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Report Reference

REPORT BY H M INSPECTORS

**NEWTOWN HIGH SCHOOL
DOLFOR ROAD
NEWTOWN
POWYS
SY16 1JE**

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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" ® 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 academic year and so on to Y13 the year group who attain the age of 18 during the academic year.

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

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

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

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1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

Newtown High School is an 11-18 mixed, English-medium comprehensive school serving the town and a large surrounding rural area of North Powys. The school is based on one large campus, expanded from a single main building opened in 1957. The catchment partner primary schools include five schools in the town itself, five schools outside the town, together with some pupils coming from the new Welsh-medium town school (Dafydd Llwyd) and from other outlying primary schools. The primary schools range in size from small village schools of about 30 pupils to town schools of up to 300 pupils.

The school's population has declined since its peak in 1995/6 of 1086 pupils to a current plateau in the mid 900s. Current annual intake levels are consistently in the range 160-180, but sudden fluctuations have affected the roll of the town schools during the last seven years, reflecting changes in the local economic climate.

The mix of the school is fully comprehensive in range, but with a significant proportion of the intake having social disadvantage. Approximately 13% of pupils claim free school meals compared to the Powys average of 8%. However, whilst employment opportunities in the town are generally good, Newtown has three electoral wards which feature prominently in the national social deprivation indices. There is a high proportion of families in rented accommodation and there are casual admissions and departures during the school year. The town's rented accommodation has also been used to house families moved from smaller towns and villages for social reasons. A significant minority of pupils is affected by a poor social fabric to their lives. This change in social background since the last Inspection is reflected in youth offending and SEN statistics for current pupils.

Whilst the surrounding rural economy is depressed as in the rest of rural Wales, this is not reflected in social issues for the school, since the family structure is generally stable.

The academic intake of the school is mixed with a small number showing exceptional performance, whilst more are of average or below average ability. The proportion of pupils with registered special needs and statemented provision has grown since 1977 from 25% and 2.5% to 35% and 4.5% respectively in 2003. In the Sixth Form, approximately 25% of the original Y7 cohort have gone on to Higher Education in the last three years.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

Newtown High School has some strengths but there are significant shortcomings some of which were present at the last inspection. The school has been judged to have serious weaknesses.

Educational Standards Achieved by Pupils

	KS3	KS4	Post-16
Welsh 1 st language	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	-
English	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
Mathematics	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Science	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Welsh 2 nd language	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory
Design and technology	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Information technology	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
History	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good
Geography	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Modern foreign languages	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Art	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Music	Satisfactory	Good	Satisfactory
Physical education	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Religious education	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Personal and social education	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Business studies	-	Good	-
Drama	-	Good	Satisfactory
Economics	-	-	Very Good
Law	-	-	Good
Psychology	-	-	Satisfactory
Vocational AVCE L&R	-	-	Unsatisfactory
Media Studies	-	Good	Good
Child Development	-	Good	-
Catering	-	Satisfactory	-
Motor Vehicle Studies	-	Good	-

The standards achieved by pupils are at least satisfactory in 86% of classes observed and good or very good in 38%. These figures are below the targets set by the National Assembly of 95% and 50%.

- The proportion of lessons with satisfactory or good standards is lowest in KS3 where standards achieved are at least satisfactory in 80% of lessons and good or better in only 28%.
- In KS4, 85% of lessons are satisfactory or better with 50% good or very good; the comparable figures for years 12 and 13 are 96% and 46%.
- These figures indicate that progress has not been made since the last inspection except in the percentage of good or better lessons in KS4.
- In the end of KS3 tests in 2002, results in all three core subjects were close to, or on, the all Wales average but significantly below that of the LEA.
- The percentage of pupils achieving at least level 5 in English and mathematics placed the school in the lowest quartile when compared to schools of a similar nature on national benchmark tables and the percentages in science and the Core Subject Indicator were below the median.
- In KS4 in 2002, the percentage of pupils achieving 5 A*-C grades was an improvement on the previous 3 year average but below the Wales and LEA averages and in the lowest quartile for schools with 11 to 15 percent of pupils entitled to free school meals.
- The percentage achieving 5 A*-G is close to the Wales and LEA performance but below the median on the national benchmark tables.

- The percentage achieving the CSI was well below that of the LEA and Wales and in the bottom quartile on national benchmarks by a significant amount. It was significantly less than the performance in the individual core subjects.

There has been some progress in key skills.

- Standards of reading and writing are, generally, satisfactory across the curriculum.
- Standards of oracy vary widely but standards are, overall, unsatisfactory.
- Standards in numeracy are satisfactory with good work taking place at post 16.
- Skills taught in ICT lessons are insufficiently applied across the curriculum and standards are unsatisfactory.

Ethos of the School

The provision for the spiritual development of pupils is unsatisfactory. The provision for the moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory.

- Statutory requirements are not met either in respect of the act of worship nor in relation to the provision of statutory religious education at post 16.
- Pupils encounter aspects of Welsh life and culture in many subjects, and a significant number of pupils participate in activities such as the Urdd. Overall, however, the Cwricwlwm Cymreig is insufficiently prominent in the life of the school.
- For the most part, pupils display respect and courtesy to each other and to their teachers.
- In a significant minority of classes, particularly at KS3, pupils show insufficient consideration for each other.
- Pupils practise and develop collaborative skills insufficiently across the curriculum.

Overall, the behaviour and attitudes of pupils are unsatisfactory.

- In most classes, pupils behave appropriately but in a significant number of middle and lower ability classes, especially at KS3, poor behaviour has a detrimental effect on the standards achieved and progress made by pupils.
- The school has introduced a number of strategies to promote good behaviour and these are beginning to have a positive impact.

Whole school attendance rates are satisfactory,

- The average attendance for the last three terms was 91%
- The school has been successful in reducing whole school rates of unauthorised absence since the last inspection .
- Unauthorised absence now accounts for less than one per cent of all pupil absence.
- Small numbers of pupils in all year groups have a high level of persistent absence that has an adverse impact on the continuity of their education and the standards they achieve.
- Internal truancy remains a problem.
- Registers are not always marked and maintained correctly.

Quality of Education

During the inspection the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in 86% of the classes observed and good or very good in 43%.

- These figures are significantly below the national targets for 2002 of 95% satisfactory or better, and 50% good or very good.

- The quality of teaching is best in the sixth form where teaching in 94% of classes is satisfactory or better, and 54% good or better.
- It is least good in KS3 where 20% of lessons are unsatisfactory or poor and only 33% good or very good.
- In a significant proportion of lessons teaching is unsatisfactory, with examples of unsatisfactory teaching in every key stage. These lessons lack structure and pace and work is not sufficiently well planned to meet the needs of all pupils in the class.

The quality of assessment and recording is satisfactory and that of reporting is good.

- The school has made progress since the last inspection in the development of a central recording system, pupil self-assessment, the quality of IEPs and reporting to parents.
- There is still insufficient monitoring of assessment across the curriculum to ensure consistency

The quality of curriculum provision is satisfactory. The curriculum is, for the most part, broad and balanced and offers pupils a satisfactory range of experiences.

- The statutory requirement for religious education in the sixth form is not being met.
- Schemes of work vary in standard across the school.
- In the sixth form there is appropriate provision to meet the requirements of students.

The provision for the welfare and guidance of pupils is satisfactory.

- Pupils are well supported and benefit from the positive relationships which exist with individual members of staff.
- The school is seeking to develop a more integrated approach to supporting pupil well-being and academic progress but there is a lack of clarity amongst staff about the respective roles and responsibilities of those involved in pastoral care.
- The social inclusion programme has a positive impact in working with pupils who require particular help and there are beneficial links with support agencies.
- The school implements statutory requirements for child protection.
- Responsibility for health and safety matters is shared amongst various school managers, but there is no clear overview.
- Careers Wales, based at the school, provides good support to students.

Provision for pupils with SEN, is satisfactory.

- The school's SEN policy is satisfactory, and has been produced with due regard to the Code of Practice and associated statutory framework.
- Pupils with identified SEN have full access to the National Curriculum, unless formally disapplied through a statement of SEN or other statutory directions.
- The school places large numbers of pupils on the SEN register, but does not always meet their needs.
- The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) discharges her role well .

The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory and its partnership with the community, schools and other institutions is good.

- Parents are kept well informed by letters, an annual diary of events, an informative prospectus, an annual report of the governing body and by the use of their children's planners.
- The quality of the family handbook is very good.
- The school has developed good pastoral and administrative links with its associated primary schools.

- Arrangements for the transfer of pupils are good.
- Links with institutes of further and higher education are well established and effective

The school's partnership with industry is good.

- The school receives valuable support from local industry, business and commerce.
- The co-ordinator for industry links ensures that procedures are in place to raise pupils' economic and industrial understanding and prepare them for the world of work.

Management

The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is unsatisfactory. Standards of leadership and efficiency are unsatisfactory.

- The school has lost ground in important areas since the last inspection particularly in relation to standards and teaching.
- The headteacher was instrumental in reformulating the aims of the school and in setting key priorities for improvement at the time of the last inspection. However, present aims do not have a strong impact at faculty and subject level and the school lacks a clear sense of a shared vision.
- The governing body is supportive of the school, and are committed to its improvement. They show a good knowledge of some of its strengths but have an insufficient understanding of the information which would allow them to bring a significant measure of challenge in relation to the standards achieved.
- Senior staff support the headteacher and show some strengths in pastoral care and the curriculum.
- The roles and functions of those in leadership positions are not always clear to the teaching staff.
- The general management skills of subject leaders are satisfactory overall, but they are insufficiently involved in monitoring standards in the classroom in order to promote effective approaches to learning.
- Although there is some evidence of monitoring having taken place, the school does not have a strong culture of self- evaluation. The senior management team, heads of faculty and subject leaders do not monitor classes with sufficient rigour to impact upon teaching and standards.
- Development planning is not a strongly established feature of the school.
- Subjects and faculties are insufficiently involved in whole school target setting process. Consequently the targets are not fully understood, shared or owned by the majority of staff and the governing body.
- Although there are clear internal guidelines for financial processes there is, overall, a lack of financial clarity and the governing body is at present unable to agree the annual financial statement.
- Staffing is unsatisfactory. The school is experiencing considerable problems because of staff absences due to sickness and an inability to recruit suitably qualified specialist staff. In a number of curriculum areas, non-specialist staff and some supply staff with insufficient expertise are having an adverse impact upon pupils' learning and the standards they achieve
- Overall, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory with the exception of music and PE

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards Achieved in Subjects and Areas of Learning

The standards achieved by pupils are at least satisfactory in 86% of classes observed and good or very good in 38%. These figures are below the targets set by the National Assembly of 95% and 50%. The proportion of lessons with satisfactory or good standards is lowest in KS3 where standards achieved are at least satisfactory in 80% of lessons and good or better in only 28%. In KS4 85% of lessons are satisfactory or better with 50% good or very good; the comparable figures for years 12 and 13 are 96% and 46%. These figures indicate that progress has not been made since the last inspection except in the percentage of good or better lessons in KS4.

In **key stage 3**, standards of achievement are:

- good in modern foreign languages and personal and social education.
- satisfactory in Welsh first language, science, Welsh second language, design and technology, information technology, history, geography, art and music.
- unsatisfactory in English, mathematics, physical education and religious education.

In **key stage 4**, standards of achievement are:

- good in Welsh second language, history, geography, music, business studies, drama, media studies, child development and motor vehicle maintenance.
- satisfactory in Welsh first language, English, mathematics, science, design and technology, information technology, modern foreign languages, physical education, personal and social education and catering.
- unsatisfactory in art and religious education.

In the **sixth form** standards of achievement are:

- very good in history and economics.
- good in English, biology, geography, law and media studies.
- satisfactory in mathematics, physics, chemistry, Welsh second language, design and technology, information technology, modern foreign languages, art, music, physical education, personal and social education, psychology and drama.
- unsatisfactory in religious education and vocational leisure and recreation.

In the end of KS3 tests in 2002, results in all three core subjects were close to or on the all Wales average but significantly below that of the LEA. Additionally, the percentage of pupils achieving at least level 5 in English and mathematics placed the school in the lowest quartile when compared to schools of a similar nature on national benchmark tables. The percentages in science and the Core Subject Indicator were below the median. The percentage of pupils achieving the CSI was considerably less than that for the separate subjects. Differences in achievement between boys and girls were insignificant in mathematics and science and smaller than the LEA in English.

In KS4 in 2002, the percentage of pupils achieving 5 A*-C grades was an improvement on the previous 3 year average but below the Wales and LEA averages and in the lowest quartile for schools with 11 to 15 percent of pupils entitled to free school meals. The difference in performance between boys and girls (8 percentage points) is smaller than the Wales or LEA average. The percentage achieving 5 A*-G is close to the Wales and LEA performance but below the median on the national benchmark tables. The percentage achieving the CSI was well below that of the LEA and Wales and in the bottom quartile on national benchmarks by a significant amount. It was significantly less than the performance in the individual core subjects.

In 2002, 42% of students entered for A-level or equivalent achieved at least 2 grades A-C. This is below the Wales average of 66% and LEA figure of 71%. The percentage achieving at least 2 grades A-E was 86% compared to 94% in Wales and 96% in the LEA.

Able pupils and those with SEN achieve satisfactory standards in both KS3 and KS4 but pupils of below average ability make unsatisfactory progress in KS3 in English, mathematics, history, and geography and in both KS3 and KS4 in design and technology, PE and RE. Standards are unsatisfactory for pupils of average ability in KS3 in English and RE.

3.2 Standards Achieved in Key Skills across the Curriculum

Literacy

In general, standards of reading across subject and faculty areas are satisfactory. Pupils in SEN classes make good progress in developing fluency and understanding and those in more able classes show that they can read both accurately and fluently. Pupils benefit in several subject areas from opportunities to read aloud, which they take with a good measure of success, but this skill is not developed across the curriculum. The display of key words in science, geography, modern foreign languages, mathematics and in design technology helpfully reinforces pupils' grasp of important vocabulary. Media studies makes a good contribution to widening pupils' reading and they consequently make good progress in developing responses to a variety of visual and written text. At post 16, students develop their reading beyond the bounds of the syllabus and in English, history and geography they show the ability to engage in individual research and to effectively summarise what they have learned.

Standards of writing are, overall, satisfactory. In classes for SEN, progress in writing is good with pupils gaining the confidence to tackle a range of forms at appropriate length and with growing control over written conventions. More able pupils are able to write fluently and often at length. There are good examples of extended writing in history and in English and more generally in the sixth form. In several subjects such as geography and PE, pupils take helpful notes. Good writing skills are demonstrated in some ICT classes with pupils responding well to focussed tasks. While there has been progress in this area, shortcomings remain. In some classes, as in science, pupils have too few opportunities to extend their writing. There is a tendency in a significant number of classes throughout the school for pupils to present their work in an untidy fashion.

Standards in oracy vary widely throughout the school but are, in general, unsatisfactory. There are examples of good and, on occasions, very good work taking place, especially in the sixth form. In economics and history for example, students can debate and share their ideas. In some classes in English they show an ability to raise their own questions and to build upon the responses of others. In KS4, more able pupils often answer questions and draw conclusions confidently, as in science lessons. There are, however, several shortcomings, which are most apparent at KS3 where good quality oracy is used too infrequently across the curriculum as a tool for learning. In mathematics for example, standards are often adversely affected by limited opportunities for oral work and, in English, responses to whole class discussion are often hesitant and unextended. Pupils rarely raise their own questions in geography and, in art there are few opportunities for pupils to develop their ideas through structured discussion. In a minority of lessons, undisciplined oral contributions, particularly from boys, have an adverse effect upon pupils' learning. For the small number of pupils who receive the curriculum in part through Welsh, standards of literacy are satisfactory.

Numeracy

Standards of achievement in numeracy are satisfactory in KS3 and 4 and good in the sixth form.

Pupils measure accurately using the correct units in science, design and technology, geography and drama. They can construct and interpret data from a reasonable range of graphs in Welsh, business

studies, geography and MFL. In history, economics and law, a variety of numerical and graphical data is interpreted to a confident standard. In science the more able can correctly identify lines of best fit. Pupils can use estimation and calculate using fractions in business studies and are able to perform calculations involving time and money in MFL. They can use formulae and numbers in spreadsheets in ICT and the more able can manipulate simple formulae and solve equations in science. In PE pupils can analyse electrocardiographs and use the correct language to identify and describe mathematical shapes. However, less able pupils are generally not confident in using the correct units in measurements and lower ability year 7 pupils show difficulty in calculating percentages in English. In KS4, a range of pupils are not secure in knowing basic facts and do not have strategies to derive them.

At A level, measurement is good in design technology. In geography students use a challenging and diverse range of statistics and analyse graphical models well and, in physics and mathematics, they can manipulate equations and formulae and interpret and plot exponential and logarithmic functions.

ICT

Standards of ICT across the curriculum are unsatisfactory. While skills are taught in the discrete ICT lesson, these are insufficiently applied in practice across the curriculum. There are examples of ICT being used effectively. In Welsh, for example, pupils create attractive presentations using Powerpoint and in music ICT is used effectively in composition. Pupils also show the ability to use the Internet for research especially in, history, geography and economics. Overall, however, ICT is insufficiently exploited to enhance learning. While media studies produces good standards of work, it could be further enhanced by the use of additional ICT applications. In science there are examples of ICT being embedded in physics but generally it is an underused resource, as it is in mathematics. Several departments cite difficulty of access as a contributory factor to lack of development in this area, although existing availability is not fully exploited. The standards achieved in business studies through the Coleg Powys link are good.

In general, sixth form students show good levels of key skills and benefit from an effective accredited course.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, social and Cultural Development

The provision for the spiritual development of pupils is unsatisfactory. The provision for the moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory.

The provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Assemblies are predominantly Christian in character. In the best examples, pupils are able to participate actively in the act of worship, listen attentively and with some reverence. Good use is also made of visiting speakers. Provision for classroom worship is variable with most classes providing a "thought for the day", but in a minority of classes there is little or no provision made. Consequently, the statutory requirement is not being met. In subjects such as science, English, drama and R.E. there are some opportunities for reflection, but overall, pupils do not reflect sufficiently in lessons.

In RE there is little provision for the development of pupils' spirituality. There is insufficient provision for RE at KS4 and RE is not taught to sixth form pupils. Therefore the statutory requirements are not being met.

Pupils, moral development is satisfactory. Moral issues are raised in assemblies, and in areas of the curriculum such as in English, drama, media, history and in A level law. In the recently introduced PSE and APAUSE, sex education and relationships programme, moral matters are also discussed and reflected upon. The school places appropriate emphasis on developing good behaviour and has made some progress in this since the last inspection. The majority of staff provide good role models. Pupils are treated with politeness and respect, and for the most part, display respect and courtesy to each other and to their teachers. In a significant minority of classes, particularly at key stage 3, pupils show insufficient consideration for each other.

Pupils, social development is satisfactory. Where pupils have the opportunity to work in small groups or pairs, in the majority of cases they respond positively. In subjects such as science, drama and music pupils develop useful social and collaborative skills. Overall, however, they practise and develop these skills insufficiently across all subjects. This is particularly the case with middle ability pupils in KS3. Sixth form students use and develop

their social skills by working with younger pupils in reading and relationships education. This has done much to foster good relationships between older and younger pupils and has helped younger pupils to learn. Pupils' involvement in the school council allows them to participate in whole school discussions and they also benefit from an extensive range of extra curricular activities, business enterprise projects, trips and visits, They also take part in regular concerts and drama productions and are able to demonstrate their care for others by organising activities to raise money for charities and good causes.

The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils encounter aspects of Welsh life and culture in many subjects. A small number of pupils follow courses in art, history and geography through the medium of Welsh, and also study Welsh as their first language. A significant number of pupils participate in activities related to the Welsh dimension, but overall, the Cwricwlwm Cymreig does not feature prominently in the life of the school. The school governing body has recently adopted a policy for racial equality in line with statutory requirements, but this has not yet been shared fully with all staff. Strategies to promote racial harmony are not yet fully in place and procedures for monitoring racist incidents are at an early stage of development. Awareness of other cultures and an appreciation of cultural diversity are promoted in music, RE, art and dance, and through PSE lessons and in assemblies. Pupils, especially those in the sixth form, participate in cultural, civic and environmental projects and also enjoy drama and music activities and events. Some pupils also benefit from both local and foreign visits and links with other European schools.

4.2 Behaviour and Attitude

Overall, the behaviour and attitudes of pupils are unsatisfactory.

Through its prospectus and revised aims, the school emphasises its high expectations in relation to pupil behaviour.

For the most part, the school is an organised community. The majority of pupils move around the school sensibly at most times and are courteous towards staff and towards each other. The vast majority of pupils are also friendly towards visitors.

In most classes pupils behave appropriately. In these classes, relationships between students and teachers are good and a majority of pupils displays positive attitudes towards their work. When opportunities for independent and collaborative work arise, pupils concentrate and persevere with their work and support each other well.

In a significant minority of classes, and especially in middle and lower ability classes at KS3, poor behaviour and attitudes to learning have a detrimental effect on the standards achieved and progress made by pupils and, therefore, the behaviour and attitudes of pupils are unsatisfactory overall

One of the aims of the school development plan is to improve standards of behaviour. This concern is mirrored by a high proportion of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Behaviour has been the subject of an independent school review.

A Behaviour Management Working Group, which includes governing body representation, has been established, and a number of strategies and procedures has been introduced to better promote good behaviour. Overall, these are beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of pupil behaviour. There are clear and comprehensive procedures for dealing with pupils who behave poorly, together with policies related to bullying.

Pupil planners are an effective means of drawing attention to and monitoring pupils' behaviour and their attitude towards work. In most classes they are regularly checked by form tutors. The use of rewards has a positive effect on pupil motivation and behaviour in KS3, but less impact on KS4 pupils. The use of a referral form to notify senior managers of praiseworthy or difficult behaviour is developing within the school, and pupils have responded positively to the school's postcard initiative whereby the headteacher personally sends a postcard home to pupils who have demonstrated good behaviour, work or effort. The regular pupil progress reviews are also helpful in maintaining focus on pupil behaviour and attitudes to work. The degree to which these strategies are understood and used throughout the school varies considerably.

Pupils who are identified as displaying unacceptable behaviour are subject to informal and formal discussion between form tutors and heads of year. Where it is deemed appropriate, pupils are placed on a report card and this is an effective mechanism for monitoring their behaviour over time. The use of the withdrawal room has been beneficial in ensuring that unruly pupils are removed from the classroom environment and have time to reflect and calm down. A clear procedure for referring students enables tracking of individual student behaviour, and an analysis of pupil referrals has also provided useful information regarding staff use of the referral system.

During the last year the school has made use of temporary exclusions for a variety of reasons. In a majority of cases, the suspensions have had a positive effect. Pupils return to school following parental consultation and are supported through individual learning programmes.

4.3 Attendance

Attendance rates are satisfactory.

Whole school attendance rates are satisfactory, averaging 91% for the past three terms. Attendance rates in years 10 and 11 compare less favourably with other year groups, both achieving under 90%. The school has been successful in reducing whole school rates of unauthorised absence since the last inspection. Unauthorised absence now accounts for less than one per cent of all pupil absence. Unauthorised absence remains highest in Y11 where it averages between two and three per cent annually.

Small numbers of pupils in all year groups have a high level of persistent absence. This has an adverse impact on the continuity of their education and the standards they achieve. Many other pupils have their progress impeded because of sporadic absence throughout the school year. The school makes efforts to minimise the disruption caused by absence and most teachers support pupils when they return to school, but a significant minority of pupils do not complete work missed. The school works diligently to develop positive attitudes in pupils towards attending school regularly, and good attendance is celebrated and rewarded throughout the school. A number of pupils, particularly in KS3, have good records of attendance.

Registration is conducted at the start of morning and afternoon sessions but is sometimes hampered by the late arrival of a minority of pupils. Registers are not always marked and maintained correctly. A number are untidy, completed in pencil and lacking in statutory data. Some tutors are not rigorous in recording pupils' attendance and absence in registers at the start of the day; this has health and safety implications as the school does not always have a full and accurate daily record of attendance. Last year's registers were not available for scrutiny.

Given the open nature of the school site, the school recognises that internal truancy is an on-going problem. The school's policy is that registers should be called early in lessons, but levels of internal truancy continue to vary significantly between subjects. Absences of targeted individuals or unusual patterns of attendance should be reported to the heads of year but this policy is not implemented consistently.

The deputy headteacher with responsibility for attendance works closely with the heads of year to monitor attendance. Follow-up procedures are consistently applied. Since the beginning of the academic year, the school has employed a part-time attendance officer who contacts parents on the first day of absence. Whilst this has not yet had a significant impact on the improvement of attendance rates, the monitoring of individual pupils' attendance is more rigorous. The school enjoys a good working relationship with the EWO. Regular meetings contribute to effective monitoring and to the development of further strategies to improve attendance. The school has set an appropriate target of 92% for whole school attendance, but is finding this challenging; attendance rates this term have been lower than usual because of seasonal illnesses.

The school makes every effort to implement the National Assembly for Wales circular 3/99 *Pupil Support and Social Inclusion*. Working closely with relevant external agencies and the EWO, the school has initiated a number of alternative strategies for dealing with disaffection and irregular attendance. Programmes such as The Youth Service 'InformEd' and Powys Training initiatives are having a positive impact on attendance rates, and hence achievement, for individual pupils.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

During the inspection the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in 86% of the classes observed and good or very good in 43%. These figures are significantly below the national targets for 2002 of 95% satisfactory or better and 50% good or very good.

The quality of teaching is best in the sixth form where teaching in 94% of classes was satisfactory or better, and 54% good or better. It is least good in KS3 where it was unsatisfactory or poor in 20% of lessons and good or better in only 33%. In KS4, 88% of the teaching is satisfactory or better, with 50% good or very good.

Teacher's knowledge and understanding is good in most subjects. However, the use of non-specialist teachers, particularly in KS3, has a significant impact on the quality of teaching and the standards of achievement.

Where teaching is good, teachers set high expectations, relationships are good and pupils are encouraged to achieve good standards. Lessons are well structured with distinct timed episodes, a variety of activities and a good pace. Clear lesson objectives are shared with pupils and effective lesson introductions gain pupils' interest and build on previous work. Good use is made of questioning to involve pupils, to probe their understanding and to draw extended responses from them.

In a significant proportion of lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory, with examples of unsatisfactory teaching occurring in every key stage. These lessons are characterised by tasks which lack challenge and do not take account of pupils' prior knowledge. Narrow questioning does not probe pupils' understanding and work is not planned sufficiently well to meet the needs of all pupils in the class. Lessons lack structure and pace and, after brief exposition, pupils work individually for too long and do not remain on task or make progress. Exposition is over prescriptive and pupils are not challenged to think for themselves.

In a few lessons, mainly in KS3, teaching is poor. In all these lessons relationships between teachers and pupils are weak and teachers have limited strategies for control of the class. Lessons are poorly prepared, disjointed and lack pace and low level tasks do not engage pupils. Pupils move off task continually and cause disruption.

5.2 Assessment, Recording and Reporting

The quality of assessment and recording is satisfactory and that of reporting is good.

The school has a policy for assessment, recording and reporting, which is currently under review. All departments have policies in line with the current school policy. Improvement of the school assessment system is one of the main objectives of the school development plan. A recently appointed co-ordinator has introduced a central recording system to improve consistency in assessment across the school. However there is insufficient monitoring of assessment practices across the curriculum.

The use made of assessments to improve standards of achievement is satisfactory. The marking of pupils' work is generally conscientious but is inconsistent between and within departments and does not give pupils specific advice on how to improve their work. In English useful comments are provided which note strengths and weaknesses but, in a number of other departments, comments focus overly on presentational and attitudinal features. The use of pupil self-assessment as a strategy to involve pupils in their own learning is starting to become a feature in several departments such as Welsh, English, French and ICT. However, in a number of departments this is an undeveloped strategy.

In some departments, portfolios have been established which exemplify pupils' work and are effectively used to promote a common understanding of standards but there is inconsistency of approach across the school. Recently the school has introduced a useful system for pupil self-assessment during extended PSE time, which consists of pupils analysing their strengths and weaknesses, setting targets, and reviewing progress. The quality of pupil analysis and review demonstrates that pupils are both constructive and mature in their reflection, but that the targets set are often too general to be of use. There was no obvious mechanism for these targets to return to subject departments to inform the planning of subject teachers. The recording of personal targets by pupils is inconsistent across the school. The standard of IEP for pupils with SEN is good and has improved since the last inspection.

There is a recently developed central system which records, on a regular basis, the effort and achievement of pupils across both KS3 and 4. The system is further refined in the sixth form. It is a useful mechanism, not only for tracking pupils but also for allowing the production of interim reports upon which parents can comment in the pupils' personal planners. Departments use analyses of external examination and test results including some value added measures. The use of comparative data which relates the performance of the school to others of a similar nature is underdeveloped. The process of setting whole school targets for pupil performance insufficiently involves all subject areas.

Annual reports to parents conform to statutory requirements. The teachers' comments are generally of good quality and the reports usefully indicate the work covered by the pupils as well as providing overall grades for effort, attainment, behaviour and homework. Targets are set by teachers, but often

these are not subject specific and as a consequence provide little guidance for pupils. Parents are encouraged to respond to the reports in their children's planners, which have become a well-used mechanism for communication between home and school.

The school has made progress since the last inspection in the development of a central recording system, pupil self-assessment and in the quality of pupils IEPs and reporting to parents.

5.3 Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum provision is satisfactory.

The curriculum provided by the school is, for the most part, broad and balanced and offers pupils a satisfactory range of experiences. The provision allows pupils to have equal access and opportunity. However the statutory requirement for the provision of religious education for all pupils is not being met in the sixth form. In KS4, insufficient time is provided for RE. Schemes of work vary in standard across the school. Some, as in child development, economics and MFL are comprehensive and provide good guidance to teachers whilst others, such as in mathematics at KS3 and R.E. at both KS3 and KS4, are unsatisfactory. There are 29 pupils with appropriate modifications to the National Curriculum and pupils are placed on a social inclusion programme. For both groups of pupils there is satisfactory alternative provision. Pupils with SEN at KS3 have reduced time in Welsh to provide extra support for basic skills. The school meets the recommended 25 hours per week of teaching time.

On entry to KS3, pupils are carefully placed into a banding system based upon information received from the primary phase. An SEN group is integrated into one of the bands and the arrangement appropriately allows for the composition of the SEN group to differ according to subject. As pupils move through the Key Stage, the curriculum progressively allows for most departments to set by ability. Setting arrangements are not always effectively employed to match work to pupils' abilities, especially in middle to lower ability sets. In year 9, for more able pupils a second foreign language is successfully introduced with the allocation to French being reduced by one period. There is provision of a single period of discrete ICT in each year but ICT skills are insufficiently developed throughout the curriculum. There is a small Welsh medium group for a range of subjects throughout the Key Stage.

In KS4, all pupils study the subjects of Welsh, English, mathematics, science, physical education, PSE and RE. In addition, pupils choose from a broad range of subjects from four option blocks, which includes provision for both GCSE and CoEA courses. The provision of a single lesson for Welsh as a core subject is insufficient. The GCSE single science course has an inappropriately generous allocation of time. There are good links with Coleg Powys for business studies and motor vehicle maintenance.

In the sixth form, every effort is made to ensure provision of courses which meet with students' requirements. There is an appropriate range of examination courses provided including AS and A level courses, and a GNVQ course in Leisure and Recreation. In Y12, in psychology, the group number is unduly large. Key skills is effectively planned and delivered with students benefiting from an accredited course.

Planning for the development of key skills across the curriculum in literacy and numeracy is generally satisfactory but in ICT it is unsatisfactory. Planning for the development of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig is very good in history and is satisfactory in most other subjects. There is a homework timetable and

homework is generally set on a regular basis across the school. The majority of pupils record the homework in their planners and these are regularly checked by form tutors.

The PSE programme is effective and well planned, and includes guidance on careers and on a range of social and health issues. The program conforms with the PSE framework.

There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities which enrich the curriculum including sporting, musical, industrial, fund raising and charity events. There are also opportunities for pupils to travel both in this country and abroad.

5.4 Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare

The provision for the welfare and guidance of pupils is satisfactory. Most benefit from the positive relationships which exist with many individual members of staff.

The school is developing a more integrated approach to supporting pupil well-being and academic progress and has recently revised its management structure to include coordinators for KS3 and KS4. There is a lack of clarity amongst staff about the respective roles and responsibilities of form tutors, heads of year, key stage co-ordinators and senior managers with responsibility for academic monitoring. There are good informal links which ensure that the needs of pupils with particular concerns are addressed. Staff briefing time is used effectively to pass on any information about individual pupils to the whole staff. Form tutors and heads of year generally work well together. The deputy headteacher who is pastoral coordinator, together with other senior managers, spends a considerable amount of time dealing with individual pupil issues.

The school's pastoral system is based on year groups. In most cases, form tutors get to know their pupils well. Tutor period time is not always well used; in a small number of classes, relationships between tutors and a minority of pupils are unsatisfactory.

There are good pastoral links between the school and its local primary schools and the procedures for ensuring that pupils settle quickly and happily in Y7 are mostly effective.

Pupils are well supported during transition from KS3 to KS4 and also from Y11 into Y12. Sixth form students are given good support from subject teachers, tutors and from the head of sixth form. Most respond well to the many opportunities provided to take on responsibility within the school, especially in relation to supporting charities and younger pupils.

Most form tutors monitor pupil progress and discuss targets for improvement with pupils. Not all pupils have, however, set themselves targets and in many cases the targets set are insufficiently specific to help them move forward. Some subject areas provide opportunities for pupils to attend subject support sessions at lunch times

Regular links between the school and a wide range of agencies cater for the specific needs of individual pupils.

The social inclusion programme has a positive impact on pupils who require particular support and helps them to re-integrate into mainstream classes.

Safety procedures for pupils are mainly satisfactory, and the school implements statutory requirements for child protection. There are two members of staff who have received first aid training. Responsibility for health and safety matters is shared amongst various school managers, and as such

there is no clear overview. There are clear guidelines and procedures for dealing with a range of pupil medical conditions. The school adopts the local authority procedures for school trips and visits, and risk assessments are carried out for these events. There are few other risk assessments undertaken. The appointment of a site manager has improved the ability of the school to address particular site needs effectively. A few health and safety issues were brought to the attention of the school during the week of the inspection.

Daily supervision procedures within the school are generally effective.

There are two officers employed by Careers Wales based at the school, who offer good support to students.

5.5 Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Provision for pupils with SEN is satisfactory.

The school's SEN policy has been produced with due regard to the Code of Practice and associated statutory framework. The policy, and other documented guidance for use across the school, is satisfactory. Pupils with identified SEN are well integrated into the school and have full access to the National Curriculum, unless formally disapplied through a statement of SEN or other statutory directions. While the school places large numbers of pupils on the SEN register, their needs are not always met.

Provision for pupils with SEN at KS4, being delivered within the alternative curriculum or 'social inclusion' area, is satisfactory but is in the early stages of development.

Pupils identified as having a specific learning difficulty in literacy at KS3 and KS4 are targeted with support through a number of strategies. Provision for these pupils is good and standards achieved by pupils are often good and sometimes very good. There is a high level of parent and pupil satisfaction.

Individual pupils at KS3 and KS4, with a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and associated learning difficulties, receive additional LSA support. They often achieve satisfactory or better standards. LSAs receive insufficient guidance, particularly in relation to supporting pupils with EBD. Health and safety protocols for some pupils, including appropriate risk assessments, are not in place.

In KS3, the provision of small groups benefits some pupils with other identified needs. This is particularly the case where work is carefully matched to pupils' abilities and where appropriate support is provided. In those lessons where work is unsatisfactory it is associated with teaching which provides inadequate levels of challenge. The large number of other pupils placed on the register are not always well-catered for within other classes.

The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) discharges her role well. Liaison with parents, governors, outside agencies, feeder primary schools and local special schools is good. Record keeping and assessment procedures are also good and reviews are in line with statutory requirements. The administrative support for SEN is good.

The school has a large team of LSAs. Their working practices are evolving and are generally satisfactory. However, there are inconsistencies in the extent to which they have opportunities to plan together with teachers.

The monitoring of the school's provision for SEN is insufficiently developed. The impact of expenditure on pupil achievement is not rigorously evaluated. The governing body's annual report to parents, which is required to report upon the effectiveness of the school's SEN policy, is unsatisfactory in this respect.

Since the last inspection good progress has been made in development of IEPs.

5.6 Partnerships with Parents and Community, Schools and Other Institutions

The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory and its partnership with the community, schools and other institutions is good.

The headteacher and staff recognise the need to involve more parents in the life of the school and partnership with parents continues to be a priority for the school. Many parents are supportive of the school and state that their children are happy and well supported by staff. However, in the parents' questionnaires returned to the inspection team, a significant number of parents expressed concerns about standards of behaviour in the school and the adverse impact that staff absence is having on standards.

Parents are kept well informed by letters, an annual diary of events, an informative prospectus, an annual report of the governing body and by the use of their children's planners. The quality of the family handbook is very good and provides parents with comprehensive information about the life and work of the school. Parents have the opportunity to meet with teachers annually to discuss their children's work and progress, but attendance at these meetings is sometimes disappointing. Parents have ready access to the headteacher and senior staff when required. A home/school agreement has been drawn up and sent to parents.

The school's active Friends of Newtown High School makes a valuable contribution to the life and work of the school. Though small in number, the association organises social and fundraising events that enhance links with the local community and provide the school with a valuable source of additional income. Funds raised are used purposefully to augment learning resources and enhance the school environment. Parents are supportive of concerts and the annual awards evening held at the school. Overall, despite efforts made by the school, parents' involvement is limited.

The school has developed good pastoral and administrative links with its associated primary schools. Arrangements for the transfer of pupils are good. Most pupils approach secondary school with confidence, feel welcomed and settle in well. Their pastoral care is carefully monitored and good support is offered to them, especially during their first weeks in the school. There are curriculum links in a minority of subjects. Liaison meetings, joint projects, teacher exchanges, a sharing of ideas and resources and bridging units that span Y6 and Y7 help ease transition. Links with institutes of further and higher education are well established and effective. Older pupils have the opportunity to attend open days and further education forums, which they find helpful. The school's productive partnerships with Coleg Powys and Cedewain Special School are particularly beneficial to pupils.

The school enjoys an effective partnership with initial teacher training institutions through the Marches Consortium and student teachers regularly undertake placements at the school. A successful monitoring and mentoring programme is in place and student teachers make a positive contribution to some subject departments.

The school plays a prominent part in the life of the community, regularly supporting a range of community initiatives. Pupils, especially those in the sixth form, regularly serve the community by taking part in cultural, civic and environmental projects. Fund-raising for local and national charities is a successful feature of school life. The school is justly proud of its partnership with other schools in

Europe through Association Horizon; pupils' personal, social and cultural development has been enhanced by these productive links.

Overall, the school's partnerships with the community, schools and other institutions have a positive impact on pupils' learning, standards and personal development. The impact of parental involvement is more limited.

5.7 Partnership with Industry

The school's partnership with industry is good.

The school receives valuable support from local industry, business and commerce. The co-ordinator for industry links ensures that procedures are in place to raise pupils' economic and industrial understanding and to prepare them for the world of work.

The school has taken appropriate account of the Framework for Work-Related Education (WRE) and pupils are provided with a well planned programme of events to enhance their industrial understanding and give them insight into employment. Events such as Y9 Project Business, the sixth form residential business conference and participation in Young Enterprise schemes are well supported by local employers and give pupils valuable insight into work and industrial and economic decision making. Pupils speak with confidence about their enterprise activities and are knowledgeable about the design, manufacture and marketing of products. Staff, pupils and parents are justly proud of the recognition the school has received, both locally and nationally, for its enterprise activities.

The school has no careers co-ordinator but the PSE co-ordinator has made a valuable contribution to careers education and guidance for pupils. He ensures careers education receives appropriate attention in the PSE programme. Working closely with Careers Wales Powys, the school provides pupils with good careers guidance.

Work experience, undertaken in Y10, is well organised and monitored. Post 16 students have the option to undertake work experience during the holidays. The school receives good support from parents and pupils who are encouraged to seek relevant placements themselves. Careers Wales Powys successfully arranges placements for those pupils who are unable to find their own. The success of the programme is evident in the positive response of many pupils who view their placements as good preparation for employment.

The school has working relationships with a number of relevant agencies including Education and Learning in Wales (ELWa) and the Welsh Development Agency (WDA). Few teachers have undertaken any recent relevant placements in industry, business and commerce but the school is actively considering a number of placements being made available this year.

Overall, pupils' motivation and learning have been enhanced considerably by the school's commitment to WRE and its good partnership with industry.

6. Management

6.1 Quality of Self-Evaluation and Planning for Improvement

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

The school evaluates the standards it achieves using a combination of standardized test data, external examinations, SATS data and value added data. Managers at subject, faculty, whole school and governing body levels receive this information which has been used to improve some areas of school performance. The school makes insufficient use of data to compare its own performance with similar schools across Wales. Only in mathematics, English and science is data beginning to lead to appropriate actions for improvement. Overall the use of data is insufficiently shared or understood to provide a basis at either subject or whole school level to inform actions and to determine priorities.

Since the last inspection, there has been some development in monitoring and evaluating standards and the quality of provision. The headteacher and members of the senior management team link to faculty areas and are generally supportive. They make short visits to lessons, meet with heads of faculty, note good practice and have a system for annual reviews. The school has also used external consultants to support its evaluation procedures. There is some in class monitoring of supply and newly appointed teachers. However, the senior management team, heads of faculty and subject leaders do not visit classes sufficiently to promote high standards nor to share good teaching practice. Overall, procedures are implemented inconsistently across faculties. There is a considerable variation in rigour with a consequent loss of impact for improvement.

The whole school action plan is updated following the publication of examination results. It broadly identifies areas for improvement, relying heavily on faculty development plans to provide detailed action. However, rigorous, detailed development planning is not well established especially in relation to success criteria. Actions at whole school and faculty level are not related to quantitative targets. In a significant number of faculties and subjects, development plans are drawn up without reference to whole school planning. Some subjects do not have development plans. The process of whole school target setting does not sufficiently involve faculties and subjects. Consequently the targets are not fully understood, shared or owned by the majority of staff and the governing body.

6.2 Leadership and Efficiency

Standards of leadership and efficiency are unsatisfactory. The school has been successful in creating a caring ethos which is valued by many parents. However, since the last inspection, progress on key issues has been slow and in a number of important areas such as in standards of achievement and in the quality of teaching the school has lost ground.

The headteacher was instrumental in reformulating the aims of the school and in setting key priorities for improvement at the time of the last inspection. However, these aims do not have a strong impact at faculty and subject level and the school lacks a sense of a strong shared vision.

The governing body is supportive of the school, is committed to its improvement and shows a good knowledge of some of its strengths. Governors link profitably to subject departments in order to get to know the school at first-hand, have discussed curriculum issues and received presentations from appropriate heads of faculties. Recently, they have also engaged in an analysis of strengths and weaknesses which has involved taking views from parents, pupils and the teaching staff. They have also usefully focussed attention upon pupil behaviour, finance and the quality of the site. In general however, they have an insufficient understanding of the information which would allow them to bring a significant measure of challenge in relation to the standards achieved by the school.

Senior staff support the headteacher, and show strengths in curriculum organisation pastoral support and pupil guidance. They are linked to subject areas and the fortnightly focus on a common theme such as punctuality or using praise in the classroom has, helpfully, brought a degree of coherence to their work around the school. Since the last inspection, with the headteacher, they have also monitored work in some classrooms and there have been some successes in using what has been learned to move forward. In general, however, there has been insufficient impact upon standards or the quality of teaching.

The school has placed a suitable emphasis upon developing the skills of middle managers. While the general management skills of subject leaders are satisfactory overall, there has been little improvement since the last inspection in respect of their monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. Lessons are not systematically visited to share and celebrate good practice, to promote high standards nor to move forward effective teaching approaches.

Perceptions about the roles and functions of those in leadership positions are not always clear to the teaching staff. Faculty structures are generally secure when there is a close relationship between the constituent subjects as in English, mathematics and science. In other areas such as expressive arts and humanities, communication routes between the various subject areas and with the senior management team lack clarity. The appointment of four cross curricular managers is a helpful development in harnessing the abilities of senior staff to influence learning and is beginning to coordinate work across subject areas. At present, however, their roles are evolving rather than secure and are hampered by heavy work loads. There is also a lack of clarity about how their functions relate to others in the school.

Day to day routines are generally satisfactory and the regular briefings are a good conduit for communicating essential information. The staff handbook is a well organised and useful document but there are policies which are still not in place.

The day to day financial management of the school is overseen by a sub committee of the governing body who receives reports of expenditure on a regular basis. There is evidence of efficiency savings achieved by the appointment of a site manager. The school has accumulated a surplus which it has now committed to development projects, but indications are that it is currently running at a significant annual deficit and that the school will need to take action to maintain appropriate balances. Although there are clear internal guidelines for financial processes which have been recently produced, there is, overall, a lack of financial clarity and the governing body is at present unable to agree the annual financial statement.

As in the last inspection, the school does not meet its statutory requirements in relation to collective worship and statutory religious education.

6.3 Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources

Overall, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory. Staffing is unsatisfactory.

Staffing.

The school has 55 full time teachers, including the headteacher, two deputies and an assistant head. There are eight part time teachers, giving a full time equivalent teaching staff of 59. The pupil teacher ratio of 16.1:1 and a contact time of 76.5% is broadly in line with national averages. 85% of teachers are graduates and the school has a balanced mix of experienced teachers, recently qualified teachers and teachers with some experience in industry.

The school is experiencing considerable problems because of staff absences due to sickness and an inability to recruit suitably qualified specialist staff. In a number of curriculum areas, non-specialist staff and some supply staff with insufficient expertise are having an adverse impact upon pupils' learning and the standards they achieve. This is evident in English, Welsh, mathematics, IT, RE, and Leisure.

A staff development programme is in place that recognises whole school and individual teachers' training needs. Whole school in-service training (INSET) has focussed on behaviour, performance management and middle management training this academic year. Heads of faculty have the responsibility of assessing training needs within their faculties and most teachers undertake some

training. In some subjects, appropriate links are made between individual and departmental needs in the training undertaken. However, the extent of the links between staff development and the priorities identified in departmental development plans, as well as the evaluation of the effects of training on teaching and learning, vary considerably between subject areas. In some areas, such as science, D&T, MFL and drama, training has had a beneficial impact; in other areas the impact is much less in evidence. There is limited monitoring of staff development and of the impact of staff development on standards of achievement. The school has, however, achieved IIP status.

The non-teaching staff, both clerical and technical, provide generally good support across a wide range of responsibilities and duties. Within classrooms, the deployment of support staff is variable. In drama and SEN classes, support staff provide good assistance, understand the lesson objectives, are actively involved in pupils' learning and contribute to the good standards achieved. In other lessons, the impact of support staff on learning and the standards achieved is less in evidence.

In recent years, the school has employed a number of newly qualified teachers (NQTs). An effective monitoring and mentoring induction programme is in place for all new staff, and NQTs receive good support and guidance.

Accommodation.

The development of the accommodation and the school site continues to be a priority identified in the school action plan. The original main building was opened in 1957 and since then various buildings have been added, including a sixth form block and a technology block. The quality of accommodation in the technology block is very good and provides pupils with a very good learning environment. There is adequate accommodation for the 947 pupils on roll; the official accommodation figure is 1129.

Since the last inspection, the organisation of the maintenance, repair and cleaning of the school has been delegated to the governing body. They have been actively involved in the development of the accommodation and grounds and the appointment of an experienced site manager has had a positive impact on this development. A rolling programme of interior refurbishment is in place and a site development plan identifies future priorities. A health and safety audit of the accommodation and site was carried out in November 2002 and the school is working diligently to rectify the shortcomings identified. All subject departments are required to have a health and safety policy and risk assessment in place; in practice an insufficient number of departments meet this requirement,

Most subject departments benefit from being located in suites of rooms in close proximity. The quality of the accommodation for music and PE changing facilities is poor. The quality of display throughout the school varies considerably between subject departments. It is good in mathematics, Welsh, English, D&T and history. The overall display of pupils' work enhances the learning environment.

The school has extensive grounds, and management of the open site is problematic. The installation of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) has reduced rates of vandalism and illegal entry. In general, pupils treat the building and grounds with respect. There is very little graffiti evident. Pupils are actively involved in improving the school environment.

Learning Resources.

Overall the supply and quality of resources for learning are adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum.

The governing body has invested considerable sums of money in the creation of new IT suites and the school has a very good pupil:computer ratio. The upgrading of the school's central IT server to allow for expansion of IT facilities across the school has also been a priority. Whilst this expenditure

provides pupils with very good facilities, the management of the use of the IT suites is not always effective. IT suites are unoccupied for a significant proportion of teaching time each week.

Since the last inspection, improvements have been made to the school's central library. New books have been purchased and the school is now building up a good range of fiction and non-fiction texts. The librarian provides good support to pupils and the library is well used, during the lunch break. Pupils have access to computers in the library and the careers section is well utilised by older pupils.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Welsh

Standards of achievement are satisfactory with good elements at both KS3 and KS4.

Although the number sitting GCSE Welsh language is extremely low, the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C in Welsh is below the national average. In 2002, 66% achieved grades A*-C. The number sitting the statutory tests in 2002 was extremely low and no pupil achieved Level 5.

KS3

Good features

- The majority of pupils listen well and respond to the teacher's questions and their peers' comments.
- Standards of listening and speaking are good. Pupils express themselves confidently and clearly and discussion skills are developing well. They ask questions, and can offer and respect each other's comments. They express their opinion readily, and provide simple reasons when discussing a range of subjects. The ablest can justify their points of view.
- Pupils read confidently, fluently and demonstrate a good understanding of the text.
- Pupils can write in a range of different forms and for different purposes and produce interesting work. At its best, the written work is both original and extended and many pupils use IT to enhance their work.

Shortcomings

- The written work of medium and lower ability pupils, in particular, is not extended and is insufficiently detailed.
- Some pupils have an uncertain grasp of syntax and make grammatical, spelling and mutation errors, which impair their expression.

KS4

Good features

- In Year 10 pupils speak accurately and clearly, using short responses.
- By Year 11 pupils can respond to a variety of oral activities with developing confidence.
- By the end of KS4, pupils can respond intelligently to media texts and they can successfully extract relevant information.

- Pupils read confidently and accurately with good pronunciation and expression.
- There is obvious progress in KS4 in terms of writing skills and the best pupils can write analytically and can express their opinions effectively. Creative work in Year 11 shows a developing style and imagination, with a good grasp of style and correctness.

Shortcomings

- The lack of contact time for pupils in KS4 - 1 lesson per week, is an important factor which impedes pupils progress in the subject.
- The oral contributions of some pupils in KS4 are limited but are generally correct. Pupils need to be encouraged to express their ideas at length.
- Some spelling and punctuation errors characterise the written work of moderately able and less able pupils.

English

Standards of achievement are unsatisfactory in KS3, satisfactory in KS4 and are good in the sixth form. At KS3, despite recent improvements, the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 falls just below the national average. As such, results in this key stage comes within the bottom quartile of schools in the all Wales benchmarking tables. At KS4, the percentage of pupils gaining 5A*-C in English also falls 5% below the national average. However, the percentage of pupils achieving 5 A*-G exceeds the national average. At A- level, results show good rates of progress from GCSE with good standards being attained. Boys are outperformed by girls at both key stages but the differential falls in line with the all Wales figures.

KS3

Good features

- Pupils in the SEN classes achieve very good rates of progress, developing confidence in their reading and extending their writing over a range of genre.
- More able pupils read poetry with insight, can express and develop their ideas and discuss the impact of a range of literary devices.
- Pupils in most classes write over a satisfactory range and are often at their best writing imaginatively.
- Many pupils are beginning to use ICT to improve the presentation of their work.

Shortcomings

- Pupils in middle ability groups make insufficient progress.
- The presentation of pupils' work is unsatisfactory in a significant minority of lessons.
- Pupils do not read sufficiently widely from other cultures.
- Oral responses in whole class discussion are sometimes hesitant and often unextended.
- Writing is short and undeveloped in a significant minority of classes.
- In a minority of classes oral responses are indisciplined and of a poor quality.

KS4

Good features

- Pupils in more able classes produce well-crafted personal writing which is often vigorous and individual.
- The majority of pupils show understanding of character and theme in the texts they read.

- The large majority of pupils present their work to a good standard.
- Pupils in the lower ability sets make very good progress in writing.
- Many pupils answer confidently and can collaborate in small group work.

Shortcomings

- Significant numbers of pupils are insecure in structuring essays on literature.
- Responses to whole class oral work are often short and undeveloped.
- Pupils do not often sustain argument in discussion
- Technical errors, notably in spelling, mar pupils' work, including that of the more able.

Post 16

Good Features

- Students write at length and perceptively in response to literature.
- They write vigorous and well structure narratives and personal accounts
- A significant minority are able to pose their own questions and build upon the responses of others.
- They read widely and demonstrate that they can effectively compare and contrast texts.
- They show evidence of individual research and the ability to present their ideas to their peers

Shortcomings

- Students show insufficient awareness of linguistic features
- A minority of students are hesitant in developing their ideas in oral work

Since the last inspection, the department has largely held its ground at KS4 and at post 16. Work in media and drama continue to contribute well to the standards achieved by pupils. Recent work at KS3 is having an impact but, overall, there has been insufficient progress at this key stage.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement are unsatisfactory in KS3. They are satisfactory in KS4 and at post -16

In the end of KS3 tests in 2002, 61% of pupils gained at least Level 5 which places the school in the lowest quartile when compared to schools of a similar nature. There was only a very small difference between the achievement of boys and girls. In 2002 38% of pupils achieved a grade C or above in GCSE mathematics without any difference between the achievement of boys and girls. This is below national and LEA averages. At A level 70% of students achieved grades A – E with only 40% at C or above.

KS3

Good features

- Most pupils can complete questions similar to those modelled in the lesson.
- The majority of pupils have good recall of basic number facts and can perform simple mental calculations correctly.
- Pupils can manipulate basic algebraic expressions and solve simple equations and the most able can solve simultaneous equations by the end of the key stage.
- The majority of pupils can calculate simple perimeters, areas and volumes accurately and use correct units of measurement. They can solve problems involving angle facts and the more able can find areas of circles and apply Pythagoras' theorem.

- Pupils can construct statistical graphs and calculate the mean, median and mode and interpret the results.
- In general pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress.

Shortcomings

- In a significant number of classes pupils are not making sufficient progress and staffing problems have had a detrimental effect on standards.
- All but the most able pupils have poor recall of previous work and can respond only to the most recent topic.
- Across a range of classes a number of pupils have books where work is missing, incomplete or poorly presented
- In some lessons pupils are insufficiently attentive which hampers their progress and leads to underachievement.
- Standards are unsatisfactory in middle and lower ability sets in year 7 where insufficient account is taken of pupils' prior learning.

KS4

Good features

- Most pupils can solve problems similar to those modelled by the teacher.
- Pupils can calculate using percentages, decimals, index notation and negative numbers.
- Pupils can solve a range of equations correctly and the more able can factorise quadratic expressions and draw and interpret graphs representing a range of algebraic functions.
- The majority of pupils can solve problems involving areas of simple shapes and volumes of prisms. Able pupils can solve problems involving congruent triangles and trigonometry.
- In data handling, pupils can draw and interpret appropriate statistical graphs and calculate the mean, median and mode of grouped frequency distributions.
- GCSE Coursework is completed to a satisfactory standard with some pieces of very good work.

Shortcomings

- Many pupils are slow in recalling basic number facts and do not have the strategies to derive them.
- A significant number of pupils have insufficient recall of previous work.
- Across a range of classes, even the most able, a number of pupils have books where work is missing or incomplete or poorly presented.
- In a number of lessons, even the most able, insufficient work is completed by pupils and they do not make enough progress.

Post -16

Good features

- In pure mathematics a substantial amount of work has already been completed in both years.
- The majority of students have a satisfactory understanding of algebraic techniques and apply these in a range of contexts.
- Most students can use a range of techniques for differentiation and integration, can use Cartesian and parametric equations to solve problems in coordinate geometry and find vector equations of lines.
- The majority of students can use a range of probability distributions, apply sampling techniques and use vectors to solve problems involving forces.

Shortcomings

- The majority of year 13 students achieved grade D or less at AS at the end of year 12.
- With a few exceptions, students need considerable support when working individually and rely too heavily on guidance from the teacher when completing questions.
- A few students do not have well-organised notes in their folders.

Pupils' algebra skills have improved since the last inspection but little progress has been made on the other issues identified.

Science

Standards of achievement in KS3 and 4 are satisfactory. Standards in the sixth form are good in biology, and satisfactory in physics and chemistry. In 2002 the percentage of pupils achieving level 5 or above in the KS3 SATs was in line with the National average but 13% below the LEA average with approximately one sixth of pupils showing no improvement in standards achieved at KS2. The standards reached in the 2002 GCSE double award and triple award was below the national average. Results at A and AS level show a significant minority of students did not achieve an E grade with 42% and 22% of students achieving a A-C grade at A level and AS level respectively.

KS3

Good features

- The majority of pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of a wide range of topics covering the NC.
- Most pupils can explain and discuss key concepts and facts that they are currently studying using the correct scientific terminology. More able pupils can also recall and apply previous work confidently to new situations.
- Experimental and investigative skills are acquired and developed throughout the key stage. Pupils are able to follow instructions and can confidently use basic scientific apparatus with due regard to safety.
- Pupils can make observations and measurements within the accuracy of the equipment provided, with most pupils able to use appropriate units.
- Pupils make use of graphical methods to display their results with more able pupils using lines of best fit and confidently deducing simple mathematical relationships from their graphs.

Shortcomings

- A significant minority of pupils have difficulty in recalling and explaining previous work using the correct scientific terminology.
- A significant number of middle and lower ability pupils have difficulty in using extended writing to describe and explain key concepts and scientific ideas.

KS4

Good Features

- Most pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the topics associated with this key stage.
- Most pupils can apply new areas of learning to everyday situations and have a satisfactory appreciation of the social, economic and environment aspects of the subject.
- Pupils can make accurate observations and measurements and can display and analyse data in a variety of graphical forms.

- Pupils are able to link their experimental and investigate conclusions to the appropriate scientific theory or concept.

Shortcomings

- The evaluative skills of pupils are generally underdeveloped and some pupils confuse fair testing and reliability with accuracy.
- A significant number of pupils have difficulty in recalling and explaining previous work and applying their knowledge to new situations.

Post 16

Good Features

- Students have at least a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of a wide range of topics.
- They can discuss their thoughts maturely using the correct scientific terminology and can apply their knowledge to solve problems.
- Practical skills are well developed and students work with a high level of accuracy to make systematic observations and measurements.
- Pupils are able to use ICT to enhance their recording of data and most pupils are able to interpret graphs and link conclusions to the correct scientific models.
- Students maintain well-organised, comprehensive files of work in all subjects.

Shortcomings

- A small number of students do not recall work covered in sufficient detail.
- A significant minority of students have difficulty applying scientific concepts learnt from one science topic to other related topics.

Standards of achievement have remained broadly satisfactory and in line with national averages. There has been an improvement in standards of achievement in sixth form biology.

Welsh Second Language

Standards are generally satisfactory at KS3 and standards are good at KS4 and satisfactory in Year 13.

Although the number sitting the full GCSE Welsh Second Language is very small, the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C in Welsh is consistently above national and local averages. In 2002, 100% achieved grades A*- C with girls achieving better than boys, which is in line with national trends. GNVQ results are good, however the results for the GCSE short course are lower than the national average. AS and A2 results are also good with very small groups.

KS3

Good features

- Pupils develop a good passive understanding of Welsh and have a sound understanding of current work.
- The majority of pupils have satisfactory listening skills and are able to respond to a good range of questions with developing confidence. In most classes pupils listen well and support each other during paired work, when given sufficient opportunities to practise their skills.

- Pupils, including those with SEN, can respond confidently to a range of activities that are tailored to their needs. Most pupils can ask and answer a range of questions with developing confidence and accuracy.
- Pronunciation is generally good amongst higher and medium ability pupils, but a minority of pupils lack confidence. The progression in language skills over the key stage is sound.
- Reading standards are generally satisfactory. Pupils have opportunities to read aloud in class and their intonation and expression is generally commensurate with ability.
- Pupils can read short paragraphs and dialogues about familiar topics with understanding, confidence and with good pronunciation generally.
- Most pupils can write short paragraphs and dialogues with developing accuracy expressing their likes and dislikes simply.
- Most pupils use ICT well to enhance the presentation of their written work.

Shortcomings

- In some classes, a number of pupils do not develop sufficient confidence to use Welsh when replying or speaking to the teacher.
- A minority of pupils have limited language resources and have underdeveloped listening skills.
- A minority of pupils in some classes are off task and these impair the learning of other pupils.
- The extended oral skills of many pupils are underdeveloped.
- Ablest pupils do not have sufficient challenge in their oral, reading and writing activities.

KS4

Good features

- Pupils are generally enthusiastic, support each other's learning and show enjoyment in many aspects of the lessons.
- Pupils can ask and answer a range of questions with accuracy and vary the tenses of the verbs.
- Pupils can use Powerpoint well to enhance their oral presentations.
- Reading comprehension skills are generally good. Pupils read for pleasure and can write short reviews of materials read.
- Most pupils can write in a range of forms and the presentation of their work is generally good.
- The ablest pupils produce a good variety of sentence patterns and can vary the tense and verb to suit the task. The ablest pupils can also draft and redraft their work and produce articles using ICT.
- Generally pupils have the good opportunities to use ICT in units of work and are encouraged to use the web for research, scan photographs, import images and use text boxes to enhance their written tasks and projects. These projects are of a good standard.
- Pupils keep good self-assessment folders.

Shortcomings

- A minority of pupils do not speak at length and have insufficient opportunities to practise their oral skills.
- More able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to undertake extended oral and writing activities.

Post 16

Good features

- Pupils have a good understanding of their current work, they respond to a variety of questions and are confident in speaking to visitors.

- Pupils read accurately and with expression.
- Pupils write at length in a range of genres with developing accuracy.
- Pupils respond well to the challenge offered in most aspects of their learning.

Shortcomings

- Although they respond accurately to questions, some Y13 students are reluctant to express opinions and take discussion forward.
- Pupils lack the confidence to demonstrate the language skills that are evident in their written work. They are reluctant to express opinions and justify their points of view.
- Although pupils write at length their work is prone to some grammar and mutation errors.

Since the last inspection, standards have remained broadly satisfactory with some examples of good work in KS3 and standards are good in KS4.

Design and technology

Standards of achievement in KS3 and KS4 are satisfactory. In the sixth form standards of achievement are also satisfactory. In KS4 the percentage of pupils gaining 5A* - C in Resistant materials is above the national average, however, Graphic products, Textiles and Electronic products are below the national average. At A level the results show good rates of progress from GCSE with some good standards attained.

KS3

Good features

- Pupils use a design process to guide their design work.
- In project work, pupils understand and develop limited specifications to guide their designing.
- Research and investigative skills are satisfactory.
- The generation of ideas is satisfactory overall.
- Making skills, using an appropriate range of materials, are satisfactory and sometimes good.
- Pupils work with limited accuracy and produce a satisfactory finish to their products.
- Good use is made of a wide range of ICT skills in CAD/CAM, design applications and general applications.
- Simple electronic control principles are understood, and appropriately embedded in design and make projects.
- Less able pupils and those with SEN make satisfactory progress and the quality of support from LSA is at least satisfactory and sometimes good.
- Graphic and presentation skills are satisfactory.
- Pupils experience a wide range of materials in their designing and making throughout the key stage.

Shortcomings

- modules, are underdeveloped.
- The link between specification and evaluation is inconsistently applied.
- Quick drawing skills and graphic presentation skills are underdeveloped.

- More able pupils' progress in Y8 and Y9 is limited by over-structured projects and workbooks and there is little increase in demand between year groups to ensure progression and enhance standards.
- There is insufficient coverage of the PoS for structures and computer control and there is no opportunity for progression in these aspects.

KS4

Good features

- Project folios display good standards of presentational skills.
- Pupils produce limited specifications to provide a structure to their design folio.
- Design work and idea generation is satisfactory overall.
- Pupils use ICT well for research, presentation and aspects of CAD.
- Modelling in the graphic products course using ICT is good.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of materials is satisfactory
- Knowledge of basic manufacturing processes is satisfactory.

Shortcomings

- Design work in resistant materials, and electronic systems and textiles is often over prescribed and lacks creativity and innovation.
- Specifications are limited in sophistication and are not applied to designs.
- Quick freehand drawing skills and graphic presentation skills are underdeveloped.
- Knowledge and understanding of materials and processes is not applied to initial ideas.
- Research work is often related to a preconceived solution rather than an exploration of possibilities.

Post 16

Good features

- Design work is satisfactory at AS level and consistently good at A level.
- Formal drawing skills are good at AS and A level.
- Project folios display good standards of presentation at A level.
- Effective use is made of ICT for research, presentation and CAD.
- Project work is innovative and consistently well made at A level.
- Students' theoretical work displays a sound and developing understanding of materials and their properties.

Shortcomings

- At AS level quick informal developmental drawing is not a strong feature of students' design work.
- At AS level there is insufficient use of a range of graphic techniques to communicate ideas effectively.

Standards are comparable with the last inspection with some examples of good work in KS4 and at post 16.

Information technology

Standards of achievement are satisfactory at KS3 and KS4. Standards are also satisfactory in the new Advanced Supplementary ICT course.

The results of the GCSE Information Studies examination for 2002 indicated that 77.3 per cent of pupils entered gained grades A* - C, which is above the national average. Numbers **have** significantly increased over the past two years and a new AS course in Information and Communication Technology will be examined for the first time in July 2003.

KS3

Good features

- Pupils use the hardware and software independently and confidently demonstrating a willingness to share ideas with others.
- All pupils integrate data from various sources, including the internet and clipart, resulting in a good standard of presentation techniques appropriate to a particular audience.
- A majority of pupils demonstrate good standards when tasks have a meaningful context.
- Most pupils are able to justify the selection of a package to solve a specific problem and use technical vocabulary appropriately.
- Some pupils demonstrate good ability to reflect on and evaluate perceptively the quality of their work.

Shortcomings

- More able pupils do not always demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- A small minority follow instructions with little understanding.
- Pupils' skills are less developed than they might be as a consequence of a lack of challenge.

KS4

Good Features

- The majority of pupils use the equipment and software competently, confidently and with a high degree of autonomy displayed.
- All pupils integrate information from several software applications, including the internet, to present work effectively and are able to critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the outcomes.
- All pupils use database and spreadsheet packages to process information in realistic contexts.
- Coursework is completed to at least a satisfactory level, and sometimes to a good or very good standard by the majority of pupils.
- Most pupils demonstrate a good grasp of technical vocabulary

Shortcomings

- A significant minority do not relate the work undertaken with the course syllabus.
- Pupils are not always able to demonstrate the full extent of their knowledge and understanding of skills established in key stage 3 due to the discontinuity in the delivery of the GCSE course.
- Able pupils do not always demonstrate the full extent of their understanding.

Post 16

Good Features

- Students work independently and underpinning this is a good standard of knowledge and understanding of the course.
- On the whole, standards in the coursework are good.
- Most of the students are self motivated and interested, demonstrating that they understand what is expected by the course.

Shortcomings

- Pupils' progress is hampered by a lack of appropriate materials.
- Insufficient challenge limits the extent to which more able pupils can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

Resources have improved since the last inspection with three well equipped IT suites, including interactive whiteboards and data projectors. However, access to other departments remains an issue. The discrete IT slot now satisfies National Curriculum requirements for ICT in KS3. There is still no effective mapping of pupils' progress across the teachers in KS3 and KS4.

The introduction of the ICAA GCSE Information Technology course means that pupils will also obtain a key skills level 1 or 2 qualification. A network infrastructure is being extended to every classroom. However, there is still no detailed development plan in place. The school benefits from the services of an IT technician who is invaluable for supporting staff, especially at KS3.

History

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS3, good in KS4 and very good in the sixth form. In 2002, 60% of the school cohort entered the GCSE examinations. 93.2% of pupils achieved grades A*-G, which is above the national average, 42% achieved grades A* - C, which is below the national average. At A level, 55% of the school cohort entered the examination, 96% gained grades A – E and 45% gained the higher grades A – C.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of both current and previous work.
- They have satisfactory understanding of cause and consequence and use it to explain the process of change within their developing chronological framework.
- Pupils are developing satisfactory investigative skills in examining historical problems and an awareness of the reliability of evidence when evaluating differing interpretations of historical issues.

KS4

- There is good progression of historical skills from KS3. Historical terms and concepts are used correctly.
- Pupils evaluate a variety of sources of evidence effectively, and successfully provide explanations of propaganda, censorship and bias in their historical context.
- Oral and written work demonstrate a growing depth of insight into the actions and attitudes of people in the past, and the power of public opinion in influencing historical events.
- Extended writing is of a good standard, well argued and presented in both portfolio and coursework.

Post-16

- Sixth form students have very good knowledge and understanding of both current and previous work in relation to U.S. Foreign Policy, the Cold War and also Seventeenth Century Radicalism in England.
- They make good use of source evidence, providing clear analysis and synthesis of secondary sources and their attribution in relation to contemporary professional historians.
- Oral presentations are of a very good standard. Students engage in reasoned debate and listen carefully to the views of others in their group.
- Students produce good quality written essays and source exercises. Personal research and reading is supported by the effective use of website data. Historical issues are analysed in the context of the question set, and supported by thorough evaluations of interpretations of history.

Shortcomings

- At KS3 in some classes, middle and lower ability pupils are underachieving. Work set is not matched to pupil abilities. Oral work is limited and in some exercise books, writing is limited or incomplete. There is also evidence of missing work.
- There is an inconsistent approach to the assessment and marking of pupil work. In some classes, marking does not facilitate pupil progress and is too superficial.
- There is a lack of integrated ICT provision across all Key Stages.

Geography

Standards of achievement are satisfactory at KS3 and good at KS4 and at post 16.

KS3

Good Features

- Pupils at all levels of ability use geographical vocabulary and terminology competently.
- They employ a range of map, photographic, atlas and geographical skills effectively in their work.
- Geographical patterns and spatial distribution can be explained by most pupils in their work on natural biomes and the climatic regions of the UK.
- Pupils can explain geographical processes related to physical and human geography within topics such as weathering, rivers and coasts, volcanoes and the weather.
- Pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the relationship between people and the environment when considering the growth and impact of tourism, the implications of global warming, and the causes and consequences of flooding.
- The majority of pupils acquire knowledge and understanding of places through studies of Wales and Italy.
- Pupils with SEN are well supported with many showing a secure understanding of the features of the National Parks of the UK, and the development of tourism.

Shortcomings

Over reliance on a single published scheme leads to decontextualised explanation, and limits pupils locational and place knowledge at both local and global level

- Insufficient differentiation and progression results in limited opportunities to develop pupils extended writing, oral and analytical skills, whilst the less able struggle with the literacy demands of the subject.
- ICT and fieldwork are underdeveloped.

KS4

Good Features

Results in GCSE examinations have, since 2001, been above the Welsh average.

- Most pupils have a good grasp of the processes and patterns associated with human and physical geography and apply them accurately within a range of appropriate examples at different scales, such as inequalities within urban areas and weather systems.
- The majority of pupils demonstrate good mapping and numerical skills in their work on weather and the distribution of retailing.
- Geographical vocabulary and terminology is used accurately and with increasing precision.
- Well structured fieldwork based in the Carding Mill river valley enables the pupils to effectively apply a range of skills and approaches, including ICT, and to develop their understanding of physical features and associated man-environment issues.
- The use of past examination papers is a feature of the work of the Department, and pupils respond well with their answers showing progressive improvement through the key stage.

Shortcomings

- The standards of achievement of a number of average ability pupils are adversely affected by a lack of application to work.
- Teaching approaches do not always take sufficient cognisance of the range of ability within the GCSE classes.

Post 16

Good Features

- Value added results for 2001 indicate good progress from GCSE. Results in 2002 show below average progress.
- Students display good interpretative and analytical skills when considering statistical, geographical, textual, map and photographic information, as shown in Year 12 work on the characteristics of the Yorkshire Dales.
- Oral skills are promoted through confident and articulate presentations based on prior research, which draw on relevant supportive case study material. Human and physical pressures on global ecosystems were well understood and explained by Year 13 students.
- Student work records are, in the main, carefully and neatly organised, with good quality exemplar material in a variety of formats.
- A varied and relevant fieldwork and coursework programme enables students to demonstrate a thorough understanding of all aspects of the course.

Progress since the last inspection has been variable. The weaknesses related to inconsistent challenge and restricted range of tasks within KS3 and 4, and the development of ICT, fieldwork and knowledge of the locality in KS3, have yet to be addressed. Provision for pupils with SEN in terms of subject specific support has improved, as have expectations for prior research and lesson input from students in the sixth form.

Modern Foreign Languages

Standards of achievement are good in KS3. They are satisfactory KS4 and in the sixth form.

KS3

Good Features

- In French and German pupils listen effectively to their teachers and to authentic recordings, understanding both the gist and many details.
- They generally learn and re-use new vocabulary well.
- The ablest pupils use the languages confidently, and by Year 9 use French independently for most purposes.
- Pupils in Year 7 especially speak French with enthusiasm. Many are developing good accents. Most pupils copy out sentences effectively and the ablest pupils are beginning to create their own
- By Year 8, most pupils can use dictionaries and are beginning to write coherent sequences of sentences
- Pupils of average ability are generally unambiguous when using the languages in structured conversations.
- The least able pupils, including many with special educational needs, gain confidence in using French thanks to teaching focused to their particular needs.
- Pupils who take German make particularly rapid progress in limited time.

Shortcomings

- Towards the end of the Key Stage some pupils are still reticent in speaking the foreign languages, especially when they have to use the languages independently: pupils of average and lower ability often lack confidence in adapting and manipulating the languages.

KS4

Good Features

- In German the proportions of pupils attaining grades A*-C at GCSE in languages in the past two years have been above average for Wales, and represent good achievement.
- The achievement of both boys and girls has improved in response to focused teaching in preparation for the GCSE.
- In French and German pupils listen and read attentively, conscious of key words to obtain gist and details.
- In written work, pupils use a good range of language. Much of this is competently word-processed,

Shortcomings

- In French, pupils' confidence and competence in speaking is less developed than in the other language skills.
- Pupils' levels of accuracy in spoken and written French are not as developed as the range of language they use.
- Pupils do not check their work systematically, hence do not eliminate careless errors which often significantly lower standards.

Post-16

Good Features

- Students achieve satisfactory standards in relation to their abilities.
- Students use a satisfactory range of vocabulary for the topics they study.
- They listen and read attentively a wide range of language from authentic sources, including conducting research using appropriate websites.
- A level students in Y13 are now doing better than their AS results suggested.

Shortcomings

- When speaking, students frequently lack confidence.
- Their written work regularly contains anglicisms and errors of basic grammar.

Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. Good standards in KS3 have been maintained. In KS4 standards remain satisfactory although GCSE results in French have fallen from average to below average for Wales. Standards in the sixth form remain satisfactory.

Art

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS3 and the sixth form. They are unsatisfactory in KS4. Examination results at GCSE in the last two years have been below local and national averages. Results at AS and A level have been variable, with some students achieving the higher grades.

KS3

Good features

- In Y7, pupils sensitively explore the work of artists, such as Van Gogh, and express their responses using a suitable variety of techniques.
- They inventively manipulate the visual elements of colour, texture and pattern to produce compositional variations based on sunflowers.
- They analyse the surface qualities of certain works of art, including the mixed media work of Welsh artist Luned Rhys Parri, and imaginatively apply what they have learned to their own mark making.
- Pupils with SEN make suitable adaptations of images, such as the mandala, and produce larger scale paintings with fair degree of confidence.
- In Y8, pupils demonstrate appropriate understanding of the work of Pop artist, Roy Lichtenstein.
- They develop observational drawing skills in recording the shape and proportion of Coke bottles, exercising discrimination in selecting media.
- Y9 pupils study at first hand the work of local weaver, Rosie Collar, and acquire new textile skills in designing and producing areas of weaving.
- All KS3 pupils make use of sketchbooks to gather information and try out ideas and techniques.

Shortcomings

- Investigative skills, especially recording from observation, are not consistently developed across the key stage.
- Pupils have acquired a relatively narrow range of skills in the use of media. Very little use is made of ICT to generate and manipulate images.
- Pupils often simply copy, rather than imaginatively develop, the work of artists and designers.
- Pupils' use of secondary references greatly outweighs their use of primary sources, such as the local environment.
- Work in sketchbooks is often unfinished or poorly completed.
- The amount of ground covered during lessons by a significant minority of pupils is limited.

- Homework does not contribute significantly to the standards achieved at KS3.

KS4

Good features

- Pupils selectively utilise a good range of secondary sources to gather information and explore subject matter relevant to the topics they are studying.
- They make appropriate use of sketchbooks to record their research.
- Pupils generate and explore ideas with a good measure of technical skill in handling certain media.
- In studying themes, such as Culture, pupils demonstrate their capability in developing and expressing personal responses.
- They utilise suitable analytical and evaluative skills in researching the imagery of different cultural traditions.
- Pupils are developing appropriate planning skills in addressing assessment objectives used in the GCSE examination.

Shortcomings

- There is often only a narrow range of skills and ideas evident in the work of many pupils. Insufficient use is made of ICT.
- There is a tendency for pupils, including some who are more able, to respond to themes with readily available images rather than considering more innovative and challenging possibilities.
- The quality of sketchbook work varies considerably.
- Insufficient use is made of primary sources and skills of recording from observation are poorly developed.
- Skills of analysis and evaluation are limited and pupils often have a superficial understanding of the work of artists.
- A significant proportion of pupils show very limited application to learning tasks and produce little work during the course of lessons.
- Homework is not used consistently to extend learning and contribute to standards.

Post 16

Good features

- Students demonstrate good technical skills in their painting, drawing and graphic design.
- They show strong evidence of their ability to respond personally to a set topic.
- Mature analytical and evaluative skills are evident when they are researching contextual images and texts.
- Students draw upon a good range of secondary sources when undertaking investigative work and use these effectively to generate ideas and pursue possible lines of enquiry.
- They apply appropriate planning skills to produce outcomes which suitably address AS and A level assessment objectives.

Shortcomings

- Students use a relatively narrow range of expressive media, with insufficient use of photography, printmaking and ICT.
- Students' expressive responses to the work of artists are often superficial.
- Poor use is made of primary sources of reference and recording from observation is not well developed.

- Students tend to play safe in terms of the methods and materials they choose to develop ideas and convey their intentions.

Since the last inspection, standards in KS3 and the sixth form have been broadly maintained. At KS4, standards have regressed but measures have now been put in place to address this issue.

Music

Standards of achievement are satisfactory at KS3, good at KS4 and satisfactory in year 12.

Good features

- At KS3 in those classes where singing takes place, the majority of pupils sing in tune with confidence, and make progress in their singing by paying attention to breathing, diction, phrasing and musical expression
- At KS3, the majority pupils make good progress developing their performing skills using body sounds, keyboards and percussion instruments. They perform individually and in small groups where a majority of pupils are able to maintain an independent part.
- At KS4 and in the sixth form, most pupils demonstrate good performing or vocal skills.
- At KS3, 4 and in Y12 pupils create compositions based on structured tasks. In a minority of cases, pupils' compositions demonstrate originality and musicality through revision and refining of work.
- At KS4 and in the sixth form where opportunities arise, pupils discuss their own and others work with confidence, with use of appropriate language and with musical discernment. In the best examples, pupil listen to and evaluate a range of music, developing understanding of musical concepts and ideas which are then integrated into their performing and composing work.
- A majority of Y12 students demonstrate sound understanding of Bach harmonic structures.

Shortcomings

- At KS3 a significant minority of pupils are reticent to participate in singing activity or display negative attitudes to singing.
- At KS3 a significant minority of pupils pay little attention to accuracy when performing on musical instruments and make little progress.
- At KS3 pupils rarely discuss and evaluate their own and others music. Their responses to music are often limited to the identification of features rather than the evaluation of the music.
- At all key stages and in Y12, many pupils compose music within narrow parameters based on overly prescriptive teaching tasks. Such composing work does not demonstrate originality and musicality brought about by evaluation, revision and refinement.

Since the last inspection, the music department has made progress in a number of areas. Pupils encounter the music of Wales regularly in their lessons and there has also been improvement in the quality of singing and extent to which it is developed in lessons. The development of pupils' composing and performing skills, however, is hindered in some cases by overly prescribed or limited tasks, and insufficient opportunity for discussion continues to hamper the development of pupils' appraising skills.

Physical education

The standards of achievement in KS3 are unsatisfactory. In KS4 and at post-16 they are satisfactory.

KS3

Good features:

- Pupils make satisfactory progress in swimming demonstrating competence in the water when performing basic strokes and show increased efficiency in a range of strokes.
- In invasion games, they demonstrate the ability to perform basic skills effectively in skill-based drills.
- In net games, they are able to maintain lengthy rallies and demonstrate good court awareness. They also work co-operatively and independently of the teacher.
- In gymnastics, they transport apparatus safely and efficiently, demonstrate good co-operative skills and can plan and perform sequences using a variety of solutions to tasks set. They can evaluate competently to enable their partners to develop their work further.
- In dance, pupils can develop and consolidate dance routines, requiring a range of step patterns and body management, to a good standard.
- They can illustrate good adaptation of techniques and co-operative skills, demonstrate the ability to work with greater precision and accuracy through practising and refining techniques.

Shortcomings

- In swimming, a majority of boys demonstrate poor breathing techniques, water confidence and personal survival skills.
- In invasion games, a third of pupils have difficulty in developing and consolidating new skills.
- Some pupils' have difficulty in working independently of the teacher in a co-operative manner and in team situations demonstrate a lack of spatial awareness and low order understanding of attack and defence.
- In net games, half the pupils have poorly developed racket skills and footwork and a significant minority of them lack the ability to adapt and apply skills in game situations.
- In gymnastics, the majority of pupils lack clarity of body shape and body tension.
- In dance, there is lack of creativity in a significant number of pupils who show no development in fluency and sensitivity when faced with increasing difficulty of challenges.
- Non-participation rates are high, averaging over 25% and this impacts adversely on standards.

KS4

Good features

- In Year 11 games, where students have a good understanding of principles in attack and defence, they demonstrate good support play and application of skills.
- They have a positive attitude, demonstrate good co-operative skills and can work productively, independently of the teacher.
- In games, generally, students understand the key principles of safe warm up and cool down, demonstrate satisfactory levels of knowledge and understanding, skills and readily take on an officiating role.
- In dance, they can develop and refine techniques with increased control and clarity of body shape.
- They are able to work co-operatively and show increased levels of performance, particularly fluency, when working in groups.

Shortcomings

- In games, especially Year 10, skills break down easily under pressure.
- A significant number have difficulty in understanding differing demands of attack and defence and demonstrate a lack of control of the ball in contact situations.

- In dance, a significant minority of students lack the ability to evaluate performance and set targets for improvement.

In GCSE lessons, good features are:

- In games, standards of basic skills are good, they demonstrate good spatial awareness and understanding of attack and defence.
- They have a good understanding of the principles underpinning the planning, performing and evaluating of a training programme and are able to adapt knowledge to other contexts.
- In dance, students are able to use correct technical terminology and have developed good observational skills.
- They demonstrate comprehensive understanding of concepts and have the ability to judge performance when called upon to do so.
- In health-related exercise, they work enthusiastically, competently and co-operatively on fitness tests and demonstrate a healthy competitive attitude in attempting to meet targets.

Shortcomings

- In games, about one third of pupils experience problems when attempting to explain outcomes with greater precision and accuracy.
- Planning of activities in relation to tasks set is not well developed.
- In dance, students are insecure in applying and adapting ideas and skills to other contexts.
- In the classroom, few pupils provide extended answers and their written work is under developed.

Post -16

There is no timetabled physical education provision for sixth form students. However, increasing numbers are opting to study the subject at AS and A level.

Good features

- Students demonstrate good knowledge of issues relating to anatomy and physiology and are able to apply their knowledge to a range of situations thus illustrating their understanding.
- They demonstrate a range of appropriate skills.
- They indulge in well-reasoned discussions relating to the history of physical education, based on clear understanding of the issues.

Shortcomings

- Students' files indicate inconsistent standards and a significant number are not well presented.
- There is little evidence of independent research or investigation.

The examination results at GCSE at A* - C level have improved slightly since last year, but are significantly lower than the Local Authority and the National averages. A and AS Level results were satisfactory.

The range and number of extra-curricular clubs or competitive opportunities is very limited and attendance at those is low.

In physical education there has been no progress since the last inspection.

Religious education

Standards of achievement are unsatisfactory in KS3 and KS4. The school does not meet statutory requirements to provide religious education for all pupils in Y12 and Y13. It should be noted that the school has experienced staffing difficulties over the past two years and this has had an adverse affect on the progress of the pupils. At present the subject is being taught by committed, but non-specialist members of staff. The school is aware of these problems and is in the process of appointing a head of department to develop the subject.

Good features

- Pupils in KS3 and KS4 have a basic knowledge of religious beliefs and practices in Christianity and other major world faiths. They demonstrate a respectful attitude to the beliefs and practices of other people and are aware of the importance of having an open-minded and tolerant view of the world.
- Year 7 pupils are aware of the use of symbolism in religion. They have factual knowledge on Jewish prayer and worship and are able to write their own thoughtful prayers. When given the opportunity, they can research information and present their findings in an organised manner.
- Whilst studying a unit of work on Martin Luther King, pupils in Year 8 and Year 9 consider the problems of racism and prejudice and can express their own views on the issues raised.
- Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in relation to their ability.

Shortcomings

- In KS3 and KS4 pupils do not have sufficient depth of understanding of religious beliefs and practices to fulfil either their potential or the standards set out in the county's Agreed Syllabus for RE.
- Most pupils are over-reliant on teacher exposition and much of their time in lessons is spent listening attentively but passively. They rarely take responsibility for their own learning.
- In KS3 standards of achievement of more able and average ability pupils are adversely affected by the undemanding nature of the tasks. Written work is often copying text or filling in missing words. Orally pupils usually give short, factual answers. Rarely do pupils give extended answers either orally or in writing.
- Pupils make very little use of ICT to enhance their work.
- In KS4 a carousel arrangement is in place and consequently Y10 and Y11 pupils have only about nine lessons a year. This inadequate time provision hinders the standards of pupils by preventing the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus from being met. Pupils do not produce any written work in KS4.

Due to the staffing difficulties that the school has experienced, no progress has been made since the last inspection.

Personal and social education

Standards at both key stages and in the sixth form are satisfactory.

There is a comprehensive PSE programme that is discretely timetabled. The PSE programme is congruent with the ACCAC PSE Framework and learning resources ensure that form teachers, who have a pastoral responsibility, are well supported in the delivery of the programme. There has, however, been little INSET for teachers and inadequate monitoring of the programme. This has led to inconsistency in delivery of the PSE programme and the PSE key skills.

The environmental aspects of sustainable development and community aspect of global citizenship are developed in geography. However, there is insufficient coverage of sustainable development, global citizenship and cultural diversity in the PSE schemes of work.

Careers education is included in the PSE programme and the provision is good, through the strong links with Careers Wales, Powys. Sex and relationships education is delivered through an innovative programme, which, through links with Exeter University, has enabled Sixth form students to be trained as peer educators in KS3 and 4 with good evaluation reports.

KS3

Good features

- Most students are engaged and develop ideas confidently and demonstrate thoughtful and perceptive insights.
- They work effectively in groups demonstrating good co-operative skills.
- They use information gleaned during the PSE programme to inform their comments.
- Most speak confidently and listen well to others.
- Pupils work well both independently and co-operatively.
- They develop and display positive attitudes and values when covering contentious issues.

Shortcomings

- Some react negatively to suggestions and criticisms and do not show respect for others.
- A minority are unfocused and are engaged only superficially with the work.
- A small number of pupils engage in disruptive behaviour.

KS4

Good features

- Most students answer confidently and formulate cogent responses to prompts.
- The majority work effectively in groups.
- Have a good knowledge of social responsibilities and issues related to citizen's rights and responsibilities.
- They develop personal ideas and insights which are thoughtful and perceptive and are able to make informed decisions.

Shortcomings

- Some students demonstrate a lack of respect for others' points of view.
- A minority demonstrate little care for the environment.
- A few have a poor understanding of codes of behaviour.

Post -16

Good features

- Students are articulate and thoughtful in their responses to challenges or tasks set.
- They have a good understanding of moral codes.
- Co-operate effectively with others and take the lead when required.
- Demonstrate self-reliance, respect and consideration for others.

Shortcomings

- Some students show indifference to the PSE programme.

- They demonstrate a reluctance to get involved in discussion
- PSE is not delivered as consistently in the Sixth form as it is in KS3 and 4.

Business studies

Standards of achievement are good in this KS4 subject linked with Coleg Powys.

Good features

- The majority of pupils have a good understanding of business concepts and answer questions confidently.
- The majority of pupils have a good understanding of desk and field research.
- The majority of pupils have a good knowledge of setting up a business as shown in their coursework.
- All pupils can recall work and use business terms appropriately when responding to questions.
- All pupils can use database, word processing, spreadsheet and presentation packages and can insert images.
- The majority of pupils work confidently with a minimum of supervision.
- Pupils produce coursework of a high standard through the medium of IT.

Shortcomings

A minority of pupils in Year 10 do not fully understand key concepts and this causes some lack of concentration.

Child Development

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- The majority of pupils have a sound knowledge of child development as shown in their child studies.
- Most pupils can assess a child's stage of development with reference to the normal child.
- The majority of pupils show evidence of research work including the use and interpretation of questionnaires.
- Most pupils produce work of a good standard in line with their ability and some are achieving above their predicted level.
- ICT is used to present work of a high standard
- The majority of pupils have a sound knowledge of the design process.
- Pupils have a sound knowledge of safety in the home.
- The involvement of the wider community such as the Fire Service and the Health Visitor enhances the quality of provision for the pupils.

Shortcomings

- A minority of pupils are too dependent on the teacher.

Drama

Standards of achievement are good in KS4 and satisfactory in the sixth form. At KS4, the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C has significantly increased from 70.6% (2001) to 90.9% (2002) and is well above the national average. Whilst only a small number of boys opt for this GCSE subject they achieve high grades. The students entered for A and AS levels achieved 100% grades A-C.

KS4

Good Features

- Pupils of all abilities collaborate well and experiment with confidence, using a range of dramatic devices to express ideas.
- They are able to extract information from texts and other sources to use as a basis for their improvisations.
- Pupils are able to create, sustain and present roles effectively.
- They are able to plan and perform their drama with an awareness of audience and purpose.
- By Year 11, pupils regularly evaluate their own work and that of others.
- Pupils written work is well structured, displaying understanding of the processes involved in creating, developing and presenting performance work.

Shortcomings

- Pupils' oral responses are not always sufficiently extended.

Post 16

Good Features

- Students are able to plan and deliver a performance, moving effectively from text to performance.
- They demonstrate a sound understanding of technical and design elements of theatre and performance technology, such as lighting and sound.
- The performance work of Year 12 students is enhanced by their voice and language skills.
- Students show evidence of individual research and apply their knowledge to both written and practical work.

Shortcomings

- A minority of Year 12 students' movement skills are less developed than their other performance skills.
- Students are not always able to sustain discussion on texts and performances, with oral responses often limited and unextended.
- Students work folders are not always well presented or effectively organised.

Economics

Standards of achievement are very good in the sixth form. In 2002, at A level, all students gained grades A – E.

Good features

- Students have very good knowledge and understanding of how the macro economy works, and the effect of government economic policy on individuals and businesses.
- They can identify the problems related to equality and equity in the redistribution of income and wealth in the context of contemporary Britain.

- Students demonstrate good skills of analysis and synthesis in their application of data to economic problems.
- They demonstrate a high standard of oral work in individual presentations to their peers.
- They respond well to challenge and argue their case coherently using relevant data.
- Students have a good understanding of theoretical economic models and can differentiate between key factors affecting the models.
- They successfully interrogate data from a variety of visual, graphical and numerical sources to successfully address data response questions. They make effective use of the internet to support personal research.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings. There has been an improvement in standards since the last inspection

Law

Standards of achievement are good in the sixth form. In 2002, at A level, all students achieved grades A- E, and 91.65% achieved grades A – C. These results are above LEA and national averages.

Good features

- Students have good understanding of statutory interpretation and can provide reasons why statutory enactments need to be interpreted.
- They have good understanding of the European Communities Act (1973) and the Human Rights Act (1998), and their impact on Domestic Law and Parliamentary supremacy.
- Students have a good working knowledge of police powers and of the PACE Codes of Practice. They can successfully apply their knowledge to contemporary case law.
- They have good data handling skills. This includes the use of Home Office data which they accurately analysed to successfully complete a Police Detention assessment exercise.
- Students successfully apply a variety of research techniques to extend their knowledge and understanding. This includes the efficient use of the internet to support personal research.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings. Standards have improved since the last inspection.

Psychology

Standards achieved in the most recent A- level examinations were unsatisfactory. However, standards observed in the present year 13 and year 12 classes are good and satisfactory respectively.

Good Features

- Students show a good understanding of mental disorder
- They make good use of the case study material
- They make perceptive comments and can justify opinion
- In Year 13 the quality of written work is good
- In Y12 the students show a growing understanding of critical issues

Shortcomings

- In year 12 the unduly large group reduces the quality and quantity of discussion which takes place, consequently slowing the pace at which the students are developing evaluative skills

Leisure and Recreation

Standards of achievement are unsatisfactory.

Good features

- The majority of students participate well in lessons.
- Many students are able to recall information in a vocational context eg customer care in the leisure and recreation industry.
- Students can plan, research and complete assignments as shown in the marketing unit.

Shortcomings

- There is a lack of detail in a majority of students' written work.
- The majority of students' oral responses are not extended
- Students' work is too much text - book based
- The majority of students are not achieving to their potential.
- Students have not shown evidence of higher grade work within their portfolios of evidence.

Media Studies

Standards of achievement are good, overall, in KS4 and good in the sixth form. At KS4 the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C has fallen from the previous year, however, the 100% gaining A*-G grades remains constant and exceeds the national average. This GCSE course is a popular choice for boys who significantly outnumber girls. At A-level the results show good rates of progress from GCSE with good standards attained. 100% of A-level students gained A-C grades.

KS4

Good Features

- Pupils display sound knowledge of key concepts and use their knowledge to evaluate a range of texts.
- Pupils use appropriate language and terminology and by Year 11 are secure in the recognition of how meaning is conveyed through a variety of images, texts and sound.
- Pupils are able to analyse critically and co-operatively.
- Course work is a particular strength. A variety of appropriate tasks are set and pupils respond enthusiastically, presenting well organised and creative work.

Shortcomings

- A significant number of pupils are hesitant to share knowledge in whole class discussions and are often reluctant to ask and answer questions.

Post 16

Good Features

- Students are able to identify and understand general conventions as well as the key concepts of audience and representations.
- They give mature and critical analysis of material and texts.
- They use appropriate technical vocabulary.
- Students collaborate well with each other on group assignments.
- Students' practical production work and written assignments demonstrate good use of investigational and research techniques.

Shortcomings

- A minority of students are hesitant in presenting their ideas orally in a whole class situation and do not readily build upon the responses of others.

Catering

Most pupils produce work which is commensurate with their ability and standards are satisfactory.

Good features

- Pupils are able to use basic ICT skills to enhance project work.
- They can relate the work they do in class to commercial settings.
- They draw on experiences gained through placement activities.
- Good basic skills development ensures good quality products are made.
- Assignments are completed to a satisfactory standard.
- Good attention is paid to issues of health and safety.
- They are generally aware of the progress they are making.

Shortcomings

- Pupils are unable to draw on and use previous knowledge and learning to inform current work.
- Pupils do not command a secure knowledge and understanding of the work undertaken
- The quality of the written work of lower ability pupils is weak.

Motor Vehicle Studies

This course takes place at Coleg Powys and the small cohort of pupils follow a CoEA examination syllabus. The standards are good and all pupils are engaged in theoretical and practical units of the syllabus. Pupils work individually and in teams to undertake practical exercises.

Good features

- Pupils are able to draw on limited previous knowledge to illustrate understanding when engaged in practical sessions.
- They make use of their experiences of theory work to reinforce their learning.
- They show a sound understanding of the internal combustion engine.
- Pupils are able to analyse faults, suggest rectifications and take appropriate action.
- Folder work is generally well presented using ICT appropriately.
- Pupils succeed in undertaking practical tasks set, with some guidance and work to a level commensurate with their ability.

- Communication skills are mainly good. Pupils work well in groups on practical tasks.

Shortcomings

- Lower ability pupils make insufficient progress.
- Pupils are not fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their work
- There is little evidence of pupils' ability to plan for improvement.

8. School Improvement

8.1 Progress Since the Last Inspection

Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

i Set clear targets and develop effective strategies to increase the proportion of good standards achieved, particularly at KS3 and KS4 with specific emphasis on promoting far greater consistency in expectation, pace and challenge of teaching and learning process within and across departments and faculties

The senior management, staff and governors have undertaken many activities to promote the raising of standards of achievement. However, there is little evidence of the impact of these on standards of achievement in the classroom.

ii Improve the effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation of standards of achievement, including gender differences, through supportive partnership between senior and middle management with academic and pastoral responsibilities

Since the last inspection some progress has been made in linking members of the senior management team to faculty areas. Some monitoring and evaluating activities are undertaken by the SMT but there has been little impact on standards of achievement. Overall, the monitoring and evaluating of standards of achievement are unsatisfactory.

iii Establish consistent implementation of a clear whole school assessment policy and improve the use of data, pupil self assessment and target setting

There have been improvements in that assessment is now satisfactory and reporting is good. However, pupil self assessment and target setting are in the early stages of development.

iv Clarify the role of homework as an integral part of teaching and learning to ensure consistent implementation according to agreed expectations

The school has undertaken a wide range of measures which have improved the frequency, understanding and communication of homework requirements to pupils and parents. This has led to some improvements in its link to teaching and learning.

v Promote a common understanding of the importance of developing pupils' core skills of literacy, numeracy, IT and problem solving and strengthen opportunities for independent study, including better use of the school library.

Recently the school has established a range of cross curricular coordinators and there has been some progress in reading, writing and library provision. In addition a draft literacy policy has been produced. Nevertheless, the short time scale of the activities has been inadequate to ensure sufficient

progress since the last inspection and standards in the important key skills of oracy and ICT are unsatisfactory.

vi Ensure adequate focus on whole school needs for staff development and INSET, particularly for SEN expertise, IT competency, teaching strategies and middle management skills.

A wide range of focused staff development and INSET activities has been undertaken. However, the impact of these on standards of achievement and the quality of teaching has been limited.

vii consider strategies to strengthen the language experience of pupils at KS4, including the place of Welsh and the Welsh dimension in the curriculum and ethos of the school

There has been progress in relation to this key issue. The provision for, and take up of, modern foreign languages has improved. However, there is still insufficient provision for Welsh first language at KS4.

viii Complete the writing of the IEPs according to the Code of Practice for statemented pupils and comply with statutory requirements re daily act of worship and religious education in the sixth form.

IEPs meet the requirements of the Code of Practice and are now judged to be good. However statutory requirements re daily act of worship and religious education in the sixth form are still not being met.

ix Respond to health and safety issues reported during the inspection

All issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed. During the inspection additional Health and Safety issues have been drawn to the school's attention.

8.2 Key Issues for action

The school needs to:

- Raise standards across the school by improving standards both where subjects are unsatisfactory and where they are satisfactory.
- Pay particular attention to standards of achievement at KS3,
- Raise standards in pupils' oracy and ICT skills.
- Developing a wider range of teaching approaches to ensure that the learning needs of individual pupils are being met.
- Develop a clear vision which is shared and owned by all staff and governors, and bring clarity to roles and responsibilities at all levels of management.
- Develop a culture of self evaluation at all levels including rigorous systems for monitoring standards and teaching.
- Continue to develop strategies which positively impact upon the quality of pupils' behaviour
- Pay particular attention to improving the provision for the spiritual development of pupils and meet the statutory requirements for Religious Education and the collective act of worship.

APPENDIX

A. Basic Information About the School

Name of School	Newtown High School
School Type	Comprehensive
Age range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Dolfor Road Newtown Powys
Postcode	SY16 1JE
Telephone Number	01686 626304

Headteacher	Mr D G Hughes
Date of Appointment	1 September 1996
Chair of Governors / Appropriate Authority	Mr Brian Harris Powys County Council County Hall Llandrindod Wells Powys LD1 5LG
Registered Inspector	Dr David Norbury
Date of inspection	10-14 February 2003

B. School Data and Indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>									
Year Group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Y14	TOTAL
Number of Pupils	177	164	171	172	166	62	35	-	947

<i>Teachers</i>			
	Full Time	Part – Time	Full Time Equivalent (fte)
Number of Teachers	55	8	58.64

<i>Staffing Information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16.1:1
Pupil:adult (fte) ratio in special classes	N/A
Average teaching group size	19.8
Overall contact ratio	76.57

<i>Attendance</i>								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	93.4	90.3	91.1	90.0	88.7	92.0	91.4	90.75
Term 2	92.6	91.4	91.6	89.2	89.1	91.6	91.7	90.88
Term 3	93.9	91.4	90	87.8	85.3	91	90	89.9

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	13%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	24

C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2002														
Total number of pupils in Y9:														
Percentage of pupils at each level														
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	5+
E N	Teacher Assessment	School		0.5				0.5	19	25.5	32	20	3	54.5
		National												
	Test	School				1		1	7.5	26	37	14.5	4.5	62
		National												
M A	TA Teacher Assessment	School		1				3.5	6	20	33	23	14.5	70.5
		National												
	Test	School				1.75			7.5	22	27	20.5	8.5	61
		National												
SC	Teacher Assessment	School		4					10	38	30.5	13.5	4	48
		National												
	Test	School		3					6.5	23	39	22	7	68
		National												

<i>Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)</i>			
In the school:	37%	In the school:	N/A
In Wales	46%	In Wales	N/A

D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection

The school was inspected by a team of 19 Inspectors who spent a total of 71.5 days in the school collating evidence and inspecting all subjects. Inspectors observed a total of 272 lessons in full or in part. Planned discussions were held with the majority of teachers, including all members of the senior management team, key stage, faculty and department heads, with non-teaching staff, support staff and the chairperson and members of the governing body. There were also informal discussions with both teaching and non-teaching staff. Inspectors visited many tutorial and registration periods as well as all assemblies, together with a range of extra-curricular activities and meetings.

All the work of a representative sample of pupils was examined. Pupils' records, past work, work during lessons and displays around the school were scrutinised. Pupils were observed coming to and from school, at lunchtimes, travelling to and from lessons

The school provided a range of documentation which was analysed before and during the inspection. The inspection team carefully considered the 100 responses made by parents to questionnaires distributed before the inspection and the comments provided by the 60 parents at the pre-inspection meeting conducted with the registered inspector and a member of the core team.

E. Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team

Team Member	Subject Responsibilities	Aspect Responsibilities
David Norbury <i>Registered Inspector</i>	Science	1, 2, 6:1, 8:1
Stafford Sherlock Core Team	English Drama Psychology	3:2, 6:2; 8:2
JMH Warr Lay Inspector		5:6, 5:7, 6:3, 4:3
Alun Williams Core Team	Music	4:1, 4:2, 5:4
Mererid Stone Core Team	Mathematics	5:1, 3:1, 5:5
Colin Green Core Team	Science	5:2, 5:3,
Pam Harper	Science (Biology) GNVQ/NVQ (L&R) ASDAN (Lifeskills) Child Development Business Studies	
Phil Bowker	SEN	
David Jones	Design and Technology Motor Vehicle Engineering Catering	
Andrew Herdman	Geography	
Martyn Williams	French German	
Mike Fitzgerald	Physical Education PSE/Health Dance	
Charles Davies	History Economics Law	
Ann Jones	Welsh Welsh second language	
J Davies	English Drama Media Studies	
Ivan Davies	Art	
P Martin	Information Technology	
Mary Parry	Religious Education Religious Studies	

The Inspection team would like to take the opportunity to thank the children, parents, staff and governors for the courtesy with which they were treated during the inspection.