

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

**Maesycwmmmer Primary School
Tabor Road
Maesycwmmmer
Hengoed
CF82 7PU**

School Number: 6762322

Date of Inspection: 16 January 2006

by

**Stephanie J James
W267/78911**

Date of Publication: 8 March 2006

Under Estyn contract number: 1117205

The purpose of Estyn is to improve quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- * nursery schools and settings maintained or used by local education authorities (LEAs);
- * primary schools;
- * secondary schools;
- * special schools;
- * pupil referral units;
- * independent schools;
- * further education;
- * adult community-based learning;
- * youth support services;
- * LEAs;
- * teacher education and training;
- * work-based learning;
- * careers companies; and
- * the education, guidance and training elements of Jobcentre Plus.

Estyn also:

- * provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- * makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section

Estyn

Anchor Court

Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gsi.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

Copies of this report are available from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide copies of the report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the cost of reproduction may be made to others requesting a copy of the report.

© Crown Copyright 2006: This report may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is re-used accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the report specified.

Maesycwmmmer Primary School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of inspection 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 information about the performance of their child's school.

The inspection of Maesycwmmmer Primary School took place between 16/01/06 and 18/01/06. An independent team of inspectors, led by Stephanie James 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.

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

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

There are three types of inspection.

For **all** inspections, there is a written report on seven key questions.

For **short** inspections, there are no subject reports.

For **standard** inspections, there are also reports on six subjects.

For **full** inspections, there are also reports on all subjects.

Estyn decides the kind of inspection that a school receives, mainly on the basis of its past performance. Most schools receive a standard inspection. All special schools, pupil referral units and any new or amalgamated schools receive a full inspection.

This school received a **standard** inspection.

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 reach the age of 5 during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who reach the age of 6 during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who reach 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

Contents	Page
Context	1
Summary	2
Recommendations	9
Standards	10
Key question 1: How well do learners achieve?	10
The quality of education and training	14
Key question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	14
Key question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	17
Key question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	20
Leadership and management	23
Key question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?	23
Key question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	25
Key question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	27
Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning	29
English	29
Mathematics	30
Design technology	32
Information technology	33
Art	34
Religious education	35
School's response to the inspection	36
Appendices	37
A Basic information about the school	37
B School data and indicators	38
C National Curriculum assessments results	39
D Evidence base of the inspection	41
E Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team	42

Context

The nature of the provider

1. Maesycwmmmer Primary School serves the traditional village community of Maesycwmmmer in the unitary authority of Caerphilly in south east Wales. The village is in a semi-rural location and there is a mix of privately owned, housing association and local council accommodation. Many parents, grandparents and several governors are former pupils of the school. The majority of pupils come from the village, but a number attend the school from outside the catchment area. The school describes pupils' families as having neither prosperous nor disadvantaged social and economic circumstances, although some pupils from less advantaged backgrounds regularly form part of its intake. There is a local post office and newsagent in Maesycwmmmer, but families have to travel to neighbouring towns and villages to access a wider range of facilities.
2. The school caters for pupils from three to eleven years of age. There are 139 pupils on roll including 24 children who attend the nursery part-time. Children enter the nursery part-time at the start of the term following their third birthday. One hundred per cent of pupils are of white ethnic origin and speak English at home. No pupils speak Welsh as a first language. Sixteen per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is just below the national average of 19 per cent. Twenty per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs (SEN), which is in line with the national average. Two pupils have statements of SEN. Pupils representing the full range of abilities attend the school, but baseline assessments in the early years class are identifying a growing number of children who have speech and language difficulties.
3. The accommodation consists of two buildings. The lower building houses the early years and key stage 1 pupils. This has a hall that also doubles as the school dining room. The upper building accommodates key stage 2 pupils. It also has a hall, a library, three classrooms, a resource room and the main office. In addition to the tarmac play areas around the school, there is a large playing field at the rear of the junior building. The village youth centre is situated within the grounds adjacent to the field. It is open three evenings a week and many former pupils attend it.
4. The headteacher has led the school since January 1998. There are five full-time teachers in addition to the head, one part-time teacher and a language support teacher who is funded by the Local Education Authority (LEA) and who also works part-time in the school. Three of the full-time members of staff have been appointed since the last inspection in February 2000. Two of them are newly qualified teachers who were appointed in September 2005. The school has recently been awarded the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark.

The school's priorities and targets

5. The main aim at Maesycwmmmer Primary School is to develop the whole child socially, physically, emotionally and intellectually in an environment that is stimulating, purposeful and happy. The school also aims to create a climate that reflects a positive attitude towards learning and encourages good social relationships.
6. The following are key targets in the school development plan (SDP) for the current year 2005-2006:
7. **English:** improve the higher order reading skills of all pupils with a specific focus on reading for meaning;
8. **Mathematics:** raise standards through the introduction of a new mathematics scheme and further develop a whole school approach to problem solving;
9. **Information Technology (IT):** ensure IT is regarded as an integral part of the curriculum;
10. **Curriculum Subject Development:** address some specific needs in religious education, design and technology, history, geography, Welsh, music and art;
11. **Special Educational Needs:** continue developing language support opportunities for pupils with SEN and review the accessibility plan for admissions 2006-07;
12. **Ethos/Care and Support:** further develop the Healthy Schools initiative and the responsibilities of the School Council;
13. **Leadership and Management:**
 - mentor newly qualified staff to ensure they meet the required standards of induction;
 - develop the role of link governors;
 - prepare for the implementation of the Foundation Phase;
 - review workforce structure to accommodate planning, preparation and assessment time;
 - further refurbish the building;
 - continue to develop the subject leader's role.

Summary

14. Maesycwmmmer Primary is a very caring school with many good features.
15. The inspection team judged the school's work as follows:

Table of grades awarded

Key question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	2
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	2
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	2
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	2
6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	2
7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	2

Standards

16. During the inspection, standards of achievement in the lessons observed in the six subjects inspected were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
0%	63%	31%	6%	0%

17. In 63 per cent of lessons, pupils' standards of achievement were judged to be grade 2 or above. This nearly matches the Welsh Assembly Government's target for 2007 that 65 per cent of standards should be grade 2 or above. However, the percentage of lessons where standards were judged to be grade 4 exceeds the national figure of 2 per cent.
18. In key stages 1 and 2, overall standards in the subjects inspected are:

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Subject	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
English	2	2
Mathematics	2	2
Design and Technology	3	3
Information Technology	3	3
Art	3	3
Religious Education	3	3

19. Pupils with SEN make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress towards achieving the targets in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs) because of the excellent support they receive.
20. The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and the pupils are making good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

21. Children under five make good progress and achieve good standards, with no important shortcomings, in using the key skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) in their activities in all six areas of learning. Their early bilingual skills are also developing well.
22. Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 make good progress and achieve good standards, with no important shortcomings, in using the key skills of listening, speaking, writing and numeracy in their work across the curriculum. Good features outweigh shortcomings in their use of reading skills and ICT in all subjects, but they do not use these skills regularly enough in all curricular areas. Standards in bilingual competence also have good features which outweigh some shortcomings.
23. Pupils make good progress in the early years and key stage 1 towards fulfilling their potential and moving on to the next stage of learning. In key stage 2 they make good progress overall in the core subjects, but their progress in the foundation subjects is less steady. There is a plateau in the development of some of their knowledge and skills during the key stage, where shortcomings were found in important areas. By the end of the key stage, however, there are good features in many aspects of their work.
24. It is difficult to identify reliable patterns in the school's performance in National Curriculum (NC) assessments at the end of key stages 1 and 2 because of the small size and changing nature of each year group of pupils. In key stage 1 in 2005, the school's results in English, mathematics and science were above the average for Caerphilly but slightly below the average for Wales. The number of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 was much higher than the local and national average.
25. In key stage 2, pupils' performance in recent years in the NC assessments has been consistently above the average for Caerphilly and Wales. In 2005, the number of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 was well above the local and national average. The number achieving the higher Level 5 was below average, but the number of pupils with SEN adversely affected the overall results. However, a significant proportion of pupils with SEN attained the level expected for their age, which is an outstanding achievement for them.
26. The comparative performance of boys and girls also varies each year, but inspectors found no discernible difference in the achievement of boys and girls of similar ability.
27. Pupils' personal, social and learning skills develop well. Children under five are happy, enthusiastic and have a positive disposition towards learning. Most pupils in key stages 1 and 2 work well in groups, or with a partner, and demonstrate the capacity to work independently.
28. Pupils are well behaved. They know what is expected of them and are courteous and friendly. They relate well to each other and to adults. Older

pupils are sensitive to the needs of younger ones. The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and are punctual at the start of the day.

29. Pupils' awareness and respect for pupils with special needs is outstanding. They are less aware, however, of the diversity of beliefs and cultural traditions in the wider society. They are developing some understanding of the world of work and play a very full part in the life of the local community.

The quality of education and training

30. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
3%	62%	23%	12%	0%

31. The quality of teaching in two thirds of lessons was good with no important shortcomings. The quality of teaching in the core subjects was consistently judged to be grade 3 or above. In some lessons in foundation subjects in key stage 2, however, the quality of teaching was judged to have shortcomings in important areas.
32. The quality of the teaching for children under five is consistently good with some outstanding features.
33. The quality of teaching and support for pupils with SEN is also good with outstanding features. Support teachers and assistants know and understand the needs of pupils extremely well and play an outstanding role in assisting them to achieve their potential.
34. Overall, teaching in the majority of lessons is good. In these lessons teachers and support staff work most effectively as teams, and relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Teachers plan thoroughly and usually prepare appropriate tasks for all pupils, including the more able. They make effective use of resources and have a sound knowledge of most of the subjects they teach. The pace of lessons is good and teachers ensure that pupils are aware of lesson objectives.
35. In the minority of lessons where there are shortcomings in important areas, lessons are not planned in detail. Tasks are not adapted well enough to cater for the needs of all pupils. They do not challenge pupils sufficiently, or sustain their interest. Teaching does not ensure sufficient pupil progress in developing skills in some foundation subjects. Class organisation and discipline are not consistently good.
36. The quality of assessment is good. The majority of teachers mark pupils' work regularly and their comments provide appropriate guidance on how they can further improve. Annual reports to parents give a clear picture of pupils' achievements and are outstanding in quality.
37. The school provides a broad and relevant curriculum that effectively meets the learning needs of most pupils. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum.

38. Provision for homework is good. Various educational visits and a good range of extra-curricular activities enhance the curriculum.
39. Collective worship offers guidance on moral issues. It does not, however, contribute so well to pupils' spiritual development because they are not often encouraged to reflect on their thoughts and experiences during services. Pupils' moral development is also developed well through subjects such as English.
40. The school effectively develops pupils' knowledge of their own culture. Its programme for promoting pupils' awareness of other cultures is less well developed.
41. Good provision is made for pupils' personal and social education. Involvement in initiatives such as the Healthy Schools project encourages pupils to work collaboratively with others and they respond well.
42. Educational visits and visitors from the community effectively raise pupils' awareness of the world of work. The activities of the School Council give pupils opportunities to understand their rights and responsibilities and develop an awareness of global citizenship.
43. The school's provision helps pupils to become aware of the importance of contributing to the care of the environment and of the need for a healthy lifestyle.
44. The school plans and manages care and support arrangements extremely well. It succeeds in its aim of creating a family atmosphere. The headteacher makes a significant contribution to this aspect of the school's work. He knows individual pupils and their families very well and cares for their happiness and well-being, as do all members of staff.
45. Arrangements to help children settle into the early years class are very well organised. Pupils who have recently joined the school say they have settled well and are happy in school. There are strong links with the local comprehensive schools to ease transition between the primary and secondary phases of education.
46. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are very carefully monitored and swift action is taken if there is a cause for concern.
47. Pupils' behaviour is closely monitored. Pupils who have difficulty in controlling their behaviour are very well supported with the result that there are few incidents of unacceptable behaviour.
48. A good range of assessments reveal pupils whose progress is a cause for concern, enabling the school to arrange support at an early stage.
49. There are excellent procedures for ensuring the healthy development, safety and well being of all. The school follows the child protection guidelines laid

down by the Local Education Authority and works in close partnership with other responsible agencies to safeguard pupils and secure their welfare.

50. The quality of the provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good with outstanding features. Learning support teachers and assistants are outstandingly knowledgeable about the needs of pupils with SEN and provide expert support to help them achieve their potential. The close and effective partnership between teaching and support staff very successfully promotes pupils' progress.
51. The school actively promotes equality of opportunity for all. A very strong line is taken against bullying and other forms of harassment to ensure that all pupils are happy and secure.

Leadership and management

52. The headteacher gives a clear sense of direction to the school. His leadership, and the shared sense of purpose of most of the staff, have resulted in improvements in important areas since the last inspection.
53. There are clear aims and policies that focus on pupils' needs. A strong ethos of equal and fair treatment for all pupils is a prominent feature in the school's policies and reflected in its daily life and work.
54. The school has suitable arrangements for monitoring the performance of individuals. Most teachers make good progress in meeting their agreed individual targets. Performance management procedures effectively identify staff development needs.
55. The headteacher and governing body place a great deal of emphasis on the professional development of all members of staff. Staff development has had a very positive impact on improving standards and quality in most areas, but has been less successful in improving the quality of teaching in those lessons where there are shortcomings in important areas.
56. The recently appointed governing body is very enthusiastic and supportive of the school. The school has identified the need to develop further the role of the governing body to enable link governors to gain greater knowledge and understanding of provision and standards in its SDP.
57. The school's self-evaluation process involves all members of staff, governors, parents and pupils and is successful in identifying most of the strengths and areas for development for the school.
58. The headteacher is very well informed about the performance of individual members of staff. Other managers, such as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo), are also very well informed about performance in their areas of responsibility.

59. Subject leaders are generally aware of strengths and weaknesses in the subjects for which they are responsible. There is not, however, a regular programme for them to observe lessons taught by their colleagues in the subjects for which they are responsible. They therefore lack first-hand evidence of the quality of teaching and learning in those subjects. In this respect, the role of subject link governors is also at an early stage of development.
60. Parents' views have been sought regarding a number of issues. The school has identified the need to draw more comprehensively on the views of parents and pupils to inform its self-evaluation as a target in its current SDP.
61. The school uses the information from self-evaluation to set clear priorities for action in its SDP, which is a useful document that steers school improvement.
62. The school's self-evaluation report is thorough, clear and concise. The school's judgements on its performance are accurate in relation to all seven key questions and match those of the inspection team.
63. The school has made good progress overall since the last inspection. It has effectively tackled all the key issues that were identified in the last inspection report, although important shortcomings remain in the quality of teaching and standards achieved in a small minority of lessons.
64. There are enough appropriately qualified teachers to teach all aspects of the curriculum. Administrative and canteen staff have a positive influence on the day-to-day running of the school. All teaching, non-teaching and support staff have job descriptions that clearly define their roles and responsibilities.
65. The overall quality of the accommodation is good and adequate for the number of pupils on roll. However, the roof of the junior building is in urgent need of repair.
66. Overall the school has enough good quality resources for every age group and subject, which are used effectively. The Friends of the School Association makes a significant, and highly valued, contribution to the school's funds and resources. The range of fiction to cater for boys' interest in reading has recently been extended, but the school's library is under used.
67. The school's commitment to investing resources to develop staff expertise has been very effective in raising the quality of leadership, teaching and support in important areas such as SEN provision. Opportunities for professional development have been less successful, however, in maintaining and raising the quality of planning and teaching consistently throughout the school.
68. Budgetary control is stringent, and the governing body monitors all expenditure effectively to ensure cost-effectiveness. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

Recommendations

R1 Monitor and improve the quality of teaching and standards achieved where there are shortcomings in important areas.

R2 Further develop the role of leaders and managers in monitoring, evaluating and improving standards in their areas of responsibility.

R3 Devise a structured programme to share and spread good practice both within, and from outside, the school.

R4 Continue to work with the Local Education Authority to repair the roof of the junior building.

Note: The school has identified the need to develop the role of subject leaders and link governors in its current SDP.

The governing body is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to the recommendations within 45 working days of receiving the 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 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

69. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
70. During the inspection, standards of achievement in the lessons observed in the six subjects inspected were:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
0%	63%	31%	6%	0%

71. In 63 per cent of lessons, pupils' standards of achievement were judged to be grade 2 or above. This nearly matches the Welsh Assembly Government's target for 2007 that 65 per cent of standards should be grade 2 or above. However, the percentage of lessons where standards were judged to be grade 4 exceeds the national figure of 2 per cent.
72. In key stages 1 and 2, overall standards in the subjects inspected are:

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

Subject	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
English	2	2
Mathematics	2	2
Design and Technology	3	3
Information Technology	3	3
Art	3	3
Religious Education	3	3

73. Pupils with SEN make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress towards achieving the targets in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs) because of the excellent support they receive. Parents are particularly happy with the standards achieved by pupils with SEN.
74. The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and the pupils are making good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.
75. Children under five make good progress and achieve good standards in the key skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Their confidence in using numeracy and ICT in their activities in all six areas of learning is developing very well. Their early bilingual skills are also developing well.
76. Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 listen attentively to their teachers and to their peers. They speak articulately when discussing their work, with the majority of pupils using appropriate terminology.

77. They read well, including reading from a whiteboard screen. However, they do not always, at an appropriate level, have the necessary skills to locate information in books and in the library. The school has identified this as a target in its current SDP. Pupils write well in different forms across the curriculum, making use of appropriate terms in most subjects. The standard of presentation of their work is good in most classes.
78. Standards in numeracy are good, with number skills being used well in subjects such as science. Pupils' use of ICT has improved since the last inspection because of greater access to computers, but they do not use their skills regularly enough in all curricular areas.
79. Standards in bilingual competence have good features which outweigh some shortcomings. Pupils in the majority of classes use incidental Welsh correctly and understand simple instructions.
80. In key stage 1, pupils' performance in the 2005 NC assessments dropped for the first time because of the large number of pupils with SEN in that group. However, the school's results in English, mathematics and science were above the average for Caerphilly. The number of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 was much higher than the average for Caerphilly and Wales as a whole. The school's results show that its performance is above average in English and science and below average in mathematics in comparison with schools with a similar socio-economic profile.
81. In key stage 2, pupils' performance in recent years in the NC assessments has been consistently above the average for Caerphilly and Wales. In 2005, the number of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 was well above the local and national average. However, the number achieving the higher Level 5 was below average. Again, the number of pupils with SEN in that group adversely affected overall results, which must be interpreted with caution because of the small number of pupils in year 6. A significant proportion of pupils with SEN attained the level expected for their age, which is an outstanding achievement. The very good performance of girls contributed to the school managing to remain slightly above average in comparison with results for Caerphilly and Wales.
82. There was a big difference in both key stages in the performance of boys and girls. However, the large number of boys in years 2 and 6 on the SEN register in 2005 adversely affected the overall results. It is difficult to identify reliable patterns in the comparative performance of girls and boys because of the small size and changing nature of each year group of pupils. However, inspectors found no discernible difference in the achievement of boys and girls of similar ability.
83. Pupils' progress in developing and applying new knowledge and skills is good in key stage 1 but variable in key stage 2. By year 6, however, pupils successfully apply new skills they have acquired in a range of contexts. For example, they apply the knowledge gained through their study of newspapers effectively to the production of their own class newspaper.

84. Where teachers refer in their marking to the individual targets inside the front covers of their books, pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve. In some class, pupils effectively indicate to their teachers whether or not they understand what they should be doing through 'traffic lights' or simple hand signals. When given the opportunity, they are often perceptive in their evaluations of their own work. Their awareness of class targets further helps their perception of their strengths and weaknesses. A minority of pupils in key stage 2 are vague about what they need to do to make further progress.
85. Pupils make good progress in the early years and key stage 1 towards fulfilling their potential and moving on to the next stage of learning. In key stage 2, they make good progress overall in the core subjects, but their progress in the foundation subjects is less steady. There is a plateau in the development of some of their knowledge and skills during the key stage, where shortcomings were found in important areas. By the end of the key stage, however, there are good features in many aspects of their work.
86. Pupils' personal, social and learning skills develop well. Children under five are happy, enthusiastic and have a positive disposition towards learning. They organise themselves very well in free choice and play activities and are confident and sociable.
87. Most pupils in key stages 1 and 2 work well in groups, or with a partner, and demonstrate the capacity to work independently. Year 3 pupils, for example, have developed a range of strategies to help them work independently on their tasks without seeking further help from the teacher. In upper key stage 2, pupils' organisational and study skills are developing well. They engage competently in a range of research related to the topics they are studying using books and the Internet.
88. Problem-solving skills are good in a range of subjects. Pupils' creative skills are good in some curricular areas, such as English, but less well developed in some classes in other subjects such as design and technology and art.
89. Pupils are well behaved. The foundations for good behaviour are laid very effectively in the early years. Pupils develop into self confident, mature young citizens from a young age. They know what is expected of them and they are courteous and friendly. They relate well to each other and to adults. Throughout the day they move sensibly in and around the school and between the two buildings. Pupils show a high degree of self-discipline.
90. Older pupils are sensitive to the needs of the younger ones. The School Council and the recently established 'buddy' system have an important role in maintaining good relationships and ensuring that all pupils have a friend at playtimes and lunchtimes. They take their responsibilities seriously and show great commitment to their roles.
91. The average rate of attendance for the three terms prior to the inspection was 94 per cent. This is above the Caerphilly and Wales averages. Absences are

caused mainly through illness, but the overall rate is adversely affected by family holidays in term time. The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly and are punctual at the start of the day. Pupils achieving full attendance are rewarded termly and at the end of the year. A significant number receive certificates in recognition of their excellent attendance.

92. Pupils are acquiring an understanding of moral issues in a variety of ways, including through stories and fables. They show an appreciation and respect for the achievements of others. For example, pupils in the year 1/2 class broke into spontaneous applause in appreciation of one pupil's skill in reading from the whiteboard.
93. Pupils' awareness of equal opportunities issues with regard to pupils with special needs is outstanding. They show great respect and care for pupils with SEN who, as a result, are happy and confidently participate in all aspects of school life. Pupils also show respect for visitors to the school from other cultures, but are less aware of the diversity of beliefs and cultural traditions in the wider society.
94. They are developing some understanding of the world of work through visits to local business such as a bakery and the supermarket. They play a very full part in the life of the local community through their strong links with organisations such as the senior citizens' centre.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

95. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation document.

96. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
3%	62%	23%	12%	0%

97. The quality of teaching in two thirds of lessons was good with no important shortcomings. The quality of teaching in the core subjects was consistently judged to be grade 3 or above. In some lessons in foundation subjects in key stage 2, however, the quality of teaching was judged to have shortcomings in important areas.

98. The quality of the teaching for children under five is consistently good with some outstanding features, one of which is the strong emphasis given to using very effective structured play activities to develop children's knowledge and understanding.

99. The quality of teaching and support for pupils with SEN is good with outstanding features. Most class teachers have a good understanding of the needs of pupils with SEN and successfully provide work that is well suited to them. Support teachers and assistants know and understand the needs of the pupils with whom they work extremely well. They play an outstanding role in assisting them to benefit from all aspects of the school's provision and in helping them to achieve their potential.

100. Overall, teaching in the majority of lessons is good. In these lessons, teachers and support staff work most effectively as teams, and relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Where the teaching is good, teachers plan thoroughly and usually prepare appropriate tasks for all pupils, including the more able. Occasionally, however, the books pupils read are not well matched to their reading ability.

101. Teachers make effective use of resources, particularly the interactive whiteboard. They are developing ways of using this resource imaginatively in order to stimulate pupils and further improve standards. They have a sound knowledge of most of the subjects they teach, the pace of lessons is good and teachers ensure that pupils are aware of lesson objectives. In some classes, whole class targets for improvement are also reiterated at the beginning of lessons.

102. In general, teachers demonstrate good class control and behaviour management and use a range of appropriate teaching strategies, which secure the active engagement of learners. Occasionally, however, teachers talk for too long and pupils' attention therefore begins to waver.
103. The majority of teachers use appropriate methods to reinforce pupils' bilingual competence. They also effectively support the development of pupils' problem-solving skills and, to a lesser extent, their creative skills. Pupils' creativity is not consistently encouraged and developed because of teacher over-direction. For example, there is some over-use of templates in subjects such as design and technology and art.
104. Teachers actively promote equal opportunities regarding gender and disability, but do not give similar prominence to the promotion of race equality.
105. Where there are outstanding features in the quality of teaching, presentations are exciting, tasks are interesting and teachers ask challenging questions.
106. In the minority of lessons where there are shortcomings in important areas, lessons are not planned in detail. Tasks are not adapted well enough to cater for the needs of all pupils and there is an over-use of worksheets which are often not well organised in pupils' books. Tasks do not challenge pupils sufficiently, or sustain their interest. Teaching does not ensure sufficient pupil progress in developing skills in some foundation subjects. Class organisation and discipline are not consistently good.
107. The school's assessment policy is clear and procedures are effective. Teachers know their pupils well and pupils' progress is constantly reviewed. The quality of assessment is good and assessments are correct and consistent. They meet statutory requirements fully, including those for pupils with SEN.
108. The quality of assessment for the under-fives is good. In key stages 1 and 2, pupils' development is regularly assessed in all subjects and detailed records are kept of their progress.
109. Good use is made of national assessment results, standardised tests and teachers' assessments to plan and improve learning. Portfolios of work produced with other schools in the local cluster group are used most effectively to moderate teachers' assessments of pupils' achievements.
110. The majority of teachers mark pupils' work regularly and their comments provide appropriate guidance on how they can further improve.
111. In most classes, pupils are involved in setting and reviewing their personal targets, which give them clear aims for improvement. In the minority of instances where target setting is less effective, there is some duplication of targets and they are not sufficiently individualised. Pupils with SEN know the targets in their IEPs and they strive hard to achieve them.

112. Annual reports to parents give a clear picture of pupils' achievements in all subjects. They offer valuable comments regarding social development and successes and guidelines for future improvement. They comply fully with statutory requirements and are outstanding in quality.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

113. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
114. Overall, the school provides a broad and relevant curriculum, and the programmes of study that are planned in detail correspond well to the learning needs of most pupils. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum. The school follows the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. It has been awarded a Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark.
115. The curriculum for the under fives is rich and varied and is presented through relevant themes, with carefully planned links between activities in all six areas of learning.
116. Appropriate schemes of work in key stages 1 and 2 include a good range of interesting and differentiated experiences for all pupils in both key stages in all curricular areas. They are concise documents, which demonstrate continuity and progression.
117. Opportunities to develop the basic and key skills are indicated in teachers' medium term plans. However, the school is not wholly effective in its delivery of all skills, with the use of ICT and bilingual skills being under-developed.
118. Provision for homework is good and appropriate tasks are set for pupils in the majority of classes. This work extends the curricular provision effectively.
119. The curriculum is enhanced by various educational visits, for example, to Techniquet. Extra-curricular activities such as folk dancing, science and sports clubs enhance pupils' skills and social capabilities. Members of the community visit the school and share their experience and expertise with pupils.
120. Collective worship is of a Christian nature and offers some guidance on moral issues. However, it does not contribute as well to the spiritual development of pupils because pupils are not often encouraged to reflect on their thoughts and experiences during services. Pupils' moral development is further developed through subjects such as English. Pupils in the year 2/3 class, for example, are beginning to understand and relate to some of the underlying messages of simple fables.
121. The social development of pupils is good, with many of them undertaking a variety of responsibilities such as running the school tuck shop. The school promotes pupils' cultural development appropriately through, for example, visits to local museums and theatres and some aspects of the *Cwricwlwm Cymreig*,

namely the Welsh dimension to the curriculum. Its programme for promoting pupils' awareness of other cultures is less well developed.

122. Arrangements for the induction of children to the nursery class from local pre-school groups are good. The school enjoys successful working partnerships with the local secondary schools to which pupils transfer. There is no teacher training partnership with a higher education establishment, but students undertaking vocational qualifications in childcare and education receive good guidance.
123. There are positive links with members of the local community and these are effective in contributing to pupils' learning in a number of areas. For example, police and fire officers visit the school. Senior citizens provide an audience for performances and concerts. The school benefits greatly from the Friends of the School Association, where sustained efforts promote its ethos as well as providing valuable funds.
124. The school complies with legal and curricular requirements. Good provision is made for pupils' personal and social education and the school follows closely the guidance provided by the Qualifications Curriculum and Assessment Authority. Involvement in initiatives such as the Healthy Schools project encourages pupils to work collaboratively with others and they respond well. There is good provision for emotional development in 'Circle Time', when problems are discussed and pupils are encouraged to express points of view. As a result, pupils relate well to each other and help and support each other in lessons and on the playground, displaying good social attitudes.
125. Educational visits and visitors from the community effectively raise pupils' awareness of the world of work, both past and present, and further strengthen the links with the community. For example, pupils work with professional artists, sports personalities and the Groundwork Trust. Pupils are successful in commercially sponsored competitions involving art and National Science week. Volunteers from the community support pupils' work in classes, for example, through sharing their experiences, hearing pupils read and with practical activities.
126. Four teachers, including one who has had a previous career in industry, have benefited from industrial placements and produced teaching packs to support subjects. The School Council writes letters of thanks for donations received from local businesses.
127. Teachers use incidental Welsh in most classes to promote pupils' passive understanding of a few commands and general phrases, but pupils' responses are limited. Some classroom displays and labelling of items in Welsh add to pupils' vocabulary. Teachers ensure that there is planning for the *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* in their schemes of work, but implementation of these plans in classroom activities is sometimes superficial.
128. Boys and girls have equal access to all activities as, on the whole, do pupils with SEN. Timetables for withdrawal groups are closely monitored and regularly

changed to ensure that pupils do not regularly miss opportunities to benefit from the school's full curricular provision.

129. The activities of the School Council are an integral part of the provision where pupils are given opportunities to understand their rights and responsibilities, and to develop an awareness of global citizenship. Members of the Council appreciate the opportunities they have to influence matters that affect their daily life in school.
130. The school's promotion of education for sustainable development is good. Pupils are involved in recycling projects and are aware of the importance of contributing to the care of the environment.
131. Pupils are very well aware of the need for a healthy lifestyle. The fruit and vegetable tuck shop is a School Council initiative that also helps develop their business and entrepreneurial skills.
132. The school attends well to national priorities for lifelong learning and community regeneration. It runs adult ICT courses that enable pupils to see adults as lifelong learners.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

133. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
134. The school plans and manages care and support arrangements extremely well. It succeeds in its aim of creating a family atmosphere. The headteacher makes a significant contribution to this aspect of the school's work. He knows individual pupils and their families very well and cares for their happiness and well-being, as do all members of staff. Parents appreciate the school's genuine 'open-door' policy.
135. One hundred per cent of parents in the meeting before the inspection, and in their responses to a questionnaire, report that pupils are very well supported. Members of staff contact parents at an early stage if there are any concerns about their children. Members of staff are very approachable and respond sensitively to parents' suggestions and concerns.
136. Arrangements to help children settle into the early years class are very well organised. As a result, they settle quickly and feel confident and secure. The school and nursery brochures provide a great deal of useful information for parents. Pupils who have recently joined the school say they have settled well and are happy in school. There are strong links with the local comprehensive schools to ease transition between the primary and secondary phase of education at the age of eleven.
137. Members of staff know pupils very well and provide high quality personal support and guidance within the school. The quality of the liaison with specialist support services, such as those for special needs and child protection, is also very good.
138. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are very carefully monitored and have greatly improved. The vast majority of parents notify the school promptly if their child is absent. Pupils are keen to achieve 100 per cent attendance certificates. There is close liaison with the Educational Welfare Officer to monitor attendance.
139. Pupils' behaviour is also closely monitored. Pupils who have difficulty in controlling their behaviour are well supported through a range of appropriate strategies that are described in the school's Behaviour Policy. Such pupils also receive good support from the Behaviour Support Service. There are few incidents of unacceptable behaviour. The school's reward system, 'Maesycwmmmer Achiever Member', encourages good behaviour and attendance. Pupils value the Achievers' Assembly once a fortnight. The staff handbook gives very clear guidelines for staff on how to manage behaviour and the steps to be taken in the event of misbehaviour.
140. A good range of assessments is used to monitor pupils' performance. These reveal pupils whose progress is a cause for concern, enabling the school to arrange support at an early stage.

141. There are excellent procedures for ensuring the healthy development, safety and well being of all, that are known and understood both by pupils and members of staff. Clear guidelines are set out in the Staff Handbook regarding health and safety and first aid procedures. Pupils say that 'Circle Time' provides a valuable opportunity for them to express any concerns they may have, as does the 'Worry Box' which is opened every day. School Council members provide another channel for pupils to communicate their views. The 'buddy' system helps to ensure that no one is without a friend.
142. The school follows the child protection guidelines laid down by the Local Education Authority. There are two named child protection officers, one of whom is the headteacher. The school works in close partnership with other responsible agencies to safeguard pupils and secure their welfare. Staff are aware of, and alert to, symptoms of abuse and know what action to take if they have any concerns.
143. The quality of the provision for pupils with additional learning needs is good with outstanding features. It fully meets the requirements of the SEN Code of Practice for Wales. Pupils with a wide range of special needs are positively welcomed and are fully included in the life of the school.
144. Pupils with SEN are identified early from baseline assessments and other screening tests. The SENCo works very closely with class teachers, support staff, parents and specialist services and pupils to assess their precise needs and organise support. She has an excellent understanding of the nature of their needs.
145. The Individual Education Plans that are drawn up for pupils are of very good quality and are reviewed regularly with the SENCo, pupils, parents and relevant support staff. In most classes, teachers modify tasks very effectively for pupils with SEN so that they enjoy access to the curriculum at a level with which they can cope and enable them to achieve their targets.
146. The teaching arrangements for pupils with SEN are a strength of the school's provision. The school benefits from very well deployed learning support teachers and assistants. They are outstandingly knowledgeable about the needs of the pupils with whom they work and provide expert support to help them achieve their potential. The close and effective partnership between teaching and support staff very successfully promotes pupils' progress.
147. Appropriate support is also provided for pupils whose behaviour is likely to impede their progress and that of other pupils. The school works closely with the Behaviour Support Service, which in turn works with parents to help them manage their children's behaviour and provide consistency of approach at home and at school.
148. The school actively promotes equality of opportunity for all and stresses the importance of treating pupils fairly and consistently, regardless of any challenges they may present. Boys and girls are given the same opportunities

- to participate in all activities. The school has a race equality policy and promotes good relationships within the community. The programme for preparing pupils for life in a multi-racial society is less well developed.
149. The school takes a very strong line against bullying and other forms of harassment. Pupils and parents say that the headteacher and other members of staff take quick and effective action on the rare occasions when bullying occurs.
150. The lower building which houses children under five and pupils in key stage 1 is accessible for all who use it. However, the upper building, which accommodates some key stage 1 and all key stage 2 pupils, is inaccessible for pupils and adults with disabilities. The school is closely monitoring the situation and has a suitable accessibility plan.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

151. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
152. The headteacher gives a clear sense of direction to the school. Since his appointment, he has identified a number of priorities for improvement. These include the quality of long and short-term lesson planning, the provision for pupils with SEN, the quality of the SDP, and the state of the building, as well as standards in several subjects. During this time, there have been a number of changes in staff and long-term absences that have sometimes impacted on consistent progress in all these areas. Nevertheless, his leadership, and the shared sense of purpose of most of the staff, have resulted in improvements in all these areas.
153. There are clear aims and policies that focus on pupils' needs and include clear expectations of all members of staff. One of the school's main aims, namely to create a positive attitude towards learning and encourage good social relationships, is successfully achieved in most classes.
154. There is a good equal opportunities policy, which actively promotes equality for all. A strong ethos of equal and fair treatment for all pupils is a prominent feature in the school's policies and is reflected in its daily life and work. Staff who are new to the school are well supported and given opportunities to develop their areas of interest and expertise.
155. The school takes good account of the Welsh Assembly Government's priorities by including them, where appropriate, in its SDP. It works very effectively in partnership with the local cluster of primary schools. For example, the cluster group spent a considerable amount of time considering how to raise standards in pupils' writing. It produced a very helpful portfolio of examples of pupils' writing that the school has used to good effect to improve its own approaches to the teaching of writing.
156. The school also works in close partnership with Ystrad Mynach and Blackwood Colleges. It provides work placements for student nursery nurses and supports the professional development of higher level teaching assistants.
157. All members of staff are involved in the process of setting targets for whole school improvement. Targets are more realistic now than at the time of the last inspection because staff discuss and agree whether or not they are manageable. The governing body is also involved in discussing these targets.
158. Most teachers make good progress in meeting their agreed individual targets. The accuracy of the targets set by teachers for their pupils has improved and is

increasingly accurate. Most pupils now achieve the targets expected of them at the end of key stages 1 and 2.

159. The school has suitable arrangements for monitoring the performance of individuals. Performance management procedures effectively identify staff development needs. Training activities are planned in accordance with both the needs of the individual and the school as a whole. Subject leaders and staff with management responsibilities have attended courses on managing curricular areas and the deputy headteacher has attended relevant management courses.
160. The headteacher and governing body place a great deal of emphasis on the professional development of all members of staff. Staff development has had a very positive impact on improving standards and quality in some areas, such as the provision for pupils with SEN. Increased expertise gained as a result of professional development has also enabled members of staff to be promoted to other schools. However, in-service training has been less successful in improving the quality of planning, teaching and standards achieved in those lessons where there are shortcomings in important areas.
161. Members of staff are well deployed, taking into account their strengths and interests. Newly qualified teachers are well supported by the headteacher, as mentor, and by other members of staff with management responsibilities, such as the SENCo.
162. The recently appointed governing body is very enthusiastic and supportive of the school. Many governors are regular visitors and have a real interest in the life of the school. They are well informed through regular reports from the headteacher.
163. There are currently three link subject governors who take a particular interest in specific areas of the curriculum. Plans for their greater involvement are proceeding well. There are appropriate finance, curriculum, buildings and health and safety sub-committees, which monitor these aspects of the school's provision.
164. The governing body complies with statutory requirements.
165. The school has identified the need to develop further the role of the governing body to enable link governors to gain greater knowledge and understanding of provision and standards in its SDP

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

166. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
167. The school's self-evaluation process involves all members of staff, governors, parents and pupils. Information about the school's performance is gained from staff meetings, self-evaluation documents, parent consultations, school and Local Education Authority data, feedback from the School Council and information from subject leaders and co-ordinators. The process is successful in identifying most of the strengths and areas for development for the school.
168. The headteacher is very well informed about the performance of individual members of staff through regular visits to classrooms. Other managers, such as the SENCo, are also very well informed about performance in their areas of responsibility.
169. Subject leaders are generally aware of strengths and weaknesses in the subjects for which they are responsible. They hold discussions with colleagues, monitor teachers' planning and pupils' work and take account of information from assessment. There is not, however, a regular programme for them to observe lessons taught by their colleagues in the subjects for which they are responsible. They therefore lack first-hand evidence of the quality of teaching and learning in those subjects. In this respect, the role of subject link governors is also at an early stage of development.
170. Parents' views have been sought regarding a number of issues such as uniform, homework and the healthy eating initiative. Members of the School Council feel that the school takes into account their views on a variety of issues. For example, members of the Council were involved in interviewing candidates for a vacant teaching post. The school plans, however, to draw more comprehensively on the views of parents and pupils to inform its self-evaluation process. This has been identified as a target in the school's current SDP.
171. Friends of the school and members of the wider community also spontaneously offer their opinions of the school, giving a helpful broader perspective on aspects of its work.
172. Most leaders and managers understand and are involved in the school's self-evaluation process and play a full part in implementing strategies for improvement.
173. The school uses the information from self-evaluation to set clear priorities for action in its SDP, which is a useful working document that steers school improvement. The governing body questions the headteacher about progress towards targets in the SDP during its meeting in the autumn term. Governors and staff then decide what needs to be carried forward to the current academic

year. Subject leaders report to the governing body on progress in raising standards in the subjects for which they are responsible, when they are a priority in the SDP. These procedures are generally successful in identifying areas for development.

174. The headteacher and governing body allocate adequate resources to ensure that objectives in the SDP are met within defined timescales.
175. Following their identification of aspects in need of improvement, subject leaders attend courses and conduct staff meetings to inform and develop the confidence and expertise of their colleagues. This process has led to measurable improvements in the standard of problem solving in mathematics, the range of writing in English, in teachers' use of interactive whiteboards and in the quality of assessment.
176. Measurable improvements in pupils' standards of achievement are also evident in assessment information gained from standardised tests and assessments such as pupils' reading ages in relation to their chronological ages and the progress of pupils on the SEN register.
177. The school's self-evaluation report is thorough, clear and concise. Although there are a couple of omissions in its evaluation of the school's performance in relation to key question 4, it nevertheless gives a comprehensive picture of the school's work, supported by evidence. It clearly identifies strengths and areas for improvement. The school's judgements on its performance are accurate in relation to all seven key questions and match those of the inspection team.
178. The school has made good progress overall since the last inspection. It has effectively tackled all the key issues that were identified in the last inspection report. It has maintained good standards in English and mathematics. It has raised standards in design and technology, information technology and religious education, which were unsatisfactory then. The one area of the curriculum where standards have not been maintained is art, but good features still outweigh shortcomings in this subject.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

179. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
180. There are enough appropriately qualified teachers to teach all aspects of the curriculum. Responsibilities for subjects and aspects are shared equitably between members of staff, including the headteacher, who does not have a class responsibility. The headteacher mentors the two newly-qualified teachers, and they are well supported in their first year of teaching. Arrangements for teachers to have time for planning, preparation and assessment are well organised.
181. The good impact of training is visible in aspects of learning and teaching, for example, the effective use made of ICT by the teachers themselves. The commitment to professional development is closely linked to priorities indicated in the SDP.
182. Effective use is made of peripatetic recorder and guitar teachers to develop pupils' music skills. Support in literacy skills by a member of the 'Catch Up' team is of a high standard, as is the level of support by the nursery nurse and student in the under-fives class. The teaching of SEN pupils is very effective, and support staff co-operate exceedingly well with teachers to plan, teach and record pupils' progress. They are very knowledgeable about the needs of the pupils in their care, and succeed very well in promoting their progress.
183. Administrative and canteen staff have a positive influence on the day-to-day running of the school. All teaching, non-teaching and support staff have job descriptions that clearly define their roles and responsibilities.
184. The headteacher and governing body initiated a rolling programme of repairs some years ago so that the overall quality of the accommodation is now good and adequate for the number of pupils on roll. However, the roof of the junior building is in urgent need of repair. The school and the Local Education Authority are working together to resolve the problem in the near future, so that all pupils can benefit from working in a safe and comfortable learning environment.
185. Standards of cleanliness in all rooms and the school grounds are good. The division between the two main buildings is inconvenient in inclement weather, but effective use is made of the current accommodation. Both halls are used appropriately for assemblies, for physical education, to serve lunch and for extra-curricular activities.
186. The school field is used as an effective resource for learning about the environment, and the spacious playground areas are marked for games. However, the upper playground is on a steep slope, which has a negative impact on ball games.

187. The school has enough resources for every age group and subject. The range of fiction to cater for boys' interests has recently been extended. Purchases are made in line with the school's priorities. The quality of resources is good, and constant and effective use is made of them in lessons. However, little use is made of the library, which is not child-friendly and does not support pupils in developing and using their independent research skills. Materials for developing creative and practical skills are adequate. Displays in classrooms and corridors are used effectively in some classes as a teaching resource.
188. All members of staff have attended in-service training courses to develop their skills. The school's commitment to investing resources to develop staff expertise has been very effective in raising the quality of leadership, teaching and support in important areas such as SEN provision. Opportunities for professional development have been less successful, however, in raising the quality of planning and teaching consistently throughout the school.
189. The school has set procedures and systems to ensure that it is staffed and resourced efficiently. Budgetary control is stringent, and the governing body monitors all expenditure effectively to ensure cost-effectiveness. The contingency fund has been managed wisely in order to plan for variations in pupil numbers. The SDP is used as a tool for budgetary planning for the future, with the deployment of staff and their professional development clearly linked to whole-school priorities.
190. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects

English

Key Stage 1: Grade 2 Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 2: Grade 2 Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

191. Pupils in key stage 1 display good listening and speaking skills. Pupils of all abilities enjoy listening to stories read aloud to them and respond appropriately to questions about the text. They speak clearly and confidently, use a good range of vocabulary and articulate their ideas well.
192. Pupils make good progress in reading. They enjoy reading familiar stories aloud in unison. They are developing a good knowledge of letter-sound correspondences. Year 1 pupils know a number of authors and confidently read simple repetitive stories. More able pupils in year 2 read quite challenging texts and have good recall of some of the details in them. Less able readers talk about the illustrations and use their knowledge of initial letter sounds to help them read.
193. In key stage 1, pupils write for a good range of purposes and in a variety of styles. They write poems, recipes and letters and show an increasing ability to structure a story. They write independently with the support of a writing frame and often find unusual words to make their writing livelier.
194. They make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of grammar and punctuation. Older pupils in year 2, for example, recognise nouns, verbs and adjectives and apply their knowledge well in their writing. Most pupils correctly use punctuation marks such as full stops, capital letters and speech marks.
195. Pupils also make good progress in their spelling and handwriting through regular practice of these skills. They effectively use their knowledge of letters and sounds in their spelling and by year 2 many pupils' handwriting is joined, neat and legible.
196. Pupils in key stage 2 continue to make good progress in their listening and speaking skills. In the year 5/6 class, pupils listen respectfully to their teacher and to one another and display maturity in small group discussions. They confidently speak at some length and thoughtfully share their ideas.
197. In key stage 2, pupils effectively consolidate their reading skills. They become increasingly familiar with a range of authors and their works. In the year 4/5 class they can identify phrases in a story that indicate how a character is feeling. They are developing their skills in using a contents page and an index to locate information.

198. By year 6, most pupils read fluently, with expression, and use a good range of strategies to work out unfamiliar words. They use their reading skills well to conduct independent research using books and ICT. They understand the layout of newspapers and the importance of headlines and sub-headings in attracting and guiding the reader's attention.
199. Pupils in key stage 2 continue to write for a good range of purposes in an increasingly wide variety of styles. They produce play scripts, character sketches and newspaper reports, as well as more complex stories and poems. Throughout the key stage, pupils of higher ability write well-structured pieces with good openings, some lively ideas and good use of descriptive language.
200. By year 6, pupils use what they have learned from their reading very well in writing their own newspapers. For example, they write catchy headlines such as "Tiny Terror makes an Error" in a report about a dog causing a rift between neighbours. They competently use ICT in the production of the newspapers.
201. Pupils' knowledge of grammar and spelling is generally good. Pupils in mid key stage 2 use the 'look, say, cover, write, check' strategy successfully to help them remember the spellings of words. By year 6, pupils have a high level of understanding of prefixes and suffixes and their meaning. Their use of punctuation is generally good and their handwriting neat, joined and the work is well presented.

Shortcomings

202. Pupils do not use ICT enough both for research, and to draft and present their writing.
203. In their work on poetry, many pupils in mid key stage 2 are confused about the use of similes. The flow and meaning of poems written by some pupils in upper key stage 2 are disrupted by their inappropriate use of rhyme.

Mathematics

Key Stage 1: Grade 2 Good features and no important shortcomings
Key Stage 2: Grade 2 Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

204. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school. They undertake tasks in addition, subtraction, division and multiplication confidently and accurately.
205. By the end of key stage 1, pupils display good mental arithmetic skills. They count quickly and accurately and explain their strategies effectively. They confidently use mathematical apparatus such as number lines and number squares when exploring patterns in addition and subtraction.

206. Year 1 pupils have a basic understanding of money, and can identify coins. In year 2, pupils add and subtract coins correctly.
207. Year 1 pupils have a good understanding of the characteristics of two-dimensional shapes. They use non-standard units to measure correctly, and estimate appropriately when undertaking practical work.
208. By Year 2, pupils have a good understanding of time, and are able to describe the main characteristics of three-dimensional shapes in detail. They use standard measures of mass and volume confidently.
209. In year 2, pupils have a clear understanding of odd and even numbers and demonstrate good knowledge of number bonds. They count backwards and forwards in ones and tens and recognise patterns in sequences of numbers. They understand that subtraction is the opposite of addition.
210. Pupils in key stage 1 use a few simple diagrams and graphs effectively to present data.
211. Pupils in key stage 2 have a sound understanding of place value. Year 3 and year 4 pupils display good knowledge of tables, and investigate number patterns intelligently. Their knowledge of simple fractions is good and they double and halve numbers easily.
212. Year 5 and year 6 pupils recall addition and subtraction facts with ease, and use a range of strategies in their mental work. Their understanding of fractions, decimals and percentages is good, and they deal confidently with positive and negative numbers. They approach problem-solving enthusiastically, and make appropriate use of the four rules to solve problems. They use the calculator purposefully.
213. In key stage 2, pupils' understanding of shape and space is good, and they have a wide knowledge of symmetry. Older pupils have a good understanding of angles and measure the area and perimeter of shapes accurately.
214. Year 5 and year 6 pupils plot co-ordinates correctly in four quadrants, and use analogue and digital clocks confidently. They use, read and write standard metric units of length, mass and capacity correctly.

Shortcomings

215. Pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 collect, record and interpret data at too simple a level, using a very narrow range of graphs and tables.

Design and Technology

Key Stage 1: Grade 3 Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key Stage 2: Grade 3 Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features

216. In key stage 1, pupils explore, and understand simple levers and sliding mechanisms. They know how to use masking tape to join components to make a hinge and apply their understanding well in making hinged doors for model houses.
217. Pupils visit the local playground and investigate how different pieces of play equipment work. They record their ideas effectively in pictures and photographs. They use construction kits to find out which shapes are the strongest for bearing loads, before making swings from reinforced straws, string and plasticene. They have a good understanding of how these mechanisms work.
218. In the year 2/3 class, pupils look at different packages and consider why we need them. They suggest ideas, plan how to make their own packages and make designs and products to a good standard. They evaluate them and explain clearly how they could improve them.
219. Pupils in the year 4/5 class, discuss with understanding how to use a lever mechanism to make moving parts for model animals. They make money holders after looking at a number of different purses and wallets and can explain the problems they encountered and suggest ways of overcoming them.
220. At the end of key stage 2, pupils gather information about shelters from a variety of sources. They generate ideas for making shelters such as tents, bus stops and houses. Their designs show good attention to detail and indicate proposed measurements. They carefully consider the purpose of the shelter before making it. After testing a variety of shapes, they realise the importance of using structures and materials that are fit for the purpose. Their shelters are similar to their design intentions.

Shortcomings

221. In both key stages, pupils' designs and products lack originality.
222. The quality of pupils' designs and products is inconsistent in key stage 2. Pupils sometimes do not complete their designs, they use a very narrow range of materials and the evaluations of their products are often identical.
223. Pupils do not use ICT sufficiently to support their design work.

Information Technology

Key Stage 1: Grade 3 Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key Stage 2: Grade 3 Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features

- 224. In key stage 1, the majority of pupils work confidently on computers and name different parts of the equipment correctly. They effectively use some basic keyboard functions such as letters, numbers and space bar.
- 225. Key stage 1 pupils write words and sentences and can change style and size of font easily. They use computer artwork successfully to produce clear shapes and to select colours from the palette.
- 226. Also in key stage 1, pupils use computer games effectively to improve their language and numeracy skills. They make some use of interactive whiteboards to do simple addition and subtraction sums.
- 227. In years 3 and 4, pupils make effective use of the digital camera and combine text and pictures successfully, for example, when creating greetings cards. They are able to save work on the computer.
- 228. Pupils in years 5 and 6 have a good knowledge of spreadsheets and are confident when using some of the functions, such as SUM. They demonstrate appropriate word-processing skills in producing a newspaper and can import pictures from the Internet in the process.

Shortcomings

- 229. Pupils in both key stages have a narrow range of IT skills and do not always make sufficient progress in developing them, particularly in key stage 2.
- 230. In key stage 1 and key stage 2, pupils do not have adequate skills in controlling a programmable robot or LOGO program.
- 231. Pupils in both key stages make insufficient use of graphs to present data.

Art

Key Stage 1: Grade 3 Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key Stage 2: Grade 3 Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features

232. Pupils in the year 1/2 class use appropriate vocabulary to describe the textures and surfaces of fruit and vegetables. They discuss different viewpoints and express their opinions confidently about which ones they think are more interesting than others. They use their observational skills well in painting self-portraits after studying Da Vinci's Mona Lisa.
233. In the year 2/3 class, pupils further develop their observational skills and their understanding and use of the visual language of art. They recognise and describe differences and similarities in rubbings of a variety of patterned objects. They show good control of a range of tools, media and techniques and produce good prints of regular and irregular repeating patterns.
234. Year 3 pupils emulate the matchstick figures of L. S. Lowry and some of them talk perceptively about their own work in comparison with his. Year 2 and year 3 pupils also engage in some good three-dimensional work, making Celtic brooches, neckbands and torques from a variety of materials.
235. Pupils in the year 4/5 class enjoy opportunities to manipulate clay and make a range of coil and pinch pots which they decorate using a variety of methods.
236. In the year 5/6 class, pupils respond practically and imaginatively to scenes from the Bayeux tapestry. They select images that they find particularly interesting and record their ideas using a selection of oil and water pastels. They know how to achieve a range of effects and evaluate their work well. Some pupils produce detailed, mature drawings of good quality.
237. Following their investigation of the local viaduct to celebrate its re-opening, a group of pupils in upper key stage 2 collaborated very successfully to make an impressive large-scale painting of it which won a prize in a competition. They very effectively applied techniques they had learned, using a wide variety of colours and tones in their painting of trees as part of the composition.

Shortcomings

238. In both key stages, many pupils' knowledge and understanding of famous artists and craft workers is limited.
239. Pupils in key stage 2 do not make consistent progress in developing their drawing and painting skills.
240. Pupils do not consistently and regularly, throughout the school, work with a sufficiently wide range of materials using a variety of scales and in two and three dimensions.

Religious Education

Key Stage 1: Grade 3 - Good features outweigh shortcomings

Key Stage 2: Grade 3 - Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features

241. Pupils in both key stages appreciate the Bible as a Christian's holy book. Key stage 1 pupils know some stories about Jesus and recall these effectively. Key stage 2 pupils know a few Old Testament stories, for example, the story of Noah, and Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt, and can retell these briefly. They explain the relevance of Bible stories to everyday life.
242. Pupils throughout the school are familiar with a Christian place of worship through their visits to the local chapel. They can describe the basic elements of Christian ceremonies and festivals. For example, year 1 pupils are familiar with weddings and year 4 pupils can describe a baptism service. Year 6 pupils can retell the story of Palm Sunday and explain the significance of bread and wine to Christians.
243. Pupils throughout the school understand the significance of prayer, and pupils in years 2 and 3 have written sincere prayers to be used in collective worship.
244. Pupils in both key stages have a good understanding of the need to conserve resources and protect our world.
245. Pupils across the school are aware of a few of the religious figures of Wales, such as Mary Jones and William Morgan and some religious leaders such as the former Pope.
246. In both key stages, pupils have a good understanding of principles such as friendship, sharing and care for others. They discuss these thoughtfully during 'Circle Time'. Pupils at the upper end of the school express their views about the Holocaust, and prejudices in general, in a mature and sensitive way.
247. Pupils in both key stages have some awareness of religions other than Christianity. Key stage 1 pupils are acquainted with some elements of Judaism. Year 2 and 3 pupils can retell stories about Hindu gods and goddesses. At the end of key stage 2, pupils have some knowledge of Islam and know the basic elements of what is important to followers of Allah.

Shortcomings

248. Pupils' knowledge about the Bible and Bible stories is limited, and they cannot explain the differences between the Old and New Testaments.
249. Pupils' knowledge of religions other than Christianity is superficial. Key stage 2 pupils do not compare other religions with Christianity in sufficient depth.

School's response to the inspection

The Governing Body and staff looked upon this inspection as a positive and informative experience from which the school could continue to move forward. We were pleased that the inspection team's findings accurately mirrored the judgements of the school's self-evaluation report on its performance in relation to the seven key questions. The comments throughout about our pupils' behaviour and how they relate to peers and adults, especially the sensitivity and respect shown to those younger and with special needs as outstanding, were welcomed by all. The recognition that the school has made good progress overall since the last inspection, effectively tackling all key issues identified within it, was also very pleasing to see. We feel that the opening statement describing our school as very caring with many good features reflects the dedication of staff throughout the school, especially the effective partnership identified between teaching and support staff as very successfully promoting pupils' progress. It is because of this that our pupils with special educational needs make good, sometimes outstanding progress in achieving targets set.

As well as the many positive features identified within the report, it also makes clear those elements on which we must focus in order to meet the high expectations we have set ourselves within the school's policy for teaching and learning. Strategies are in place and being implemented to address the need to improve the quality of teaching and standards where shortcomings in important areas have been identified. An action plan will be put in place to address all recommendations within the report. Linking closely with the key recommendations, the current School Development Plan includes the further development of our leaders and managers in monitoring, evaluating and improving standards in their areas of responsibility. This, alongside the enhanced role of our curriculum-linked governors, will enable all to monitor closely the progress made on this target throughout the year ahead.

The staff and Governing Body will address all recommendations before the end of the school year. Continually raising our pupils' standards of achievement through effective teaching and learning experiences will continue to be a priority. A structured programme will be provided in order for staff to share and spread good practice both within and from outside our school. A copy of the school's Action Plan in response to the inspection report's recommendations will be sent to all parents. The Governors Annual Report to Parents will also report in detail on the progress we are making on the report's recommendations.

Appendix A

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Maesycwmmmer Primary School
School type	Community
Age-range of pupils	3 to 11
Address of school	Tabor Road Maesycwmmmer Hengoed Mid Glamorgan
Postcode	CF82 7PU
Telephone number	01443 812148

Headteacher	Mr C R Jones
Date of appointment	5 January 1998
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Mr R Woodyatt
Registered inspector	Ms S James
Dates of inspection	16 to 18 January 2006

Appendix B

School data and indicators

Number of pupils in each year group									
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	12	20	16	21	15	16	18	21	139

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	6	2	6.5

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	25:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	12:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	N/A*
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	25
Teacher (fte): class ratio	1:1

*Not applicable

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection			
Term	N	R	Rest of School
Spring 2005	88%	94%	93%
Summer 2005	86%	89%	93%
Autumn 2005	88%	95%	95%

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	16%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	1

Appendix C

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of Key Stage 1:

National Curriculum Assessment KS1 Results 2005			Number of pupils in Y2:		14		
Percentage of pupils at each level							
			D	W	1	2	3
English:	Teacher Assessment	School	7	7	7	33	50
		National	0	4	13	63	20
En: reading	Teacher Assessment	School	7	7	7	33	46
		National	0	3	11	63	23
En: writing	Teacher Assessment	School	7	7	13	33	40
		National	0	5	15	69	11
En: speaking and listening	Teacher Assessment	School	7	7	0	40	46
		National	0	4	14	55	27
Mathematics	Teacher Assessment	School	7	7	7	33	50
		National	0	2	11	63	24
Science	Teacher Assessment	School	7	7	0	46	40
		National	0	2	10	65	23

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in English, mathematics and science according to teacher assessment in 2005			
In the school	79	In Wales	81

- D Pupils who have been disapplied from the statutory arrangements
 W Pupils who are working towards level 1

National Curriculum Assessment Results
End of Key Stage 2:

National Curriculum Assessment KS2 Results 2005			Number of pupils in Y6		14						
Percentage of pupils at each level											
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	64	22
		National	0	0	0	0	4	4	13	42	37
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	57	29
		National	0	0	0	0	2	3	16	43	36
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	64	29
		National	0	0	0	0	1	1	8	51	39

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science and English according to teacher assessment in 2005		
In the school	86	In Wales
		72

- D Pupils who are exempted under statutory arrangements from part or all of the National Curriculum
- A Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence
- F Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence
- W Pupils who are working towards level 1

Appendix D

Evidence base of the inspection

Three inspectors spent a total of seven inspector days in the school and met as a team before the inspection. A peer assessor also spent three days in the school. The nominee from the school was the headteacher.

These inspectors visited:

- twenty-six lessons or part lessons;
- all classes;
- acts of collective worship and
- a range of extra-curricular activities.

Members of the inspection team had meetings with:

- staff, governors and parents before the inspection began;
- senior managers, teachers, support and administrative staff and groups of pupils during the inspection.

The team also considered:

- the school's self-evaluation report;
- thirty-four responses to a parents' questionnaire;
- comprehensive documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection and
- a wide range of pupils' past and current work.

The inspection team held post-inspection meetings with the staff and governors.

Appendix E

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Stephanie James Registered Inspector	Context Summary Recommendations Key Questions 1, 4, 5 and 6 English Design and Technology Art Appendices
Zohrah Evans Team Inspector	Key Questions 2, 3 and 7 1.3 Mathematics Information Technology Religious Education
Caterina Lewis Lay Inspector	Contributions to key questions 1.11, 1.12; 3.8, 3.10, 3.12-3.14; 5.7-5.9
Louise James Peer Assessor	Contributions to the evidence for all key questions and subjects inspected.
Clive Jones, headteacher Nominee from the school	

The contractor was: Atlantes Educational Services
Technology House
Lissadel Street
Salford
M6 6AP

Acknowledgement

The inspection team would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff and pupils for their co-operation and courtesy throughout the inspection.