The quality of the provision for children in the Nursery and Reception classes in the six areas of learning is satisfactory. Children achieve satisfactory standards in their language, literacy and communication skills; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; creative development and in their physical development. In their personal and social development, they achieve satisfactory standards in the Nursery and good standards in the Reception class. Children make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and good progress in the Reception class.

- Standards of achievement are satisfactory in both key stages in English, mathematics, Welsh second language, science, design and technology, history, geography, art, physical education and religious education. In information technology and music, standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS1 and good in KS2.
- Progress is uneven as pupils move through the school. Scrutiny of pupils' previous work indicates that the good progress in the Reception class has not been maintained in Y1 and, despite good efforts to make good this loss in Y2, the knock-on effect of this is evident as pupils move into KS2. Recently introduced strategies to ensure better continuity and progress in learning are starting to improve this situation.
- When they start in the nursery, children have a wide range of skills and experiences, and attainment on entry varies from year to year. Scrutiny of data over time indicates some particular variation between boys and girls in some year groups. Over time, attainment is below – and sometimes well below - that found in other schools in Wales. Compared with other schools in the LEA and in similar situations (using the latest available information) attainment on entry is below average.
- In the 2003 NC teacher assessments, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 in reading, writing, mathematics and science was well below the local and national averages. The KS1 core subject indicator was 47 per cent, compared to 79 per cent in all schools nationally.
- Compared with similar schools pupils' results are in the lower 25 per cent. In these assessments, girls achieved better than boys in mathematics and science, and significantly better than boys in English. Although a high number of pupils in this year group have special educational needs, the school acknowledges that pupils made uneven progress as they moved through the key stage. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels was also well below the national averages.
- Results at the end of KS1 show a significant decline over the last three years. The school has identified some of the contributory factors and is addressing these; inspection evidence indicates that these strategies are putting the school on the right tracks.
- The school's 2003 NC test results at the end of KS2 show that the proportions of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 in English, mathematics and science were below the local and national averages. Boys did better than girls in mathematics and science but not as well as the girls in English. Although the proportions of pupils achieving Level 5 were below the LEA and national averages, boys' results in science were better than those in other schools in the LEA.
- The 2003 core subject indicator was 46 per cent. This is below the national average of 63 per cent. Boys achieved significantly better overall than girls. Compared with similar schools, the English results were below the median, and the science and mathematics results in the lower 25 per cent.
- Trends over time show that the results at the end of KS2 are below LEA and national averages. However, the rolling averages are steadily increasing with results showing year-on-year improvement in all subjects in 2001 and again in 2002. The school did not meet its targets for 2003; it cites the absence of the permanent Y6 teacher in the weeks leading up to the tests as a major factor in lower than expected results. However, it is

evident that teacher assessments have tended to be consistently higher than test results in recent years.

- Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in the school. In the period since the last inspection, the uneven progress of pupils in KS1 has adversely affected standards in KS2. Although effective schemes of work are now in place, there are still gaps in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding from earlier years. A further contributory factor is the above average rate of pupil absence, which has a significant impact on many pupils' progress.
- Pupils from ethnic minority groups make similar progress to other pupils. Pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress in relation to the targets in their IEPs. The school successfully identifies the needs of abler pupils; setting for English and mathematics is an effective means of meeting their needs.

3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum

The overall standards of achievement in the key skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing and numeracy across the curriculum are satisfactory in both key stages. Standards of achievement in the use of ICT are satisfactory in KS1 and good in KS2. Long term planning for the development of key skills across all subjects is comprehensive and detailed.

- The progress and achievement of children under five in the key skills across the six areas of learning are satisfactory. Throughout the school, boys and girls achieve similar standards.
- Throughout the school, most pupils listen well in lessons and follow instructions carefully. Most pupils answer questions willingly and offer sensible responses. They speak clearly but are often reluctant to produce extended responses and to explain their methods of working.
- Reading skills develop satisfactorily as pupils move through the school. They use a range of non-fiction books with some help to seek information on relevant topics. Older KS2 pupils display effective research skills when working on individual and class projects.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in their writing skills in different subjects, though the scope is limited in KS1 and lower KS2. By the end of KS2, pupils make good progress and write well in a range of forms and styles in subjects such as history and science.
- In both key stages, pupils make satisfactory progress in their application of numeracy skills in different subjects. KS1 pupils use their counting and measuring skills effectively in geography and science, and produce and interpret simple graphs and pictograms. In KS2, pupils' data handling skills are developing satisfactorily and many use a range of charts, tables and graphs to enhance their understanding in science and geography.
- Standards achieved in the use of ICT across the curriculum are satisfactory in KS1. Pupils work independently on computer software packages to enhance their learning in mathematics and English but their skills are currently applied within a limited range.

They make good use of equipment such as tape recorders and have an appropriate awareness of the uses of ICT in everyday life.

- KS2 pupils make good progress in using a range of computer programs and packages across a number of subjects. Data handling, word processing, multi-media presentation, composing and computer aided design packages are used effectively in appropriate subjects such as mathematics, science, history, geography, music and design and technology.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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

- Daily assemblies comply with requirements. Pupils listen to a rich programme of music that creates a spiritual atmosphere. Pupils have some opportunity for reflection, which is an improvement since the last inspection, but there is rarely a focus, such as a lighted candle, to help them concentrate their attention. Children from the Early Years classes and pupils from KS1 respond well and with understanding to the assembly conducted in Welsh.
- Pupils' achievements in and out of school are celebrated in the weekly whole school assembly. Opportunities for pupils to meet more frequently in a whole school environment are inhibited by the geographical nature of the school site.
- Teachers and other adults are very good role models. They provide a clear lead and pupils are encouraged to develop a sense of right and wrong. Pupils know and understand both the school and classroom rules they help to draw up.
- Pupils co-operate well and share resources when working in pairs and groups. They respond well to the limited opportunities to take responsibilities such as class monitors and the Y2/Y5/6 reading partners.
- Teachers know their pupils and their families well, and relationships within the school are good. Pupils benefit from a caring and supportive staff.
- Educational visits and visitors contribute effectively to pupils' social and cultural development. Pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm to an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities including residential visits that help promote their social and team building skills.
- Pupils entertain members of the community; for example, the choir performs at the Rhymney Music Festival and in concert with the Silurian Male Voice Choir. The school supports charities, and pupils are aware of people less fortunate than themselves.
- The school has an agreed policy for racial equality and this is effectively promoted. Pupils develop a positive awareness of other faiths and cultures. They celebrate festivals such as Divali and visit places of worship such as a mosque and a synagogue; Y5 are

involved in a cultural diversity workshop. However, overall, pupils' multi-cultural experiences are limited.

- The school makes effective provision for the development of pupils' understanding of the Welsh culture, for example in design and technology and music where pupils work with craftsmen to produce Welsh love spoons and learn a range of folk songs. Incidental Welsh is used effectively throughout the day, particularly in the Reception/Y1 class.

4.2 Behaviour and attitudes

The standards of behaviour and pupils' attitudes to learning are good overall.

- The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and procedures are in place to maintain and further improve standards in the school. The headteacher and all staff work hard to maintain acceptable standards of behaviour: pupils know what is expected of them.
- During lessons, most pupils show a good ability to apply themselves to the task and they approach their work with interest and enthusiasm, showing an increasing ability to sustain concentration. Pupils generally are friendly and polite towards visitors and staff.
- Pupils move sensibly in and around the school site under supervision, for example, for assemblies and lunch. They enter the halls quietly and take up their places quickly for assemblies. Most wait patiently for their peers and listen attentively to the headteacher and staff. Older pupils move between areas with minimum disruption to their peers.
- The majority of pupils respond well to the school's high expectations for behaviour and to the classroom rules. Pupils know the consequences of misbehaviour. They are rewarded for good and improved behaviour, their attitudes and standards of work and for acts of kindness. Their achievements in and out of school are celebrated at the weekly whole school assembly and their certificates are displayed proudly in classrooms.
- Circle Time and the *Proud to Present* scheme are used effectively to raise pupils' self esteem and confidence. Plans are in place to establish a School Council to provide pupils with more responsibilities and to enable them to promote positive relationships.
- A small but significant minority of pupils present their teachers with challenging behaviour and demand a disproportionate amount of their time. The management of these pupils is satisfactory in the Nursery and good in other year groups. Staff have established clear routines, and positive strategies are consistently applied in most classes.
- Incidents of inappropriate behaviour and bullying are dealt with quietly and calmly and with minimal disruption to lessons. Sanctions appropriate to each situation are applied. Incidents and outcomes of serious misbehaviour are formally recorded. Appropriate procedures have been followed in the case of the temporary exclusion in the last twelve months. This was the first case in many years.
- Trained mid day supervisors contribute positively to the maintenance of acceptable behaviour during the lunch period. Their handbook provides useful guidance on games for indoor and outdoor activities and they have a role in the reward system. The majority

of pupils in KS1 share and take turns well with the playground equipment provided but there are insufficient structured activities to prevent some over boisterous behaviour during lunchtime in the KS2 playground.

4.3 Attendance

The level of pupils' attendance is unsatisfactory. This is much the same situation as at the last inspection.

- The average rate of attendance over the past twelve months at 88.86% is well below the LEA and national averages. Attendance figures overall and the school's targets are adversely affected by the poor attendance of a small number of families and the frequent absences of a significant number of pupils.
- Although the school regularly informs parents of the detrimental effects of lateness and non-attendance on their children's education, many parents are slow to respond and some condone unnecessary absence.
- Absences are carefully monitored and follow up procedures are in place. The school operates a *first day* call system and works closely with the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) to reduce the number of absences with a small measure of success.
- A small number of pupils in most classes arrive late at the start of the day and miss the beginning of lessons. The school day and individual lessons start on time.
- Strategies are in place to improve attendance and punctuality. Pupils with perfect attendance are rewarded termly and at the end of year. Their certificates are displayed in each classroom. Older pupils respond particularly well to the *Class of the Week* award that is celebrated at the weekly whole school assembly. Attendance in the week of the inspection was well over 90 per cent.
- Registers are completed meticulously at the start of both sessions. The school complies with regulations for the registering of pupils.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.

- During the inspection, teaching was very good in 4 per cent of the 36 lessons or part lessons observed, good in 41 per cent and satisfactory in 48 per cent of lessons. Two unsatisfactory lessons (7%) were seen.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. At that time, teaching was good in 10 per cent of lessons, satisfactory in 70% and unsatisfactory in the remaining 20 per cent. Significant shortcomings included low expectations and an undemanding pace.

- Teaching in the Early Years is satisfactory overall. In the Nursery, relationships between adults and children are positive. Planning is detailed and provides a good range of experiences across the areas of learning leading to the DLOs. The activities for the four-year-old children are suitably matched to their needs and good working habits are actively encouraged.
- The activities planned for the younger three-year-old children who have recently joined the nursery, whilst suitable for children of their age, are not so well matched to their particular individual needs. Teaching is not active enough in establishing clear routines and the boundaries of acceptable learning behaviour. In this respect, the lack of a quiet room and soft play equipment contributes adversely to the provision.
- In the Reception class, teaching is good. Teachers' expectations of children's behaviour are high. All children are actively encouraged to participate fully in class discussions and staff focus well on developing listening and speaking skills. Explanations are clear and children are well supported in their activities. Staff support pupils with special educational needs well.
- In KS1, teaching is at least satisfactory. Teachers make good use of questions to check what children know and can do, and provide suitably varied work for those who learn at different rates. Where needed, pupils benefit from effective individual and small group teaching from support staff.
- In KS2, teaching ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Overall, it is satisfactory. In the best lessons, teaching encourages pupils to be imaginative and to do their best. The pace of lessons is brisk and the work challenging yet achievable. In these lessons, teachers share learning objectives with pupils at the beginning and effectively return to them in the closing session. In the unsatisfactory lessons, teachers did not make good use of time and their expectations were not high enough.
- Across the school, teachers' subject knowledge across the curriculum is satisfactory. Where teachers have specialist knowledge, they put it to good use. This is evident in some lessons in the Early Years, English and information technology, and contributes effectively to good standards of achievement. The school's strong focus on developing teachers' expertise through in-service training is starting to pay dividends in improving teaching.
- Teachers make satisfactory use of the available assessment information to plan the next steps in learning. However, their expectations of what children can achieve are not always sharp enough; gaps in pupils' earlier learning often contribute to this.
- The progressive development of skills and knowledge is not yet secure in the school. Many policies and schemes of work are recently in place and teachers are following these closely. Sometimes, teachers have slightly different interpretations of the school's strategies in, for example, numeracy and literacy. A particular shortcoming is evident in the teaching of handwriting; inconsistencies in KS1 mean that many pupils have developed bad habits and these adversely affect standards as they move through the school.
- There are times when teachers tend to over-direct pupils' learning, rather than actively promoting their independent learning skills. When pupils are given the opportunity and

guidance to develop their ideas and understanding, they rise well to the challenge. However, there is too heavy a reliance on worksheets and exercises where pupils have to fill in missing words.

- There is suitable support for those pupils with special needs and, in most classes, effective challenge for abler pupils. Support staff make a good contribution to the quality of pupils' learning.
- Particularly effective use is made of ICT in KS2. In the Early Years and KS1, the use of ICT is satisfactory; although the computer suite is available, getting pupils to it is very time consuming, especially in inclement weather. Overall, there is a good emphasis on planning for the development of key skills but teachers do not consistently follow this through in their daily plans.
- The use of teaching time is satisfactory overall. However, at times, pupils sit for too long on the carpet during introductory sessions. Some lessons are too long, slowing the pace of pupils' learning.
- Most staff regularly promote the use of incidental Welsh in lessons. Teachers make effective use of learning resources.

5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting

The school's arrangements for assessment, recording and reporting are satisfactory.

- The school's policy gives clear guidance on agreed procedures and methods for assessment, recording and reporting at the school. Children are informally assessed when they start in the Nursery and again at the end of the Reception year. Staff use the DLOs as a basis for these assessments.
- Good use is made of a range of assessment materials to assess attainment in the core subjects, and pupil progress is recorded and carefully tracked. Individual pupil records contain further useful information on achievement and attainment according to National Curriculum assessment criteria.
- The school gives due regards to different groups of pupils in its interpretation of the information it collects. Results of standardised tests and teacher assessments are used to identify any pupils requiring additional support and the nature of the support required. This information is also used to inform teachers' planning for differentiated tasks, and to identify the differing learning styles of, for example, boys and girls.
- Clear assessment guidelines and the development of subject portfolios help to ensure consistency in teacher assessment. The school is currently involved in the development of individual target setting and the involvement of pupils in their own ongoing assessments.
- Assessment in the foundation subjects is at an early stage of development; assessment and recording procedures are not yet consistent.
- The quality of marking is generally good, though there are some inconsistencies from class to class. Pupils' work is marked regularly and is often annotated with useful

comments on achievement and suggestions on how to improve their work. The recent development involving pupils in recording the learning objectives for lessons, and teachers marking according to those objectives, is working well in some cases but is not fully implemented in all classes.

- Reports to parents are produced annually. For the core subjects and some foundation subjects these are detailed with clear comments on progress and suggested ways forward. However, for some of the foundation subjects they do not include sufficient detail on progress and the skills developed. Teacher assessments and test scores related to the NC levels are reported at the end of each key stage. Consultations with parents are held twice yearly.

5.3 Curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- Staff have put commendable efforts into developing policies and schemes of work. This was a particular issue at the time of the last inspection and a lot has been accomplished in a relatively short period of time. Much is only recently in place and the curriculum is still bedding down; over time, pupils have not systematically developed skills, knowledge and understanding as they move through the school. This means that there are gaps in their learning which continue to have an adverse affect on standards.
- There are suitable policies and schemes of work in place for nearly all subjects, with commercial policies and schemes for art and personal and social education (PSE) in the process of being adapted to the needs of the school. The school meets the requirements of the Wales Curriculum 2000 in both KS1 and KS2. The curriculum suitably reflects the aims of the school and successfully promotes the all-round development of pupils. The school's scheme of work for developing key skills across the curriculum is well thought out; it provides clear and effective guidance for staff.
- Policies outline learning outcomes and indicate opportunities for assessment and evaluation. The curriculum in KS1 and KS2 covers all the prescribed subjects of the NC and meets with statutory requirements. Religious education is taught in accordance with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The curriculum for children in the Nursery and Reception successfully promotes progress in all six areas of the Desirable Learning Outcomes. In the last academic year, there was no pupil for whom the NC was modified or disapplied.
- The amount of teaching time broadly meets the National Assembly for Wales' recommendations. However, this time is not always used to the best advantage, as some lessons are too long.
- Arrangements for personal and social education (PSE) are sound. Visitors, including the school nurse and community police officers, contribute effectively to the provision. Older pupils are developing a suitable understanding of the responsibilities of citizenship in the wider world.
- The school's coverage of *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is satisfactory.

- Staff are working hard to develop their planning. Their medium and short-term plans build effectively on the schemes of work. However, teachers do not consistently include key skills in their short-term plans. The quality of planning in the Nursery and Reception classes is good but, in the Nursery, is not always successfully realised for the youngest children. In delivering the planned curriculum, teachers in both key stages are still adjusting to the new schemes of work; their provision for pupils to take active responsibility for their own learning and develop their own ideas is not yet secure across the curriculum.
- The curriculum is socially inclusive. Staff make good efforts to provide pupils with full curricular equality and opportunity; they address the needs of abler and SEN pupils. They recognise the differing interests of boys and girls, and encourage pupils with particular sporting and musical skills. Excursions and educational visits add to the curriculum. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular musical and sporting activities. Pupils support these well.
- The school's homework policy is suitable for the age of the pupils. Overall, homework is set regularly and is relevant to pupils' classroom learning.

5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

The quality of support and guidance given to pupils is good.

- The school provides a welcoming and caring environment where children feel safe, happy and secure. Teachers know their pupils well, are responsive to their needs and there is a general ethos of mutual respect between pupils and staff.
- The Child Protection Policy meets statutory requirements and there are good links with external agencies. All members of staff have received training from the County Child Protection Officer.
- The school has an appropriate Health and Safety Policy and all teachers and classroom assistants have received first aid training. Midday supervisors have received training focused on playground activities and safety. The accident book is kept up-to-date and there are clear procedures for notifying parents of any illness or accidents in school. The headteacher and governors undertake risk assessments in line with the LEA advice. The school holds regular fire drills and alarm checks.
- Pupils are satisfactorily supervised in school and during playtimes.
- The school has a sex education policy that is agreed by governors, and parents are consulted about the provision. There is suitable provision for raising pupils' awareness of drug and substance abuse.
- There is a strong ethos of inclusion at the school and support is provided to ensure that all boys and girls have access to all areas of the curriculum. The design of the present school buildings precludes wheelchair access to most classrooms.

5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)

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

- The school identifies 53 pupils as having SEN. Eight are at the School Action Stage and 21 at School Action Plus. Currently, no pupil has a statement outlining their individual needs. Pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve satisfactory standards in relation to the targets set for them.
- The SEN co-ordinator (SENCo), supported by her colleagues, has done much in a relatively short time to establish sound procedures for identification of pupils with SEN and to ensure a common approach to record keeping at the school. The school has also developed much closer links and shared information regarding their children's needs with parents.
- There is a special needs policy that outlines clearly the roles and responsibilities of everyone concerned in supporting pupils with SEN. It gives appropriate guidance regarding procedures for the identification of pupils who need additional support and a clear description of the provision offered by the school. It does not, however, make specific reference to the graduated approach and stages outlined in the SEN Code of Practice. The school's *Gifted and Talented Pupils Policy* and the *Disability Accessibility Plan* provide further useful information on provision at the school.
- There are detailed individual education plans (IEPs) in place for each pupil on School Action and School Action Plus stages. These plans have clear objectives against which the progress of each pupil can be assessed. Progress is reviewed each term and IEPs amended accordingly, though comments on pupil progress do not always include sufficient detail. Information regarding IEPs is sent to parents and they are provided with opportunities to discuss their children's progress each term.
- Baseline Assessment is used for early identification and a range of standardised tests are used effectively to measure progress. There are also good examples of teachers identifying the more able pupils' strengths and particular needs.
- Pupils with SEN are supported mainly within their classes or teaching groups and a Language Support Teacher, funded by the LEA, provides two sessions a week for pupils on the School Action Plus stage. These language sessions are carefully planned and the detailed records of progress indicate that pupils are making satisfactory progress.
- Class teachers have a good awareness of their pupils' needs and in the majority of cases differentiate the work accordingly. There are some instances however, where work is not sufficiently targeted to meet the needs of less able pupils. Classroom assistants provide effective and sensitive support.
- Pupils in KS2 to are set into ability groups for English and mathematics and this is an effective way of providing suitable tasks for both the most able pupils and those requiring additional support.
- Although there are currently no pupils with statements of SEN, the school is well supported by LEA Educational Psychologists and various agencies. An additional support

worker for the under-fives is provided by the Shell-By Project, which delivers a programme to counteract identified speech and language concerns.

- The named governor with responsibility for SEN is supportive and well informed regarding SEN provision and issues at the school.

5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions

The overall quality of partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions is good.

- Regular newsletters and other communications both formal and informal keep parents well informed about activities and events. Copies of important notices are posted in the nursery and KS1 notice boards. All parents have signed the home/school agreement.
- The school prospectus provides useful information about the school but, together with the Governors' annual report to parents, does not comply fully with statutory requirements.
- Notifications of educational visits provide parents with information about topics in the related subject but the school does not provide timely information about subjects being taught across the curriculum.
- There is good daily informal contact between parents and teachers. The headteacher gives a good deal of time to contact with individual parents.
- The school involves parents in family learning projects such as the numeracy group for parents and pupils in KS1 and the *Link Up* sessions for children in the Early Years. Attendance is variable but pupils continue to be included even when their parents drop out. Parents gain an improved knowledge and understanding of their children's work and pupils make noticeable progress. Plans are in place to introduce a *Play and Language* project for parents and children in the Early Years.
- A small number of parents and friends of the school organise fund raising and social events that are family oriented. Money raised is used to enhance resources and the environment, for example, the purchase of garden furniture and video and digital cameras.
- A small number of volunteers provide good quality support in classrooms that contributes significantly to the standards achieved by pupils. They run the library and parents of children in the Reception class regularly assist in dressing children for physical education lessons.
- The school plays an active part in the community. Pupils support the Rhymney Music Festival and go out into the community to entertain. They sing with the Silurian Male voice Choir. Concerts and celebrations are open to members of the community, and are very well attended.
- Visits and visitors help to enrich the curriculum. Pupils' experiences include working with theatre groups and involvement in a cultural diversity workshop. The school liaison

police officer and officers from the emergency services support the PSE curriculum in KS2 and work with KS1 on their *People who help us* topic.

- There are good links with other local primary schools and the receiving secondary school. Pupils are involved in inter-school sports tournaments. Transition and pastoral arrangements are well established and pupils are involved in cross phase projects in the core subjects.
- Although the school is not involved in a formal partnership with an initial teacher training institution, there are very good links with nearby colleges of further education. The school provides good quality training and work experience for nursery nurses and student nurses.
- The school has good links with outside agencies.

5.7 Partnership with industry

The quality of partnership with industry is satisfactory.

- Visits and visitors help to raise pupils' awareness of the world of work both past and present. Pupils are involved in a paper-recycling scheme. They benefit from professional football coaching and work with professionals on road and railway safety issues. Y5 pupils are in the early stages of a mini enterprise scheme. They work on their project during the after school technology club.
- The school has good links with a local pharmaceutical company. Pupils benefit from the generous donation of computer equipment.
- There is no written industry policy. Staff have not benefited recently from industrial placements.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement

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

- The school has recently made good progress in developing procedures for self-evaluation and enhancing the monitoring roles of subject leaders.
- The School Development Plan (SDP) is a detailed document that includes brief evaluation reports of previous plans, the school's long-term overview and specific short-term priorities. The action plans for current priorities include aims, detailed actions to be taken, success criteria including targets and timescales. Few targets include costings and there is a lack of information on procedures for monitoring and evaluating progress. The plan for the current academic year is very demanding and includes too many targets to be realistically achieved.

- Self-evaluation reports and review notes in the SDP are mainly focused on procedures but the school is currently working on placing more emphasis on evaluating standards of achievement. Analysis of NC assessment results produced by LEA advisers in partnership with the school has helped to inform planning for improvement.
- Curriculum co-ordinators are becoming actively involved in monitoring their subject areas by observing lessons and evaluating pupils' work. Pupils' books in the core subjects in particular are scrutinised regularly and history and geography books have been monitored recently. Some changes in planning and practice have already been made because of monitoring. The school has not, however, established a planned programme for monitoring and evaluating its policies and schemes of work across all subjects of the curriculum.

6.2 Leadership and efficiency

The leadership and efficiency of the school are satisfactory.

- The headteacher is successfully leading the school out of a difficult period. Monitoring reports from the LEA indicate that standards declined after the last inspection and little progress was made towards addressing the key issues identified in the inspection report. The school was identified as giving cause for concern to the LEA. During this intervening time, the school has suffered considerable long-term staff absence, together with a number of temporary appointments, staff turnover, and a decline in pupil numbers.
- The present staff are working hard to address the school's shortcomings. Much effort has gone into getting the school to its present position; in many areas, staff have had to start from scratch. The headteacher knows what needs to be done to improve the school and, with the ready support of the deputy headteacher, gives a purposeful and positive lead. Although a shortcoming, the over-abundance of targets in the school development plan demonstrates the work still required across a wide range of the school's work. Much is only just in place but it provides a secure basis for development.
- Subject co-ordinators are successfully getting to grips with their responsibilities. With the exception of art and PSE, where there are interim arrangements, policies and schemes of work are now in place for all subjects and are adapted to the school's particular needs. Co-ordinators are beginning to monitor their implementation and effectiveness. The school's scheme for the teaching of key skills across the curriculum is well structured.
- The school's aims are appropriate and reviewed annually. In pursuit of higher standards, the school is making increased use of test and other data to evaluate its work. Standards are rising at the end of KS2 but have declined over time at the end of KS1. The headteacher has correctly identified contributory factors, in particular, the uneven progress as pupils move from Reception through to Y2. Inspection evidence indicates that improvements are starting to show through.
- Governors are most supportive of the school; many have long associations with the school and know pupils, parents and grandparents well. The governing body conducts its business efficiently, and decisions are suitably recorded in the minutes. Governors rely on the headteacher to inform and guide them but they are starting to take a greater role in evaluating outcomes. Although major statutory requirements are met, there are some minor omissions to the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents. The

school has identified issues concerning access for disabled people and has recently agreed a policy to combat racial discrimination.

- Day-to-day routines are well established, and the school runs smoothly. The three separate buildings, on a steep hillside, make communication difficult. In the circumstances, the school does the best it can for staff and pupils to meet as often as possible but there are many limitations with the present buildings that put barriers in the way of informal monitoring by staff and regular contact between pupils of different ages. Most significant, however, is the necessary duplication of equipment and resources and the additional costs of running and maintaining the facilities.
- The headteacher and governing body seek *best value* in their purchases and look carefully at different options when formulating their budget. A shortcoming of the current school development plan is that targets are not systematically costed; because the school's main priorities are not identified, the relationship between the budget and the school's plans for development is not clear enough. The caretaker's role in maintaining the building makes a valuable contribution to the school's budget management.
- The school has put in place suitable procedures to address the issues raised in the most recent auditor's report. The school secretary carries out her duties efficiently and effectively.

6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

The overall provision for staffing, resources and accommodation is satisfactory.

- There are sufficient teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum. They work well together as a team. They are well qualified and, between them, have a good range of subject expertise enabling them to deliver the NC.
- There is now an effective staff development policy in place, enabling staff to identify their training needs, which in turn is linked to the priorities in the SDP. This follows a considerable period in which there had been little training provided.
- All staff have appropriate job descriptions and teachers have readily taken on new and additional roles as subject leaders. Classroom assistants are effectively deployed to support individual or groups of pupils. They make a good contribution to pupils' learning.
- The split site causes many difficulties for the school in terms of communication and in the efficient use of resources. Currently, the KS2 building lacks appropriate access for pupils with physical disabilities. Although the external fabric of school needs attention, the caretaker ensures that the accommodation is secure and as well maintained as possible.
- The accommodation is adequate for the number of pupils and is used effectively. All classrooms are colourful and stimulating environments with good displays of pupils' work. Specialist accommodation such as the ICT and music rooms in KS2 are well used to enhance pupils' learning. The halls in both buildings are suitable for PE. The Nursery accommodation, although spacious, has no quiet area. The outside play areas are spacious and satisfactorily maintained.

- The school has discarded a great deal of old and unusable resources and prioritised funding for essential books and equipment. As a result, the core and some foundation subjects are well resourced. The nature of the site means that many resources need to be duplicated and this leads to unavoidable additional expense. There is a satisfactory range of fiction and non-fiction books and the KS2 library in particular is adequately stocked.
- There is good provision for IT in the suite and within classrooms. The provision for outdoor equipment for the Nursery and Reception classes is satisfactory.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

Provision for the under-fives

Overall, the quality of the educational provision for children under five is appropriate to their needs. Children make satisfactory progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

- The school offers full-time places for Reception (four to five-year-old) children and part-time places for Nursery (three to four-year old) children. The school admits younger three-year-old children as part of the National Assembly Government's initiative. Numbers in each intake vary from year to year, reflecting declining numbers in the area. Many children enter the school with a limited range of skills and experiences.
- In children's personal and social development, standards are good in the Reception class and satisfactory in the Nursery. Standards are satisfactory in children's knowledge and understanding of the world, language, literacy and communication skills, mathematical development, creative development and physical development. Some children achieve the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the time they are five, but many are still working towards these, particularly in literacy and communication skills. From their low starting point, children make satisfactory progress in the Nursery and good progress in Reception.
- Classroom routines are well established in Reception. Staff provide a good balance of activities. Children are helped to make decisions and select materials and activities. The accommodation is used well. Reception children have use of the Nursery's fenced play area.
- The Nursery is accommodated in a separate building, on a steep slope between the infant and junior departments. Access is by steep, narrow steps. The overall floor area is suitable for the number of children involved. However, the lack of a suitably sized quiet room is a shortcoming, particularly as some of the younger children find it difficult to cope with the open space available and the distraction of other activities going on at the same time. These children have very limited self-control and demand a high degree of adult attention. At present, staff are not sufficiently active in establishing clear routines for these children.

Good features

Reception children achieve good standards in the development of their personal and social skills; nursery children achieve satisfactory standards in this area of learning.

- Older children in the Nursery are familiar with daily routines. They respond well to instructions, share equipment with each other and take turns to speak when in groups with an adult.
- Reception children take turns, make choices about using equipment, and most routinely respect the views and property of others. They get on well with the adults they meet in the classroom. They have good regard for the class rules and mix well with each other in the playground. Most concentrate well, respond promptly to requests and instructions, and take good responsibility for their personal needs.

Nursery and reception children achieve satisfactory standards in the development of language, literacy and communication skills.

- Most children in the Nursery follow instructions correctly. Most answer questions, some in short phrases and others in sentences. Some confidently ask visitors what they are doing in the Nursery.
- Children repeat accurately short statements made by adults when working with play-dough or in the sand tray. Children following a special language project show a marked improvement in their speaking and listening skills.
- Pupils understand that illustrations tell a story and that the reading direction sequences events. They recognise that labels in Welsh and English on a St. David's Day display carry meaning.
- Reception children listen attentively to adults and take turns to answer questions when sitting together. In the class café, they take turns to take orders, answer the telephone and serve their customers. They model adult language effectively, extending their range and use of vocabulary.
- Children greet each other, say prayers and sing songs in Welsh. They respond to questions, instructions and signs in the classroom in both English and Welsh. Children count confidently to 10 in Welsh, recognise and name colours well.
- Children know the names and sounds of many letters; they recognise specific letters in their name and write it on a marker board. They recognise familiar words on labels and notices around the classroom. Children handle books carefully and talk about the illustrations. They use nouns correctly – such as lion, lioness and cub – when discussing family groups.
- Children make their own words using magnetic letters, trace and copy adult writing, and label pictures and drawings. Many correctly sequence pictures to tell a story.

Nursery and reception children achieve satisfactory standards in their mathematical development.

- Nursery children know a number of counting rhymes. They count to 10, match objects and name some regular two-dimensional shapes. When working in the water and sand trays, older children understand terms such as *full*, *empty*, *more* and *less*.
- Reception children sort three-dimensional shapes by their properties. They model shapes from play-dough, identifying cones and cylinders. Children count to 20 and beyond. They understand terms such as *one more*, *bigger than*, *smaller than* and *same as*. They look for similarities and differences in patterns and compare different objects, such as the collection of building materials on display in the classroom.

Nursery and reception children achieve satisfactory standards in the development of their knowledge and understanding of the world.

- Nursery children are familiar with the passing of time. They describe the weather, talk about different people in their families and the different places they have visited.
- Reception children are familiar with the different materials used in building a house. They have observed a house being built near the school. On a walkabout around the school, they recognise the different materials used for drainpipes, walls, doors and drain covers.
- Children visit the nearby Catholic Church. They are familiar with some of the different parts of the church building, the priest's vestments and the statues.
- Children know the different seasons of the year. They collect leaves in autumn to make leaf prints and take bark rubbings. Their visits in the local area help them to develop an appreciation of where they live. Celebrations of the Chinese New Year help them to develop a wider understanding of the world and its different cultures.
- Children use the computer independently. They use the mouse to follow on-screen instructions and the interactive whiteboard for their work on moving animals.

Nursery and reception children achieve satisfactory standards in their physical development.

- Older nursery children successfully control large wheeled vehicles, moving in different directions as they negotiate routes around a series of hoops. They understand commands such as *stop*, *fast* and *slow*. When using sand and water, most exercise suitable control when filling one object from another.
- Children in Reception handle different tools correctly. They use a range of different colouring and writing implements. They draw with control and make good use of construction kits. Most handle equipment carefully, using finer movements to slot and piece items together.

Nursery and reception children achieve satisfactory standards in their creative development.

- Nursery children use paints and simple printing techniques to produce attractive pictures. They mix colours, such as blue and white, to make different colours for their *night and day* scenes. They use different materials to make collages.
- Children sing a range of rhymes and songs in both English and Welsh. They follow the rhythm of a guitar accompaniment.
- Reception children make effective use of their hands and vegetables for printing. They make hedgehogs with clay and matchsticks. They contribute to large wall displays, for example, a jungle scene.
- Children enjoy making music with instruments. They respond well to recorded music and sing tunefully in both Welsh and English. Children play imaginatively in the class café, and make effective use of equipment to act out their stories and events.

Shortcomings

- In both the Nursery and Reception classes, many children have a limited range of vocabulary. They do not readily expand upon their ideas and thoughts. This affects their progress across all the areas of learning.
- Some younger children in the Nursery have difficulty in following instructions and dart from one activity to another; they are often oblivious to others and tend to be destructive of equipment. Although they are starting to respond to adults, they demand considerable individual attention.

English

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in both key stages.

Good features

- In both key stages, listening skills are good. Pupils follow instructions carefully and respond promptly to questions. In Y5 and Y6, they listen attentively to each other when discussing possible lines of development in a story.
- Speaking skills are satisfactory in both key stages. Pupils in KS1 explain the work they are doing; they ask questions of each other and adults. With encouragement, pupils in KS2 take part in group and whole class discussions; older pupils take part in *writing conferences* and sustain a logical argument.
- Standards of achievement in reading are satisfactory. Using *big books* in the whole class reading sessions, Y2 pupils join in well and take part in discussions of the text. Pupils are successfully developing different strategies to help them improve their reading. They have a go at matching sounds to the unfamiliar words they read, to *build up* a word.

- Y3/4 pupils know the difference between factual and fictional texts. They understand the different purposes of texts, for example, instructions in a recipe book. Pupils in Y5/Y6 successfully develop more advanced skills, enabling them to understand and discuss in greater depth what they are reading. Most pupils read fluently and, increasingly as they get older, with expression.
- In writing, pupils in KS1 make satisfactory progress overall. Pupils in Y1 sequence pictures to form a story. They imagine what it must be like to live in a lighthouse as part of their work on *The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch*. Pupils in Y2 are familiar with beginnings and endings of stories, and many recall information logically. Pupils make effective use of writing frames to help them structure their work.
- In KS2, younger pupils develop their understanding and use of grammar and punctuation, for example, using the apostrophe and when writing in the singular and plural. In their work on recipes, pupils identify and use imperative nouns and verbs. They write for different purposes, such as letters and rules, and include characters and plot development in their story designs.
- Y5/6 pupils develop many skills from their class texts, such as *Goodnight Mr Tom*. They compare characters, change the direction of the plot, predict different outcomes and make effective use of similes, metaphors and personification in their work.

Shortcomings

- In both key stages, pupils' vocabulary when explaining their thoughts and ideas is not wide enough.
- In KS1 and the start of KS2, pupils' reading skills for research and information gathering are limited.
- Pupils' independent writing skills are underdeveloped, particularly those involving drafting and editing their work, as they move through the school. They make insufficient use of ICT to support their work.
- Standards in handwriting, spelling and the presentation of written work have dipped in KS1 and impede the achievement of better work well in to KS2.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in both key stages.

Good features

- KS1 pupils count confidently on and back in twos, tens and fives to a hundred, from different starting points. They recall number facts rapidly and use their knowledge of number bonds to 10 well when dealing with larger numbers.

- Pupils understand place value to 100 and make good use of number lines and squares. Mental calculation skills develop satisfactorily and most pupils cope confidently with adding and subtracting to 20 and apply these skills to real life situations.
- Pupils develop a sound knowledge of mathematical vocabulary and use terms such as plus, addition, subtraction and minus correctly. Older KS1 pupils know the names of simple 2D and 3D shapes and describe them according to their properties.
- Pupils use standard and non-standard measurements accurately to measure items in the classroom and they make sensible estimations. They make good progress in gathering, interpreting and representing data, and in applying their skills in other areas of the curriculum.
- In KS2, pupils have a good awareness of place value and their recall of number bonds and multiplication tables is developing satisfactorily. They respond with increasing confidence during mental mathematics sessions.
- Older and more able pupils show good understanding of the relationships between fractions, decimals and percentages. Throughout KS2, pupils develop appropriate vocabulary and correct use of mathematical terminology.
- Pupils display good knowledge and understanding of the properties of 2D and 3D shapes. They make sensible estimates of measure and they show a good awareness of the need to use appropriate units of measure.

Shortcomings

- Pupils use a limited range of strategies for mental and written calculations.
- A number of pupils lack confidence when discussing their work and explaining their strategies.
- Pupils do not make sufficient use of problem solving and investigative skills.

Science

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in both key stages.

Good features

- Pupils in KS1 offer sensible ideas on how to carry out simple scientific investigations and make reasonable predictions. They make satisfactory progress in developing their sorting and classifying skills when sorting materials.
- Older KS1 pupils develop an understanding of forces and explain what happened in an investigation that they carried out as a class. They record results accurately in tables, and produce and interpret pictograms and block graphs. They demonstrate sound knowledge of simple electrical circuits and offer explanations using appropriate vocabulary. Some pupils understand the concept of fair testing.

- KS2 pupils make satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding of the programmes of study of the NC. They have a good recall of previous learning and share their understanding. They respond well to questions and understand scientific terms and concepts relevant to their age and ability.
- Pupils make steady progress in classifying and describing the properties of different materials. Older pupils confidently classify substances as solids, liquids and gases. They have a sound understanding of changing materials and recognise that some changes can be reversed and others cannot.
- By the end of KS2, pupils record their work neatly in a good range of written forms using appropriate scientific language. They present their observations and measurements clearly in tables and graphs, using ICT where appropriate. Pupils make sensible and reasoned predictions when discussing scientific investigations.

Shortcomings

- In both key stages, pupils' scientific investigation skills are underdeveloped. Pupils in KS2 show insufficient ability to construct investigations independently.
- Many pupils do not have a sufficient understanding of fair testing.
- KS1 and lower KS2 pupils' development in recording their findings in science activities is at times restrained and confined through the use of prepared worksheets.

Welsh second language

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in both key stages.

Good features

- In both key stages, pupils respond effectively to the incidental Welsh used by teachers and follow basic instructions.
- In KS1, pupils respond confidently and appropriately to familiar questions about their own lives and likes and dislikes. They describe the weather and use familiar patterns to ask their own questions. Pupils write simple sentences using familiar patterns and read what they have written with understanding.
- Pupils enjoy listening to Welsh stories and use their phonic skills to read familiar texts along with the teacher. They sing Welsh songs with enthusiasm and good pronunciation.
- In KS2, pupils answer questions confidently, responding to an increasing range of patterns. Some pupils ask their own questions relating to everyday experiences. When working as a class or group with the teacher, they read with meaning and appropriate expression.

- Pupils in KS2 question each other regarding what they like and dislike with satisfactory expression and pronunciation. They complete short written tasks neatly and correctly, following set language patterns.

Shortcomings

- A number of KS1 pupils do not have a secure grasp of work previously covered and are hesitant in their responses to questions.
- Upper KS2 pupils make insufficient progress in building on skills developed previously. They do not have a firm knowledge of vocabulary and phrases, sufficient to express their own ideas confidently.
- Despite some good examples and the availability of a satisfactory range of books, pupils' reading skills in Welsh are insufficiently developed.
- Pupils in upper KS2 are unable to complete simple, free writing exercises.

Design and technology

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in both key stages.

Good features

- Pupils in KS1 design and make moving vehicles to a satisfactory standard. They confidently describe the good features of their designs and models.
- Pupils discuss the properties of familiar materials and talk about designs when making glove puppets to use in other classroom activities. They record their designs and finished products satisfactorily in words and pictures.
- Pupils join materials in a variety of ways and have a good understanding of health and safety requirements when using simple tools. Their skills in programming a controllable toy are satisfactory.
- In KS2, pupils demonstrate good making skills in their design and technology lessons. They use tools and equipment effectively and safely. Previously completed products show that pupils produce work to a satisfactory standard.
- Pupils are aware of techniques for strengthening and reinforcing structures when required. They measure accurately and take great care in applying appropriate finishes to their products. When making moving toys, pupils develop good understanding of how simple mechanisms can be used to produce different types of movement.
- Pupils make effective use of a computer aided design package to design gift bags as part of a business enterprise project.

Shortcomings

- Pupils show insufficient initiative and care in designing; they are too reliant on teacher direction.
- Many pupils do not effectively evaluate and suggest improvements to their finished products.

Information technology

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS1 and good in KS2.

Good features

- In KS1, pupils make satisfactory progress in the development of their keyboard and mouse control skills. They are developing competence in word-processing and are beginning to write sentences independently. Some store and retrieve work with some help.
- When using an art package, pupils produce colourful and pleasing pictures. They use appropriate software to create images by using a mouse to click and drag items.
- Pupils in KS2 make good progress in their use of computers. They use a range of software packages confidently to enhance learning across the curriculum. Y6 pupils make good progress in multi-media presentations using text and graphics, which they import from other programs and the Internet.
- Pupils input data using a spreadsheet program and understand how to use appropriate tools to make calculations. They use a range of data handling programs effectively to present their findings in mathematics and science.
- Good use is made of digital cameras, and pupils confidently import the photographs into their work. Some scan images to use in reports, book reviews and presentations.

Shortcomings

- Although pupils in KS1 are familiar with the basic elements of the computer, their skills in working independently with word-processing software is not sufficiently developed.

History

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in both key stages.

Good features

- Pupils in KS1 are developing a sense of chronology. They identify similarities and differences between the past and present.

- Pupils explain the differences between early and modern day forms of transport. They record their observations clearly in pictures and sentences. When discussing and comparing hobbies, they express likes and dislikes about past traditions.
- Younger KS1 pupils recount accurately their visit to St. Fagan's and speak confidently about the homes and lives of people in the past. They compare them to their own experiences, and explain how and why things have changed.
- In KS2, pupils display a developing knowledge of events and people from the past. They appreciate that the experiences of people living at the same time varied according to their circumstances.
- Pupils use a range of secondary sources effectively to study the periods covered. They glean information from textbooks, photographs and ICT.
- Y6 pupils make appropriate use of artefacts and primary sources when studying World War 2. They present their work neatly and in a good range of written forms and they have an awareness of the causes and consequences of the main events of the war.

Shortcomings

- Pupils' skills of historical enquiry and handling artefacts to learn about the past are underdeveloped across the school.
- Pupils do not progressively develop a widening knowledge and understanding of people and events in Welsh history.
- KS1 and lower KS2 pupils record their work in a limited range of writing.

Geography

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in both key stages.

Good features

- KS1 pupils are familiar with different types of transport. They describe their journey to school. They identify local features and give directions, for example, to the adventure playground, the local post office and the Catholic Church.
- Pupils draw plans of their classroom and the school. They use these to give directions from one spot to another.
- Pupils compare their own area with others they visit. They remark on the differences and similarities, using appropriate geographical terms. They know the points of the compass and, when studying a map, successfully estimate distances from one point to another.
- In KS2, Y4 pupils make maps of Rhymney and compare their home area with the village of Llanarthe. They use photographs and maps to contrast these two localities. They look at changes in the use of buildings and use co-ordinates to determine an exact location.

- On a field trip, Y6 pupils successfully gather and interpret information about Cardiff Bay. They understand the historical context of the area and see how this has shaped the development of the City and the industrial hinterland. They successfully map and categorise current developments, making good use of digital images to make multi-media presentations.

Shortcomings

- Pupils' understanding of world environmental issues is limited
- In KS1 and early KS2, pupils' written work and diagrams are not of a high enough standard
- Pupils have a limited knowledge and understanding about the physical and economic features of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.

Art

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in both key stages. There are many examples of good work at the end of KS2.

Good features

- KS1 pupils demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of colour, pattern and shape. Pupils mix and match colours, and use a range of tools and equipment. They make observational drawings of cars and suggest designs for a puppet theatre.
- Pupils choose and apply materials to create a collage. They make suitable use of ICT to develop their ideas and record images.
- In KS2, Y4 pupils' moving picture books bring together a variety of design and make skills. Working in small groups, they effectively incorporate text and illustrations, making good use of raised cutouts to improve the visual impact of the finished product.
- Y5 pupils make good use of colour-washing techniques in their landscape work on an African safari theme. Their initial sketches show how they have planned and modified their ideas.
- Y6 pupils' work on local landscapes successfully captures the style of LS Lowry's work when he visited Bargoed. Pupils work effectively with clay, papier maché and soft materials. They use ICT successfully to create Islamic patterns. Pupils' still life drawings of flowers and their pastels work in style of Monet show a keen eye for detail.

Shortcomings

- Pupils do not systematically develop their skills and understanding as they move through the school; they rely too much on their teacher's guidance and direction.

- Pupils do not make regular, systematic use of sketchbooks to experiment and try out their ideas and designs.
- Pupils do not choose from a wide enough range of materials and techniques.

Music

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS1 and good in KS2.

Good features

- KS1 pupils successfully link actions to a strong rhythm, such as the march *Men of Harlech*; they use body parts and untuned percussion instruments to play repeated rhythm patterns in time with recorded music. They sing together in both English and Welsh.
- KS2 pupils sing tunefully and follow an accompaniment carefully. The quality of singing by the choir is good. Pupils listen attentively to recorded music. Over time, they hear music from a wide range of styles, periods and countries. A strength is their appreciation of different types of music from Wales, including *Vanog*, the harp music of John Metcalf.
- Y4 pupils make good use of tuned and untuned percussion instruments to retell the story of *Cantre'r Gwaelod*. They effectively use a pentatonic (five note) scale for repeated melodies and chords. Pupils have a good sense of the beginning and end, and they follow a conductor carefully.
- Y6 pupils have a good sense of performance. In a class composition on a theme of *The Spider's Web*, they listen constructively, yet critically, to each other and suggest ways to improve their work. Pupils who play keyboard and other instruments have good opportunities to perform in school and their efforts are much appreciated by their peers.
- Pupils make good use of IT for composing. One group has successfully composed a multi-track rap using a sound-sampling program. Pupils show a good understanding of the process and confidently recount the issues they faced in bringing their work up to performance standard.

Shortcomings

- When singing together, as in assembly, pupils give insufficient attention to their breathing and posture, thus restricting their vocal range.
- Some pupils rely on adults to direct and guide them in their composition work.

Physical education

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in both key stages.

Good features

- KS1 pupils are attentive to instructions. They effectively travel across the floor in different directions in a variety of ways, such as running, jumping and bouncing. They stretch and curl to make different body shapes.
- Pupils put apparatus out and away safely. In travelling over and under the apparatus, they show a good sense of balance.
- KS2 pupils are familiar with warm-up and cool-down routines, and the effect of exercise on their bodies. Most pass a ball effectively and many demonstrate good defensive skills.
- The school reports that by the end of KS2, most pupils swim 10 metres unaided and many are successful at 25 metres.

Shortcomings

- When planning and evaluating their work, pupils do not sufficiently explain and elaborate on what they can do to improve their performances.
- Some older pupils have difficulty in participating in a team situation; they are quick to criticise others but slow to accept criticism themselves.

Religious education

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in both key stages.

Good features

- KS1 pupils understand that places of worship are *special places* and that particular objects have an important significance to worshippers. They appreciate the purpose of *Rangoli* patterns and the symbolism of the *Menorah* candle.
- In discussing the parable of the *Good Samaritan*, pupils give helpful examples of the ways in which they help members of their family and their friends.
- KS2 pupils visit local places of Christian worship. They identify different features in buildings and learn about the vestments worn by those involved in leading worship.
- In learning about Judaism, pupils make comparisons with other religions. They are familiar with the *Seder* meal and the importance of the *Shabbat*. Pupils are familiar with the importance of rules in the effective running of any group. They understand that festivals and fasting are important events in religious practice.

Shortcomings

- Pupils do not sufficiently develop and elaborate on what they learn about religion in order to apply it to how people live and work.
- Some pupils spend too much time completing worksheets and filling in missing words in sentences and texts at the expense of reflecting upon, discussing and recording their own perceptions.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress since the last inspection

LEA monitoring reports indicate that little progress was made after the last inspection. Staff have worked very hard in the last three years to address the key issues raised in the last report. Much is only recently in place but the structure forms a good basis for further development. The school has still to improve its performance in comparison with similar schools in the statutory tests and assessments, particularly at the end of KS1 where standards have declined significantly.

The Key Issues from the previous inspection, together with the school's response to each, are as follows:

- 1. Implement a system for the review, by senior managers and curriculum leaders, of aspects of pupils' standards and of the quality of the school's work; improve the quality of planning to achieve desired improvements. (Aspects 6.1 and 6.2)**
The school has made good progress. Suitable strategies are in place and the school is moving forward.
- 2. Raise standards in mathematics, particularly at KS2. (Aspect 3.1)**
The school has made good progress. Standards are now satisfactory.
- 3. Review the school's approach to the teaching of literacy and act to address shortcomings in English. (Aspect 3.1)**
The school has made good progress, with many shortcomings successfully addressed.
- 4. Improve the organisation of support for pupils with SEN. (Aspect 5.5)**
The school has made good progress and the provision is now satisfactory.
- 5. Improve the arrangements for the assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' progress and achievements. (Aspect 5.2)**
The school has made good progress. The new arrangements are bedding down effectively.

- 6. Improve the effectiveness of teachers' planning:**
- **complete schemes of work in all subjects for both key stages and establish procedures for evaluating and refining existing schemes of work;**
 - **reduce the amount, and improve the quality, of teachers' medium and short-term plans. (Aspect 5.3)**

The school has made good progress. New schemes of work are now in place for most subjects, with those for art and PSE in the process of completion. Teachers' planning is now effective.

- 7. Raise standards in art in KS2. (Aspect 3.1)**

The school has made sound progress.

8.2 Key issues for action

The governing body, headteacher and staff should maintain the good progress made in addressing the school's shortcomings since the last inspection and, in particular:

- Raise standards where they are satisfactory by:
 - ensuring that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are systematically and progressively developed as they move through the school;
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve;
 - developing the process of gathering and using assessment information in the foundation (non-core) subjects;
 - setting up a planned programme for reviewing, monitoring and evaluating policies and schemes of work across the curriculum;
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop and apply independent learning, thinking and research skills.
- Improve the provision for the younger three-year-olds in the nursery.
- Make better use of self-evaluation so as to identify key priorities for inclusion in the school development plan, and ensure that these are fully costed, monitored and evaluated.
- Improve attendance.
- Meet statutory requirements in respect of the school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents.

APPENDIX

A. Basic information about the school

Name of School	Lower Rhymney Primary School
School type	LEA maintained/Community
Age-range of pupils	3 – 11 years
Address of school	Eglwys Fan Rhymney
Post-Code	NP22 5QA
Telephone Number	01685 840230

Headteacher	Mrs J. Davies
Date of appointment	Acting headteacher from March 2001 Permanent headteacher from March 2002
Chair of Governors	Mr J. Smith
Registered Inspector	Dr Michael Best
Dates of inspection	23 rd to 26 th February 2004

B. School data and indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>									
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	10.5	17	30	34	15	32	26	21	185.5

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	8	1	8.6

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	25:1
Pupil:adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	7:1
Pupil:adult (fte) ratio in special classes	n/a
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	25
Teacher (fte) : class ratio	1.15:1

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>				
	R	KS1	KS2	Whole School
Autumn Term 2003	88.4	89.4	91.5	89.7
Summer Term 2003	85.9	88.6	87.4	87.3
Spring Term 2003	87.4	90.7	90.8	89.6

Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	1
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C. Results of National Curriculum assessments and public examinations

National Curriculum Assessment KS1 Results: 2003			Number of pupils in Y2: 15					
Percentage of pupils at each level								
			D	W	1	2	3	4
ENGLISH:	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	47	47	7	0
		National	0	4	14	63	20	0
EN: Reading	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	40	40	20	0
		National	0	4	14	55	27	0
EN: Writing	Teacher Assessment	School	0	7	40	47	7	0
		National	0	5	14	69	11	0
EN: Speaking and listening	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	40	60	0	0
		National	0	3	12	63	22	0
MATHEMATICS	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	47	53	0	0
		National	0	2	11	63	24	0
SCIENCE	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	47	53	0	0
		National	0	2	10	66	22	0

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment			
In the school:	47	In Wales:	79

- D Pupils who have been disapplied under sections 364 and 365 of the Education Act 1996 or, in the case of the Task/Test were absent.
- W Pupils who are "working towards" level 1, but have not yet achieved the standards needed for level 1.

National Curriculum Assessment KS 2 Results: 2003			Number of pupils in Y6: 22										
Percentage of pupils at each level													
			D	A	N	B	W	1	2	3	4	5	6
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	9	55	14	0
		National	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	16	45	31	0
	Test/Task	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	9	50	18	0
		National	0	2	1	1	0	0	5	12	38	40	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	14	50	18	0
		National	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	19	46	30	0
	Test/Task	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	36	41	14	0
		National	0	2	1	0	0	0	4	18	42	33	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	59	36	0
		National	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	13	49	35	0
	Test/Task	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	50	23	0
		National	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	9	48	39	0

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school:	64	In the school:	46
In Wales:	63	In Wales:	63

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

D. Evidence base of the inspection

Three inspectors spent a total of nine inspection days in the school. Thirty-six lessons were observed in whole or in part.

- Pre-inspection discussions about the life and work of the school were held with the headteacher and staff, the governing body and parents.
- Responses to the questionnaire for parents distributed before the inspection were analysed.
- During the inspection, discussions were held with the headteacher, staff and pupils in the school.
- Policy documents, schemes of work and other documentation were read, analysed and discussed with the headteacher and staff.
- A range of pupils' past and present work was examined.
- Post inspection meetings were held with the governors, headteacher and staff.

E. Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Inspector	Type	Aspect Responsibilities	Subject Responsibilities
Michael Best	RgI	Context; Main findings; Standards achieved; Teaching; Curriculum; Leadership and efficiency; Progress since the last inspection; Key issues	Early Years; English; Geography; Music; Art; Physical education; Religious education
Caterina Lewis	Lay	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; Behaviour and attitudes; Links with parents; Links with industry	
Roy Griffiths	Team	Key skills; Attendance; Assessment, recording and reporting; Support and guidance; Special Educational Needs; Self-evaluation; Resources	Welsh second language; Mathematics; Science; Design Technology; Information Technology; History;

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