

**Inspection under Section 10 of the  
Schools Inspections Act 1996**

**Ysgol Maes y Dderwen  
Tudor Street  
Ystradgynlais  
Swansea  
SA9 1AP**

**School Number: 666/4021**

**Date of Inspection: 4-8 October 2004**

**by**

**Gareth Wyn Roberts  
WO19/17166**

**Date: 6 December 2004**

**Under Estyn contract number: T/06/04**

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Ysgol Maes y Dderwen, Ystradgynlais was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents more information about their child's school. A copy of this summary is sent to every family with a child at the school. The full report can be obtained from the school.

The inspection of Ysgol Maes y Dderwen took place between 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2004. An independent team of inspectors, led by Mr Gareth Wyn Roberts undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

The team was required to report on the standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management and the contribution made by the school to its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This summary report may be reproduced for non-commercial educational purposes but only as a whole and provided it is reproduced verbatim without adaptation and the source and date thereof are stated.

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

<b>Grade 1</b>	good with outstanding features
<b>Grade 2</b>	good features and no important shortcomings
<b>Grade 3</b>	good features outweigh shortcomings
<b>Grade 4</b>	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
<b>Grade 5</b>	many important shortcomings

## Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who attain the age of 5 during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who attain the age of 6 during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who attain the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y 1	Y 2	Y 3	Y 4	Y 5	Y 6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y 10	Y 11	Y 12	Y 13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The national curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

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## Context

### The nature of the provider

1. Ysgol Maes y Dderwen is a community comprehensive school for pupils age 11-18 maintained by the Local Education Authority of the Powys Unitary Authority. It was the second comprehensive school to be built in Wales and opened in 1954. Currently it has 610 pupils including 80 in the sixth form (Y12 and Y13). There is an annual entry of between 110 and 120 pupils into the school. The school serves the small town of Ystradgynlais and the surrounding villages which are former mining communities. There are areas of social deprivation within the catchment area and in September 2003 the Ystradgynlais Communities First project was established to promote the regeneration of the community. Seventeen per cent of the pupils are registered as eligible to receive free school meals, which is almost double the county percentage of 9%.
2. Thirty-three pupils (about 6.5% of Y7-Y11 pupils) have a statement of special education needs, which is about double the percentage for Wales. In addition, 134 pupils (about 30% of Y7-Y11) are on one of the action stages of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. This is slighter than the national average for Wales. No pupil is disapplied from the National Curriculum. There are three pupils in Local Authority care.
3. Almost every pupil belongs to the white ethnic group. Ninety-six of the pupils come from homes where English is the main language and only 4% from homes with Welsh as the main language. About 11% of pupils can speak Welsh to first language standard. Although the school has a Welsh ethos, no subjects are taught through the medium of Welsh.
4. In Y12 Advanced Subsidiary level Spanish is running in conjunction with the local college as part of a flexible learning programme.
5. The school was previously inspected in October 1998.

### The school's priorities and targets

6. The school's main priorities for 2004-2005 are to:
  - a) develop the appropriate strategies detailed in *Aim for Excellence at key Stage 3* relating to numeracy and literacy in order to raise the Core Subject Indicator at key stage 3;

- b) continue to develop processes of self-evaluation, including addressing those issues identified through discussion with the local education authority;
  - c) combat the underachievement of boys at key stage 3 and key stage 4;
  - d) introduce a system of peer support for teaching staff in order to address issues of classroom management and staff attendance;
  - e) continue to develop the strategies associated with the Assertive Discipline programme to further improve the school's ethos;
  - f) continue to raise academic standards throughout the school as well as the levels of expectation;
  - g) continue to develop the use of target-setting for departments and subjects;
  - h) continue to raise the positive profile of the school in the community;
  - i) maintain and develop the atmosphere of co-operation and partnership between staff, pupils and parents;
  - j) develop the school's management structure and its effectiveness;
  - k) provide the administration and resources necessary to meet the requirements of the School Development Plan;
  - l) complete the cycle of the school's Performance Management Policy;
  - m) prepare for Phase II of the major building refurbishment programme and develop the community sports facilities at the school;
  - n) develop the school's information and communication technology infrastructure and networking capacity.
7. The school's quantitative targets for 2004-2005 are as follows:-

<b>Key stage</b>	<b>Subject etc</b>	<b>School targets</b>	<b>County target (%)</b>	<b>Wales target (%)</b>
Key stage 3	Welsh % at level 5 or higher	93	84	80-85
	English % at level 5 or higher	59	86	80-85
	Mathematics % at level 5 or higher	68	83	80-85
	Science % at level 5 or higher	62	89	80-85
	Core subjects indicator	62	67	
Key stage 4	5 GCSE subjects gaining grade A*-C	52	66	58
	5GCSE subjects gaining grade	93	95	95

	A*-G			
	Key subjects indicator	52	49	50+
	% leaving without qualification	0	1.5	2.8
	% unauthorised absences		0.75	-

## Summary

8. Ysgol Maes y Dderwen has made good progress in addressing the key issues for action emanating from the last inspection. It is an improving school.

### 9. Table of grades awarded

Key question	Inspection grades	
	Key stage 3 and Key stage 4	The Sixth form
1 How well do learners achieve?	3	2
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	3	2
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	3	3

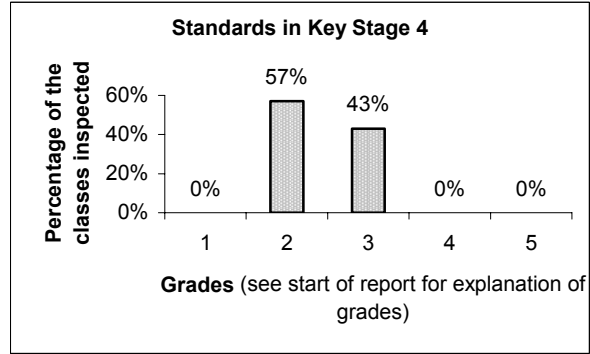
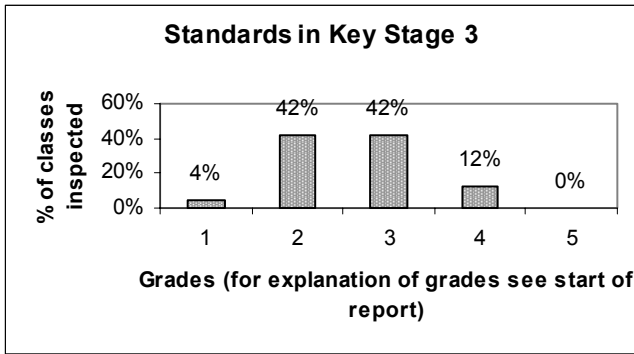
4	How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2
5	How effective are leadership and strategic management?	3	3
6	How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	3	3
7	How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	3	3

## 10. Standards

<b>Standards in subjects inspected</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b>KEY STAGE 3</b>	<b>KEY STAGE 4</b>	<b>Sixth Form</b>
Science	3	2	
Biology	-	-	2
Chemistry	-	-	2
Physics	-	-	2
Design and technology	3	3	2
History	2	2	2
Art	3	3	3
Physical Education	2	2	-
Religious Education	2	2	
Religious Studies			2

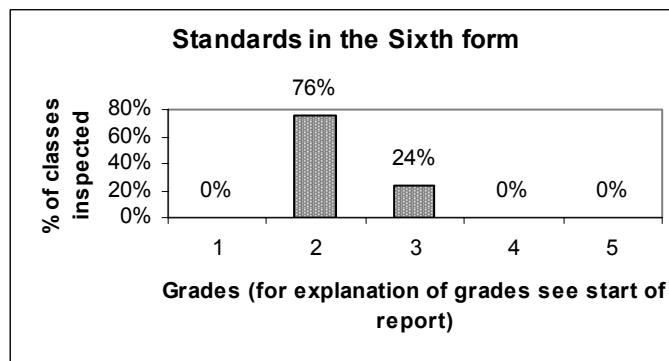
### Standards of achievement

11. The team inspected the standards that the pupils achieve in six subjects throughout the school and seven subjects in the sixth form. In science in key stage 3 good features outweigh shortcomings. In key stage 4 and in the individual science subjects in the sixth form standards are good with no important shortcomings. In design and technology, good features outweigh shortcomings in key stage 3 and key stage 4 and standards are good with no important shortcomings in the sixth form. In art, good features outweigh shortcomings throughout the school. Standards in history are good without important shortcomings throughout the school. In physical education and religious education, in key stage 3 and key stage 4 standards are good with no important shortcomings. These subjects were not available for inspection in the sixth form though standards in religious studies are good with no important shortcomings in the sixth form.
12. The following graphs shows the standards that pupils achieve in the key stage 3 and key stage 4 classes in the six subjects inspected.

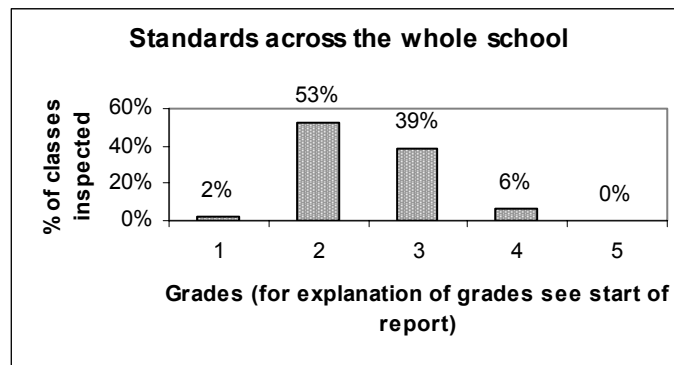


13. At key stage 3, there are important shortcomings in learners' achievement in 12% of classes. In key stage 4 there are no classes where learners show important shortcomings in important areas. The relatively large percentage of classes in keystage 3 where there are important shortcomings means that overall in key stage 3 and key stage 4 the total percentage of classes with important shortcomings is slightly above the percentage for Wales.

14. The following graph shows the standards that students achieve in classes in the seven sixth form subjects inspected.



15. The overall figures mean that the school reaches the target that standards should be good or better in 50% or over of classes but is just below the target set for standards to show no shortcomings in important areas.



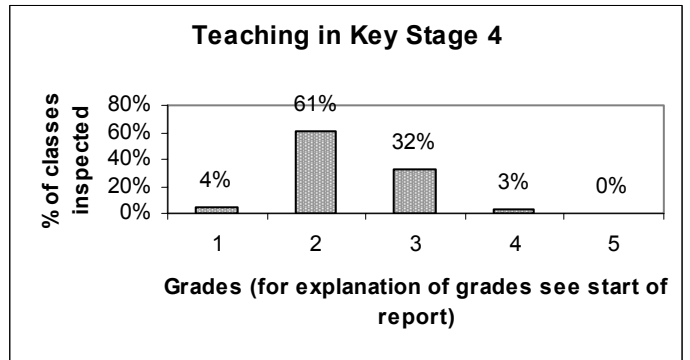
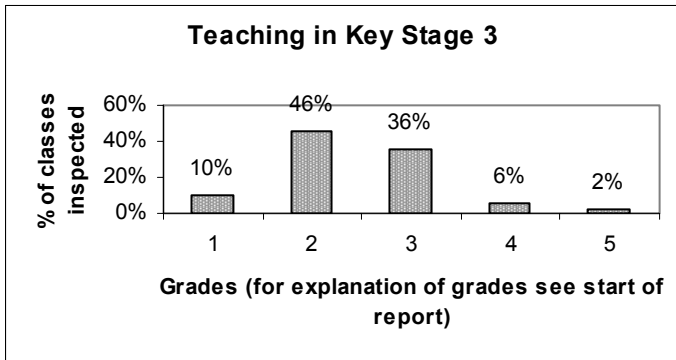
16. Learners with additional educational needs, who form about a third of learners at the school, achieve good standards.
17. Learners listen well to the teachers and to each other throughout the school. In key stage 3 and key stage 4 learners answer questions but rarely at length. Oral work in the sixth form displays good features and no important shortcomings. Learners' reading standards in key stage 3 and key stage 4 display good features which outweigh shortcomings. In the sixth form, learners' reading standards are good with no important shortcomings. In key stage 3 and key stage 4, learners' writing standards display good features which outweigh shortcomings. In the sixth form, learners' writing standards have good features and no important shortcomings.
18. With some exceptions, standards in numeracy are good throughout the school with no important shortcomings. Standards in information and communication technology display good features which outweigh shortcomings.
19. Over the last four years learners' attainment in the key stage 3 tests in mathematics and science have improved significantly and place the school among the best of the schools which have the same percentage of learners entitled to free school meals. Results in English, however, show a significant difference between the standards achieved by girls and boys.
20. In key stage 4, there has been a gradual but irregular improvement in examination results in the core and other subjects. After a significant improvement in 2003, results in 2004 were disappointing with the school placed in the lowest quarter of schools with the same percentage of learners entitled to free school meals. Results have been significantly below those for the county and below those for Wales as a whole. Various indicators and predictors, however, show that the school often adds value by the end of key stage 4.
21. Results at Advanced level are also below those for the county and for Wales as a whole, especially with regard to the percentage of learners achieving grades A-C. The numbers gaining grades A-E, however, are high and reflect the school's 'open door' policy regarding learners who wish to pursue Advanced level courses.

- 22. Girls often attain better than boys in English and the difference between the sexes is larger than the average differences in other schools, both locally and nationally.
- 23. Students completing their courses in Y13 gained entry to the university or college of their choice.

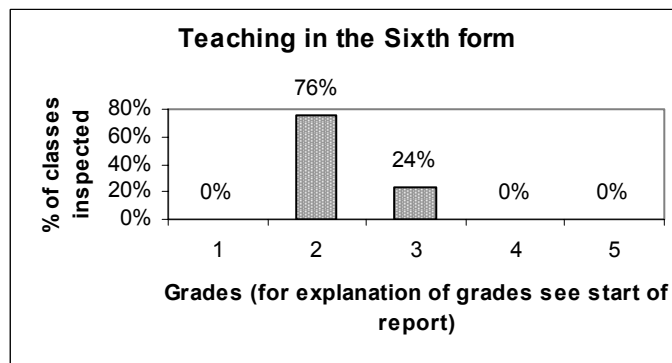
### The quality of education and training

#### Quality of teaching

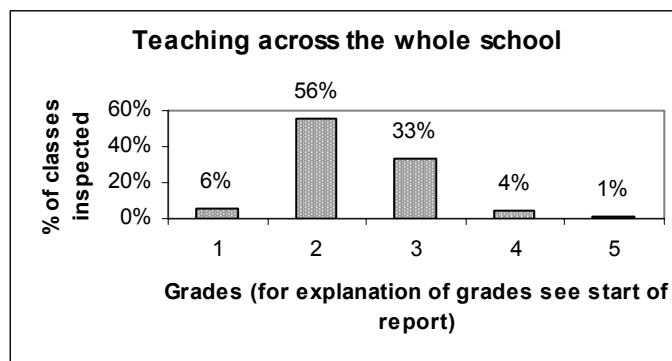
- 24. The following graphs show the quality of teaching in key stage 3 and key stage 4 classes in the six subjects inspected.



- 25. The school has exceeded the target set by the Welsh Assembly Government that teaching should be at least good in 50% of classes. Teaching has shortcomings in important areas or significant weakness in 8 per cent of classes in key stage 3 and shortcomings in just 3 percent of classes in key stage 4.
- 26. The following graph shows the quality of teaching in classes in the seven sixth form subjects inspected.



- 27. There were no important shortcomings in the teaching in any of the sixth form classes inspected.



28. This means that overall the school meets the government's target for teaching to have no shortcomings in important areas in 95% of classes.
29. The system for reporting to parents throughout the school has improved since the previous inspection and is now of good quality.

### **Quality of assessment**

30. The quality of assessment varies in quality within and across departments. Though marking is thorough, it does not always give students a clear indication of how to improve their work.

### **The quality of the learning experiences offered by the school**

31. The curriculum caters successfully for the needs of all pupils and meets the statutory needs for pupils of statutory school age as indicated in the 1996 Education Act. All pupils can access the curriculum, including those with physical disabilities or with additional educational needs. Learners have opportunities to gain an appropriate range of GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) and entry level examinations however vocational qualifications are more restricted.
32. The broad and balanced curriculum provided enables pupils to make appropriate progress between years and key stages.
33. The school offers an appropriate range of mainly traditional Advanced Level courses. There are few courses in applied subjects and only one course is offered in conjunction with another institution. The school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide religious education in Y13.
34. The school succeeds in its aim of creating a caring ethos. Pupils at both key stages and students in the sixth form are well supported by teachers, form tutors, heads of year and the senior management team. Pupils and students are confident that personal worries will be dealt with quickly and sensitively when they report them to staff.
35. In key stage 3 and key stage 4, pupil attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection. Attendance is also conducive to good learning in the sixth form.

### **Leadership and management**

36. The school has clear aims that are shared with governors, the staff, parents and learners. This is true throughout the school.
37. The headteacher and senior managers provide effective, supportive leadership. The leadership of the sixth form is good. Pastoral leadership is a particular strength throughout the school. The quality of departmental management is variable and overall shows good features but with some shortcomings.
38. Governors are very supportive and work well with the school in carrying out their responsibilities.

### **Self-evaluation**

39. The school's self-evaluation report addresses briefly, accurately and honestly the seven questions of the common inspection framework. The findings of the inspection team closely match those of the school's own self-evaluation report.

### **The school's use of resources**

40. The school has enough appropriately qualified staff to teach all aspects of the curriculum throughout the school. Ancillary and support staff are also of good quality.
41. Resources are generally of good quality and are well used. However, there is a shortage of resources in a number of subjects, including information technology.
42. Overall, accommodation is adequate for the number of learners on roll. Rooms are located and used effectively in most subjects. The school is kept very clean and well maintained internally. Externally, however, there are significant weaknesses. A small number of health and safety issues have been reported to senior staff, including the need to keep learners, staff, parents and visitors separate from buses and cars especially at the beginning and the end of the school day. The campus itself is tidy and there is very little litter.
43. The headteacher and the finance officer manage the budget effectively on a day to day basis but the School Development Plan is not closely related to the school's budget and procedures for evaluating its effectiveness are insufficient.

## Recommendations

In order to improve further, the school needs to:

- raise the standards of achievement in the 12% of classes where there are some important shortcomings at key stage 3 and ensure a continuing improvement in the results of external examinations at key stage 4;
- continue to raise the standards attained by boys, especially in English, and reduce the gap between the sexes in the external examination and test results overall;
- improve the quality of teaching, especially in the 8% of classes in key stage 3 and 3% of classes at key stage 4 where there are important shortcomings;
- rationalise and coordinate assessment as a diagnostic tool within and across departments and secure a clearer role for learners in assessing their own work and thus improve achievement standards;
- ensure that the whole school evaluation process is focused and rigorous so that it becomes an effective means of raising standards;
- ensure that the statutory requirement to provide religious education in Y13 is met;
- give due attention to health and safety matters outlined in the report, in particular the safety of pupils and others as they arrive and leave school and continue to press for improvements in buildings.

*The governing body is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the above recommendations within 45 working days of receiving this report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. This plan, or a summary of it, will be circulated to all parents at the school.*

## Standards

### Key question 1: How well do learners achieve?

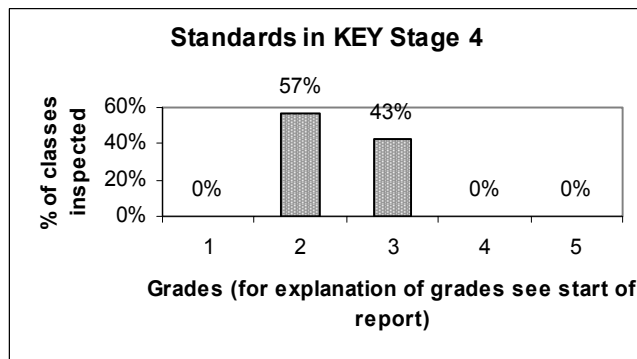
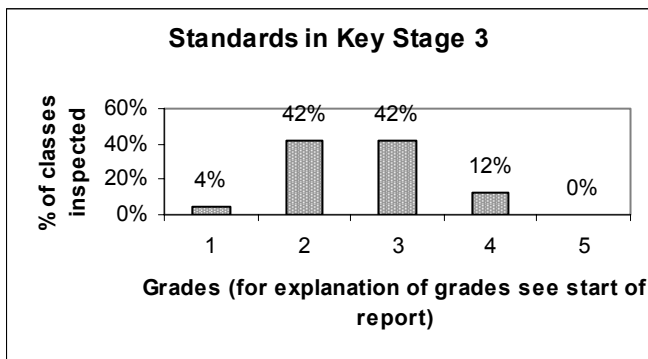
Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings.

44. This grade corresponds to the school's own evaluation of how well learners achieve.

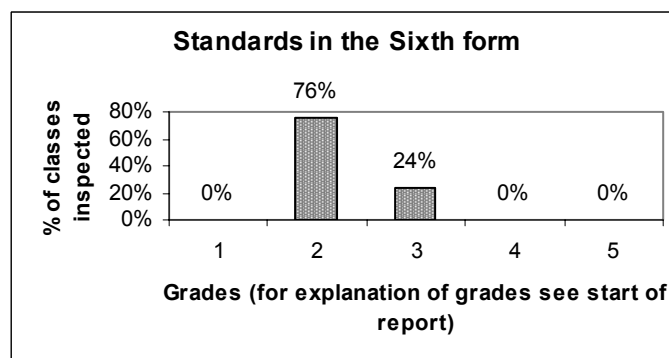
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Design and technology	3	3	2
History	2	2	2
Art	3	3	3
Physical Education	2	2	-
Religious Education	2	2	
Religious Studies			2

### Standards of achievement

45. The team inspected the standards that the pupils achieve in six subjects in key stage 3 and key stage 4 and in seven subjects in the sixth form. In science in key stage 3, good features outweigh shortcomings. In key stage 4, and in the individual science subjects in the sixth form, standards are good with no important shortcomings. In design and technology, good features outweigh shortcomings in key stage 3 and key stage 4, and standards are good with no important shortcomings in the sixth form. In art, good features outweigh shortcomings throughout the school. Standards in history are good without important shortcomings throughout the school. In physical education and religious education, in key stage 3 and key stage 4, standards are good with no important shortcomings. These subjects were not available for inspection in the sixth form though standards in religious studies are good with no important shortcomings in the sixth form.
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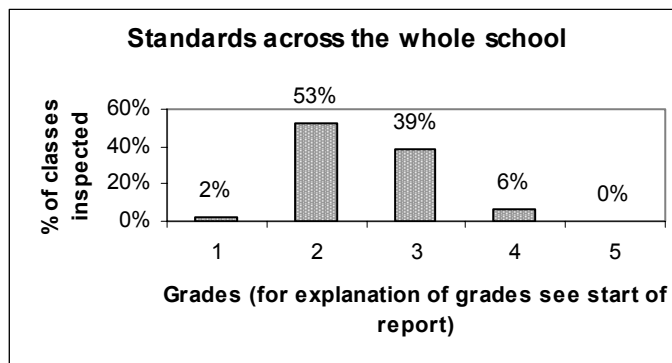


47. At key stage 3, there are important shortcomings in learners' achievement in 12% of classes. In key stage 4, there are no classes where learners show shortcomings in important areas. The relatively large percentage of classes in key stage 3 where there are important shortcomings means that overall, in key stage 3 and key stage 4, the total percentage of classes with important shortcomings is slightly above the percentage for Wales.
48. The following graph shows the standards that learners achieve in classes in the seven sixth form subjects inspected.



49. The overall figures for the school means that the school reaches the targets that standards should be good or better in 50% or over of the classes, but is just below the target set for schools to show no shortcomings in important areas.
50. Learners with additional educational needs, who form about a third of learners at the school, achieve good standards.
51. Learners make good progress in reaching targets set for them in key stage 3. In key stage 4, results have improved gradually but, as yet, learners have some way to go to reach nationally and locally set targets. County targets are high and reflect the good quality results of Powys schools in general.
52. Course completion rates in the sixth form are very good. Those following one year AS courses generally do well enough either to obtain work or to gain entry

to a further education college. Y13 students usually do well enough to reach the university or college of their choice.



53. Learners listen well to the teachers and to each other throughout the school. In key stage 3 and key stage 4, pupils answer questions but rarely at length. Oral work in the sixth form displays good features and no important shortcomings. Pupils' reading standards in key stage 3 and key stage 4 display good features which outweigh shortcomings. In the sixth form, students' reading standards are good with no important shortcomings. In key stage 3 and key stage 4, pupils' writing standards display good features which outweigh shortcomings. In the sixth form, students' writing standards have good features and no important shortcomings.
54. With some exceptions, standards in numeracy are good throughout the school with no important shortcomings. A minority of learners have difficulties in drawing graphs but mental arithmetic, measuring and weighing is often of a good standard.
55. Standards in information and communication technology display good features which outweigh shortcomings throughout the school. Pupils can produce desktop published documents of good quality. Computer aided design and making is of good standard in design and technology, though key stage 3 pupils have little experience of controlling devices by means of a computer. Learners at both key stage 4 and the sixth form use information technology successfully in order to produce and enhance examination course work.
56. First language Welsh speakers follow Welsh first language course requirements and as they learn all other subjects through the medium of English they make some progress in their bilingual competence. All other learners in key stage 3 and key stage 4 follow Welsh Second Language courses. This gives them some bilingual competence in day to day situations which they can use, for example, during work experience.
57. Standards in problem solving are good throughout the school. Pupils aged 14 or over work well with each other; a minority of sixth formers gain accreditation for the wider key skill of working successfully together. Learners throughout the school do not always know how best to improve their learning.

58. Over the last four years, pupils' attainment in the key stage 3 tests in mathematics and science have improved significantly and place the school among the best of the schools which have the same percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. Results in English, however, show a significant difference between the standards achieved by girls and boys.
59. In key stage 4 there has been a gradual but irregular improvement in examination results in the core and other subjects. After a significant improvement in 2003, results in 2004 were disappointing with the school placed in the lowest quarter of schools with the same percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. Results have been significantly below those for the county and below those for Wales as a whole. Various indicators and predictors, however, show that the school often adds value by the end of key stage 4.
60. Results at Advanced level are also below those for the county and for Wales as a whole, especially with regard to the percentage of students achieving grades A-C. The numbers gaining grades A-E, however, are high and reflect the school's 'open door' policy regarding accepting students to pursue Advanced level courses.
61. Girls often attain better than boys; the difference in English, especially, is larger than the average differences in other schools, both locally and nationally.
62. The ablest pupils in key stage 3 are not always sufficiently challenged. Apart from this, learners of all social, linguistic or ethnic backgrounds achieve comparable standards.

### **Pupils' and students' progress in learning**

63. Generally, pupils
  - gain knowledge, understanding and skills;
  - can apply their knowledge, understanding and skills to new and unfamiliar situations;
  - respond appropriately to the good pace of most lessons;
  - are beginning to understand that the summary at the end of the lesson;
  - is a way for them to check what they have learned;
  - do not always know what they are doing well and what they need to do better;
  - are too dependant on the teacher and lack independence in their learning.
64. Generally, learners make good progress through the courses they are studying; this is more evident in key stage 4 and in the sixth form than in key stage 3 where a minority of pupils make insufficient progress. In some instances, such as science at key stage 3, the ablest learners are not always suitably challenged.

### **The development of pupils' personal, social and learning skills**

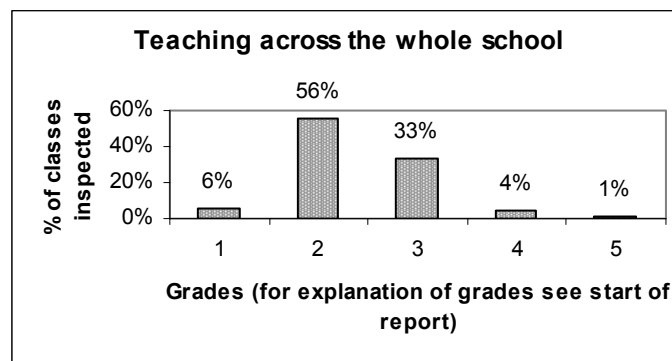
65. Generally, key stage 3 and key stage 4 pupils show interest in their work and have a positive attitude towards learning. These features are particularly strong in about one class in ten. In these classes, pupils concentrate and work hard for the full 60 minutes of a lesson. There is more of this good working in key stage 4 than in key stage 3. Sixth form students, however, do demonstrate these skills.
66. In almost one class in five, notably in Y8 in key stage 3, pupils do not show enough interest in their work. This lack of interest is far less common in key stage 4.
67. Generally, learners in key stage 3 and key stage 4 behave well and relate well to one another and to their teachers. This helps them learn. Sixth formers set an example of good behavior. Behavior around the school is particularly good. Pupils conduct themselves maturely when walking down the corridor, when eating in the canteen and when getting on or off the school buses. Pupils who have additional educational needs have the full respect of other learners.
68. Pupils' attendance throughout the school is satisfactory. Attendance figures have improved significantly since the last inspection and reflect a positive attitude to learning.
69. Generally, pupils arrive at school in good time in the mornings unless buses arrive late. They arrive punctually at lessons throughout the day.
70. Pupils and students are generally good at solving problems. When given an opportunity to do so in a minority of subjects in key stage 3 and key stage 4, pupils rise well to the challenge of being encouraged to think for themselves. This is more evident in the sixth form.
71. Most pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 organise their written work well and this aids their revision work. However, the work done in exercise books is not always completed or tidy. Key stage 4 pupils generally complete their course work but often need encouragement to hand it in. Sixth formers organise their work well.
72. Pupils throughout the school work together very well. They help each other to learn, and, when given the opportunity to do so, work purposefully in pairs and small groups. During practical activities they share out tasks well.
73. Pupils throughout the school are well aware of different cultures, beliefs and lifestyles and how they differ from their own. They respect these differences.
74. Pupils have a good knowledge of the world of work, though know less about entrepreneurship.

## The quality of education and training

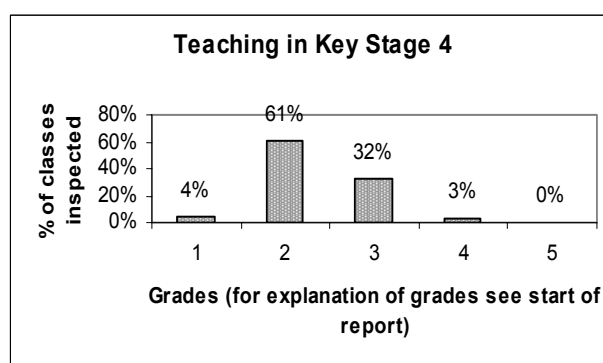
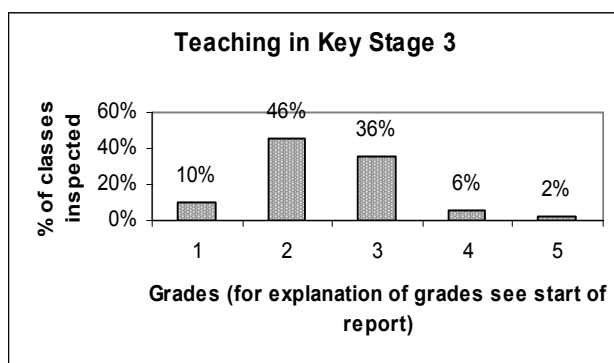
### Key question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

75. This corresponds to the grade the school awards itself in its whole school self evaluation report.



76. There are good features and no important shortcomings in the teaching in 62% of classes across the school. This exceeds the target set by the Welsh Assembly Government, that teaching should be at least good in 50% of classes. Teaching has good features but shortcomings in important areas in 5% of classes. This meets the Welsh Assembly Governments' target for teaching to be at least good in 95% of classes.

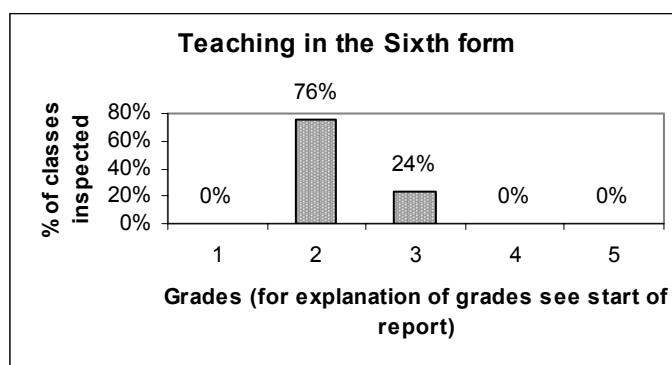


77. There are good features and no important shortcomings in the teaching in 61% of classes in key stage 3 and key stage 4. Teaching has good features that outweigh shortcomings in 34% of classes. There are shortcomings in important areas in 5% of classes in key stage 3 and key stage 4.
78. The quality of teaching is good with no important shortcomings in all lessons in history, religious education, physical education and in art. In science and design and technology, very occasionally in key stage 3 a small number of lessons have shortcomings in important areas.
79. In the vast majority of lessons teachers successfully gain the pupils interest at the beginning of the lesson and elicit a lively response from them by setting challenging tasks that stimulate good results. Pupils are offered constructive support and teachers provide positive response to their contributions during lessons. Teachers establish a good learning ethos. However, opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own work are limited. Teachers expectations on behaviour are high and their rapport with pupils is positive. In a minority of lessons, the tasks are less challenging and extended. The methods used to provide for pupils of differing abilities in classes are limited.
80. With few exceptions, lessons have a brisk pace and some teachers use an appropriate range of teaching strategies and learning activities. The respectful relationship which exists between teachers and learners ensures that pupils learn in a friendly and supportive learning environment. This promotes pupils' motivation to concentrate and persevere. Praise and humour encourages pupils to work diligently.
81. Teachers are suitably qualified and have good subject knowledge. They also are aware of cross curricular requirements. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well in classes and make good progress.
82. Lesson planning is good. Lessons have clear presentations which build on previous work. The objectives of the lesson in terms of knowledge and understanding, are clearly shared with pupils at the outset and in almost all cases they are reviewed at the end. In a small number of lessons the objectives for key personal and learning skills are less evident.

83. Where teaching is good, it is characterised by high expectations and lively presentations. Lesson preparation is thorough and teacher exposition clear. The pace of the learning is good with timed appropriate tasks being set. Teaching methods are varied to include individual, pair, group and whole class teaching, relevant practical work and investigations. Pupils and teachers make good use of the resources available.
84. In a significant minority of lessons, there are a few shortcomings. At times, lesson presentations are too long and activities are excessively controlled by the teacher. As a consequence, pupils do not have the opportunity to foster their independent learning skills. There are examples of setting tasks which are too structured and of closed questioning which hinders the development of pupils' thinking and creative skills.
85. Teachers create a caring climate and offer learning experiences where all pupils are respected as individuals regardless of gender, race and disability and are supported in a sensitive and effective manner.
86. Teachers are aware of the pupils' ability to speak more than one language. They appreciate the advantage of pupils being able to work bilingually through work experience in Y10 and Y12. Opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their bilingual skills are planned in history and music lessons, the 'Clwb Cymraeg' and through 'Urdd' activities.
87. Teachers ensure the full participation of all pupils in most lessons and monitor and review their progress in line with departmental strategies. In a minority of lessons, there are a few shortcomings and the work is not well matched to pupils' ability and prior achievement.

### Teaching in the sixth form

88. Teaching in the sixth form is good with no important shortcomings.



89. There are good features and no important shortcomings in the teaching of 76% of sixth form classes. Good features outweigh shortcomings in the teaching in 24% of sixth form classes.

90. The quality of teaching is good with no important shortcomings in history, physics, biology, religious studies and design and technology. In chemistry and art, a small number of lessons have shortcomings.
91. The relationship between teachers and students is very good. Expectations are high and in most cases students are challenged to achieve ever higher standards and to become independent learners.
92. Teachers have very sound subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned and have clear objectives which are shared with the students. A good range of teaching techniques are used and developed. In the majority of lessons there is continuity from one lesson to another. Lessons proceed at a good pace.
93. Students have effective support and receive good preparation to meet the needs of external examinations.

### **The rigour of assessment and its use in planning and improving learning**

94. In all subjects the assessment procedures are at least satisfactory. The assessment policy is out of date and does not provide a framework to ensure consistency in the nature of assessment and the application of assessment criteria across departments.
95. The demands for assessing and reporting on the National Curriculum in key stage 3 are met. In key stage 4, the requirements of the examination boards are satisfied.
96. The quality and frequency of marking varies both within and across departments. In the best examples, teachers mark pupils' work regularly and provide detailed and constructive comments which promote improvement in learning. There are, however, a significant number of examples in which assessments do not clearly indicate how learners can improve their work. Oral discussion is occasionally used as an effective diagnostic assessment tool. In many departments systems are in place for pupils to assess and evaluate their own work. At present these are underdeveloped and self assessment is not used to its full potential.
97. Parents are regularly informed of pupils' progress through interim and full reports and by means of the well established 'Arrows Scheme'. The system for reporting to parents has been reviewed since the last inspection and is of good quality. Parents value the information the reports contain and a significant number take advantage of the opportunity to respond to the comments made.

### **The Sixth Form**

98. The quality of assessment, recording and reporting in the sixth form has good features. These include the reporting system to parents which provides useful information on students' progress. Although there are some examples of regular and constructive marking, this good practice is not common across all subjects. Opportunities for students to assess and evaluate their own work are also inconsistently used.

**Key question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?**

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

99. This corresponds to the school's own view as outlined in its whole school self-evaluation.

**The extent to which learning experiences meet learners' needs and interests**

100. The curriculum caters successfully for the needs of all learners in key stage 3 and key stage 4 and meets the aims set out for pupils of statutory school age in the Education Act 1996. The curriculum is accessible for all pupils, including those with physical disabilities and those with special educational needs. Pupils have opportunities to gain an appropriate range of GCSE and entry level qualifications. The less able are often entered at both levels. In the sixth form the usual qualification is AS or Advanced level. There are limited opportunities, however, to gain vocational or applied qualifications both in key stage 4 and the sixth form.
101. The medium of instruction for all the subjects, apart from Welsh First language, is English. No pupils follow a course in English as an additional language. All key stage 3 and key stage 4 pupils follow a course in Welsh, either as a first or second language.
102. No pupils have been disapplied from the National Curriculum and the curriculum has not been modified for any pupil.
103. The curriculum in key stage 3 and key stage 4 is appropriately broad and balanced. It provides effective continuity and progression between years and between the key stages. The school ensures that pupils follow an appropriately balanced programme of mostly traditional subjects in key stage 4. Subjects have adequate time allocations.
104. The school uses an appropriate system of mixed ability classes, setting or banding of learners in key stage 3 and key stage 4. This usually reflects departmental preferences. Some of the classes show a gender imbalance, but this has no noticeable effect on standards.
105. The school offers a good range of subjects at AS and A levels though learners have not taken up a number of these options. Teaching time is adequate. The numbers in sixth form classes vary but overall are large enough to ensure that the provision is cost-effective. The school has an 'open door' policy in regards to allowing learners to continue their studies in the sixth form. Only one applied course is offered, however, in health and social care. One course, namely AS Spanish, is run in conjunction with a local further education college. No courses are offered via distance learning or in collaborative relationships with any other schools or colleges.
106. The school fails to ensure that students in Y13 follow a course in religious education as required by statute.
107. Just over a quarter (27%) of pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 receive practical lessons in musical performance from peripatetic teachers. This percentage is high.

108. The provision for personal, health and social education is good in key stage 3 and key stage 4 and statutory requirements are met.

The school works closely with Careers Wales and the provision for Careers education and guidance is good in key stage 3, key stage 4 and the sixth form.

110. The school has established productive curricular links with primary schools in almost half of the National Curriculum subjects. In these subjects, primary school teachers and secondary subject departments have worked together to ensure that schemes of work help pupils to move smoothly from Y6 to Y7. The links in other subjects are underdeveloped.
111. The curriculum in key stage 4 provides a good basis for pupils to progress to the sixth form, and into further education or employment. Similarly, the sixth form curriculum provides a sufficient basis for students to continue their education in either a further education college or university.
112. Information and communication technology is timetabled for specific periods in Y7 to Y9; pupils learn useful skills. About two thirds of pupils follow either a short or full course in information and communication technology in key stage 4. Computer studies is an option on the sixth form curriculum.
113. The school plans well for pupils to develop and apply numeracy and literacy skills across the curriculum in key stage 3 and key stage 4. A small but significant number of departments also contribute to the development of information and communication technology skills throughout the school.
114. Timetabled lessons help sixth formers' produce portfolios in numeracy, communication, information and communication technology and the wider key skill of 'Working with Others'. About a quarter of sixth formers achieve either a level 2 or level 3 qualification in one or more of the key skills. Students may submit their modules for evaluation in either English or Welsh.
115. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is available in key stage 3, key stage 4 and the sixth form and all pupils and students are encouraged to participate. These include study trips abroad, a range of cultural activities, including visits to theatres and concerts, and a wide range of sporting and musical activities.
116. The school promotes learners' spiritual, moral and social development effectively throughout the school:-
117. Pupils' and students' spiritual development is good. In a good number of subjects, pupils are offered opportunities to reflect on their own experiences and to develop a sense of wonder and curiosity about life. The daily act of collective worship contributes well to their spiritual development.
118. Pupils' and students' moral development is good. They show respect for each other, their teachers and visitors. There is very little litter or graffiti to be seen inside the school or in the school grounds. Pupils and students also raise large sums of money for charity.

119. Pupils' and students' social awareness is good. Relationships between pupils and students are good, as are their relationship with teachers and other staff. Learners respond well to opportunities to accept responsibility and to contribute to the social life of the school. Pupils' views are regularly consulted in the school council and these views are taken seriously.
120. Links with parents are good. They are welcome to call at the school to discuss any issue. They receive regular newsletters and the documentation provided in the Parent's Handbook, the Choices Booklet, the leaflet on uniform, are clear and informative.
121. There is an active Parents / teachers association which raises funds for the school.
122. The school has good links with the local community. Several representatives have visited the school and provided the pupils with first hand information about local industry and local projects. The learning experiences offered to pupils have been enhanced by events such as An Industry Day, The Heritage Project and The Ystradgynlais Communities First Project. Links between the school and Powys Drugs and Alcohol Service allow specialist support for individual pupils and the delivery of Substance and Drug Misuse education.
123. Some links have been developed with further education colleges; a Spanish course is provided by the local further education college. Links with other schools only occur during sports events.
124. Arrangements for the transfer of pupil records are good. The induction arrangements for the transfer of pupils from key stage 2 is very good. Pupils have an opportunity to visit the school on open evenings, during arranged feeder school visits, and for a Science Day organized for Y6 pupils. Curriculum continuity across key stages 2 and 3 is developing with joint work being undertaken with the primary schools in literacy, history, Welsh, mathematics and science.
125. The school makes good use of partnerships with initial teacher training institutions. The school has links with Initial Teacher Training Departments at Swansea and Cardiff. Students are accepted annually, and are mentored by a senior member of staff. The school also has links with Trinity College, Carmarthen and have access to their artifacts.
126. Apart from provision of statutory religious education in the sixth form, the learning experiences of pupils meet legal and course requirements. The curriculum is balanced and broadly based and prepares pupils for the experiences of adult life.
127. Personal and Social Education within the school is good. Modules are delivered by form tutors in an hourly session every fortnight. The school adheres to the ACCAC framework.
128. Health education is provided in accordance with statutory requirements through the personal and social education programmes at key stage 3 and key stage 4. Within the course, substance misuse is discussed at both key stages. Due

account is taken of the frameworks for work-related education and careers education.

129. The school effectively informs parents when subject options become available and what these courses involve.
130. Apart from sporting links, there are few contacts with other local secondary schools to enhance the curriculum.

**The extent to which the learning experiences respond to the needs of employers and the wider community.**

131. The curriculum includes an appropriate range of work related activities. A newly introduced industry day for Y9 pupils, which included contributions from six major employers, was considered a success.
132. All Y10 pupils and Y12 students undertake work experience placements with a network of local employers. These placements are matched to pupils' interests, the subjects they have chosen to study or their career ideas. Work-based experiences are sometimes used to provide realistic contexts for learning in some subjects. However, there are no nominated business representatives on the governing body.
133. The 'Curriculum Cymreig' features in pupils' work in a significant number of departments, but is missing in design and technology, art and science.
134. The school tackles social disadvantage effectively. A small minority of pupils have lost interest in school and have poor records of attendance. Some Y10 and Y11 pupils are placed on a scheme run in partnership with a local youth workers' organisation. This scheme has been effective in improving pupils' basic skills, encouraging them to re-engage in education and preparing them for the world of work. Attempts to re-establish a building course, in conjunction with the Construction Industries Training Board in key stage 4, have failed.
135. The development of pupils' entrepreneurial skills is patchy. Although these skills are used to raise several thousand pounds for Children in Need, they are not coordinated by a whole school policy. No Young Enterprise initiatives are currently taking place.
136. The school is an active partner in the local Communities First initiative which aims to regenerate the area. Individuals and groups use school facilities in the evening to augment those available at the adjoining leisure centre. Both school and community benefit as a result. There are good links with local churches.
137. Sustainable development is a topic taught in several subjects and is encouraged in personal and social education or tutorial lessons as well as during communal worship.

**Key question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?**

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

138. The school's-self evaluation grade for this key question coincides with that of the inspection team.

139. The school has placed a great emphasis on creating a caring ethos and its pastoral arrangements reflects this success.
140. The school has a well developed and effective system of pastoral care. The system is understood by staff and pupils alike.
141. Form tutors, pastoral heads of year and the senior assistant head ensure that behaviour, attendance, and the general well being of all pupils receive appropriate attention.
142. The School Council enables pupils to express their views to the school management team, and wherever practicable their wishes are implemented.
143. The school makes effective use of the support services available. One special feature is the fortnightly visit of "the Radical Bus", which has comprehensive information on a variety of issues.
144. Links with parents are good. Parents are welcome to discuss issues with the senior management team. They receive regular informative newsletters and The Parents' Handbook is distributed to parents of Y6 pupils. The School Planner provides support for pupils, and guidance for parents. Regular parents' evenings are held throughout the year with an average attendance of 73%.
145. Option books are distributed to pupils in Y9 and Y11, with information on the subjects available for GCSE and AS level. Y9 pupils are given guidance and advice on subject choices in their personal and social education lessons.
146. The induction programme for pupils from the primary feeder schools is very good. Visits to Maes y Dderwen in the summer term and joint project work designed by primary and secondary teachers makes for the successful transition which the pupils and their parents clearly appreciate.
147. Personal and social education and careers guidance takes a detailed account of the framework provided by the Welsh Assembly and provides the pupils with valuable experiences in hourly tutor periods held weekly across the key stages. The structured programme includes units on health education, careers guidance, and work in the pupils' progress files. Good use is made of external speakers. Efficient use is also made of the Powys Careers Service as all pupils in Y11 are offered an individual interview with the link advisor. Sex education is delivered according to statutory requirements, by specialist agencies and trained staff and by sixth form volunteers.
148. The monitoring of pupils' punctuality, attendance, behaviour and performance is good. Procedures are in place in all of these areas and the school has worked hard, and with some success, since the last inspection to raise standards of attendance.

149. Registers are marked in accordance with the statutory requirements outlined in document 3/99 (under revision). Attendance receives a high profile in the daily life of the school. The attendance league tables displayed in the reception area are avidly read by pupils.
150. The school has a well documented behavioural system. Members of staff are encouraged to be assertive in their approach to discipline. A well constructed sanction and reward system means that pupils are well aware of the standards expected from them and the great majority respond in a positive manner.
151. Correct procedures are followed in the case of pupils excluded temporarily for unacceptable behaviour. There were no permanent exclusions during the year preceding the inspection.
152. The school has clear documented procedures for assuring pupils' well being and health and there is a nurse based in the school. Six members of staff have a recognized First Aid qualification. Appropriate steps have been taken to ensure suitable arrangements for pupils with specific physical or medical needs.
153. Arrangements for the arrival and departure of pupils on school buses do not adequately ensure their safety, as pupils and vehicles are not segregated.
154. Effective procedures are in place for the protection of young people; members of staff have been appropriately trained. Procedures are in place to deal with complaints.

#### **The quality of provision for additional needs**

155. The learning support department caters effectively for pupils with educational, emotional and physical needs. The requirements of the Code of Practice are met and the school has responded positively to the recommendations in the Disability and Discrimination Act.
156. Good information from the primary schools, together with commercial tests, identify pupils who need additional help when they transfer to the school. Appropriate strategies are employed to ensure that pupils with special educational needs make progress in all the subjects of the curriculum.
157. All learners needing extra help have good individual educational programmes. Appropriate targets are set and these are shared with the pupil, with parents and with other teachers. There are examples of subjects making good use of the strategies in the individual action plans to produce differentiated tasks. There is a positive and meaningful whole school approach to the education of pupils with special educational needs.
158. Learning support assistants provide good support for learners with special educational needs in the mainstream classes. The work is well targeted and co-ordinated. Learning support assistants are sensitive to the needs of pupils, foresee their difficulties and help them with their tasks. In a small minority of lessons, class teachers do not make effective use of the educational support offered by the learning support assistants.

159. A good number of effective strategies are used to improve pupils' reading in key stage 3. Records show that pupils are making good progress in gaining reading skills. By the end of Y9, most are fluent and confident readers.
160. Pupils with specific learning difficulties receive effective cross-curricular support and specific educational help. They follow relevant individual education plans and are making good progress in their literacy and organisational skills. Most gain good GCSE grades.
161. The school maintains good standards of behaviour as a platform for learning. Should unacceptable behaviour or incidents arise, effective measures are in place to deal with such conduct. The great majority of learners benefit from an orderly and caring educational environment.
162. The Code of Practice is administered effectively. Good links have been established with parents and external agencies. The special educational needs' register is reviewed thoroughly at least every term.
163. The special educational needs' co-ordinator offers very good guidance. The headteacher and the governors are supportive of the work and are committed to the school's inclusion policy.

#### **The quality of provision for equal opportunities**

164. The school carefully creates a climate where learners are free from harassment and discrimination. Parents and pupils are confident that the school would respond promptly were such instances to arise.
165. The school monitors and compares the examination results of boys and girls. A small minority of departments have identified teaching strategies designed to reduce the gap in performance between boys and girls.
166. All key stage 4 and sixth form options are open to learners from either sex. The pastoral system encourages learners to have appropriate expectations.
167. The few disabled pupils are able to access all relevant areas of the school and follow the mainstream curriculum.
168. All pupils are supported sensitively and effectively if they experience difficulties in school. The school has good working relationships with an extensive range of external agencies. Pupils looked after by local authorities are supported by these agencies and the school.
169. The school has very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. They have grown up with the other pupils and have integrated naturally with their peers. Racial equality is promoted in the school's personal and social education programme. The school has procedures which would vigorously tackle any racist incident.

## Leadership and management

### Key question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

170. In its self-evaluation report, the school judged this aspect as Grade 3.

### How well leaders and managers provide clear direction and promote high standards

171. The school has clear aims and policies that have been adopted by staff, governors and parents. These fulfil its mission statement of being a 'caring, supportive community, dedicated to fulfilling the potential of all its members'

172. The headteacher and school management team lead the school effectively. They are supportive and set high expectations for pupil behaviour, attendance and school uniform.

173. The management of the sixth form is effective.

174. The senior management team are linked as line managers to departments. However, when monitoring pupils' and teachers' work, the processes lack specificity and are not sufficiently evaluative. The targets for improvement are not always clear and challenging.

175. The senior management team identify key issues for improvement annually, which are then discussed with staff and adopted on a collegiate basis.

176. The school has good links with parents.

177. The school takes account of the Welsh Assembly Governments' priorities. Pupil transition from key stage 2 to key stage 3 is effective. Improving pupils' basic skills and standards of achievement in key stage 3 have been school priorities, in accordance with 'Aiming for Excellence at KS3'. The school has successfully presented the development of key skills across the curriculum for 16 – 19 year olds.

178. The school has links with the local further education college at key stage 4, as part of the Acorn Project for disaffected students. The school's partnerships

with other providers of education and training are insufficiently developed at key stage 4 and in the sixth form.

179. Based on external test data, the school sets challenging but realistic targets for pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 and heads of department and their teams are expected to take appropriate action to meet them. Teaching staff are aware of the targets set for pupils in their teaching groups. Heads of department evaluate performance against targets annually. Some departments demonstrate a lack of incisiveness in the evaluation of results of tests and examinations.
180. The day-to-day administrative procedures and routines are effective.
181. The school fully operates the statutory performance management procedures and the targets are fed into the Continuous Professional Development Programme. As part of the departmental development plan departments also identify training and development needs. However, courses are predominantly based on the requirements of the examining boards and not on teaching and learning methodology. Departments evaluate the courses attended but the evaluation is insufficiently focused on the impact of this training on improving performance.
182. The school has effective arrangements for inducting staff new to the school and for those assuming new roles and responsibilities. The support for newly qualified teachers falls short of that required in the newly qualified teachers' Career Entry Profile.
183. Senior and middle Managers take advantage of county and national programmes for continuous professional development. Three members of the staff have completed the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers programme.

#### **How well governors or other supervisory bodies meet their responsibilities**

184. Governors are very supportive and work well with the school staff and with the local education authority in carrying out their responsibilities. Governors have good access to information that enables them, in consultation with the school's professional staff, to participate in discussions about the strategic development of the school. Governors are linked with individual departments in order to increase their understanding of the school's needs and of the work associated with its priorities.
185. Governors are well informed about the external examination and test results learners attain, and about how well the school is performing in relation to other similar schools. Standards are discussed in governors' meetings but the governing body is heavily dependent on the school's professional team for guidance. The governors have ensured that the vast majority of statutory requirements are met but have not ensured that Y13 students receive regular instruction in religious education.

**Key question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?**

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

186. In its self – evaluation, the school also judged this aspect as Grade 3.

**How effectively the school's performance is monitored and evaluated?**

187. The school's self- evaluation report addresses the seven 'key questions' of the Common Inspection Framework'. The findings of the inspection team closely match those of the school's self-evaluation report.

188. The school pays attention to the self- evaluation process, though developments across departments are inconsistent.
189. The school prepares detailed analyses of external tests and examinations. These analyses are shared with heads of subject departments and form the basis of discussion between heads of department and the senior management team. However, not all departments make the fullest use of this data for effective forward planning, as set out in the departmental development plan.
190. Senior and middle managers observe lessons and examine the work of students. These activities are not collated so as to lead to the clear enough identification of what needs to be improved.
191. Through departmental and staff meetings, staff contribute to the self- evaluation process. The views of pupils are also taken into account, when appropriate. Senior staff also take account of the views of parents and governors.
192. Current job descriptions for all staff do not incorporate a reference to self- evaluation.
193. Insufficient attention is focused on the outcomes of the self – evaluation process, in order to build upon strengths and remedy weaknesses in standards.
194. In addition to evaluating the standards of pupil achievement, the school uses a range of indicators to evaluate matters such as attendance and pupil behaviour. The strategies devised in response to an analysis of the indicators have led to an improvement in behaviour and attendance.
195. Departmental self – evaluation reports are of varying quality. Some are good and give a good indication of what needs to be done in order to improve the work of the department. Generally, however, they do not focus enough on standards of teaching and learning.

#### **The effectiveness of planning for improvement**

196. The School Development Plan notes the school's main priorities. Specific responsibilities are allocated to individuals and an implementation time – table is incorporated. However, the plan is not related closely enough to the school's budget and procedures for evaluating its effectiveness are not explicit enough.
197. The school's self – evaluation processes are not linked closely enough to the School Development Plan and resources are not clearly matched to this plan's priorities.
198. Departmental Development Plans are not always focused clearly on pupils' standards of achievement or the quality of teaching and learning. Although a number of the plans identify matters for development, there is often no comprehensive strategy to implement them nor definite targets against which to evaluate progress.
199. The main priorities of the School Development Plan are not reflected in all Departmental Development Plans.

200. The school's emphasis on certain key areas has resulted in a steady improvement in pupils' standards of achievement as well as an improvement in behaviour and attendance.
201. The school has made good progress in addressing all the key issues emanating from the last inspection.
- Standards in art and design and technology no longer have shortcomings in important areas.
  - Attendance has improved.
  - The quality of reports to parents has improved
  - The procedures for setting departmental targets are clearer

**Key question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?**

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

202. In its self – evaluation report, the school judged this aspect as Grade 3.

**How efficiently resources are managed to achieve value for money**

203. The school has suitable staff to meet its curricular needs and the qualifications of the great majority match the curriculum areas they teach. There is a good balance between experienced teachers and those new to the profession. Peripatetic teachers of music enrich the curriculum provision.
204. Other than in design and technology, sufficient non-teaching staff provide effective support across a wide range of duties and responsibilities and make a valuable contribution to the life of the school. Support in science is very effective.
205. The continuous professional development of teachers is well organised. Training needs are identified by departments and subject priorities and needs are identified by individuals. Most teachers have gained good classroom strategies through the 'assertive discipline' training programme, but insufficient

attention has been given to developing teaching and learning skills at whole school levels.

206. Staff are deployed economically and efficiently and good use is made of the staff's time, expertise and experience. Staffing levels are appropriate in Years 12 and 13. The performance management system for teachers has been established and is operative, with one 'cycle' completed.
207. There is a suitable induction programme for newly qualified teachers and the school ensures that teachers new to the school are provided with clear information about its workings. The school has good links with two initial training establishments and trainee teachers are fully involved in school activities.
208. Science resources are well used and maintained. In design and technology there is a good supply of hand equipment but very few up to date reference materials. In religious education, there is a shortage of artifacts and no key stage 3 textbooks. The physical education department has established effective links with the community and makes good use of the local sports centre which is attached to the school. The history department has developed a departmental library but there are insufficient books for Y12 and Y13. The school library is not easily accessible and does not sufficiently support independent learning. No magazines or newspapers are provided and there is a shortage of English non-fiction books. There is a shortage of text books and artifacts within the curriculum. While there is a good supply of computers and networked software in the specialist IT rooms, there is a shortage of computers in individual classes. The use of information and communication technology in art is significantly under-developed across the curriculum.
209. The school is awaiting two phases of development to bring its buildings up to modern standards. The buildings completed in phase one stand in marked contrast to the run down external appearance of the remainder. There is sufficient accommodation for the present number of pupils. All available accommodation is used to its full potential and all the areas in use are accessible to the disabled. The school is kept very clean and running repairs are effectively carried out by the school-based maintenance team. Internally, much effort has gone into creating good and pleasant working environments. Displays provide a colourful aid to learning in almost every classroom. Despite the spread of its buildings and the absence of a clear focal point, the school has managed to create a feeling of unity and purpose.
210. The following health and safety-issues were noted and need to be addressed:
  - at the hospital entrance pedestrians and vehicles are not separated;
  - there are no clear road markings and, during the inspection, there was no adult supervision at the beginning of the school day;
  - there is no lockable cabinet for toxic materials in the design and technology department;
  - rusting toilet cubicle partitions are unpleasant and a health hazard;
  - the long jump pit is dangerous.

Finance is allocated to departments by formula. Departments also have an opportunity to bid for additional finance. Currently, the school has 8% of its budget in reserve at the end of the financial year, which is above the 5% sum recommended by the Audit Commission. This surplus is projected to disappear within two years, as a result of falling pupil numbers and anticipated cuts in local education authority funding.

212. The headteacher is responsible for the school budget at a strategic level and from day-to-day. He monitors spending in conjunction with the local education authority's link officer and presents regular reports to the governing body's finance committee. Current surpluses or balances in the budget are targeted to ensure satisfactory staffing levels in the future, at the expense of present deficiencies in departmental resources.
213. The general upward trend in the results of external examinations, pupils' standards of achievement, extra-curricular provision, the quality of teaching and the emphasis on behaviour, dress and attendance, all indicate that the school provides value for money.

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

### **Science**

**Key Stage 3 - Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

**Key Stage 4 - Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

**Sixth Form - Biology, Chemistry, Physics - Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

#### **Good and outstanding features**

##### **Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4**

214. By the end of key stage 3, all learners make at least satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding of the key stage 3 programme of study.
215. In key stage 4, the majority develop a sound knowledge of the subject matter required by the examination specifications. They understand what is expected for a good response to an examination question and they are able to apply their understanding in familiar and unfamiliar situations.
216. In both key stages, pupils show good recall of recently carried out work and are able to use the information they have gained to solve problems and offer explanations for the behaviour they observe.
217. Learners are able to follow instructions and carry out practical tasks safely. They show a sensible and responsible attitude to the work. They generally use measuring instruments effectively to make accurate measurements which they record in tables. The majority can identify patterns in data and can draw simple conclusions.
218. In key stage 3, a significant number of pupils display a sound basic knowledge of investigative work. In key stage 4, good quality coursework demonstrates that learners can plan a systematic enquiry, identify and control variables, make systematic observations and measurements and communicate these as tables and charts. They are able to use graphs to identify patterns, make predictions and reach conclusions. The more able can link these to scientific knowledge and understanding and can evaluate their work by commenting on the quality of the data collected and the methods used.
219. Pupils' knowledge of scientific terms is good and they use the terms correctly in oral work. Their reading, writing and listening skills are mainly satisfactory.

220. Pupils use information and communication technology effectively in work carried out in the context of physical processes.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4**

221. In key stage 3, learners' progress is uneven. In Y7 and in some classes in Y8, low ability pupils are unclear of the purpose of some of the activities and they make insufficient progress. In Y7, Y8 and Y9, pupils have insufficient responsibility for their learning and this prevents the most able from reaching their full potential.
222. In both key stages, a significant number of pupils find difficulty in effectively communicating data as graphs.

#### **Sixth form**

##### **Biology:**

223. Students develop a good knowledge and understanding of biological facts and principles.
224. They gain a good range of practical and investigative skills.
225. The more able students apply their knowledge, understanding and skills confidently within new situations.
226. Students write good accounts of their practical and investigative work and are able to use texts effectively to produce brief relevant notes.
227. There are some good examples of information and communication technology being used for producing reports and communicating information. Students are able to find relevant information from the internet.

##### **Chemistry:**

228. Students demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of chemical facts and principles.
229. They apply their knowledge and skills within new situations.
230. Students use their knowledge to make sensible hypotheses and design investigations to test them.

**Physics:**

- 231. Students develop a good understanding of basic laws and concepts as well as the practical applications of the subject.
- 232. Some students apply this understanding confidently when performing mathematical calculations.
- 233. Students plan suitably demanding investigative work and write good accounts of their findings.
- 234. They use information and communication technology confidently for measurement and for the presentation and analysis of data.

**Shortcomings**

**Sixth Form**

**Biology:**

- 235. Students do not use information and communication technology to process and analyse scientific information.

**Chemistry:**

- 236. A minority of students do not fully understand the concepts presented.

**Physics:**

- 237. A significant number of students take a passive role during lessons and rely heavily on teacher-led activities.

<b>Design and Technology</b>
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**Key Stage 3 - Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

**Key Stage 4 - Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

**Sixth Form - Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

**Good and outstanding features**

**Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4**

238. Pupils work independently and constructively in groups. They take good responsibility for their own work.
239. They have good knowledge and understanding of designing processes which they successfully apply in the different material areas.
240. Pupils fulfil a variety of tasks and experience a range of materials and components in their 'design and make' activities. Their knowledge of the properties of materials and components is sound.
241. In resistant materials and graphics, they use information and communication skills purposefully for CAD / CAM, including Pro Desktop, as well as for the testing and modelling of their ideas.
242. Pupils make regular, consistent and correct use of specialist terminology. Their numeracy skills are good and are reinforced regularly.
243. Pupils' practical making skills are good as is the quality of the presentation of the work.
244. Pupils make good use of informal and formal drawing skills in their design work. Drawing skills reveal some creative outcomes which are supported by annotation and the use of colour.
245. Appropriate attention is given to health and safety in practical classes.
246. Pupils have a sound understanding of the suitability of equipment for different tasks.
247. Analysis of existing products is thorough and contributes to pupils' understanding of designing processes.
248. Pupils evaluate their work and are able to suggest improvements to their design solutions.
249. The pupils' practical making skills are good.
250. In both resistant materials and graphics products courses in key stage 4, pupils produce products that respond to appropriate design briefs. The best work is achieved when the design brief is of particular interest to the individual concerned.
251. An understanding of the principles of ergonomics enhances the designing and making skills of a significant number of pupils.

## **Sixth Form**

252. Students show a positive attitude and take responsibility for their own work. They discuss their projects with maturity and understanding.
253. Students apply designing processes appropriately to the development of their work.
254. The best work shows signs of a developing creativity.
255. Thorough research is undertaken prior to finalising the proposed briefs.
256. Students' designing skills are developing with occasional examples of good standards.
257. A range of communication techniques and effective use of colour are used to present the work.
258. Case studies are well prepared and draw on first hand experiences.
259. The practical work undertaken is carried out with accuracy, especially when making products that respond to clear needs and for specific purposes.
260. Students make good use of information and communication technology to produce, present and develop images through CAD / CAM, including Pro Desktop.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **Key Stage 3**

261. Pupils' folders include some incomplete tasks.
262. The tasks undertaken are not always challenging enough to extend the most able pupils' knowledge and understanding.
263. Pupils do not have knowledge and understanding of control technology.
264. In food and textiles, learners do not use an appropriate range of information and communication technology skills to support their 'design and make' activities.

#### **Key Stage 4**

265. Not all pupils make sufficient use of their research work or their knowledge of materials and techniques, in order to deepen their understanding and develop their work further.

266. Not all pupils apply the changes recognised in their evaluations to their work.

### **Sixth Form**

267. The students' coursework show little evidence of a knowledge and understanding of the needs of the world of work.

268. The use of case studies has not been fully developed and does not have sufficient influence on the coursework.

<b>History</b>
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**Key Stage 3 - Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

**Key Stage 4 - Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

**Sixth Form - Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

### **Good and outstanding features**

#### **Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4**

269. In both key stages, pupils show that they are aware of chronology. Time lines are produced and learners can place events within the correct historical time-scale.

270. Pupils understand how various events in the past have effected change, and can explain how events in the past have helped fashion the present.

271. They are able to assess the significance of important historical events, and are confident in recalling historical information.

272. Pupils across both key stages understand that people living in the past would rarely have viewed their own lives in the same way as history views them today.

273. The majority of pupils across key stages 3 and key stage 4 are able to make comparisons and connections between the main events and developments studied.
274. Pupils demonstrate a high level of skill when extracting accurate and relevant information from a variety of historical sources. They are able to evaluate the importance to historians of different sources, and are confident in detecting bias and propaganda.
275. In key stage 4, pupils' interpretation of sources shows a growing maturity and they display confidence when discussing complex historical issues.
276. Across both key stages, the majority of pupils investigate independently. They also demonstrate a sound knowledge of historical terminology and concepts.
277. The majority of pupils communicate in appropriate depth, both orally and in written work according to age and ability, and use information and communication technology well to improve their coursework.

### **Sixth Form**

278. In Years 12 and 13, students demonstrate sound knowledge and understanding of the personalities and the issues being studied. They extrapolate, analyse and evaluate a range of historical interpretations, and demonstrate their ability to pass judgement on the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments of professional historians. They are confident in their analysis of primary and secondary sources and develop reasoned and comprehensive argument based on the relative values of the various sources. They are comfortable in their use of historical terms and concepts, as exemplified by their oral presentations.
279. Essay work shows that students are able to synthesize the views presented in a range of historical articles and documents and construct sound historical arguments of their own. The most able students provide very well constructed and balanced answers.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4**

280. In a minority of lessons, the standards achieved by a few learners are affected by the slow pace of the lesson, and teacher centred activities.

#### **Sixth Form**

281. In some class discussions, a few students do not have enough confidence to present their findings.

<b>Art</b>
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**Key Stage 3 – Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

**Key Stage 4 – Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

**Sixth Form – Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

**Good and outstanding features**

**Key Stage 3**

- 282. Pupils are confident when sketching and mixing colour paint to achieve the appropriate tone when undertaking portrait work.
- 283. In Y8 they develop an awareness of the drawing styles of other cultures by exploring approaches such as Manga.
- 284. Pupils demonstrate an increasing ability to draw from their imagination and develop their compositions by producing mono prints of Celtic Dragons.

**Key Stage 4**

- 285. Pupils make effective use of their sketchbooks to gather information and develop ideas, prior to making their final compositions.
- 286. Pupils have an increasing understanding of the visual language of art.
- 287. They are confident when selecting and using a range of materials and employ appropriate techniques in both two and three-dimensional work. Printmaking, ceramic and collage techniques have been employed within the more successful compositions.

**Sixth Form**

- 288. Students demonstrate an increasing understanding of the use of perspective within cubism.

289. Students are confident in their approach to their art work and freely explore a range of techniques, such as the construction of maquettes, which can be applied in order to communicate their ideas and creations.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4**

290. Pupils' use of information and communication technology as a resource for researching and image manipulation is significantly underdeveloped.
291. Pupils' understanding of art within a historical and contemporary context, including the *Cwricwlwm Cymraeg*, has yet to be developed effectively.
292. Their understanding and use of the visual language is limited at key stage 3, and this reduces their capacity to apply it effectively in their compositions.

#### **Sixth Form**

293. Students do not exploit the use of information and communication technology to develop their artwork.

<b>Physical Education</b>
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**Key Stage 3 - Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

**Key Stage 4 - Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

**Sixth Form – Physical Education was not inspected in the Sixth Form.**

#### **Good and outstanding features**

294. In both key stages, pupils listen intently, respond enthusiastically and enjoy contributing to the activities in all the lessons seen.
295. Pupils in key stage 3 have a sound understanding of the body's anatomy and the majority are able to apply their knowledge to the principles of health and fitness. In key stage 3, the pupils' level of fitness is good and this contributes to the standards achieved by the end of Y9.
296. The teaching of swimming is a strength at the school. The majority of pupils seen have learnt correct stroke techniques and become proficient swimmers by the end of key stage 3.

297. In the GCSE Year 10 swimming group, pupils have a good understanding of life saving skills and apply them in a variety of situations.
298. In Year 7 hockey, a good majority of pupils have mastered the basic dribbling skills needed to play a small sided game in a short space of time.
299. In year 8 dance, the pupils' performance and choreography skills are well developed. They create routines which contain relevant shapes, body tension and rhythm. Pupils perform their dances with clarity, spontaneity and humour.
300. Standards in Y9 rugby are good, with pupils applying their knowledge and understanding of the game effectively to solve a variety of set tasks.
301. The department provides a broad programme of extra curricular activities for all pupils at the school. It has successfully created sporting links with local organisations as well as the leisure centre on site. Pupils consistently bring credit and honour to the school through county and national competitions.

### **Shortcomings**

302. In the significant majority of lessons, the pupils do not work as a group to self evaluate their own or their partners' work often enough.

<b>Religious Education</b>
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**Key Stage 3 - Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

**Key Stage 4 - Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

**Good and outstanding features**

### **Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4**

- 303. In key stage 3 and key stage 4, pupils across the ability range have good factual knowledge and understanding of the units of work studied, which reflect the local agreed syllabus.
- 304. They have a good understanding of what religions have in common, how and why they differ, and the diversity of belief and practice in Wales.
- 305. Pupils express, and a significant majority can justify an opinion when they explore some of the fundamental questions about life and religion.
- 306. They use a range of religious vocabulary appropriately and demonstrate a good understanding of symbolic language.
- 307. The more able pupils in Y9 make very good progress in developing their research skills, using an appropriate range of sources. The written work produced is carefully planned and logically argued.
- 308. Pupils have good knowledge of how religious beliefs about the natural world are reflected in the narrative and traditions of religions.
- 309. Less able pupils have an appropriate vocabulary of key terms and can organise and present factual information about religious events and beliefs.
- 310. In key stage 4, pupils respond thoughtfully to moral and social issues, and show a growing confidence in reflecting the issues raised by religious beliefs.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4**

- 311. Some pupils are less confident in their writing than in their oral contributions.
- 312. A minority of pupils' written response to questions are too short. In key stage 4, some of the written work is incomplete.
- 313. There were no Y12 lessons during the week of the inspection and there is no religious education taught in Y13.

<b>Religious Studies</b>
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### **Sixth Form - Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

#### **Good and outstanding features**

- 314. Y12 students demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the life of the Buddha.

315. They are aware of the social and religious background against which Buddhism emerged.
316. They have a good knowledge about key events in the life of the Buddha and can explain Buddhist doctrines and concepts.
317. Class discussions are effective. Students work well together to analyse and give reasons for the different perspectives held concerning the beliefs, values and traditions of the religion studied.

### **Shortcomings**

318. In their written tasks students do not include sufficient critical evaluation of the question asked.

## **School's response to the inspection**

The headteacher, staff and governors of Maes-y-Dderwen welcome the report of the inspection carried out by Cynnal under the new Estyn Inspection framework in October 2004. It is encouraging to note that the findings of the team on the seven key questions reflect the self-evaluation carried out by the school.

All members of staff appreciated the professionalism and sensitivity with which the rigorous process of inspection was carried out and the opportunities offered for constructive and meaningful dialogue between staff and members of the inspection team.

The very positive comments on the high standard of behaviour of our student population and the positive comments regarding the care, support and guidance given to our pupils support our mission statement of being "*A caring supportive community dedicated to fulfilling the potential of all it's members*". This gives us a strong platform on which to build as we continue to strive for improvement in all aspects of school life.

The school has already recognised many of the recommendations made by the inspection team and give assurances they will be addressed and acted upon.

The accommodation issues in the report echoes the concerns of the headteacher, staff, Governors, pupils and parents regarding the quality of the school buildings. We will continue to press for the full completion of all the phases for the rebuild of the school. In the meantime we will address those areas that are within our control, though it has to be noted that the school lacks the adequate funding to meet any large-scale projects. We also appreciate the recognition the report gives to the hard work put in by all members of the school community in making good use of our current buildings to create a good atmosphere for teaching and learning.

Comments on the need to further develop vocational and applied courses, in Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form, to meet the needs of our learners and the local community are welcomed. We will endeavour to meet these needs and strive to develop further partnerships and links with other providers.

Although we have some concerns over the process involved in the new framework of a "standard" inspection, the headteacher and all staff wish to highlight that the inspection team were professional, courteous and sensitive throughout the week and have provided the school with an external audit that will enable Ysgol Maes-y-Dderwen to move forward in our next phase of development.

## Appendix A

### Basic information about the school

Name of school	Ysgol Maes-y-Dderwen
School type	Maintained by the LEA / community
Age-range of pupils	11 – 18
Address of school	Tudor Street Ystradgynlais Swansea
Post-code	SA9 1AP
Telephone number	01639 842 115

Headteacher	Mr David Rose
Date of appointment	January 2000
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Mr Hugh Patrick
Reporting inspector	Gareth Wyn Roberts
Dates of inspection	04 – 08 October 2004

## Appendix B

### School data and indicators

Year group	Y 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y 10	Y 11	Y 12	Y 13	Total
Number of pupils	108	122	124	92	84	49	31	610

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	39	2	40.3

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	20.6
Average teaching group size	17
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	80%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole School
Term 1	92.2	92	90	94	96.2	98	100	93.5
Term 2	94.8	92.1	90.8	91.2	92.8	97.0	98.2	93.1
Term 3	93.0	93.0	91.0	92.2	91.3	98.6	98.1	92.9

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	17
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	35

## Appendix C

### National Curriculum Assessment Results

#### End of key stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KEY STAGE 3 results: 2004																	
Total number of pupils in Y9:93																	
Percentage of pupils at each level																	
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	E	P	
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0		0	0	0	12	24	41	22	2				
		National	0	1		0	0	2	9	22	34	22	9				
	Test	School	0	2		-	-	-	11	23	47	15	2				
		National	0	3		-	-	-	8	21	31	23	10				
Welsh	Teacher assessment	School	0	0		0	0	0	0	50	40	10	0				
		National	0	0		0	0	1	6	19	34	29	10				
	Test	School	0	0		0	0	0	0	50	30	20	0				
		National	0	2		-	-	-	4	19	35	28	10				
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	1		0	0	0	5	22	32	30	10				
		National	0	1		0	0	1	8	2	25	29	14				
	Test	School	0	4		-	-	-	2	19	30	33	11				
		National	0	5		-	-	-	7	19	21	32	14				
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0		0	0	0	5	24	48	16	6				

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		National	0	1		0	0	1	8	21	32	25	11		
	Test	School	0	3		-	-	-	2	18	44	28	4		
		National	0	4		-	-	-	6	19	31	25	14		

- D Pupils excepted under statutory arrangements from part of the National Curriculum
- A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence
- Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence
- W Pupils who are working towards level 1
- EP Exceptional Performance, where pupils at Key Stage 3 perform above level 8

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school	49%	In the school	54%
In Wales	54% *	In Wales	54% *

\* National figures 2003

### Public Examination Results

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ	
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2004	131
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	32

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2004:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	78	89	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	40	60	51
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	76	88	85
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	29	46	38
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	95	97	97
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	63	81	75
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G C or the vocational qualification equivalent	88	93	93
attained no graded GCSE C or the vocational qualification equivalent	12	7	7
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	6	2	3
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	0		
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	0		

For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs	
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2004	
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2004	23
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2004	6

	School	UA	Wales
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Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	65	72	68
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	96	95	95
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	19	21	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	1		
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	0		

## Appendix D

### Evidence base of the inspection

Ten inspectors spent a total of 40 inspector days at the school and 95 lessons or part lessons were observed in the six subjects being formally inspected. A further 21 lessons or part lessons in other subjects were inspected to gain an insight into pupils standards in key and personal skills. In addition, a cross-section of registration periods, morning services and extra-curricular activities were visited. Interviews

were arranged with members of the SMT, heads of departments and form tutors, together with members of staff, including ancillary staff with specific responsibilities.

The work of a cross-section of able, middle and lower ability pupils and students from Y7 to Y13 was inspected. In addition, further examples of pupils' and students' work were seen when visiting classrooms, workshops and laboratories. Their work was discussed regularly with the pupils and formal interviews were conducted with pupils chosen to represent the different years.

All documentation submitted by the school before and during the inspection was analysed. Pre-inspection meetings were held with members of the Central Committee, the staff, governing body and parents. Thirty-five attended the parents' meeting and 113 questionnaires were returned, together with 12 letters and comments on the questionnaire from parents.

## Appendix E

### Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities and contributions to Key Questions
Gareth W Roberts, Registered Inspector	Summary, recommendations KQ 1, 3, 4, 5 Appendix
John Roberts, Lay Inspector	KQ 1, 3, 7
Heddwyn Evans	KQ 4, 7 Religious Education

Neil Jones	KQ 5, 6	Science, chemistry
Margaret Robertson	KQ 2	Science, biology
Bethan Whittall	KQ 3, 4	History
Beryl Portlock	KQ 2	Design and Technology
Graham Edwards		Art
Ieuan Jones		Physical Education
Gareth Jones		Contributing to science and physics

The school's nominee was Mr Glyn Richards, the school's deputy headteacher. There was no peer assessor.

### **Acknowledgement**

The inspection team would like to thank the governors, staff and pupils of Ysgol Maes y Dderwen for their co-operation during the inspection.

# **SUMMARY REPORT FOR PARENTS**

**Inspection under Section 10 of the  
Schools Inspections Act 1996**

**Ysgol Maes y Dderwen  
Tudor Street  
Ystradgynlais  
Swansea  
SA9 1AP**

**School Number: 666/4021**

**Date of Inspection: 4-8 October 2004**

**by**

**Gareth Wyn Roberts  
WO19/17166**

**Date: 6 December 2004**

**Under Estyn contract number: T/06/04**

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Ysgol Maes y Dderwen, Ystradgynlais was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents more information about their child's school. A copy of this summary is sent to every family with a child at the school. The full report can be obtained from the school.

The inspection of Ysgol Maes y Dderwen took place between 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2004. An independent team of inspectors, led by Mr Gareth Wyn Roberts undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

The team was required to report on the standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management and the contribution made by the school to its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This summary report may be reproduced for non-commercial educational purposes but only as a whole and provided it is reproduced verbatim without adaptation and the source and date thereof are stated.

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

<b>Grade 1</b>	good with outstanding features
<b>Grade 2</b>	good features and no important shortcomings
<b>Grade 3</b>	good features outweigh shortcomings
<b>Grade 4</b>	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
<b>Grade 5</b>	many important shortcomings

## Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years of age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who attain the age of 5 during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who attain the age of 6 during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who attain the age of 18 during the academic year.

### Primary phase:

Year	R	Y 1	Y 2	Y 3	Y 4	Y 5	Y 6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

### Secondary phase:

Year	Y 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y 10	Y 11	Y 12	Y 13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The national curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

## Context

### The nature of the provider

1. Ysgol Maes y Dderwen is a community comprehensive school for pupils age 11-18 maintained by the Local Education Authority of the Powys Unitary Authority. It was the second comprehensive school to be built in Wales and opened in 1954. Currently it has 610 pupils including 80 in the sixth form (Y12 and Y13). There is an annual entry of between 110 and 120 pupils into the school. The school serves the small town of Ystradgynlais and the surrounding villages which are former mining communities. There are areas of social deprivation within the catchment area and in September 2003 the Ystradgynlais Communities First project was established to promote the regeneration of the community. Seventeen per cent of the pupils are registered as eligible to receive free school meals, which is almost double the county percentage of 9%.
2. Thirty-three pupils (about 6.5% of Y7-Y11 pupils) have a statement of special education needs, which is about double the percentage for Wales. In addition, 134 pupils (about 30% of Y7-Y11) are on one of the action stages of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. This is slighter than the national average for Wales. No pupil is disapplied from the National Curriculum. There are three pupils in Local Authority care.
3. Almost every pupil belongs to the white ethnic group. Ninety-six of the pupils come from homes where English is the main language and only 4% from homes with Welsh as the main language. About 11% of pupils can speak Welsh to first language standard. Although the school has a Welsh ethos, no subjects are taught through the medium of Welsh.
4. In Y12 Advanced Subsidiary level Spanish is running in conjunction with the local college as part of a flexible learning programme.
5. The school was previously inspected in October 1998.

### The school's priorities and targets

6. The school's main priorities for 2004-2005 are to:
  - a) develop the appropriate strategies detailed in *Aim for Excellence at key Stage 3* relating to numeracy and literacy in order to raise the Core Subject Indicator at key stage 3;

- b) continue to develop processes of self-evaluation, including addressing those issues identified through discussion with the local education authority;
- c) combat the underachievement of boys at key stage 3 and key stage 4;
- d) introduce a system of peer support for teaching staff in order to address issues of classroom management and staff attendance;
- e) continue to develop the strategies associated with the Assertive Discipline programme to further improve the school's ethos;
- f) continue to raise academic standards throughout the school as well as the levels of expectation;
- g) continue to develop the use of target-setting for departments and subjects;
- h) continue to raise the positive profile of the school in the community;
- i) maintain and develop the atmosphere of co-operation and partnership between staff, pupils and parents;
- j) develop the school's management structure and its effectiveness;
- k) provide the administration and resources necessary to meet the requirements of the School Development Plan;
- l) complete the cycle of the school's Performance Management Policy;
- m) prepare for Phase II of the major building refurbishment programme and develop the community sports facilities at the school;
- n) develop the school's information and communication technology infrastructure and networking capacity.

7. The school's quantitative targets for 2004-2005 are as follows:-

<b>Key stage</b>	<b>Subject etc</b>	<b>School targets</b>	<b>County target (%)</b>	<b>Wales target (%)</b>
Key stage 3	Welsh % at level 5 or higher	93	84	80-85
	English % at level 5 or higher	59	86	80-85
	Mathematics % at level 5 or higher	68	83	80-85
	Science % at level 5 or higher	62	89	80-85
	Core subjects indicator	62	67	
Key stage	5 GCSE subjects gaining grade	52	66	58

4	A*-C			
	5GCSE subjects gaining grade A*-G	93	95	95
	Key subjects indicator	52	49	50+
	% leaving without qualification	0	1.5	2.8
	% unauthorised absences		0.75	-

## Summary

8. Ysgol Maes y Dderwen has made good progress in addressing the key issues for action emanating from the last inspection. It is an improving school.
9. **Table of grades awarded**

Key question	Inspection grades	
	Key stage 3 and Key stage 4	The Sixth form
1 How well do learners achieve?	3	2

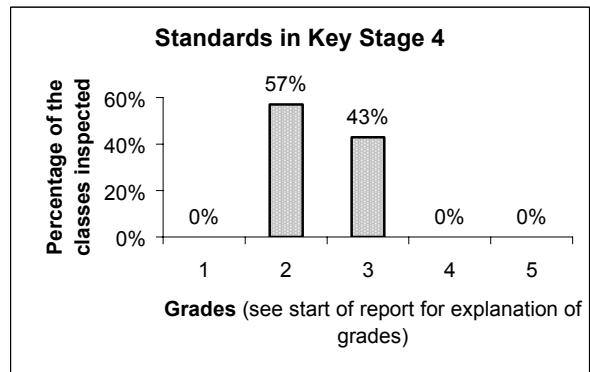
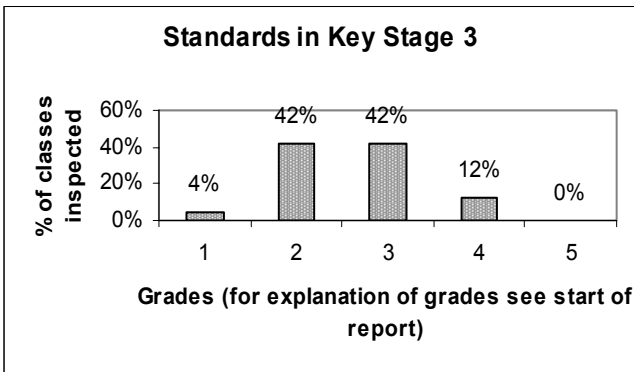
2	How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	3	2
3	How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	3	3
4	How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2
5	How effective are leadership and strategic management?	3	3
6	How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	3	3
7	How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	3	3

## 10. Standards

<b>Standards in subjects inspected</b>			
<b>Subject</b>	<b>KEY STAGE 3</b>	<b>KEY STAGE 4</b>	<b>Sixth Form</b>
Science	3	2	
Biology	-	-	2
Chemistry	-	-	2
Physics	-	-	2
Design and technology	3	3	2
History	2	2	2
Art	3	3	3
Physical Education	2	2	-
Religious Education	2	2	
Religious Studies			2

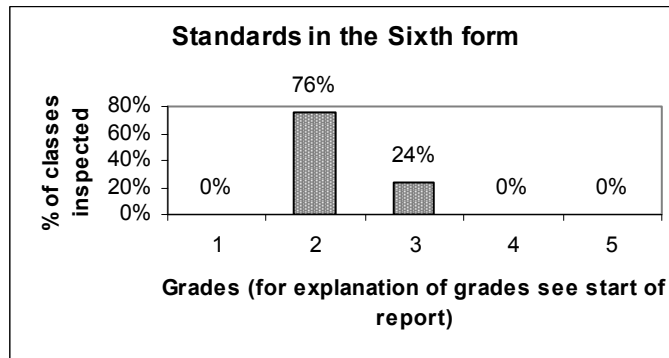
### Standards of achievement

- The team inspected the standards that the pupils achieve in six subjects throughout the school and seven subjects in the sixth form. In science in key stage 3 good features outweigh shortcomings. In key stage 4 and in the individual science subjects in the sixth form standards are good with no important shortcomings. In design and technology, good features outweigh shortcomings in key stage 3 and key stage 4 and standards are good with no important shortcomings in the sixth form. In art, good features outweigh shortcomings throughout the school. Standards in history are good without important shortcomings throughout the school. In physical education and religious education, in key stage 3 and key stage 4 standards are good with no important shortcomings. These subjects were not available for inspection in the sixth form though standards in religious studies are good with no important shortcomings in the sixth form.
- The following graphs shows the standards that pupils achieve in the key stage 3 and key stage 4 classes in the six subjects inspected.

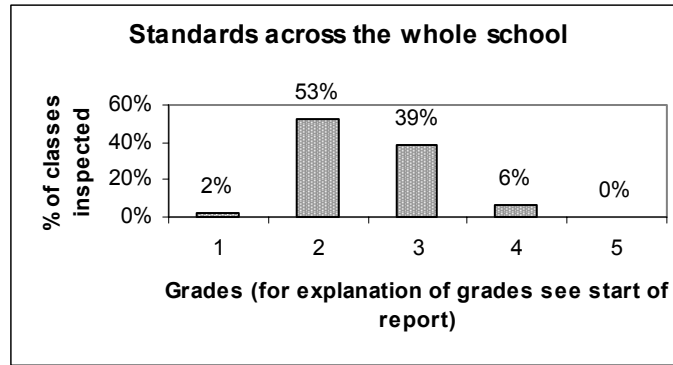


13. At key stage 3, there are important shortcomings in learners' achievement in 12% of classes. In key stage 4 there are no classes where learners show important shortcomings in important areas. The relatively large percentage of classes in keystage 3 where there are important shortcomings means that overall in key stage 3 and key stage 4 the total percentage of classes with important shortcomings is slightly above the percentage for Wales.

14. The following graph shows the standards that students achieve in classes in the seven sixth form subjects inspected.



15. The overall figures mean that the school reaches the target that standards should be good or better in 50% or over of classes but is just below the target set for standards to show no shortcomings in important areas.



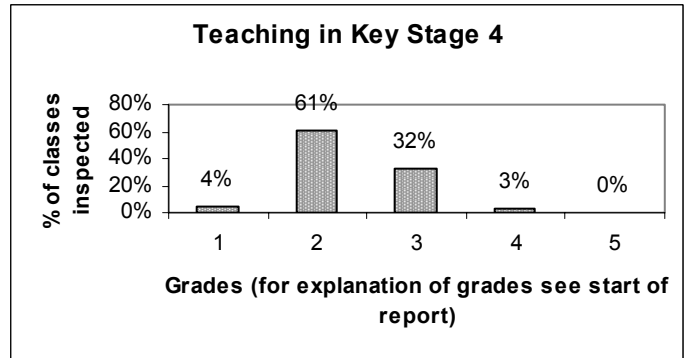
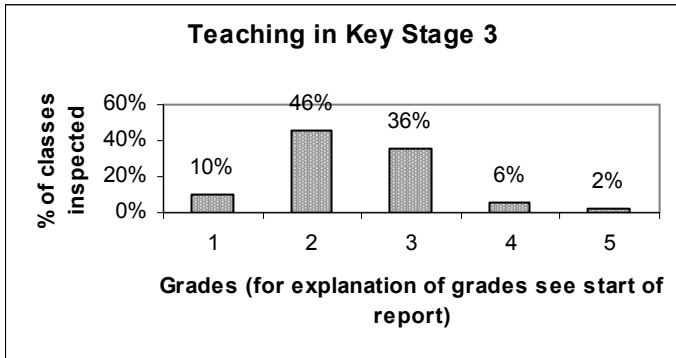
16. Learners with additional educational needs, who form about a third of learners at the school, achieve good standards.
17. Learners listen well to the teachers and to each other throughout the school. In key stage 3 and key stage 4 learners answer questions but rarely at length. Oral work in the sixth form displays good features and no important shortcomings. Learners' reading standards in key stage 3 and key stage 4 display good features which outweigh shortcomings. In the sixth form, learners reading standards are good with no important shortcomings. In key stage 3 and key stage 4, learners' writing standards display good features which outweigh shortcomings. In the sixth form, learners' writing standards have good features and no important shortcomings.
18. With some exceptions, standards in numeracy are good throughout the school with no important shortcomings. Standards in information and communication technology display good features which outweigh shortcomings.
19. Over the last four years learners' attainment in the key stage 3 tests in mathematics and science have improved significantly and place the school among the best of the schools which have the same percentage of learners entitled to free school meals. Results in English, however, show a significant difference between the standards achieved by girls and boys.
20. In key stage 4, there has been a gradual but irregular improvement in examination results in the core and other subjects. After a significant improvement in 2003, results in 2004 were disappointing with the school placed in the lowest quarter of schools with the same percentage of learners entitled to free school meals. Results have been significantly below those for the county and below those for Wales as a whole. Various indicators and predictors, however, show that the school often adds value by the end of key stage 4.
21. Results at Advanced level are also below those for the county and for Wales as a whole, especially with regard to the percentage of learners achieving grades A-C. The numbers gaining grades A-E, however, are high and reflect the school's 'open door' policy regarding learners who wish to pursue Advanced level courses.
22. Girls often attain better than boys in English and the difference between the sexes is larger than the average differences in other schools, both locally and nationally.

23. Students completing their courses in Y13 gained entry to the university or college of their choice.

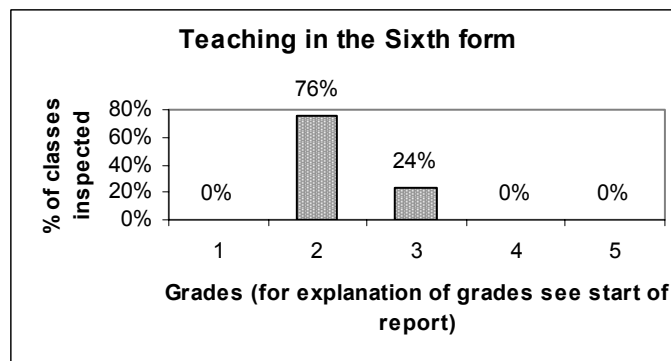
### The quality of education and training

#### Quality of teaching

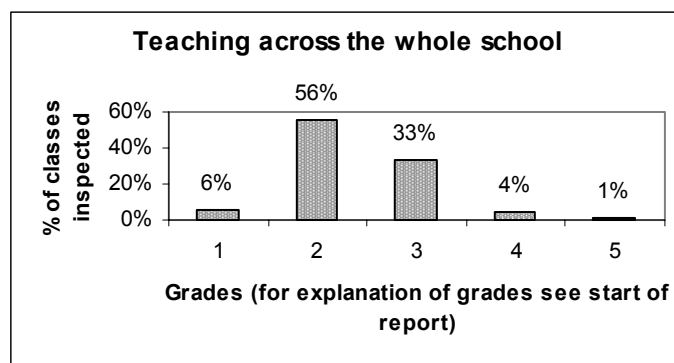
24. The following graphs show the quality of teaching in key stage 3 and key stage 4 classes in the six subjects inspected.



25. The school has exceeded the target set by the Welsh Assembly Government that teaching should be at least good in 50% of classes. Teaching has shortcomings in important areas or significant weakness in 8 per cent of classes in key stage 3 and shortcomings in just 3 per cent of classes in key stage 4.
26. The following graph shows the quality of teaching in classes in the seven sixth form subjects inspected.



27. There were no important shortcomings in the teaching in any of the sixth form classes inspected.



28. This means that overall the school meets the government's target for teaching to have no shortcomings in important areas in 95% of classes.
29. The system for reporting to parents throughout the school has improved since the previous inspection and is now of good quality.

### **Quality of assessment**

30. The quality of assessment varies in quality within and across departments. Though marking is thorough, it does not always give students a clear indication of how to improve their work.

### **The quality of the learning experiences offered by the school**

31. The curriculum caters successfully for the needs of all pupils and meets the statutory needs for pupils of statutory school age as indicated in the 1996 Education Act. All pupils can access the curriculum, including those with physical disabilities or with additional educational needs. Learners have opportunities to gain an appropriate range of GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) and entry level examinations however vocational qualifications are more restricted.
32. The broad and balanced curriculum provided enables pupils to make appropriate progress between years and key stages.
33. The school offers an appropriate range of mainly traditional Advanced Level courses. There are few courses in applied subjects and only one course is offered in conjunction with another institution. The school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide religious education in Y13.
34. The school succeeds in its aim of creating a caring ethos. Pupils at both key stages and students in the sixth form are well supported by teachers, form tutors, heads of year and the senior management team. Pupils and students are confident that personal worries will be dealt with quickly and sensitively when they report them to staff.
35. In key stage 3 and key stage 4, pupil attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection. Attendance is also conducive to good learning in the sixth form.

## **Leadership and management**

36. The school has clear aims that are shared with governors, the staff, parents and learners. This is true throughout the school.
37. The headteacher and senior managers provide effective, supportive leadership. The leadership of the sixth form is good. Pastoral leadership is a particular strength throughout the school. The quality of departmental management is variable and overall shows good features but with some shortcomings.
38. Governors are very supportive and work well with the school in carrying out their responsibilities.

## **Self-evaluation**

39. The school's self-evaluation report addresses briefly, accurately and honestly the seven questions of the common inspection framework. The findings of the inspection team closely match those of the school's own self-evaluation report.

## **The school's use of resources**

40. The school has enough appropriately qualified staff to teach all aspects of the curriculum throughout the school. Ancillary and support staff are also of good quality.
41. Resources are generally of good quality and are well used. However, there is a shortage of resources in a number of subjects, including information technology.
42. Overall, accommodation is adequate for the number of learners on roll. Rooms are located and used effectively in most subjects. The school is kept very clean and well maintained internally. Externally, however, there are significant weaknesses. A small number of health and safety issues have been reported to senior staff, including the need to keep learners, staff, parents and visitors separate from buses and cars especially at the beginning and the end of the school day. The campus itself is tidy and there is very little litter.
43. The headteacher and the finance officer manage the budget effectively on a day to day basis but the School Development Plan is not closely related to the school's budget and procedures for evaluating its effectiveness are insufficient.

## Recommendations

In order to improve further, the school needs to:

- raise the standards of achievement in the 12% of classes where there are some important shortcomings at key stage 3 and ensure a continuing improvement in the results of external examinations at key stage 4;
- continue to raise the standards attained by boys, especially in English, and reduce the gap between the sexes in the external examination and test results overall;
- improve the quality of teaching, especially in the 8% of classes in key stage 3 and 3% of classes at key stage 4 where there are important shortcomings;
- rationalise and coordinate assessment as a diagnostic tool within and across departments and secure a clearer role for learners in assessing their own work and thus improve achievement standards;
- ensure that the whole school evaluation process is focused and rigorous so that it becomes an effective means of raising standards;
- ensure that the statutory requirement to provide religious education in Y13 is met;
- give due attention to health and safety matters outlined in the report, in particular the safety of pupils and others as they arrive and leave school and continue to press for improvements in buildings.

*The governing body is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the above recommendations within 45 working days of receiving this report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. This plan, or a summary of it, will be circulated to all parents at the school.*

**The inspection team wish to thank the staff, pupils, governors and parents for their co-operation during the inspection.**