

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

MARY IMMACULATE HIGH SCHOOL

Wenvoe

Cardiff

School Number: 681-4607

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by

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Registered Inspector

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CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES

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

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

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

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

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

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1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

Mary Immaculate High School is an 11-16, Roman Catholic voluntary-aided school, in the city of Cardiff. There are 710 pupils on roll, compared to 642 at the time of the last inspection. About 85 per cent of pupils are Roman Catholic and over 90 per cent of pupils come from the four partner primary schools.

Pupils come from the full range of social backgrounds, from the south-western suburbs of the city. There are a significant number of pupils who come from economically disadvantaged areas, and the majority of pupils come from areas which are neither particularly prosperous nor particularly disadvantaged. A small minority come from relatively prosperous districts. Twenty-six per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, a figure above the national average of 20 per cent.

About 95 per cent of pupils are white and five per cent from other ethnic heritages. Nearly all have English as their first language; none speak Welsh fluently. Twenty-five pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN) and a further 135 have been identified as needing some support. These figures, combined, form an above average proportion in the school as a whole. Pupils represent the full range of ability. There is a sizeable minority of able pupils, though in the school as a whole there is a majority of pupils of average to lower ability. The ability of pupils currently at Key Stage (KS) 4 is higher than in previous years.

Since the last inspection in September 1996, the school has moved onto one site, with largely new buildings. The deputy headteacher was in post at that time, but the headteacher and assistant headteachers have all been appointed since, though two assistant headteachers were already teaching at the school.

The school has a clear mission statement of "achieving the best for all in a Catholic learning community," and detailed aims and objectives, to translate this into action.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

Mary Immaculate High School has good features, including standards in some subjects, opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and a hard-working staff. It provides in general an acceptable standard of education. The school also has serious weaknesses. These relate mainly to poor behaviour and attendance, by which pupils' progress is adversely affected. There has been a high turn-over of staff in recent years and considerable staffing difficulties, including long-term absence and temporary staffing. These have also adversely affected pupils' progress, and particularly in the core subjects.

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Good features

- Standards in a number of option groups at KS4 are good.
- Standards in history and physical education at both key stages are good.
- Pupils' key skills of reading, writing and numeracy are satisfactory.
- Able pupils do well in a number of foundation subjects, particularly at KS4.

- Examination results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in history, geography, modern foreign languages and design and technology have added a measure of progress to pupils' prior attainment.
- Results in the National Curriculum (NC) tests at the end of KS3 have risen steadily since the last inspection.

Shortcomings

- In classes observed, standards were at least satisfactory in 80 per cent of classes and good or very good in 35 per cent. These figures are well below the targets of the Welsh Assembly government of 95 per cent and 50 per cent respectively.
- Standards in the core subject of science, and in Welsh, compulsory at both key stages, are unsatisfactory, whilst standards in the other two core subjects, English and mathematics, are satisfactory as opposed to good at both key stages.
- Standards in information technology at KS3 and in information and communications technology (ICT) across the curriculum are unsatisfactory.
- Pupils, particularly those of average and lower ability, make limited progress in a significant number of classes because of disruption and because of their poor attendance record. Attendance last year averaged at 84 per cent, with eight per cent unauthorised absence.
- Standards in the key skills of listening and speaking are unsatisfactory.
- General Certificate of Secondary Education results have declined in the last few years. Whilst 25 per cent of pupils gained at least five grades A*-C, only 13 per cent of pupils gained grades A*-C in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science in 2002. Eighteen per cent of pupils left school without any GCSE grade.

Standards in Subjects

Subject	KS3	KS4
English	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Mathematics	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Science	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Welsh	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Design and Technology	Satisfactory	Good
Information Technology	Unsatisfactory	Good
History	Good	Good
Geography	Satisfactory	Good
Modern Foreign Languages	Satisfactory	Good
Art	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Music	Satisfactory	Good
Physical Education	Good	Good
Personal & Social Ed (PSE)	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Business Studies	-	Good
Catering	-	Good
Child Development	-	Good
Health & Social Care	-	Good

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Good features

- Teachers are very supportive of their pupils and give generously of their time to help them, for example in giving extra lessons to Year (Y) 11 pupils.
- The alternative curriculum, at KS4 for those who are disaffected, is proving very successful and pupils recently won a national award.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities in sport and music in particular, and visits to places of interest in the United Kingdom and abroad.
- Links with the community and industry extend the range of opportunities available to pupils.
- Transition arrangements from partner primary schools are good, as are links to the sixth form college.
- The new buildings provide good accommodation and a very attractive learning environment.
- The quality of education which pupils receive and to which they respond is particularly good in design and technology, physical education and vocational education.

Shortcomings

- Teaching was at least satisfactory in 85 per cent of classes observed and good or very good in 41 per cent. These figures are well below the national targets for this year of 95 per cent and 50 per cent respectively. The most significant issue is the difficulty in controlling pupils' behaviour.
- A significant number of pupils do not follow up the work done in class by completing homework.
- Pupils' progress across the curriculum is not yet adequately monitored.
- The library is not yet operational and there are limited opportunities for research.
- Pupils do not have easy access to ICT resources to extend their learning. There are fewer information technology resources than in most schools, and a significant proportion are more than five years old. Technical difficulties have hindered the development of ICT.
- There are relatively few courses leading to vocational qualifications, and no curricular provision for drama or media studies, subjects in which pupils on the alternative curriculum have been very successful.

PUPILS' SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Good features

- Assemblies are dignified occasions, where pupils are given opportunities to reflect.
- Pastoral staff spend much time supporting individuals.
- There is also a part-time counsellor on site to extend this support.
- There are good links between parishes and school, to support pupils' development.
- The school council involves pupils in the decision-making process.
- Large sums are raised for charities.

Shortcomings

- A substantial minority of pupils show a lack of respect for other pupils, for staff and for the environment. This detracts from the overall atmosphere in which pupils acquire values.
- Tutorial time at the start of each day and in PSE lessons is not used effectively for pastoral care in many groups. Standards in PSE classes observed at KS3 were unsatisfactory overall.
- Pupils' lateness to school in the mornings does not prepare them well for the world of work. They also thereby fail to participate in the corporate worship of the school and to receive pastoral support in tutorial time.
- Spirituality and the Welsh dimension are not promoted sufficiently across the curriculum.
- As there was not an act of worship in all tutor groups, statutory requirements are not met with regard to the daily act of collective worship.

LEADERSHIP AND EFFICIENCY

Good features

- There has been a growing emphasis on teaching and learning styles, on the development of middle management and on promoting a culture of self-evaluation and planning. There has been progress in these areas.
- The roles of the members of the headship and leadership teams have been clearly defined.
- The governing body is very committed to the school.
- Some departments are well managed.
- There has been meticulous and successful planning for the new buildings and careful financial planning to furnish it and provide resources.
- Staff are well qualified and deployed effectively to teach their subject specialism.

Shortcomings

- Senior management is not currently effective in prioritising and resolving the school's major problems such as behaviour.
- There is not a sufficiently strong sense of community, common purpose and culture of learning with which pupils and parents can identify.
- Staff do not work collaboratively to implement whole-school policies consistently.
- Monitoring is not effective in eliminating inconsistencies within and between departments and good practice is not sufficiently highlighted and shared.
- There has been insufficient progress on the key issues of attendance, ICT and standards from the last inspection.
- The staffing costs, to cover absence and long-term illness, have been high and have used up much of the projected surplus from the budget this year.
- Statutory requirements are not met with regard to the information supplied in the school prospectus and the governors' report to parents. A few health and safety issues were reported to the school.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards Achieved in Subjects and Areas of Learning

At KS3, standards are good in history and physical education. They are satisfactory in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages, art and music. Standards are unsatisfactory in science, Welsh, information technology and PSE.

In the NC tests at the end of KS3, results have improved steadily and peaked in 2001. Forty per cent of pupils gained level five or above in English, mathematics and science combined, compared to 50 per cent nationally. In comparison with schools of a similar intake, these results were about average. Results in mathematics were above average and results in English and science below average for schools of a similar intake.

At KS4, standards are good in a number of option groups – design and technology, information technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages, music, catering, child development, business studies and health and social care. They are also good in both core and GCSE physical education. Standards are satisfactory in art and personal and social education. In the core subjects, they are satisfactory in English and mathematics, but unsatisfactory in science. In Welsh, standards are also unsatisfactory at both key stages.

Results in GCSE examinations have fallen in the last few years from a peak in 1999. Twenty-five per cent of pupils gained at least five grades A*-C in 2002, compared to 46 per cent locally and 50 per cent nationally. At the full range of grades (A*-G) 65 per cent of pupils gained five subjects compared to 81 per cent locally and 85 per cent nationally. In comparison with schools of a similar intake, both these indicators placed the school in the lowest quartile, as did the indicator for the percentage of pupils gaining one GCSE grade. Pupils were more successful in their option subjects than in English, mathematics and science. Only 13 per cent of pupils gained a grade A*-C in all three of these subjects, a figure well below that nationally (34 per cent) and by comparison with schools of a similar intake. Results in mathematics were higher than in English and science. Eighteen per cent of pupils left school without any GCSE grades and 13 per cent without any qualifications at GCSE or entry level, below national comparators of eight and five respectively. In the option subjects there have been some good results, adding a measure of progress to pupils' prior attainment, notably in history, geography, modern foreign languages and design and technology.

In classes observed, standards were at least satisfactory in 80 per cent and good or very good in 35 per cent. These figures are well below the national targets of the Welsh Assembly government of 95 per cent and 50 per cent respectively. The overall percentages for classes observed mask a considerable difference in standards between the two key stages. At KS3, standards were good or very good in only 23 per cent of classes, compared to 51 per cent at KS4. The proportion of classes in which standards were unsatisfactory varied between 23 per cent at KS3 and 16 per cent at KS4.

In classes observed, there was little significant difference between the standards achieved by boys and by girls, except in writing, where girls do better. This is particularly evident in English, but also impacts on standards in a range of other subjects. In examination results last year, there was little difference between the performance of boys and girls at KS3. At GCSE, there was a marked difference in results in the core subjects, in the percentage obtaining grades A*-G across the curriculum and in the percentage leaving without grades at GCSE, with girls outperforming boys. At the higher grades (A*-C), there was little difference.

In terms of progress in relation to ability, the most able pupils, both boys and girls, make the most consistent progress. In science at both key stages and art at KS3 their progress is satisfactory. In other subjects it is good and very good in physical education. Pupils with SEN reach good standards in English and mathematics, design and technology and physical education. In other subjects there is only satisfactory progress or underachievement. Pupils of average to lower ability make least progress in relation to ability. They do well in design and technology, history and physical education at both key stages, in option groups at KS4 and in some classes at KS3. However, in a substantial proportion of classes there is underachievement through poor behaviour and attendance. Their achievement in the core subjects is particularly weak.

3.2 Standards Achieved in Key Skills across the Curriculum

Communication

Standards in speaking are unsatisfactory. Pupils, particularly at KS3, often shout out brief answers without sufficient thought and, sometimes, in inappropriate language. Extended answers are rarely insisted upon and pupils lack opportunities for formal speech in presentations to the class. Whilst they debate and solve problems in pairs and groups in some subjects, they are limited in English and mathematics in particular. At KS3, the best practice is seen in physical education, where pupils respond well to open-ended questions. Standards improve at KS4, especially in the option groups, and some pupils use specific terminology to analyse, justify their opinion and debate issues. However, a significant minority of pupils lack confidence and oral fluency.

Standards of listening are unsatisfactory. A substantial proportion of pupils do not listen to the teacher and much time is wasted having to wait for their attention. In some classes, in a range of subjects and in science in particular, listening is poor. Conversely, it is good in physical education, design and technology, information technology, and many option groups at KS4. In these classes, pupils also listen to the views of other pupils.

Standards of reading are satisfactory. Pupils with SEN are taught by specialists at KS3 and there is support from learning assistants in a range of other subjects. When pupils read aloud, standards are good, though little was heard during the inspection. Pupils are generally able to extract information from written resources without difficulty and, at KS4, there is evidence of wider reading for research, particularly in history, geography, business studies and art. However, there is an over-dependence on worksheets, as textbooks are not taken home, and too few opportunities generally for extended reading. The lack of an operational library also restricts the amount of reading for pleasure undertaken. Some opportunities are built into tutorial time but this time is not effectively used in many groups.

Standards of writing are satisfactory. In many classes, pupils concentrate and achieve more in their written work than in the other aspects of literacy. Standards of presentation and accuracy vary considerably but the more able achieve well, particularly girls. The major problem is the amount of work missed through pupils' absence and their failure to complete work they have missed. Thus there are gaps in the books of a significant minority of pupils. At best, there is extended writing of good quality by the more able, especially at KS4, seen particularly in design and technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages, textiles and business studies. The dependence on worksheets limits extended writing, at KS3 in particular, in a number of subjects.

Numeracy

Standards are satisfactory. Basic number work is at least satisfactory in mathematics and pupils can transfer these skills to complete calculations in related subjects. Pupils analyse

cash flow profit and loss competently in business studies. They carry out measurement accurately in design and technology and art. They use data, graphs and bar charts effectively to present their work in history and geography but graphical work is weak in science and in mathematics.

ICT across the curriculum

The use of ICT to enhance standards of achievement across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

At KS4 pupils use the Internet for research and communicating and handling information to a good standard in physical education, General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses and catering. In the core subjects standards are unsatisfactory in Welsh and science, and poor in mathematics in both key stages. In English, satisfactory standards are achieved at KS4 but they are unsatisfactory at KS3. In history and geography, physical education at KS3, and music at KS4 applications are satisfactory. In all other subjects, including the use of ICT to support the learning of pupils with SEN, standards are unsatisfactory.

Pupils have few opportunities to use computers at lunchtimes, other than for GCSE information technology, and they are rarely directed to do so as part of their class work. Planning for the use of ICT and teacher competence are satisfactory. There is an ICT development plan but the school has not yet developed a culture of using ICT to enhance learning across the curriculum. The unreliable and inadequate computer network undermines teacher confidence in the use of ICT.

Other key skills

Pupils work with imagination to solve problems, in collaborative activities in design and technology, physical education, history, geography and vocational education. There is good creative writing in modern foreign languages and in some classes in English. Pupils' creative work in textiles and ceramics is good. Composing in music has also improved since the last inspection. However, pupils do not show enough initiative in many classes in other subject areas, as whole-class, teacher-controlled activities dominate, largely because of constraints of pupils' behaviour.

Involving pupils in improving their own performance is not a strongly overt feature in classes. Self-assessment and formative assessment, whereby pupils know their strengths and weaknesses, are developing. However, as yet, self-assessment and target-setting are not embedded and pupils are not strongly motivated to surpass their targets. In business studies, pupils draft and re-draft their work to improve it, and pupils are keen to improve on previous performance in physical education. At KS4, standards are higher than at KS3, generally.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

The inspector appointed by the diocese will issue a separate report on the spiritual development of pupils. In lessons across the curriculum the promotion of pupils' spiritual development is inconsistent. Examples were seen of the development of pupils' values and beliefs in art and history. Elsewhere there is no evidence of subjects seeking to develop the spiritual dimension of life and encouraging pupils in a search for deeper meaning to their experiences. Assemblies are well planned and dignified but there is frequent interruption as a result of the late arrival of many pupils and they do not promote a sense of whole-school community. In tutor groups, acts of worship are sometimes brief, perfunctory and in some cases disrespectful. In some tutor groups there was no act of collective worship and therefore statutory requirements are not met.

The school has aims designed to promote moral development. Most teachers are caring and show respect for pupils but there is not a strong corporate approach to the implementation of policies. The ethos of the school does not reflect a clear sense of shared values. In lessons such as design and technology and physical education, pupils value each other's work and there is respect for the environment. Pupils also help develop concern for others through extensive charitable work undertaken by each year group. In addition, Christmas social events are organised for the elderly people of the community. However a substantial minority of pupils do not exemplify the values and attitudes embedded in the aims of the school. For these pupils behaviour and attitudes are often negative, and there is a lack of respect for other pupils, teachers and the environment. Such behaviour is not well managed currently. As a result, other pupils do not experience a clear framework of right and wrong and moral development is unsatisfactory overall.

Relationships between pupils and teachers and between each other are particularly good in design and technology and physical education. There are also some examples of good relationships in a range of other subjects. However, in some lessons and some tutor periods, relationships are less positive. Effective pair and group work is limited to subjects such as design and technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages and a minority of English lessons. In other subjects, there is avoidance of class organisation which involves social interaction in the interest of class control. Pupils' understanding of their place in society is developed through work experience and social issues are discussed in lessons of information technology, business studies, PSE and English. In physical education and through the school council there are opportunities for responsibility and pupils' response is positive. However, for a substantial minority of pupils, particularly those in KS3, there is unsatisfactory social development and interaction which is demonstrated by poor behaviour. These pupils adversely influence the quality of learning and the ethos of the school so that social development is unsatisfactory overall.

The cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. Pupils study the culture of other countries in modern foreign languages, English and geography. Pupils benefit from an extra-curricular programme, particularly strong in music and sport. The number of pupils having peripatetic teaching in music has more than quadrupled since the last inspection. There are theatre visits and visits to places of interest in the United Kingdom. In addition, there are opportunities for pupils to participate in visits to France and Spain. Pupils' appreciation of the heritage and culture of Wales is reflected in the work of a limited number of departments such as English, Welsh history, music and geography and is underdeveloped elsewhere in the curriculum. *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is neither co-ordinated throughout the curriculum nor in evidence in the environment of the school.

4.2 Behaviour and Attitudes

Pupils' behaviour is poor. There is a small minority of pupils who show extreme behaviour, in the form of defiance, insolence and inappropriate language to teachers. Their influence on other pupils is significant and has resulted in a substantial minority of pupils being unco-operative. The behaviour of the whole class is unsatisfactory or poor in a substantial minority of lessons. These are mainly in the middle to lower ability groups and classes of pupils with SEN, but not exclusively so. In the top ability band, the quality of behaviour is variable, depending on the subject and individual teacher. Unsatisfactory behaviour is evident, though disruption is more usually in the form of incessant or spasmodic chatter. Poor behaviour was seen in classes of all year groups, including Y7, though behaviour is generally better at KS4 than at KS3. Poor behaviour is transferred from one class to another throughout the day. In subjects, poor behaviour is most significant in all the core subjects.

Conversely, behaviour is exemplary in two areas of the school, namely design and technology and physical education. The separate premises have a different and strong ethos of high standards, mutual respect and rapid response to any shortcoming. In individual classes in a number of other subjects in the main teaching block there is also good behaviour, especially in the option groups at KS4. Behaviour in assembly is also good.

Pupils' behaviour outside lessons is poor. In corridors, at break and at lunchtime, there is some pushing, arguing and fighting, as well as inappropriate language. Litter is a problem on the newly carpeted corridors of the main teaching block.

The school has a behaviour policy with rewards and sanctions. At present, the policy is not effective, largely because current sanctions for incidents of extreme behaviour are not working, and teachers are not operating the policy consistently. The time spent by senior and middle management, and administrative staff, on following up incidents is not proving effective and the 'time out' area is too public an arena. The school has taken action in excluding pupils. A high level of exclusions was recorded last year: 183 exclusions, involving 130 pupils, six of them permanently.

As part of the school's reward scheme, pupils receive credits for good work, improved behaviour, attendance and good citizenship. These can be used towards purchases in the school shop. Both pupils and their parents value this scheme.

Twelve Y10 pupils are currently taking an alternative curriculum in which they spend part of the week out of school obtaining work experience. This scheme is showing some success in correcting the previous poor behaviour and attendance of these pupils.

The school's documentation details the measures necessary to prevent bullying or racial harassment. The results of a few bullying incidents were witnessed during the inspection, but pupils also spoke of their confidence that they could approach staff for help.

The school provides some opportunities for pupils to develop responsible attitudes in decision-making. Although there is no prefect system, pupils in each form select four of their number to represent them on a year council from which delegates are selected to form the school council. This group meets twice each term to discuss matters of interest, which include running the school shop once per week including the handling of money. A link is being developed with the Cardiff Young Persons' Forum. Senior staff attend these meetings which enables good communication of ideas back to the head teacher and early action if important issues are raised. As part of a buddy system, some Y11 pupils help those in Y7 and Y8 in the event of any bullying. This scheme provides appropriate responsibilities for the older pupils while the younger ones receive helpful support.

4.3 Attendance

Attendance levels are poor, having averaged 84.0 per cent during the past year, generally worsening as pupils progress through the school, and below the Cardiff average of 88 per cent. Unauthorised absence, at 8.1 per cent, was considerably higher than the Welsh average over that period. Average attendance during the current term to date has improved to the level of 85.6 per cent, though unauthorised absence remains very high. Poor attendance is adversely affecting the progress of a significant number of pupils.

These attendance figures are particularly disappointing since the school has introduced a range of good initiatives in an attempt to improve the situation. These include:

- the efficient use of a recently installed computerised monitoring system;

- the quick supply of the previous week's attendance statistics to senior staff with pastoral responsibilities;
- the appointment of a part-time attendance coordinator;
- the rapid follow-up by the school with parents in the event of their child's unexplained absence;
- valuable assistance from and good co-operation with the Education Welfare Service (EWS) based at the school for three days each week;
- operation of 'good attendance' incentive schemes with appropriate rewards for pupils and classes with good or improved attendance and;
- use of the Compact scheme to encourage older pupils to be responsible for their own regular attendance.

Punctuality at the start of the school day is also poor. The late arrival of buses is sometimes a contributory factor but there are also many pupils who arrive late, on foot. In the first seven weeks of the current term, 38 per cent of the pupils have been late on five or more occasions for the statutory registration sessions. On the last day of the inspection, a third of Y11 pupils were not accounted for during assembly time.

Registration procedures generally comply with the Welsh Assembly Government Circular 3/99, though the method of recording lateness is insufficiently rigorous because some form tutors wait for an unspecified time before completing the register in anticipation of the late arrival of pupils arriving by bus.

5 QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 85 per cent of classes observed and good or very good in 41 per cent, including six per cent in which it was very good. These figures are well below the targets of the Welsh Assembly government, of 95 and 50 per cent respectively. There is significant difference between the key stages. At KS3, teaching was unsatisfactory in 20 per cent of classes, satisfactory in 52 per cent and good or very good in 28 per cent. At KS4, the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching dropped to eight per cent and the proportion of good or very good teaching rose to 59 per cent.

The above figures are not a true reflection of the calibre of the teaching staff, which is generally good. Teachers are well qualified, hard-working and deployed effectively to teach their subject specialism with few exceptions. However, the poor attitudes and behaviour of a substantial minority of pupils negate many of their best efforts. Whilst the classroom management skills of a small minority of teachers are underdeveloped, and the staff as a whole do not implement the behaviour policy consistently, the degree of challenge to experienced and effective teachers is a cause for concern.

Lessons are well planned. The 'Learning Forum', involving a group of staff in the school as part of a county initiative, has focused attention on teaching and learning styles and disseminated useful strategies. There has been appropriate sharing of good practice and many lessons now convey objectives of the lesson to pupils and review progress at the end. However, planning for the promotion of key skills is unsatisfactory in many departments.

There is a generally good match of work to pupils' abilities, helped by the banding system, though the wide range of ability within that band is not always taken adequately into account.

There is some support for pupils with SEN from learning assistants attached to a number of departments, but not for all needs. Teachers make generally good use of the information on individual educational plans (IEPs) to provide appropriately. Extension work was seen in some classes to stretch the very able.

Many teachers use a wide range of techniques to convey knowledge, probe understanding and develop pupils' skills. These are often innovative in geography. The use of whiteboard technology is developing, audio-visual resources are used well and pupils are given opportunities to work in pairs and groups in a number of subjects as well as in whole-class situations and individually. The lack of ICT facilities in most departments and difficulty of access to central resource rooms are limiting, as is the current absence of a library and its potential as a resource centre. There are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to undertake research.

Teaching is consistently good in design and technology, physical education, information technology and vocational education at KS4, and pupils' response is good. In history, geography and modern foreign languages, teaching is also consistently good, though not always fully effective because of pupils' negative responses at times. In other subjects, particularly in the core subjects, there are inconsistencies within the department and some temporary staffing. The largest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was observed in science, Welsh, and personal and social education.

5.2 Assessment, Recording and Reporting

The quality of assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' achievements is satisfactory.

There is a whole-school policy which is based on sound principles. Most departments have policies that are in line with that of the school and there is good practice. However, this is not shared and there is insufficient monitoring of practice as well as inadequate whole-school guidance on day-to-day marking to ensure consistency of practice across the curriculum. Teachers usually mark homework, classwork and tests but there is inconsistency in the regularity and rigour of marking within and between departments particularly in science and English. In some subjects, such as art and business studies, grades and marks awarded by teachers are supplemented by appropriate use of praise but there is insufficient use across the curriculum of good oral feedback based on criteria for success, particularly in KS3. In English, core tasks in KS3 and coursework in KS4 are responded to with comments which identify strengths and weaknesses and targets are set for improvement. There is also target setting for individual pupils in history and physical education but there is inconsistent use of this practice across the curriculum and insufficient use of such diagnostic marking and target setting on a day-to-day basis, particularly in KS3. Pupils do not always know how improvements may be made. In departments such as English, there is monitoring of pupils' books in Y7 and Y8 but this is not seen in all departments and the process has not always eliminated inconsistencies in assessment practice. A variety of assessment methods is used, such as the end of unit tests, common tasks, annual examinations for all pupils and trial examinations. At KS3, pupils are aware of predicted levels, particularly in modern foreign languages, English, history and geography. Pupils are also aware of predicted GCSE grades. Assessments are usually accurate. Pupils' involvement in their own and peer assessment is insufficiently widespread but there is some good practice in history, music and information technology. There are plans to develop self and peer assessment in geography. Homework is usually regularly set, although it is not always recorded by pupils in their daily planners. Most teachers keep accurate records of their pupils' marks, grades, levels and test results but records are not always used to improve standards and inform lesson planning. Moderation of

pupils' work is a feature of a minority of departments, such as history, and GCSE coursework in English is moderated.

The school's database is comprehensive and there is good analysis of NC assessments, as well as middle years information service (MIDYIS) and year eleven information service (YELIS) data. Senior management and heads of departments use data for the setting of departmental targets and for predicting external test and examination results of individual pupils. There is less use of data by the senior management to ensure that the school's equal opportunities policy is implemented in regard to examination entry at KS4, especially in the core subjects. Heads of department identify underachievement and subject teachers subsequently offer support to individual pupils but whole-school data are inadequately used to track the progress of pupils across the curriculum. There are missed opportunities to involve tutors and heads of year in reviewing data, identifying underachievement and supporting pupils. There is also insufficient use of available data by subject teachers to evaluate teaching, to assist curricular planning and to ensure that teaching methods are appropriate for each pupil. There is good practice when SEN teachers support English teachers, reviewing data, sharing information and working as a team to adopt appropriate teaching strategies.

A full annual report is issued to parents. Arrangements to inform parents are satisfactory in that as well as reports, there are opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress in annual meetings with subject teachers. Parents of Y7 pupils meet with tutors to discuss cross-curricular progress. The quality of annual reports is satisfactory. There is a page allocated to each subject which includes comments by the teacher on progress within the subjects and targets set for improvement. However, these are general in nature and lack subject specific detail.

At KS4, all pupils are involved in preparing their Records of Achievement (RoA). The deputy headteacher co-ordinates the process and all pupils in Y11 receive a comprehensive RoA. The school has plans to introduce Pupil Progress Files in the next academic year. Pupils with SEN are assessed in line with the requirements of the Code of Practice. Satisfactory IEPs are in place and subject teachers have access to them although they are inconsistently used. Individual educational plans are regularly reviewed and there is an annual formal review involving parents.

5.3 Curriculum

At KS3 the curriculum is delivered effectively in terms of allocations of time for each subject, except in information technology, where it is inadequately taught across the curriculum in Y8 and Y9. Good features include the size of classes generally, the weekly provision for PSE and the organisation of pupils into appropriate groupings by ability for the most effective delivery of the curriculum. However, the number of pupils with SEN exceeds the smaller discrete groups and class size in the middle to lower ability band is high for the range of needs therein. The accelerated learning methodology introduced into the core subjects is proving effective. Pupils have a broad range of experiences. Statutory requirements are met.

At KS4, statutory requirements are also met. There is appropriate time allocated to each subject and class size is good, particularly in some option groups. There is an adequate range of GCSE courses to cater for the large majority of pupils, but no opportunities for drama, media studies or a second modern foreign language. Most pupils only take single science in Y10, with a small number opting for double science, which is not good provision. Time for Welsh for all is generous, but this does not result in comparable success at GCSE. The timetabling of single lessons for design and technology impacts adversely on what can be

achieved in practical work in sessions. There are a few vocational courses, but limited in relation to the needs of a significant minority of pupils. More are planned for the next academic year, in conjunction with two local schools.

The alternative curriculum, for a group of 12 pupils in Y10 who are disaffected, is proving very effective and has replaced the Youth Award scheme, currently in Y11. It is tailored to the needs of individual pupils and offers alternative qualifications such as National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), through off-site provision for three days, in conjunction with other schools and training providers. Pupils' attitudes, attendance and standards have improved, with close contact between home and school, though their experiences in school for two days are fragmentary.

Whole-school planning for the development of pupils' key skills is unsatisfactory. There are no policies for literacy, numeracy or ICT across the curriculum, though a few departments plan to promote these skills in their schemes of work.

Homework is set to extend the curriculum, but this is patchy. A substantial proportion of pupils have negative attitudes to homework, and do not complete it. Homework thus fails to impact significantly on pupils' standards of achievement at KS3 in particular, and mostly in middle to lower ability groups. In examination courses at KS4, there is a better response, though poor attendance and failure to meet deadlines of coursework adversely affect the standards achieved by a significant minority.

Arrangements for PSE and work-related education are effective. Personal and social education is delivered once a week, with some elements of careers guidance. Work experience extends the curriculum at KS4.

There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities in music and sport in particular, and homework clubs support pupils in Y11 in most GCSE courses. There are also good opportunities through Industry and Activity Days, Outward Bound courses and visits in the United Kingdom and abroad. All these provide well for pupils' development but there are few activities in the lunch hour or opportunities for pupils to access ICT facilities. The library/resource centre is not yet operational.

The school's curricular and extra-curricular provision is socially inclusive. No pupils with SEN are disappplied from the NC and they receive their full entitlement in terms of curricular time for each subject. Whilst pupils are divided into ability bands for the majority of subjects, tutor groups, PSE lessons and KS4 option groups contain pupils of all abilities. The overall atmosphere is socially inclusive.

5.4 Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare

The quality of support and guidance offered to the pupils is satisfactory overall.

On entry to the school, pupils are placed in tutor groups and stay with the same tutor from Y7 to Y11. Form tutors know their pupils well and have responsibility for their personal and academic development. On the four days when there is no year assembly, time is spent on a variety of tasks that include checking the pupil planner and uniform, developing listening skills, catching up on unfinished work and a silent reading session. The quality of this provision is variable, and in a significant number of classes pupils fail to settle to the task set. In some groups, behaviour is unacceptable, and fails to create the correct atmosphere for the day ahead. Although the school has introduced a review day for the parents of pupils in Y7, there is no structured review programme involving pupils. The lack of an on-going review programme, including interviews to monitor pupils' pastoral and academic development, limits the effectiveness of the form tutor. The significant amount of tutor time made available is not used for support and guidance, in a substantial number of groups.

Heads of year, under the leadership of a member of the headship team, oversee the pastoral provision throughout the school. Regular meetings between the assistant headteacher and heads of year, and with tutorial teams ensure that communication is effective. Heads of year provide good support for form tutors in the execution of their role and assist in preparing material for the PSE programme. A part-time counsellor also provides good support for pupils. However, opportunities for heads of year to review and monitor pupils' academic progress are limited. A substantial amount of time is spent in dealing with day-to-day disciplinary matters, manning the isolation area and being on-call to deal with emergencies. Although there have been discussions to develop a mentoring scheme, this has not been started.

The school operates a system of rewards, where pupils can gain credits for good work and full attendance and punctuality. The aggregated credits can lead to prizes in a fortnightly raffle or purchase essential equipment in the school stationery shop. All pupils in Y11 are presented with a RoA that summarises achievement over five school years in all activities. This is valued by pupils. The support and guidance given by a number of departments are good. However, in others they are only satisfactory because relationships are strained by the disruptive behaviour of a number of classes, especially in KS3.

Pupil planners are used by all pupils in Y7 to Y11. They provide guidance for pupils and the opportunity for dialogue between home and school; a small minority of pupils use them well. With the majority of pupils, the planner is not used effectively to organise learning; there is evidence of a significant amount of incomplete work in all years.

The PSE programme is organised by one of the assistant headteachers and contains most of the learning outcomes identified in the Welsh Assembly Government framework for PSE and work related education. However, there is duplication and a lack of continuity within the programme. The school has planned to carry out an audit in the near future. The programme of study covers elements including sex education and relationships, study skills, health education, drug and alcohol abuse, bullying and citizenship. Sex education and relationships are taught in religious education lessons; other elements are taught in a weekly time-tabled pastoral lesson. The effectiveness of careers education and guidance throughout the school is satisfactory. Aspects of careers education are taught as part of the PSE programme; however the recent withdrawal of the additional discrete lesson in careers in KS4 has weakened this valuable provision. The school receives good support from Careers Wales in preparing pupils for option choices in Y9 and work experience in Y11. All pupils in Y11 are interviewed by the school's careers adviser who also assists with work experience placements. All placements are checked for health and safety compliance by Careers Wales.

The governing body has approved an appropriate range of policies including, sex education, health and safety, anti-bullying, drugs education, equal opportunities and the protection of children. The school has clear guidelines regarding child protection which conform to the requirements of the Welsh Assembly Government. One of the assistant headteachers is the nominated person responsible for child protection. There is close liaison with specialist support and external agencies. A nurse is on site for one afternoon each week; the school has effective arrangements for dealing with medical needs.

Procedures for promoting pupils' and staff's health and safety are generally good. Risk assessment is undertaken on a regular basis. The health and well-being of pupils are further assured by having five qualified first-aiders on the staff. A few matters relating to health and safety were reported to the school during the inspection.

Transitional links with primary schools are good. The headteacher and assistant headteacher meet Y5 and Y6 parents on a regular basis. The head of Y7, who always remains with the

year group, also visits classes in partner primary schools, speaks to staff and pupils, and organises induction days where pupils are able to sample lessons in many areas of the curriculum. With the exception of mathematics, curricular links are underdeveloped, though links are currently developing in English.

5.5 Provision for Pupils with SEN

The provision for pupils with SEN is satisfactory overall and the school fulfils its statutory requirements under the Code of Practice.

In each year group, one class is taught English and mathematics within the Learning Support department base by specialist staff. Other subjects are taught within subject specific departments sometimes with the help of learning support assistants (LSA).

There are 25 pupils in the school who are in receipt of statements of SEN. Additionally, 123 pupils are at the 'school action' stage of the Code of Practice and 12 pupils are at 'school action plus'. Statements are reviewed effectively in consultation with external agencies, parents and officers of the Unitary Authority (UA). Given these figures, the staffing of the Learning Support department of two teachers and five LSAs means that staffing resources are thinly spread throughout the school.

The five LSAs offer good support to pupils both within the department and throughout the school. Four LSAs are allocated to specific subject departments, science, religious education, history/geography and modern foreign languages/Welsh. One LSA is employed to support pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school governor with responsibility for SEN is actively involved within the Learning Support department, visiting on a regular basis to assist pupils in their learning.

The school also receives support from visiting specialist teachers of speech and learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Time allocation for this support is limited.

Individual educational plans are generated by the head of Learning Support and distributed to subject departments and through the school's pastoral system. The use of IEP information within subject departments is inconsistent, with evidence of satisfactory use in history, geography, design and technology, modern foreign languages, physical education, English and mathematics. This leads to suitably differentiated materials being utilised in order to support and challenge pupils with SEN. In other subject areas suitably differentiated materials are less apparent. There are no designated members of staff within subject departments who have a responsibility for pupils with SEN and insufficient links between staff with expertise in the Learning Support department and staff in other curricular areas.

Within the Learning Support department itself, standards are satisfactory at both KS3 and KS4 in literacy and numeracy with evidence of some good practice in the teaching of English at KS3 where a number of pupils make good progress relative to their abilities. On other occasions, tasks can lack challenge. Where teachers from the Learning Support department support subject specialists within the classroom, this can lead to good teaching and learning which challenges pupils appropriately. At KS4, this joint approach has enabled pupils to achieve well in courses leading to accreditation.

The classrooms utilised within the Learning Support department are of adequate size and attractively decorated. Some of the resources within the Learning Support department are, however, dated. The use of ICT within the department in order to enhance the pupils' learning is limited.

Pupils' behaviour within the Learning Support department is good with staff utilising appropriate strategies in order to keep pupils on task and generate a safe learning environment. This positive behaviour is not, however, always replicated in other curriculum areas where pupils are taught by non-specialist staff.

5.6 Partnership with Parents and Community, Schools and Other Institutions

The school's partnership with parents is barely satisfactory. There are good links with organisations in the local community.

Only about six per cent of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and two per cent attended the meeting. The majority of these expressed support for the school, but there were some concerns about pupils' attitudes and behaviour which were found to be justified. Information provided by the school through newsletters, reports, meetings and letters is of satisfactory quality but the governors' annual report to parents and the school prospectus do not contain all the information statutorily required. Few parents have responded to the home/school agreement and pupils' planners are not used effectively as a means of communication. There is no parent-teacher association. Contacts between home and school have improved dramatically for those pupils on the alternative curriculum at KS4 but at present, parents as a whole do not identify with the school's aims. Co-operation between home and school is not a strong feature in pupils' learning.

The school has good relationships with local agencies including the UA, EWS, social and medical services. The school nurse provides medical help to pupils and monitors their general health.

The school has a good relationship with the liaison and community police officers who visit the school regularly. They advise both staff and pupils about crime prevention and talk to groups of pupils about matters concerning their personal safety and substance misuse.

There are effective links through the full-time chaplain with the four nearby parishes covering the school's catchment area. Priests support the school's pastoral programme and pupils' preparation for reception of confirmation. They also participate regularly in the liturgies for the church's celebration of feast days. Pupils visit the nearby church of St Francis on certain feast days.

There are good links with the four partner primary schools. The Head of Y7, subject co-ordinators and the SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) regularly visit to talk to Y6 pupils and their parents. These pupils attend activity days, lessons and social events at Mary Immaculate and their teachers visit the school to share subject expertise. The transfer of satisfactory quality information, both curricular and personal, enables the Y6 pupils to make a smooth transfer to the secondary school, though there are few links between subject departments. However, Y9 pupils have recently co-operated with some Y6 pupils on a silk screen design project. Some Y11 pupils take part in work experience placements at the primary schools. There are good links with St David's Sixth Form College, Glan Hafren and Barry Colleges and Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Institutions.

Pupils take part in competitions organised by the local Rotary Club and provide forty local retired people with food and entertainment at a party each Christmas.

5.7 Partnership with Industry

The school has a satisfactory partnership with local companies which gives pupils some introduction to the world of work around them.

About a hundred local businesses and other concerns provide industrial placements to enable all Y11 pupils to undertake one week's work experience every autumn. The local Careers Wales office supports this programme. Most pupils not only obtain practical experience of the workings of business, but also increase their sense of responsibility, self-esteem and personal and social skills. Other companies are offering valuable work experience placements

to a few Y10 pupils as part of their alternative curriculum. Local businesses also support the successful Industry Days for pupils at KS3.

The adviser from Careers Wales attends the school on three days each week and gives good quality support. He advises KS3 pupils and their parents on options choices and future career possibilities. Pupils in KS4 receive individual help with the development of a career plan and have mock interviews. The careers office also arranges for some pupils requiring additional support to obtain extra careers advice. There are two separate industry days when business people set pupils tasks related to aspects of the world of work such as marketing, costing and quality control. These activities help pupils to develop their teamwork, decision-making and planning skills.

The school receives little financial or material support from local organisations though art and drama companies have recently helped pupils with their projects. The local Education Business Partnership (EBP) office has recently funded a survival skills week in Swansea for twenty Y10 pupils.

Although few school departments have links with local companies, pupils have some opportunities to learn about work through industrial visits. For example, the home economics students have recently visited several catering establishments and others have gone for an English awareness day at a local chemical company.

A significant number of staff have previous industrial experience and a few members of staff have recently attended business-related courses to support the teaching of their subjects.

Though there is no policy for links with industry, the school meets the recommendations of the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) work related education framework in much of its practice.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of Self-Evaluation and Planning for Improvement

Following the last inspection an action plan was drawn up to address the key issues. Whilst there has been good progress in development planning, there has been insufficient progress in the majority of issues, related to standards, attendance and the use of ICT.

A self-evaluative culture has been promoted in recent years, with some success. Senior managers know the school's strengths and weaknesses, though have not prioritised which are the most urgent to be resolved. The monitoring of each department in turn by senior managers has evolved into a system which gives more responsibility to the heads of faculties and departments, whilst retaining links with senior managers. Whilst this system has the potential to be fully effective, at present it is not. Senior managers have an uneven distribution of responsibilities and not all have monitored classroom practice this year. At middle management level, some heads of department have monitored all teachers within the department and pupils' work. Others have done little monitoring and this has not been addressed at senior management level either. Good practice is evident in history, geography, modern foreign languages, design and technology, music, physical education and vocational educational. Its success may be seen in the improved standards. On the pastoral side, there is insufficient monitoring of PSE lessons and tutor time.

Planning for improvement at whole-school and departmental level has some good features but the major shortcoming is that it does not focus on the key issues affecting performance. Action planning is not sufficiently linked to the results of the monitoring process, so that shortcomings can be eliminated. The good features are the involvement of governors and

staff in whole-school planning; the lay-out of the school development plan (SDP) with responsibilities defined, success criteria and deadlines; and the correlation between the SDP and departmental development plans.

There is appropriate review of each year's development plan to evaluate progress. All departmental heads write an annual review, though this analysis is not yet followed up effectively at senior management level. The results do, however, feed into a whole-school review document which is published for staff and governors. This is a good system.

The analysis of data is developing well, particularly at whole-school level. The deputy head correlates information from NC tests at KS2 and KS3, MIDYIS and YELIS results and predicted grades at GCSE. GCSE results are also analysed at whole-school level and effectively in many departments. Targets are set, though these are not yet proving strongly motivational to individual pupils.

Good systems are in place for self-evaluation and planning. With sharper focus and more consistent implementation, they can provide a good framework for school improvement.

6.2 Leadership and Efficiency

Senior management has had a number of issues to contend with in the last few years. The school has been virtually rebuilt on the existing site of the Upper School, causing considerable disruption over a period of nearly four years. The new school has been carefully planned and executed, providing very attractive and appropriate facilities. There has also been a high staff turnover and considerable problems of staffing, including temporary staffing, to cover long-term absence, particularly in the core subjects, which have not been wholly resolved yet. During this period several good initiatives have been introduced, with successful outcomes: clear delegation of responsibilities to each member of senior management, a greater focus on teaching and learning styles, the development of middle managers and the promotion of a more self-evaluative culture, with planning for improvement. This year the headship team has been enlarged, to good effect, but this latest appointment is still temporary.

However, senior management has not been effective to date in prioritising its major problems, such as behaviour and resolving them. Its aims and objectives are not met, in that there is not a strong corporate ethos and learning culture with which pupils and parents identify and staff do not work collaboratively to implement whole-school policies consistently. Shortcomings between and within departments and within the pastoral system are not identified and eliminated by the monitoring system, which is not sufficiently focused. Overall there is insufficient direction in defining expectations and ensuring that those are upheld. Whilst senior managers work hard, too much time is spent following up incidents, rather than on implementing strategies for school improvement.

Governors are a committed group, and very supportive of the school. There is an appropriate structure of committees as well as regular meetings of the full governing body. Governors are involved in strategic planning effectively. Their role of monitoring performance is a developing one: they have recently become attached to the core subjects, a role they hope to expand through observing practice.

At middle management level, there is some good practice. Management is particularly good in design and technology and physical education. It is also good in many respects in history, geography, modern foreign languages and music. Heads of year do not yet fulfil their management role effectively; they are at the forefront of dealing with individuals and giving sanctions, a time-consuming role which leaves them little scope for overview and planning for integrating the pastoral and academic systems for closer monitoring of pupils' progress

across the curriculum. The management of whole-school issues, such as standards achieved by pupils with SEN across the curriculum and standards in ICT across subjects, is not yet effective.

Available resources are generally well managed. Staff are deployed effectively, the accommodation is used well and there are not significant shortages of resources in departments, apart from ICT resources. ICT facilities in the school as a whole and library stock are below those found in most schools. Curriculum time is well allocated but tutorial time is wasted in many groups at the moment.

Financial planning is meticulous and is in line with the targets of the SDP. An equitable system for distributing departmental allowances is in place along with the opportunity to bid for additional funding for curriculum development, though departments under-use this opportunity. The input by one assistant headteacher in planning for and furnishing the new buildings has been considerable and effective. Support staff also contribute substantially to the smooth running of financial administration. Careful control procedures are in place, by staff and governors and cost-effectiveness is regularly evaluated. The latest auditor's report found that in general the systems were operating satisfactorily and in a few areas there were recommendations. The high staffing costs this year, to cover long-term absences, have eaten into the projected surplus from the budget and may result in a deficit budget.

The school is well-organised on a day-to-day basis. There is a staff briefing at the start of each day, a weekly bulletin, a staff handbook and any changes of routine are posted in the foyer, at the school office.

Statutory requirements are met apart from the daily act of collective worship and the information supplied in the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents.

6.3 Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources

The provision of teaching and support staff is of good quality and sufficient to meet the school's needs. The pupil to teacher ratio of 15.8:1 is near the Welsh average.

Teachers are well qualified but as a result of a high staff turnover (over 40 per cent of the staff have been appointed in the last three years) a substantial number is relatively inexperienced. The staffing of the core subjects has been particularly difficult recently, mainly as a result of long-term sickness. The overall staff absence rate has been high. Staff are deployed effectively to cover the curricular and pastoral roles identified in their job descriptions. There is some teaching outside specialisms, but it has little detrimental effect on standards. The teachers' class contact ratio of nearly 86 per cent is higher than usual. The staffing structure is appropriate to the school's needs with 69 per cent of the staff having equitably allocated incentive allowances for extra responsibilities. The school leadership team comprises a fitting balance of experience.

The non-teaching staff provide effective support across a wide range of duties and responsibilities but some express a need for more training. They are very helpful and make a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the school. There is, however, no technician support in information technology, which has a detrimental impact on standards in ICT across the curriculum, and no technician support in both design and technology and art.

A deputy head effectively manages the day-to-day organisation of the in-service training (INSET) provision, including its evaluation. Training is prioritized according to the requirements of the SDP, departmental development plans and individual needs. The link between effective monitoring of teaching and the standard of pupils' work is not firmly established, although the school is moving towards implementing a well-constructed performance management and review policy. In-service training is seen as an important facet

of developing teachers but it is currently insufficiently focused on important whole-school issues such as behaviour management. Few staff maintain a continuing professional development file. Newly qualified teachers are closely supported through a well-planned programme of observation, review and INSET, both in the school and as part of the UA programme. Teachers new to the school are supported by their line manager, and planning for a formal whole-school induction programme is underway. The school has good and effectively managed links with ITT establishments and a well-planned teaching practice programme, which is appropriately monitored and organised by the senior mentor. The school gained 'Investors in People' status in 2002.

The school has moved into new purpose-built accommodation over the last two years. It is well designed and nearly all subject needs have been met but there are some inadequacies in the provision for music and some departments are short of storage space. Currently there is no library provision as the up-to-date learning resources centre has not yet been opened. There is little evidence of graffiti and vandalism but pupils drop large quantities of litter in almost all areas of the school. This is a serious problem which detracts from the appearance and ethos of the school.

The quantity and quality of the school's learning resources meet educational requirements and are of good quality other than that for ICT. Currently the school spends a lower than average percentage of its budget on learning resources. The quality of staff-developed teaching material is often good and enhances pupils' standards. There are shortages of computer aided design/and manufacture (CAD/CAM) and control equipment in design and technology.

The learning resources centre is soon to open, but currently there is no access to books for research or pleasure and careers literature is unavailable. The school is aiming at a 10:1 ratio of books to pupils, which is below the recommended ratio of 13:1, but the quality and range of texts already purchased and catalogued are good.

Overall the number of computers available for pupils' use is below average and over 40 per cent are more than five years old. There are three computer suites but only one is reasonably reliable as a consequence of intractable network problems. The problem of unreliability discourages the use of ICT resources across the curriculum and results in the head of ICT spending a considerable amount of time trying to resolve network problems rather than teaching. There is good access to audiovisual equipment and, where available, the use of electronic white boards enhances standards in departments.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

English

Current standards of achievement in English are satisfactory at KS3 and KS4. They are better than previous standards in examinations as a result of a partial resolution of staffing difficulties. National Curriculum test results at KS3 have represented satisfactory progress from pupils' prior achievements. Examination results at KS4 represent unsatisfactory progress with a low percentage of entry for both language and literature.

Good features

KS3 and KS4

- The majority of pupils listen to the teacher and to one another. They respond to questions, recall information, describe and explain.
- A minority of pupils collaborate in pairs and in small groups. They put forward a point of view and justify opinions.
- The majority of pupils read aloud with accuracy and fluency. Able pupils read with expression.
- They read a wide range of challenging texts and pupils in Y7 read for pleasure.
- Able pupils use higher order reading skills and appreciate stylistic devices used for effect.
- The majority of pupils write in a range of forms and for a variety of purposes.
- The majority of pupils improve writing of core tasks at KS3 and coursework at KS4 by drafting, and the use of writing frames.
- The writing of able pupils is often well structured and usually technically accurate.

Shortcomings**KS3 and KS4**

- The majority of pupils do not work in pairs and small groups; they have unsatisfactory skills for independent learning.
- A significant minority of pupils of lower and middle abilities shout out inappropriately, do not listen to the teacher and one another. They disrupt the pace of learning and make minimal progress.
- A minority of pupils of lower and middle abilities have unsatisfactory higher order reading skills of inference and deduction.
- A minority of pupils do not structure and extend writing. They often fail to complete written tasks.
- A significant minority of pupils do not draft their writing and fail to correct errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Progress since the last inspection

- Standards at both key stages are similar to those reported in the last inspection.

Mathematics

Standards are satisfactory at KS3 and KS4. In the NC tests in 2002 the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or above was good being between the median and upper quartile for similar schools. Results at GCSE in 2002, were well below national figures at grades A*-C and A*-G in the subject although residuals were not negative. The number entered for GCSE is a low percentage.

Good features**KS3**

- Pupils make clear progress from Y7 to Y9 during this key stage and develop their understanding and achievement in the subject at an appropriate level, whilst the more able pupils make above average progress.
- Many pupils with SEN make good progress.

- Pupils understand and correctly use the concept of place value in whole numbers and decimals and can relate their knowledge to correct computation. This is further reinforced by the numeracy work done from the Cardiff initiative work in the first two years of this key stage.
- Pupils understand decimals, fractions and percentages at levels appropriate to their ability, understand the relationships between them and can use this knowledge to work out questions as appropriate.
- Pupils know how to use letters to represent numbers, can solve equations of various types as required and can apply the required rules to generate number sequences.
- Pupils know the names and various properties appertaining to two and three-dimensional shapes and can apply the correct formulae to determine areas and volumes of these shapes.
- Pupils can find the mean, median and mode of a given set of numbers and can use tables of frequency to construct histograms that represent the data they have available.

KS4

- The able pupils do well at this key stage and they provide reasoned answers to questions indicating an acceptable understanding of the topics they have studied in all areas of the subject.
- Pupils can apply trigonometrical ratios to solve given problems that entail finding the size of an angle or the length of a side.
- Pupils are able to calculate the interior and exterior angles of regular polygons and understand the relationship between these two angles.
- Pupils can deal effectively with transformations and are able to determine if shapes have been reflected in a given line or rotated about a fixed point to determine how the transformed shape is created.
- Pupils can deal correctly with indices according to their ability and understand the effect created by a negative index being a fraction.
- Pupils can increase and decrease monetary values by a percentage and can apply this understanding to finding sale prices, calculating VAT and to determining increased costs.
- Pupils who follow the intermediate GCSE course understand the work covered on loci and can use a pair of compasses correctly to determine loci points and to construct a perpendicular bisector.
- Pupils of middle and lower ability can determine the value of a co-ordinate or plot such a value on graph paper.

Shortcomings

KS3

- The achievement of a significant number of pupils is adversely affected by the disruption to lessons by a number of pupils, generally boys.
- There are a number of pupils who do not always complete the work set and neither do they consistently or always complete homework, which adversely effects their progress.

- Recall of previous work by many pupils is slow showing that their mathematical knowledge is not embedded in their memory and a significant minority of pupils make fundamental mistakes in basic calculations.
- A few pupils work without understanding. They repeat learned procedures as taught without really knowing what is happening mathematically by the process used.
- A number of pupils lack confidence in their ability in the subject.
- Written work is not always well presented and this does not make it useful for revision.

KS4

- There are a significant number of pupils who do not complete work or attempt to copy up work missed through absence and this is having a marked effect on their achievement since there are significant gaps in their subject knowledge.
- The constant misbehaviour and chatter in many lessons hinder the progress of pupils.
- A minority of less able pupils confuse mathematical terms.

Progress since the last inspection

- Standards in both key stages are similar to those in the last inspection.

Science

Standards of achievement are unsatisfactory at KS3 and KS4. The standards at KS3 are significantly lower than the results attained in the national tests in the last two years. At KS4, they are similar to examination results.

Good features**KS3 and KS4**

- A minority of able pupils have a good understanding of a wide range of topics covering all aspects of the NC. They have a good recall of key concepts and ideas, and apply them with confidence across a range of tasks and applications in everyday life.
- The remaining able and a very small minority of average ability pupils make satisfactory progress across some topics in life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes.
- In some classes, pupils with SEN make good progress, relative to their abilities.
- In KS4, a minority of able pupils complete investigations of a good standard.
- Pupils in both key stages work safely during practical work.

Shortcomings**KS3 and KS4**

- The progress of a majority of average and lower ability pupils is unsatisfactory. These pupils have a limited recall of current and previous work, and have difficulty in applying scientific principles to some basic problems.
- In a significant number of classes, progress is seriously hindered through the unacceptable behaviour of a number of pupils, and the high level of incomplete work witnessed in classwork and homework tasks. At KS4, unsatisfactory attendance also has an impact on the lack of progress.

- Although Cognitive acceleration through science education (CASE) is followed in Y7 and Y8, investigational work is underdeveloped at KS3.
- In KS4, a significant majority of pupils submit investigational work of an unsatisfactory standard, in relation to their abilities. In these cases, there are significant weaknesses in the skill areas of planning, analysing and evaluating. Some of the investigations attempted have a low level of demand and limit access to the higher marks.
- The progress of a significant number of pupils is affected by the substantial amount of unsatisfactory teaching.
- Pupils' skills in using ICT are not developed, nor is ICT used to raise standards in science.

Progress since the last inspection

- The department has made little progress since the last inspection.

Welsh second language

Standards of achievement at KS3 and KS4 are unsatisfactory. Small groups of pupils are entered for GCSE Welsh second language and the standards achieved are good.

Good features

KS3

- Able pupils in Y9 can provide quite correct and extended oral and written responses on topics of interest.
- Many pupils with SEN in Y7 and Y8 can ask basic questions on topics such as pocket money and school subjects and they achieve satisfactory oral standards.
- Listening skills of pupils with SEN are satisfactory and they improve their oral skills by listening attentively to teacher prompts and taking part in language drill.
- Year 7 pupils access relevant websites in order to improve their brief descriptions of different houses in the target language.

KS4

- Able pupils can seek and impart personal information and express opinions on leisure interests, using full sentences.
- Individual pupils across the key stage can produce quite extended, structured written work in line with GCSE coursework requirements.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Pupils' listening skills are generally unsatisfactory. Many pupils do not listen attentively to teacher inputs and as a result, pupils' oral responses are often incorrect and too short.
- Pupils cannot practise the target language effectively in groups and pairs.
- The majority of pupils cannot read sentences and short dialogues with sufficient clarity and meaning. Many pupils make basic pronunciation errors and are not confident readers in the target language.

- Most pupils' writing tasks are limited in range. In a substantial minority of cases the presentation of written work is unsatisfactory, and some tasks are incomplete.
- Little use is made of ICT to improve the content, structure and presentation of written work at KS3.

KS4

- Many pupils do not contribute effectively in class and group discussions.
- Many pupils cannot adapt or extend the oral patterns provided by the teacher.
- Reading and listening comprehension skills are underdeveloped. Many pupils are unaware of the main cues required in understanding the target language.
- Reading skills of many pupils are limited. Less able pupils cannot read short paragraphs with sufficient clarity and confidence.
- Standards of pupils' writing at KS4 are generally unsatisfactory. When writing independently, some pupils translate literally from English sources. Many pupils, especially of middle or lower ability do not take sufficient care in planning the order, content or presentation of their writing tasks.

Progress since the last inspection

- Standards were also unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection.

Design and technology

Standards of achievement at KS3 are satisfactory. At KS4 standards are good in GCSE resistant materials and graphic communication. In 2002 pupils often gained higher grades in design and technology than in their other subjects, and results at grades A*-C were an improvement on the previous year.

Good features**KS3**

- Pupils have a sound understanding of a design process and its application is satisfactory.
- In project work, pupils understand and develop specifications to guide their designing. The link between specification and evaluation is understood by most and applied in project work.
- Making skills are good and sometimes very good in resistant materials. They are satisfactory in textiles. Pupils generally work with accuracy but finish is variable particularly in textiles.
- Mechanical control principles are understood and appropriately embedded in project work.
- Knowledge and understanding of materials and components and their applications are satisfactory.
- Pupils have a sound understanding of structures and are able to apply structural principles in their project work.
- Less able pupils and those with SEN make good progress in their project work.

KS4

- Design work is good overall with effective use of a design process to guide pupils' work.
- Design specifications are well constructed and effectively guide pupils' project development. Evaluations are appropriately linked to design specifications.
- Research skills are well developed.
- Project folios are generally well presented.
- Making skills are often very good. Pupils work accurately and produce a good finish to their products.
- Project work is often innovative.
- Understanding of materials, their properties and working characteristics is good.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Aspects of designing in most modules are underdeveloped, in particular the generation and development of ideas.
- Quick drawing skills and graphic presentation skills are underdeveloped.
- More able pupils' progress in Y8 and Y9 is at times limited by over-structured projects.
- The use made of ICT for CAD/CAM, research, microprocessor control and general applications is underdeveloped.
- Project work involving electronics lacks sufficient depth.

KS4

- Quick drawing skills to explore ideas are weaker than other elements of designing.
- The use of ICT for research and design is underdeveloped.

Progress since the last inspection

- Standards at KS3 are similar, with 'control' remaining underdeveloped. At KS4 standards have improved significantly.

Information technology

Standards of achievement at KS3 are unsatisfactory. Standards in Y10 of the GCSE course are good.

Good features

KS3 Y7

- Pupils make good progress in their early development of information technology competencies.
- Pupils manage computers effectively. They confidently conduct fundamental computer operations such as logging on, calling up and saving their work, and accessing appropriate applications and the Internet.
- Standards of communicating information are good. Pupils confidently combine text and images, and change and arrange fonts and layouts in appropriate combinations according to their designs.

- Pupils understand the function of a spreadsheet and are able to set up basic spreadsheets and conduct simple modelling exercises.

KS4

- Pupils develop a comprehensive range of information technology skills in the portfolio component of the GCSE course.
- Pupils confidently communicate information for a variety of purposes and audiences including effective PowerPoint presentations.
- Pupils' project work displays confidence in handling and modelling information using spreadsheets.
- Research, analysis and problem solving skills are developing well. Pupils make appropriate use of the Internet to support their research.
- Pupils present their work well and are able to explain clearly why they have chosen specific information technology applications.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Pupils learn information technology skills in Y7 only. Pupils have insufficient cross-curricular ICT teaching experiences in Y8 and Y9 to sustain and develop their skills.
- Pupils insufficiently consider social, economic, ethical and moral issues related to the use of ICT.

KS4

- Pupils have a variable understanding of theory.
- Absence affects the standards of some pupils.

Progress since the last inspection

- Standards remain the same at both key stages.

History

Standards of achievement at KS3 and KS4 are good. These good standards are reflected in the examination results at GCSE, which are good in relation to pupils' abilities.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils acquire a good knowledge and understanding of the events, personalities and developments studied. Their recall skills are good. Pupils' chronological awareness is securely based.
- All pupils use historical terms appropriately. Most pupils have a clear insight into the process of change and can provide good explanations for change over time.
- The majority of pupils show a capacity to share ideas, form opinions based on evidence and present their findings knowledgeably.
- Average and above average ability pupils demonstrate competence in tackling enquiry-based tasks and produce research projects of good quality.

- Most pupils work confidently with sources and make good use of the information acquired to substantiate their opinions. More able pupils can combine evidence from a variety of sources and can consider their advantages and limitations as sources of evidence.
- All pupils can distinguish between fact and opinion. Average and above average ability pupils can recognise the reasons for differing interpretations of historical issues.
- Work, for instance on the Spanish Armada, demonstrates pupils' ability to empathise with the lives and attitudes of people in the past.
- Most pupils can select, organise and communicate historical information in a variety of ways. Written work is well presented. More able pupils produce well-structured narratives, descriptions and explanations.
- All pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of the history of Wales.
- Pupils with SEN are making satisfactory progress at KS3.

KS4

- Pupils display sound subject knowledge and deploy this effectively in well-structured written coursework.
- The work of the more able pupils shows growing maturity in the depth of response and insight into attitudes of people in the past. Pupils make good progress in developing their research skills using a wide variety of sources including the Internet.
- All pupils are able to extract accurate and relevant information from a variety of sources. More able pupils are becoming more critical in their approach to historical sources. Both oral and written work show they are competent and confident in testing sources for reliability and usefulness.
- Pupils' understanding of causation and change becomes more analytical. Their work on Nazi Germany shows they can identify and analyse causal factors to explain Hitler's rise to power.
- Pupils can argue a case and refer to suitable evidence to substantiate their points, for example when considering the Cuban Missile Crisis. A significant number of these pupils develop confidence in adopting an investigative approach to historical problems. More able pupils can use their knowledge and understanding to compare, contrast and judge various interpretations.
- Pupils with SEN are making satisfactory progress at KS4.

Shortcomings**KS3**

- Lower ability pupils make limited written responses to tasks set. Their work often lacks adequate range and depth.
- At KS3, pupils are not sufficiently aware of complex causation.

KS4

- Lower ability pupils make insufficient use of sources in order to construct convincing arguments. They tend to focus on the content rather than on the limitations of a source or the circumstances of its production.

Progress since the last inspection

- Since the previous report, there has been good progress. Standards have risen, particularly at KS3 and the numbers choosing history at KS4 have grown.

Geography

Standards of achievement at KS3 are satisfactory and good at KS4. The standards at KS4 are reflected in the examination results at GCSE which are good in relation to pupils' abilities.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils display a good knowledge and understanding of the location, features and characteristics of places. They are able to apply this understanding in their study of national parks and areas of volcanic activity.
- Project work demonstrates a good grasp of enquiry-based techniques using sources such as written texts, databases, CD-ROMs and the Internet.
- The majority of pupils across the ability range are competent in the use of atlases, statistical data, written texts and maps to enable them to acquire knowledge, understanding and subject specific skills.
- Pupils' grasp of geographical terminology is good with the majority able to apply key words with accuracy in a variety of geographical contexts.
- Structured fieldwork enhances pupils' enquiry and research skills in addition to developing their analytical and recording techniques.

KS4

- Pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of the inter-relationship between man and his environment, particularly well illustrated by Y10's work on the conflicts within the Peak District National Park.
- Pupils can analyse and interpret geographical data with confidence and are able to communicate their findings in a variety of formats, and where appropriate, with the support of ICT. Year 10's weather forecasting presentation is a particularly good example.
- Fieldwork, being an integral part of geographical activities, contributes to the pupils' understanding of process in physical and human geography. Coursework projects based on river and coastal studies in Pembrokeshire and the Gower Peninsula display the pupils' thorough grasp of the processes at work in the formation of patterns and features associated with river and coastal activity.
- Pupils can use an extensive range of geographical terminology with accuracy. They can apply skills and techniques to complex geographical situations with increasing understanding.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Pupils' knowledge is not sufficiently extended by planned classroom activities in a minority of lessons.
- Some pupils, particularly those of lower ability, find it difficult to maintain concentration and to refrain from chatting and shouting out in class.
- The written work of some pupils across the ability range and particularly those of lower ability is of variable quality. Some written and map work is left unfinished.

Progress since the last inspection

- Standards since the last inspection have been maintained at KS3 and have improved at KS4.

Modern foreign languages

Standards are satisfactory at KS3 and good at KS4. GCSE results reflect progress on prior attainment and, in 2002, there was a significantly high proportion of top grades.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils in the top band make good progress in the four language skills.
- Able pupils speak in full sentences with increasing confidence.
- Able pupils understand the spoken and written language easily.
- Pupils of all abilities make steady progress in written work. The more able write in paragraphs from Y7.

KS4

- Pupils of all abilities achieve well.
- They speak with increasing fluency and confidence, with the most able reaching very high standards in extended speech.
- Extended writing is of good quality, on a range of topics, using a variety of tenses.
- Pupils understand the spoken and written language easily and can extract relevant information in response to a question.
- Pupils show a developing awareness of the rules of grammar and can apply them to a good degree of accuracy.

Shortcomings

KS3

- The progress of pupils of average to lower ability and of pupils with SEN is adversely affected by poor behaviour.
- In particular, they do not listen with concentration or gain confidence in speaking.
- A significant minority of pupils do not consolidate their knowledge by completing homework.

Progress since the last inspection

- Standards have improved at both key stages.

Art

Standards of achievement in art are satisfactory at KS3 and KS4. These standards are reflected in the examination results at GCSE, which are satisfactory over the last two years in relation to pupils' abilities.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEN, demonstrate a sound understanding of the visual language of line, tone colour, pattern and shape and apply it effectively in their work.
- Pupils select and use a range of materials and resources confidently and employ appropriate techniques in order to communicate ideas through two and three-dimensional work.
- They satisfactorily record images and ideas from direct observation, from memory and from their imagination and develop these to provide lively outcomes.
- Particular strengths are pupils' work in painting where imaginative use is made of colour mixing to provide interesting abstracted images in the style of Kandinsky.
- Pupils achieve good skills in ceramic work when they construct coil pots, clay plaques and masks and also in perspective drawing where skills of creating the illusion of space and distance are well developed.

KS4

- In Y10, pupils have made a confident start to the GCSE course and benefit from some of the firm foundations laid down at KS3.
- Pupils quickly learn more demanding skills and can organise their studies effectively by means of imaginative investigation of ideas, materials and techniques.
- In Y10 and Y11, pupils' work in craft processes such as in ceramics, calligraphy and textiles is often of a very high standard, demonstrating sophisticated experimentation, research, design and making skills.
- In some classes, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of artists and designers, for example, Klint, Rousseau, Modigliani and William Morris and successfully integrate these studies in their own creative work.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Standards of drawing from observation in sketchbooks (usually undertaken as homework) are unsatisfactory. Pupils' work is often hurried, unfinished and lacking in detail. In Y9, there is a marked falling-off in the quality and quantity of sketchbook drawing.
- Pupils have an insecure knowledge and understanding of artists, craftworkers and designers; in particular of the way the study of other art can influence their own creative work.
- Pupils' skills in using computers as a tool for informing and enriching their art are seriously lacking. Pupils are largely unaware of ICT's potential for investigating, research and augmenting design processes.

KS4

- In Y11, a significant minority of pupils are underachieving through lack of motivation and application to course work and examination preparatory study. Standards are unsatisfactory due to incomplete course units and low level skills.
- In general, pupils' drawing skills are unsatisfactory; in particular drawing from observation in sketchbook. Pupils too readily copy at second hand resulting in stereotyped and hackneyed images.
- As in KS3, KS4 pupils do not use computers sufficiently to collect information, to investigate design processes, to manipulate images or even at a basic level to improve the presentation of their work. This is partly due to a lack of ICT equipment in the art rooms.

Progress since the last inspection

- Since the last inspection standards of achievement have remained satisfactory at KS3 while at KS4, standards have fallen from mainly good to satisfactory achievement.

Music

Standards of achievement are satisfactory at KS3 and good at KS4. Able musicians achieve good results at GCSE and results at Entry level have been very good.

Good features

KS3

- Standards of singing are satisfactory, with some good use of rhythm complexes in Y7 and satisfactory vocal work in Y9 Blue Suede Shoes and Siyahamba performances.
- Pupils are encouraged to develop appropriate keyboard technique.
- There are examples of satisfactory performance work in Y7 and in Chinese and Calypso styles in Y8.
- Pupils with SEN achieve satisfactory standards for ability in Y8 and, in Y9, they cope well in performances of Hen Wlad fy Nhadau.
- Pupils who receive instrumental tuition generally achieve good standards in classroom performance.
- Satisfactory standards in composing are achieved. Some good standards are achieved in Y7 gamelan work and in Y8 Star Children compositions and in some Y9 classes.
- Standards of appraising are satisfactory overall.

KS4

- There are examples of good group and individual vocal work.
- Despite limited computer resources there are examples of good compositions, using keyboards and computers, created by abler musicians.
- Less able musicians develop satisfactory to good instrumental skills.
- Pupils on the Entry level course have gained very good results.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Progress in Y9 was adversely affected by poor behaviour in one class observed.
- In a few classes, pupils make unsatisfactory progress in appraising the work of others because a minority of pupils disrupt learning.

KS4

- There are gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding through sporadic attendance.

Progress since the last inspection

- Standards of achievement have been maintained with an improvement in appraising and composing at KS3 and KS4 respectively.

Physical education

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and at KS4. GCSE results have improved considerably over the past two years and are now just below national averages.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils demonstrate good standards in planning, performing and evaluating their own work and the work of others. This is particularly evident in step aerobics, gymnastics and netball.
- Pupils lift, carry and place equipment accurately and safely.
- Pupils are knowledgeable, skilful and reflective. They are sometimes given responsibilities such as leading their peers in warm-ups, team situations and cool down periods. Pupils respond well to these personal challenges.
- In gymnastic and step aerobics activities pupils demonstrate the capacity to be creative. They have the physical skills to execute movements effectively with precision and body tension. Individual skills are developed into challenging, fluid movement sequences that are original and physically demanding. The use of apparatus and the interpretation of music are good features.
- Pupils' understanding of physical fitness is good. Individuals participate enthusiastically in challenging fitness exercises, monitor the physiological changes and discuss the effect of activities on their personal fitness. Examples of this are pulse monitoring, flexibility exercises and the requirements for all-round personal fitness.

KS4

- Pupils demonstrate good standards in planning, performing and evaluating their own work and the work of others. This is particularly evident in rugby, trampolining, basketball and fitness testing.
- Pupils' participation in fitness activities that develop strength, endurance and flexibility is good. Individuals plan, undertake and evaluate fitness programmes, record improvements or regressions and are able to discuss the effect of various tests on their personal fitness.
- Pupils following GCSE examination courses demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding of subject content, for example skill acquisition. They perform physical activities to a good standard and engage enthusiastically in a wide variety of appropriate tasks. A number of individuals produce very good work.

- In outdoor games, pupils display good standards in the application of techniques, the implementation of tactics and the ability to discuss strategies for improvement. Pupils use space well, have good ball control, pass and shoot accurately and are effective in both defence and attack.

Shortcomings

- The fitness levels of a number of boys and girls in KS3 and KS4 are underdeveloped.

Progress since the last inspection.

- Progress since the last inspection has been good.

Extra-curricular activities

- The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Standards are good for both individual performers and school teams. A number of pupils and teams reach the highest of standards and the school is justifiably proud of these achievements.

Religious education

This subject was inspected separately under Section 23 of the Education Act.

Personal and social education

Standards of achievement are unsatisfactory at KS3, and satisfactory at KS4.

Good features

KS3 and KS4

- At both key stages, pupils experience a broad range of experiences, the majority of which are areas identified for coverage in the Welsh Assembly Government guidelines.
- In a minority of classes, pupils participate with interest in discussion and problem-solving activities. Some pupils prepare feed-backs to represent the views of a group of pupils.
- In a minority of classes, pupils' understanding of health and environmental issues are enhanced by the sensitive management of responses by the teacher.
- At KS4, especially in Y11, pupils respond well to learning experiences enhanced by the input of a number of speakers and presentations.
- At KS4, pupils value the experience made available through the work experience placement and monitoring by members of staff.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- In a substantial number of classes, especially at KS3 and to a lesser extent at KS4, the level of disruption limits the range of activities and experiences which can be developed in lessons.
- In these classes, a significant number of pupils do not listen to instructions given by the teacher, and have a lack of respect for other pupils when they attempt to contribute to class discussion.
- Standards are adversely affected by a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching at KS3.

Progress since the last inspection

- Lessons in PSE were not observed in the last inspection.

Business studies

Standards at KS4 are good. These good standards are reflected in the number of passes and merits gained in the previous year, and the unit passes achieved currently, which are good in relation to pupils' abilities.

Good Features

- Pupils can apply the knowledge gained from personal research to their coursework for Applied Business (Y10) and GNVQ Business (Y11).
- Higher ability pupils in Y11 produce cash flow analyses, profit and loss accounts and comprehensive analytical and evaluative coursework.
- Progress is marked from Y10 where pupils can select relevant data to write short paragraphs about the functional areas of business, to Y11, where pupils have a high level of understanding in a wide business context. They communicate this well in extensive, mature conversation.
- Pupils with SEN achieve good standards, and gain confidence when they use the computer to overcome poor writing skills.

Shortcomings

- Year 10 pupils cannot always recall technical language which they copy from textbooks.
- A minority of pupils do not progress quickly, as they talk off-task.
- Poor attendance affects standards.

Progress since the last inspection

- Standards have improved since the last inspection, when the GNVQ delivery had just begun. Particular progress is shown in the quality of coursework which pupils achieve.

Child development

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Pupils demonstrate an understanding of topics relating to child development.
- Pupils understand Health and safety procedures, reinforced during given practical situations.
- Evidence of research and a high standard of presentation are present in pupils' portfolios.
- Pupils are productive and work at a good pace.

Progress since the last inspection

- This subject was not reported upon in the previous report.

Vocational Education

Catering

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of inherent concepts of catering.
- Information and communication technology skills enable pupils to access information relating to menu planning and recipe development which they have researched from a variety of sources including the Internet.
- Pupils observations/listening skills are developed during class practical demonstrations.

Progress since the last inspection

- This subject was not reported upon in the previous report.

GNVQ Health and Social Care

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Whilst planning and setting targets for the completion of tasks, pupils work well both individually and collaboratively.
- Orally pupils demonstrate good comprehension skills.
- Initial drafting of coursework ensures that the final outcome includes appropriate detail.

Health and social care

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Pupils show an interest in and enjoy the flexible learning approach to the subject.
- Pupils demonstrate understanding as they complete work from well-structured units which link with outside agencies.
- Pupils are able to appreciate the value of the course in providing further opportunities at post-16.

Progress since the last inspection

- The good standards have been maintained.

Information Technology

Standards are satisfactory in KS4 CLAIT.

Good features

- Pupils confidently manage basic computer operations.
- Most pupils produce accurate work using a word processing application.
- Basic spreadsheet and database construction are satisfactory.
- Pupils apply an art package to a satisfactory level.

Shortcomings

- Absence on the part of most pupils hinders progress.

Progress since the last inspection

- This is a new course.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress Since the Last Inspection

1. Refine the sound SDP so that specific programmes for action are prioritised, and outcomes, costs and time schedules are defined.

The current SDP is a clearly laid out document which sets out areas for improvement, responsibilities, deadlines and success criteria. Its shortcoming is that it does not prioritise the school's major problems such as behaviour.

2. Relate the planning within subject departments more directly to the priorities of the SDP.

There has been good progress on this issue. Correlation between departmental plans and the SDP is good.

3. Intensify efforts to counteract under-expectation and under-achievement at all ability levels.

The school has introduced various initiatives to try to tackle this, such as the Learning Forum and the pastoral programme "You can do it". Nevertheless, these problems still exist, exacerbated by the staffing difficulties, behavioural and attendance difficulties.

4. Continue the monitoring of teaching and learning and extend the role played by departments in evaluating the effectiveness of their own work.

Monitoring by senior staff has continued, though not effectively by all at present. Departments are playing a greater part and monitoring is effective in about half of the departments at present.

5. Continue to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment, especially in those subjects in which standards of work are unsatisfactory.

The proportion of lessons in which standards are unsatisfactory has remained the same since the last inspection and standards are again unsatisfactory in Welsh at both key stages and in information technology at KS3. Standards in modern foreign languages have improved.

6. Strengthen strategies, including arrangements for the registration of pupils for reducing the levels of absenteeism and lateness.

This remains a key issue. The attendance rate has fallen and lateness remains a problem.

7. Improve facilities for the teaching of information technology at KS3.

Arrangements for the teaching of information technology at KS3 have not improved, and have worsened, as discrete lessons are now only timetabled in Y7. Forty per cent of the information technology equipment is now over five years old. Some new equipment has been purchased but the ratio of pupils to computers is worse than in schools generally.

8. Take action in respect of the safety hazards to which attention was drawn during the inspection.

These were related to the previous buildings, which have now been demolished.

8.2 Key Issues for Action

In order to improve on its current performance the school should:

1. Improve standards of behaviour.

2. Raise levels of attendance and improve punctuality.
3. Improve standards generally and, in particular, standards in:
 - Science and Welsh at both key stages
 - Information and communication technology at KS3 and across the curriculum
 - Pupils' key skills of listening and speaking.
 - Subjects in which standards are satisfactory, as opposed to good.
4. Increase the proportion of pupils gaining success at GCSE, and in the core subjects in particular.
5. Promote a greater sense of community, common purpose and culture of learning.
6. Ensure greater consistency in the implementation of school policies and practice, through closer monitoring of teaching and learning and sharing of good practice.
7. Monitor pupils' progress across the curriculum more effectively and improve the links between the academic and pastoral systems.
8. Use tutor time effectively.
9. Attend to the health and safety issues identified and ensure that statutory requirements are met, as indicated in the report.

APPENDIX**A. Basic Information About the School**

Name of School	Mary Immaculate High School
School type	Voluntary aided
Age -range of pupils	11-16
Address of school	Caerau Lane Wenvoe Cardiff
Post-Code	CF2 5QZ
Telephone Number	02920 593465

Headteacher	Mr Philip Gilpin
Date of appointment	1 September 1998
Chair of Governors	Mr J Michael D'Arcy
Registered Inspector	Miss Glynis Owen
Dates of inspection	3-7 March 2003

B. School Data and Indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>						
Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total
Number of pupils	155	123	150	148	134	710

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	42	5	45.3

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	15.8:1
Average teaching group size	18.4
Overall contact ratio	85.9%

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>						
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Whole school
Spring 2002	88.2	85.6	86.0	81.4	78.9	84.1
Summer 2002	86.8	82.0	80.1	76.0	76.0	80.6
Autumn 2002	90.5	88.1	84.0	88.2	87.4	86.6

<i>Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection.</i>	130
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C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2002															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 150															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
EN	Teacher assessment	School	0	0.7	0	0	1.3	2.0	13.3	22.7	42.7	14.0	3.3	0	0
		National	0	1	1	0	0	3	10	22	34	21	8	0	
	Test	School	0	4.7	4.0				13.3	25.3	36.0	12.0	4.7		
		National	0	3	2	-	-	-	9	22	33	19	10	-	
MA	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0.7	12.7	22.0	29.3	28.7	6.7	0	
		National	0	1	0	0	0	1	10	23	25	26	13	1	
	Test	School	0	7.3	0				10.0	24.7	27.3	25.3	4.0	0	
		National	0	6	1	-	-	-	8	22	22	27	13	-	
SC	Teacher assessment	School	0	0.7	0		0	0.7	11.3	32.0	38.0	12.7	4.7	0	
		National	0	1	1	0	0	1	10	24	31	23	9	0	
	Test	School	0	5.3	0				8.7	29.3	33.3	19.3	4.0	0	
		National	0	4	1	-	-	-	9	22	29	24	10	-	

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school:	44.7	In the school:	40.7
In Wales:	48	In Wales:	50

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

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, CoE, GNVQ and NVQ			
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2002: 119			
The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2002:			
	School	UA	Wales
were entered for 5 or more GCSEs	69	83	86
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C	25	46	50
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-G	65	81	85
achieved GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language)	13	34	37
entered at least one CoE, GCSE short course or GCSE	89	94	97
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-C	55	69	74
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-G	82	89	92
achieved no graded GCSE	18	11	8
achieved one or more CoE only	5	3	3
achieved a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	3		
achieved a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	18		
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	25		
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent	65		

vocational qualifications or a combination of both	
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D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection

- 16 inspectors spent the equivalent of 48 days at the school.
- 201 lessons were observed, including full and part sessions, covering all curricular areas.
- Inspectors attended a sample of assemblies, tutor periods and extra-curricular activities.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, all members of the headship team, all heads of department and pastoral staff, and members of the administrative and support staff.
- Work across the curriculum, from representative pupils in Y7-Y11 was examined, together with work in each subject.
- There was formal discussion with a group of pupils from KS3 and KS4 and informal discussion with many other pupils.
- The Registered Inspector met the staff and governing body prior to the inspection.
- Thirteen parents attended the parents' meeting and 41 replies to the questionnaire were received.
- Documentation provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection.
- Feedback was given to departments and the headship team during the week of the inspection and to the headship team and governors after the inspection.

E. Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team

Inspector	Type	Aspect Responsibilities	Subject Responsibilities
Miss Glynis Owen	Rgl	Context Main Findings Standards in subjects and key skills Teaching Curriculum Quality of self evaluation and planning Leadership and efficiency Progress since the last inspection Key issues	modern foreign languages
Mr Stephen Page	Lay	Behaviour and attitudes Attendance Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions Partnership with industry	
Mrs Lynn Bithel	Core	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Assessment, recording and reporting	English
Mr Glyn Davies	Core	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare	science
Mr Selwyn Gale	Core	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources Information and communication technology across the curriculum	design and technology information technology
Mr Peredur Francis	Team		mathematics
Mr Zaccheus Davies	Team		Welsh
Dr Patricia Evans	Team		science business studies alternative curriculum
Mrs Pamela Scourfield	Team		child development health and social care catering
Mrs Ruth Powell	Team		history
Mr Huw Llewelyn	Team		geography
Mr Martyn Williams	Team		modern foreign languages
Mr Ivor James	Team		art
Mr John Jenkins	Team		music
Dr Stephen Lloyd	Team		physical education
Mr Michael Munting	Team	Provision for pupils with SEN	

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