

REPORT

on the

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

**PONTARDDULAIS COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL
CAECERRIG ROAD
PONTARDDULAIS
SWANSEA
SA4 8PD**

School Number: 670/4072

Date of Inspection: 17 – 20 March 2003

By

Mrs A Powell
Registered Inspector W131

Under Estyn contract number: T/30/02

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CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES

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

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

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

Key stage 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

Pontarddulais Comprehensive School is an 11-16 mixed comprehensive school situated in the town of Pontarddulais. There are 792 pupils on roll compared to 750 at the time of the previous inspection in 1997. Pupils are drawn mainly from the town of Pontarddulais and the surrounding villages. The area has prosperous sections but is relatively disadvantaged economically; 25 percent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Most pupils come from English speaking homes; less than one percent of pupils speak Welsh as a first language. Less than one percent come from minority ethnic groups. There is a full range of ability represented in the school. Eighteen percent of pupils are identified on the school's register of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and 3 percent have statements of SEN.

The school's priorities for 2002-2003 are concerned with the following areas: resources, continuing professional development, curriculum, assessment, recording and reporting, school improvement and community. There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement firmly embedded in the culture of the school.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

Pontarddulais Comprehensive School is a very good school with many strengths. It is very successful in terms of its ethos, standards of achievement and quality of teaching. There has been considerable improvement in standards of achievement and quality of teaching since the previous inspection in 1997. The school has a clear vision of what it wants to achieve and effective strategies are being implemented to bring about improvements. The head teacher provides a clear vision and very effective leadership. The quality of management of the senior management team and teachers with whole school responsibilities is very good. The quality of leadership displayed by heads of departments is good and often very good.

The standards achieved by pupils are at least satisfactory in 98% of classes and good or better in 82%. Very good standards are achieved in 24% of classes. Achievement is better in KS4 (91% good or better) than in KS3 (74% good or better). In KS4, there are very good standards of achievement in 35% of classes. In the previous inspection in 1997, standards of achievement were good in 40% of classes and at least satisfactory in 90%.

Pupils of all abilities achieve very good standards in all key stages in English. In KS3, pupils of all abilities make good progress across the curriculum. In KS4, pupils of all abilities make very good progress in many subjects.

Table of standards achieved in subjects

<i>Subject</i>	<i>KS3</i>	<i>KS4</i>
English	Very good	Very good
Mathematics	Good	Good
Science	Good	Very good
Welsh second language	Good	Good
Design & technology	Good	Very good
Information technology	Good	Very good
History	Good	Good
Geography	Good	Very good
Modern foreign languages	Satisfactory	Good
Art	Good	Very good
Music	Good	Very good
Physical education	Good	Good
Religious education	Good	Good
Religious studies	-	Good
Personal and social education (PSE)	Very good	Good
Home economics	-	Very good
Drama	Good	Very good
Diploma of vocational education (DVE)	-	Good

Standards of achievement in speaking, reading and writing are good. Standards of listening are very good. Pupils speak clearly and confidently and oral responses provide evidence of very effective listening to teachers, to each other and to audio-visual presentations. A good proportion of pupils, especially in KS3, is developing the habit of reading for pleasure and information. Standards of research are good. Pupils produce detailed and often extended original writing in many subjects and adapt their style to suit the audience and purpose of their work.

Standards of achievement in numeracy are good. Pupils have a good understanding of number and complete simple calculations confidently and accurately. They measure and weigh accurately using a wide range of units correctly. Across the curriculum, pupils collect and analyse data successfully, from surveys and questionnaires in a range of contexts. In many subjects, pupils make good use of a range of graphs to record and analyse data.

Standards of achievement in ICT are good. Pupils develop good skills in their designated IT lessons in KS3 and KS4 and are confident to apply their skills, often autonomously, in subjects across the curriculum. Researching and communicating information is a particular strength. Across the curriculum, pupils are able to collect, communicate and analyse information to a good standard.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The ethos of the school is a major strength. Pupils' moral and social development is very good; their spiritual and cultural development is good. The school is a welcoming and caring community and is successful in promoting self discipline, respect for others and very good relationships.

Pupils reflect on their personal experiences, develop their own opinions, and learn to respect the values of others. They develop insights into their own beliefs and the beliefs of others. On the days when pupils do not attend an assembly they remain in their tutor groups. Not all tutor periods include an act of collective worship so that the school does not fully meet statutory requirements.

Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and show respect for each other, for adults and for their environment. They are confident to discuss issues such as prejudice and human rights and show respect for people whose traditions and beliefs differ from their own. They express opinions on personal, social and environmental issues with maturity and honesty. Through their generous support for a great number of local and national charities, pupils display a sense of responsibility towards others.

Relationships throughout the school are very good and create an ethos where pupils can learn in a secure and happy environment. Pupils are confident, co-operative and work productively together across the age range. They take pride in representing the school at local and national events. They respond well to opportunities to exercise responsibility and develop initiative and make full use of the opportunity to influence decisions in the school through their participation in the year and school councils.

The extensive programme of extra-curricular activities is very good. Pupils enrich and extend their learning through a wide range of activities and events that include musical, sporting, and cultural activities, visits to other countries, residential courses and many links with the community. The activities do a great deal to broaden experience, improve standards of achievement and increase self-confidence.

Standards of behaviour and attitudes towards learning are consistently very good throughout the school and this has a very positive effect on standards of achievement, ethos and quality of life in the school. The school is a lively, happy and civilised community. Pupils are well motivated, concentrate, exercise self-discipline and apply themselves readily in lessons.

Attendance is satisfactory. The average attendance rate for the three terms prior to inspection was 91.8%. The school has been successful in improving attendance by implementing a good range of effective strategies.

Quality of education

The quality of teaching is a major strength of the school. It is satisfactory or better in 98% of classes and good or better in 83%. These figures greatly exceed targets set by the National Assembly for the year 2002, for the quality of teaching in 95% of classes to be at least satisfactory and 50% good or better. In 26% of classes there is teaching of very good quality and this occurs in both key stages. The quality of teaching is very good in 37% of classes in KS4. The quality of teaching is better in KS4 (90% good or better) than KS3 (77% good or better). In the previous inspection in 1997, the quality of teaching was satisfactory in 90% of classes and good or very good in 40% of classes in KS3 and 50% of classes in KS4.

Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach is good, often very good. Planning is detailed and thorough. Almost all lessons are well planned, have clear objectives and are well structured. Resources are well planned and are used effectively. Classroom organisation is consistently good and is very good in KS4. Where teaching is very good, difficult concepts are made easy. Almost all lessons proceed at a brisk pace and teachers'

expectations are high across the curriculum. Teachers build effectively on existing knowledge and understanding and activities are well adapted to provide pupils of different abilities with challenging activities.

Assessment is accurate and consistent. The use made of assessments to improve standards of achievement is satisfactory in KS3 and good in KS4. In KS4, pupils are often aware of their progress in terms of examination grades. In KS3, in a few subjects, pupils are fully aware of their progress in terms of the learning objectives of the National Curriculum but this is not the case across the curriculum.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and often provide useful oral feedback to individuals and the whole class. The usefulness of written comments varies in its effectiveness across the school. There are procedures to involve pupils in their own learning through self-assessment throughout the school but these are fully effective in only a few subjects. In many subjects pupils are insufficiently aware of their strengths and weaknesses and what they must do to improve in terms of the specific requirements of different subjects.

Arrangements for recording pupils' achievement and progress are good. There is an effective, whole school system which tracks an individual pupil's progress across the curriculum from KS2 onwards. This information is used well to identify pupils making good progress and those who are underachieving. There is early intervention from subject teachers and the pastoral system.

Reports to parents are satisfactory. Reports are well structured but the usefulness of teacher comments varies across the curriculum. In a number of subjects, comments are very good: they are detailed, subject specific, note strengths and weaknesses and the way forward but in a significant proportion, comments are too general.

The analysis of internal assessments and external examination data is very good at whole school level. National and local data are used to compare performance in all subjects and there is a good understanding of progress grades in the school.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, meeting all statutory requirements for the National Curriculum and religious education throughout the school. Curriculum provision is effective and inclusive, ensuring pupils of all abilities have equal access and opportunity. It makes a positive contribution to pupils' standards of achievement.

The quality of support and guidance is very good and is a major strength of the school. There is a strong sense of the school as a community and an ethos of mutual support and respect. A clear focus on raising standards and on monitoring the academic progress of individual pupils is linked to a genuine concern for pupils' welfare and very good arrangements for social inclusion. Pupils are very well supported to achieve their full potential.

The quality of the PSE and the careers education and guidance programmes is very good.

The provision for pupils with SEN and the school's response to the requirements of the Code of Practice are very good.

Partnerships with parents and community, schools, other institutions and industry are very good.

Management

The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is very good. Action planning and reviewing procedures are very well established, fully understood and all staff and the governing body are effectively involved in their implementation. Strategies are very effective, provide an informed basis for further improvement and allow a prompt response to new educational initiatives.

The head teacher provides a clear vision and very effective leadership. He is very ably supported by the senior management team. The school is very well organised. The quality of management of the senior management team and those teachers with whole school responsibilities is very good. The quality of leadership displayed by heads of departments is at least good in almost all departments. It is very good in almost half.

Staff are highly committed to the success of the school and are a major strength. The INSET provision is very good.

Accommodation is good. It is sufficient to meet the curriculum and pastoral needs of pupils and provides a good environment. Decoration and displays throughout the school are uniformly good.

The previous report identified three key issues for action. There has been good progress made in addressing all the key issues. Progress in key issues one and two has been very good. There has been good progress in issue three.

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 98% of classes and good or better in 82%. Very good standards are achieved in 24% of classes. Achievement is better in KS4 (91% good or better) than in KS3 (74% good or better). In KS4, there are very good standards of achievement in 35% of classes. In the previous inspection in 1997, standards of achievement were good in 40% of classes and at least satisfactory in 90%.

In the end of KS3 National Curriculum tests in 2002, the percentages of pupils gaining level 5 or above in English, mathematics and science were above national averages. Results for girls were above national averages; those for boys were almost equal to the national averages for boys. In all three subjects, the difference between girls' and boys' results was greater than the difference in Wales. The percentage of pupils achieving a level 5 or above in English, mathematics and science (the core subject indicator, CSI) was above the average for Wales. The school has a free school meal index of 25. According to the National Assembly benchmark evaluation, which compares schools of a similar profile, the school's KS3 test results in science, English, mathematics and the CSI were in the top 25% results for schools in Wales.

Table of standards achieved in subjects

<i>Subject</i>	<i>KS3</i>	<i>KS4</i>
English	Very good	Very good
Mathematics	Good	Good
Science	Good	Very good
Welsh second language	Good	Good
Design & technology	Good	Very good
Information technology	Good	Very good
History	Good	Good
Geography	Good	Very good
Modern foreign languages	Satisfactory	Good
Art	Good	Very good
Music	Good	Very good
Physical education	Good	Good
Religious education	Good	Good
Religious studies	-	Good
PSE	Very good	Good
Home economics	-	Very good
Drama	Good	Very good
Diploma of vocational education		Good

In 2002, almost the whole cohort entered GCSE examinations in double science, English language and mathematics. All pupils who entered the examinations gained grades A*-F and the percentage of the cohort gaining grades A*-C in these subjects was well above national averages. In mathematics and English, the percentages of girls gaining grades A*-C were greater than the percentages of boys gaining A*-C grades and this difference is greater than the difference in Wales. In Welsh, 40% of the Y11 cohort entered the GCSE examinations in the full course Welsh second language in 2002. All the pupils who entered gained grades A* - E and results at A*-C exceeded the average for Wales. The percentage of the cohort gaining grades A*-C was just below the national average: results for girls were above the national average, those for boys were below. The percentage of pupils gaining five grades A*-C has increased from 49% (in 1997) to 56% (in 2002). The percentages of pupils gaining at least one A*-C and five or more A*-G have improved significantly; the improvement is greater than that attained nationally. On the National Assembly benchmark evaluation, the percentages of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C and the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C in mathematics, English and science (the CSI) were in the top 25%, while those gaining five or more A*-G grades and one or more A*-G grades were in the top 50%. On the WJEC database, almost all subjects show positive progress from KS3.

Pupils of all abilities achieve very good standards in all key stages in English. In KS3, pupils of all abilities make good progress across the curriculum. In KS4, pupils of all abilities make very good progress in many subjects.

3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum

Communication

Standards of achievement in speaking, reading and writing are good in both KS3 and KS4. Standards of listening are very good.

In almost all subjects of the curriculum, pupils speak clearly and confidently and make good use of standard English. Responses to teachers' questions are often extended and detailed and pupils' develop their ideas through talk. Interaction between teachers and pupils is good. Good collaboration in pairs and groups, where pupils take responsibility for extending their own learning, is a feature of lessons in almost all subjects. Pupils develop a technological vocabulary well, across the curriculum.

Standards of listening are very good across the curriculum. Pupils are attentive, maintaining concentration and showing interest in their lessons. They show respect for other people's views but also an ability to challenge and extend what they hear when necessary. Their responses, both written and oral, provide evidence of very effective listening to teachers, to each other and to audio-visual presentations. Instructions and information rarely have to be repeated.

In almost all subjects, reading skills are good. There is a range of effective support for those with reading difficulties and the great majority of pupils are able to read fluently and with understanding. Pupils read aloud clearly and with understanding in many lessons. They are able to retrieve information successfully from books and IT resources and standards of research are good. In their response to texts, pupils show an increasing ability to make inferences and deductions and to understand the importance of a writer's style and choice of language in conveying implicit meaning. A good proportion of pupils, especially in KS3, is developing the habit of reading for pleasure and information and makes good use of the school library.

Standards of writing are good in most subjects of the curriculum and very good in a few subjects in KS4. Pupils produce detailed and often extended original writing in many subjects and adapt their style to suit the audience and purpose of their work. They increasingly understand the need to edit and revise their work so that standards of accuracy and presentation in final drafts are good and coursework is of good or very good quality. ICT is often used effectively to enhance the presentation of pupils' written work and contributes significantly to the good standards achieved.

Numeracy

Standards of achievement in numeracy are good in both KS3 and KS4. They are good in the majority of subjects. Pupils have a good understanding of number and complete simple calculations confidently and accurately. They measure and weigh accurately using a wide range of units correctly. Across the curriculum, pupils collect and analyse data successfully, from surveys and questionnaires in a range of contexts. In many subjects, pupils make good use of a range of graphs to record and analyse data.

ICT

Standards of achievement in ICT are good in both KS3 and KS4. In design and technology, standards of achievement are very good in both key stages and good in almost all other subjects.

Pupils develop good skills in their designated ICT lessons in KS3 and KS4 and are confident to apply them, often autonomously, in subjects across the curriculum. Researching and communicating information is a particular strength. Pupils use the Internet well, and in both

KS3 and KS4 produce well researched and presented information in a variety of forms, including PowerPoint presentations for use in class. In design and technology, pupils make very good use of CAD/CAM and of microprocessors to control devices. They successfully digitise and manipulate images in art. Across the curriculum, pupils are able to collect, communicate and analyse information to a good standard. Pupils with SEN improve their literacy skills using reading and spelling packages.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The ethos of the school is a major strength. Pupils' moral and social development is very good; their spiritual and cultural development is good. The school is a welcoming and caring community and is successful in promoting self discipline, respect for others and very good relationships.

Pupils' spiritual awareness is developed through assemblies, PSE, religious education and many other subjects. In many subjects, pupils reflect on their personal experiences, develop their own opinions, and learn to respect the values of others. Pupils develop insights into their own beliefs and the beliefs of others in religious education. Assemblies are well organised and are enriched by good presentations by pupils, staff and visitors. Pupils' achievements and successes are celebrated and music is sometimes used at the beginning and end to enhance the event. There are good opportunities to reflect on identified issues and pupils respond well. There are good guidelines for form assemblies on the days when pupils remain in their form classes. There are examples of form assemblies of good quality with effective contributions from the teacher and meaningful participation by pupils but others are brief and provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to reflect. Not all tutor periods include an act of collective worship so that the school does not fully meet statutory requirements.

Moral issues are raised regularly in assemblies, religious education, PSE and many other subjects of the curriculum. The school places a strong emphasis on fostering respect, honesty, consideration for others and self discipline. Pupils respond well, have a clear sense of right and wrong and show respect for each other, for adults and for their environment. They are confident to discuss issues such as prejudice and human rights and show respect for people whose traditions and beliefs differ from their own. They express opinions on personal, social and environmental issues with maturity and honesty. Through their generous support for a great number of local and national charities, pupils display a sense of responsibility towards others.

Relationships between pupils and staff and between pupils and their peers are very good and create an ethos where pupils can learn in a secure and happy environment. Pupils are confident and co-operative and feel that they belong to a close-knit community. They collaborate well in pairs and groups in lessons and in extra curricular activities. They mix well socially and work productively together across the age range. Pupils respond well to opportunities to exercise responsibility and develop initiative by representing the school in many activities in school and the community. They make full use of the opportunity to influence decisions in the school through their participation in the year and school councils. There is evidence of several major initiatives that have been a direct result of pupils' suggestions, and pupils feel that they have a real voice in the school's management. This

provides a real sense of motivation and involvement. Across a wide range of activities, pupils take pride in representing the school at local and national events.

There is a very good range of extra curricular activities that extends pupils' personal, social and cultural development. Music, sports and drama are particularly strong, and a high number of pupils participate in the school's production of musical drama. There are visits to theatres and museums and residential courses. Pupils are developing an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of living in a multi-cultural society through activities in many subjects. Pupils from ethnic minorities are integrated naturally into the daily life of the school. The school is successful in promoting racial equality. Pupils learn much of the culture of Europe through educational visits. An understanding of the culture and heritage of Wales is effectively developed by the Welsh department and more than half the subjects of the curriculum. There is a successful Welsh week, school Eisteddfod and pupils are successful in activities undertaken in conjunction with the Urdd. There are bilingual signs around the school but little incidental use of the Welsh language in the school.

4.2 Behaviour and attitudes

Standards of behaviour and attitudes towards learning are consistently very good throughout the school and this has a very positive effect on standards of achievement, ethos and quality of life in the school. The school is a lively, happy and civilised community. Policies, procedures, responsibilities and expectations of staff and pupils are clearly stated and well understood. Effective strategies of behaviour management are well established and are implemented consistently. Pupils respond very positively and relationships throughout the school are very good.

Pupils' attitudes towards learning are very good. Pupils are well motivated, concentrate, exercise self-discipline and apply themselves readily in lessons. The merit system operates effectively. Social inclusion measures are particularly proactive with much support for pupils considered to be at risk and effective strategies to support pupils with a history of disaffection. Problems are identified quickly and every effort is made to resolve them and assist pupils facing difficulties. There is good use made of specialist external agencies in supporting young people when necessary. The school's anti-bullying procedures are implemented effectively and parents and pupils are confident that the school reacts promptly when allegations of bullying arise. There were 58 temporary exclusions and one permanent exclusion in the year preceding the inspection.

Areas of the school have narrow corridors and staircases and there is congestion at the end of lessons and break times. However, pupils exhibit self discipline and behave responsibly so that movement of pupils between lessons is orderly and no time is wasted between classroom transfers.

4.3 Attendance

Attendance is satisfactory. The average attendance rate for the three terms prior to inspection was 91.8%. In the previous inspection in 1997 it was 89.2% and was unsatisfactory. The school has been successful in improving attendance by implementing a good range of effective strategies. There is first day call when pupils are not in school. Full attendance and improved attendance are rewarded and there are compact arrangements in KS4. There are whole school and form targets and good attendance is identified and celebrated.

Registration procedures are computerised and maximum use is made of records and data in close monitoring of all attendance matters and concerns. Attendance registers are accurate, meet statutory requirements and there is very good communication at all levels so that any identified patterns giving concern are quickly addressed. Unauthorised absence is very low but there is a high rate of holidays in term time. A significant number of pupils exceed the statutory holiday period limit. Heads of year and form tutors are conscientious in following up attendance and there is close monitoring of pupils' attendance daily and weekly. Support from the efficient administrative staff is very good. There are regular, effective meetings with the educational welfare officer. Attendance is recorded in lessons in all subjects and subject teachers review patterns of absence.

Punctuality is good. The vast majority of pupils arrive punctually at the beginning of the day but a significant minority arrive up to five minutes late for morning registration. Pupils are punctual arriving at lessons and the school day operates efficiently and punctually. The school has responded effectively through a range of initiatives to social inclusion measures.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

The quality of teaching is a major strength of the school. It is satisfactory or better in 98% of classes and good or better in 83%. These figures greatly exceed targets set by the National Assembly for the year 2002, for the quality of teaching in 95% of classes to be at least satisfactory and 50% good or better. In 26% of classes there is teaching of very good quality and this occurs in both key stages. The quality of teaching is very good in 37% of classes in KS4. The quality of teaching is better in KS4 (90% good or better) than KS3 (77% good or better). In the previous inspection in 1997, the quality of teaching was satisfactory in 90% of classes and good or very good in 40% of classes in KS3 and 50% of classes in KS4.

In KS3, the quality of teaching is very good in English and PSE and satisfactory in modern foreign languages. It is good in all other subjects. In KS4, the quality of teaching is very good in English, science, design and technology, information technology, geography, physical education, art, music, drama and home economics. It is good in all other subjects.

Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach is good, often very good. Almost all teachers are fully aware of current initiatives. Planning to cover the programmes of study of the National Curriculum, the requirements of external examination specifications and progression from KS3 to KS4 is detailed and thorough. In mathematics, English and science there is good progress in building on topics covered in the primary school. There is a good range of strategies to ensure pupils develop the skills of communication, numeracy and ICT. These include the use of key words, reading aloud, pupil presentations, research, surveys and analysis.

Classroom organisation is consistently good and is very good in KS4. Almost all lessons are well planned and have clear objectives. Resources are well planned and are used effectively. A wide range of resources is employed to generate and maintain interest and provide a variety of experiences. ICT is used successfully in teaching in a number of subjects. In almost all lessons, there is a good learning environment and relationships are very good.

Classes are well managed and practical activities are organised effectively. Paired and group activities are often used well to ensure that pupils share information and ideas, develop self confidence and improve their understanding. The quality of paired and group work is good in the vast majority of subjects. In English, history, religious education and drama it is very good

The range of teaching techniques used in lessons is consistently good and is very good in KS4. Lessons are well structured. They begin with an effective recapitulation of work covered earlier, there is a good sequence of activities and a final recapitulation ensures key points are understood. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are thoroughly and constantly checked by skilful questioning. In many lessons, pupils further develop their understanding when probing, challenging questions ensure pupils analyse and reflect on their ideas. Where teaching is very good, difficult concepts are made easy.

Almost all lessons proceed at a brisk pace and teachers' expectations are high across the curriculum. In KS3, activities are well matched to each individual pupil's needs; in KS4, they are often very well matched. Teachers build effectively on existing knowledge and understanding and activities are well adapted to provide pupils of different abilities with challenging activities. Teachers give freely of their time to provide pupils with extra support when it is required. In a few lessons, teachers' exposition goes on too long and pace slows.

5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting

The whole school assessment policy is comprehensive and useful. It provides effective guidance for the policies of individual departments and assessment procedures. A full range of assessment techniques is used and there is a common marking code which pupils understand. In KS3 and KS4, assessment is accurate and consistent and is linked appropriately, in almost all subjects, to National Curriculum criteria in KS3 and to examination criteria and grades in KS4. Teachers use a good variety of assessments with clear criteria and there is often effective moderation within departments.

The use made of assessments to improve standards of achievement is satisfactory in KS3 and good in KS4. In a few subjects in KS3, pupils are fully aware of their progress in terms of the National Curriculum and in KS4, pupils are often aware of their progress in terms of examination grades. In all subjects, pupils are informed of underachievement and good progress but they do not always understand the progress they are making in terms of the learning objectives of the National Curriculum. In most subjects, National Curriculum levels themselves are not used until the end of Y9 for statutory teacher assessment.

Teachers mark pupils' work, including homework, regularly and often provide useful oral feedback to individuals and the whole class. The usefulness of written comments varies in its effectiveness across the school. In the best practice, teachers' comments identify strengths and weaknesses and give specific ways in which to improve but in many other cases comments are too general. There are procedures to involve pupils in their own learning through self-assessment throughout the school but these are fully effective in only a few subjects. Pupils' comments are often too general so that in many subjects, pupils are insufficiently aware of their strengths and weaknesses and what they must do to improve in terms of the specific requirements of different subjects.

Arrangements for recording pupils' achievement and progress are good. There is an effective, computerised, whole school system which tracks an individual pupil's progress across the curriculum from KS2 onwards. Departments record assessments throughout the year and there is a regular record of pupils' progress across the curriculum twice a year. This information is used well to identify pupils making good progress and those who are underachieving. The information is shared with heads of year and form tutors and there is early intervention from subject teachers and the pastoral system. Mentoring and other support are provided at an early stage.

Reports to parents are satisfactory. The school fully meets statutory requirements. Parents receive one full report annually and an interim report in Y7 to Y10. The timing of reports is well matched to parents' evenings. Annual reports are well structured. They record attainment, effort and general progress, and provide additional comments on strengths, weaknesses and targets for improvement. The usefulness of teacher comments varies across the curriculum. In a number of subjects, comments are very good: they are detailed, subject specific, note strengths and weaknesses and the way forward. However, in a significant proportion, comments are very general in nature and refer more to presentational and pastoral issues than to the requirements of the subject and how to improve.

The school is making good progress in implementing plans to develop an effective formative review of progress through progress files. Pupils in Y9 are the pilot year for the new progress files which will supersede the national RoA system still being used in KS4. Final documents are well produced, contain relevant records of academic and wider development and celebrate achievement. National and local data are used for comparison

The analysis of internal assessments and external examination data is very good at whole school level. It informs future groupings, and gender and other equal opportunity issues are considered. Challenging targets for improvement are set at whole school and departmental levels. National and local data are used to compare performance in all subjects and there is a good understanding of progress grades in the school. There is a growing understanding of setting targets for attainment at departmental level.

5.3 Curriculum

The curriculum is broad and balanced, meeting all statutory requirements for the National Curriculum and religious education throughout the school. The timetable is organised over a two-week cycle of fifty one-hour lessons and meets the recommended 25-hour teaching week. Curriculum organisation makes a very positive contribution to meeting the school's commitment to equip pupils with knowledge, understanding and skills together with moral, spiritual and cultural understanding. Curriculum provision is effective and inclusive, ensuring pupils of all abilities have equal access and opportunity. Pupils with SEN in KS3 and KS4 have access to the National Curriculum, to accredited courses in KS4 and to pre-vocational programmes. They enjoy good support for integration into the full life of the school including extra-curricular activities. There is one appropriate disapplication from the National Curriculum.

In KS3, the curriculum meets the needs of pupils of all abilities. Subjects are generally allocated an appropriate number of lessons. In order to improve breadth and challenge in Y9, the most able linguists in French and Welsh have reduced time to accommodate the introduction of German. French and Welsh lessons for pupils with SEN are also reduced to

accommodate additional literacy lessons. In other subjects, pupils are taught mainly in mixed ability groups and there are appropriate setting arrangements in mathematics from Y7, in Welsh and modern foreign languages from Y8, and in science in Y9. Pupils with SEN are taught in small special groups, which provide additional support, throughout KS3 in English and mathematics and in Y9 in Welsh. There are separate lessons for drama. IT and PSE have a designated lesson in each year of KS3. In mathematics, English and science there is good progress in developing curriculum links with primary schools.

In KS4, the organisation of an extended common core curriculum ensures pupils have access to English, mathematics, double award science, Welsh, physical education, PSE, religious education, health education and an accredited key skills course in IT. While all pupils study Welsh, this does not lead to accreditation for most pupils. Most pupils study double science. Pupils choose from four option columns, which enables some to study both history and geography or two modern foreign languages. Pre-vocational DVE subjects are introduced which are appropriately followed by mainly lower ability pupils. A small number of pupils study NVQ in hairdressing at a local college of further education. Good guidance ensures most pupils have a balanced curriculum. At the end of KS4 about 80% of pupils go on to study in a college of further education. There is a good take-up of subjects across the curriculum except for German where, as a consequence of low take-up, the school funds an evening course at a local college of further education for a small number of pupils. There is a very good provision of an alternative curriculum for pupils in Y11 who have a history of disaffection. The programme is taught outside school and effectively combines academic studies, work experience and activities to develop self confidence and self esteem. Pupils enjoy the course, their attendance is good and the school closely monitors their progress.

Pupils in Y10 undertake 9 days work experience and the programme is well managed. There is a wide range of work-related experiences, including enterprise activities, technological challenges and talks and visits, often related to curriculum activities. The recommendations of the ACCAC framework for work-related education in Wales are being fully implemented. Arrangements for PSE are very effective. PSE is taught in timetabled lessons and in lessons when the timetable is suspended. The programme is very well planned with appropriate content and continuity. It includes careers education and guidance and all aspects of health education and fully meets the requirements of the ACCAC PSE framework.

Planning for the development of the key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT across the curriculum is good. Planning for the development of Cwricwlwm Cymreig and multicultural understanding is good. Schemes of work are detailed, covering the requirements of the National Curriculum and providing good guidance for teaching and learning and continuity and progression between the key stages. Homework is set regularly and allows pupils to extend and consolidate their understanding. All pupils have pupil planners which many use well to manage their learning and homework but their use is not consistent across classes and subjects. There is no homework timetable, which occasionally results in too much or too little homework being given.

The extensive programme of extra-curricular activities organised by the school is very good. Pupils enrich and extend their learning through a wide range of activities and events that include musical, sporting, and cultural activities, visits to other countries, residential courses and many links with the community. Pupils respond well to the wide range of opportunities to continue their studies out of school hours and at lunch times where a wide range of facilities and support is available to help them improve their standards of achievement. Over 11% of pupils with musical flair have instrumental tuition as part of the LEA peripatetic

service funded by the school. The activities do a great deal to broaden experience, improve standards of achievement and increase self-confidence.

5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

The quality of support and guidance is very good and is a major strength of the school. There is a strong sense of the school as a community and an ethos of mutual support and respect. A clear focus on raising standards and on monitoring the academic progress of individual pupils is linked to a genuine concern for pupils' welfare and very good arrangements for social inclusion. Pupils are very well supported to achieve their full potential. The school offers a secure and caring environment where all are valued and where pupils and parents feel confident that any problems, such as bullying, are dealt with quickly and effectively. Staff are generous in giving their own time to support pupils who need extra help with their work, and additional support including Easter revision courses is also available to pupils.

The pastoral system is very well organised. Pastoral organisation consists of a deputy head teacher with overall responsibility for pupils, a designated head of the affective curriculum, pastoral team leaders attached to each year group and form tutors. Very good pastoral links exist with partner primary schools and pupils are well prepared for transition to the comprehensive school where they are placed in mixed ability tutor groups. Apart from the pastoral team leader for Y7, team leaders and tutors remain with their tutor groups throughout the pupils' school careers so that very good relationships and a detailed knowledge of individuals are built up. Team leaders are successful in establishing a year group identity through activities such as charity support and sports teams. Day-to-day communication between members of the pastoral teams is good and more formal meetings are held each half-term. Record keeping is very good.

Form tutors meet their forms for registration each morning and afternoon, and for tutor periods on three mornings each week. The use of tutor time is generally effective. Tutors check attendance and uniform, monitor both the use of pupils' planners and the updating of national RoA and progress files. Pastoral team leaders and form tutors play an effective, integral role in the whole school monitoring system by providing early intervention for pupils who have been identified as underachieving in some aspects of their school work.

The school's monitoring system also identifies pupils about whom there are concerns in five or more areas, and these pupils are well supported by a mentoring programme involving members of the senior management team, pastoral team leaders and other staff. Currently, 24 pupils in Y11 have a mentor, in addition to a smaller number of pupils from other year groups. Pupils appreciate this support and state that the weekly meetings help them to organise themselves and their work. The school's merit system also acts as a motivating force and pupils respond well to it.

The PSE programme is very effective. The coordinator of the affective curriculum oversees the programme and individual pastoral team leaders are responsible for the regular review, evaluation and updating of the schemes of work. The programme is detailed and comprehensive and fully meets the requirements of the ACCAC framework. All pupils have one lesson every two weeks and each year group also has one day of suspended timetable every year with a relevant focus. Form tutors deliver the programme with additional input from a wide range of external speakers, and specialist teachers provide extra lessons of health

and sex education in KS4. There is an emphasis on pupils' active involvement in lessons, delivery is good and pupils value the programme, finding it useful and informative.

The quality of careers education and guidance is very good. The programme is well planned and develops pupils' self awareness, career planning skills, understanding of career opportunities and the world of work. It provides relevant information and objective advice. The provision is included in the school development plan and is effectively monitored by the careers coordinator. Activities are well integrated into the PSE and work experience programmes and begin in Y7. Pupils and parents value the programme and almost all pupils have a good understanding of potential job and college opportunities and their requirements. Y11 pupils undertake effective mock interviews. There is a very good relationship with the careers advisor who is based at the school for part of the week, attends parents' meetings and is fully involved in planning and delivering the programme. From Y9 onwards there are useful interviews with the careers advisor. Pupils make good use of the careers library which contains relevant, up to date information.

The school's policy and procedures for Child Protection fully comply with statutory requirements. Arrangements for looked-after children are very good and all pupils have detailed, relevant personal education plans. There are good links with a range of relevant outside agencies. A newly appointed school nurse is available on site for several hours each day and all learning support assistants and a few teachers and administration staff have up-to-date qualifications in first aid. All these aspects combine to provide very good support for pupils with particular needs. Procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety are good though a few areas of concern were identified to the headteacher during the inspection.

5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)

The provision for pupils with SEN and the school's response to the requirements of the Code of Practice are very good. Pupils with SEN are well integrated into the full life of the school and have good access to accredited courses in KS4, including DVE, entry level qualification and GCSE. A substantial number are successful in gaining good grades.

Subject teachers are responsible for providing suitable work for most pupils with SEN. Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) are distributed to assist subject teachers in their planning and in a most lessons the information is used well. Pupils make good progress and build well on previous learning. In a number of classes there is very effective support for individuals or small groups of pupils provided by learning support assistants. They work well with class teachers and keep detailed records of their work. Across the curriculum, the standard of achievement of pupils with SEN is good in KS3 and often very good in KS4.

In the small special classes in English and mathematics in KS3 and in Welsh in Y9, pupils make good progress. Lessons are well planned to match pupils' achievement and appropriate teaching strategies are employed. The withdrawal of pupils from French in KS3, for extra help in literacy skills is successful in improving their literacy skills but hinders continuity in French and their standards of achievement. Thirty-six pupils are withdrawn from mainstream lessons on a rolling programme to receive additional help with literacy. There is careful consideration given to their subject interest and needs before arranging the withdrawal programme. Literacy schemes are carefully structured and activities are specific to pupils' individual needs. Pupils have regular opportunities to collaborate on a variety of reading tasks. They are enthusiastic and make good progress in gaining relevant literacy skills. The

programme is well co-ordinated and learning support assistants work closely together to ensure its success.

Twenty-four pupils have a statement of SEN. Statements are reviewed effectively and parents, external agencies and the LEA are consulted appropriately. One pupil has been appropriately disapplied from an element of the National Curriculum to enable him to receive additional help with his literacy and study skills. One hundred and one pupils are identified on the SEN register on school action and twenty pupils are identified on school action plus. Arrangements for identifying pupils in need of extra support are very good and the SEN register is reviewed effectively. Every pupil in need of additional support has a very good IEP which relates well to their needs. Strengths and areas to be developed are identified and there are appropriate targets for improvement. These are shared with pupils and parents which is good practice.

The provision is very effectively coordinated by two deputy head teachers who are well supported by the specialist teachers. The work of the learning support assistants is very well organised by the learning support coordinator. Across the curriculum, teachers are positive in their approach to pupils with SEN and make good use of the expertise within the school. The head teacher and the designated governor are very supportive of the provision and ensure a wide range of appropriate opportunities for all pupils with SEN.

5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions

Partnerships with parents and community, schools and other institutions are very good. The wide range of links and partnerships make a valuable contribution to the life of the school, its values and ethos and pupils' personal, social and academic development.

The quality of information provided for parents about the work of the school is very good. The prospectus issued to parents of all new pupils, is of very good quality and style and contains much valuable information. It complies fully with National Assembly requirements. There are a few minor omissions in the governing body's annual report to parents. A home/school agreement is well established and parents receive an additional flow of information which is supplemented by a newsletter every term that provides information about the school's activities and successes. Parents have responded well to the first day telephone call system in relation to absence.

A series of evenings is arranged annually for the benefit of parents of each year group to discuss their children's work. A number of additional evenings is arranged for specific needs and there is good information and advice for pupils and parents at important transition points such as Y7, Y9 and Y11. There is an 'open-door' system whereby parents can contact senior members of staff or make an appointment to discuss matters of concern at mutually convenient times. Questionnaires completed by parents prior to the inspection recorded support for the school and satisfaction with provision, organisation and values. A hard-working PTA raises funds in support of school facilities and activities. Public events and activities held at the school are very well supported but parents are not currently involved in activities within the school.

There is a strong community ethos in the school and a wide range of links which enhance pupils' experiences. The community is used effectively as a resource by subjects such as art,

drama, physical education, geography and in the PSE and vocational programmes. The leisure centre and extensive outdoor facilities are located on the campus and are used extensively by the public.

Links with the partner primary schools are a particular strength of school provision. Pastoral links are very well established and the annual transition arrangements for receiving Y6 pupils are efficient and thorough and as a result pupils settle quickly. In mathematics, English and science there is good progress in developing curriculum links with primary schools. Liaison with further education colleges is very good: pupils benefit greatly from the relationships. Transition arrangements for Y11 pupils are extensive, long established and parents and pupils appreciate the comprehensive programme of preparation. There is effective use of the expertise of a range of external agencies which provide good support across a wide variety of activities.

5.7 Partnership with industry

Partnerships with industry are very good. Pupils' economic and industrial understanding, awareness of the world of work and curricular experiences are greatly enhanced as a result of well-established partnerships with industry and business.

The ACCAC framework for work-related education in Wales is being fully implemented. The programme begins in Y7 and continues to Y11. There is a stimulating programme of experiences and opportunities which is carefully planned, monitored and evaluated. It is delivered through work experience, careers education and guidance, industry days, enterprise projects, visits to industry and business, residential courses, mock interviews, the pre-vocational programme, the alternative curriculum and the PSE provision. Industry is used as a resource to enhance pupils' understanding in almost half the subjects of the curriculum and to develop key skills and self confidence. The school prepares pupils well for the world beyond school.

Pupils in Y10 undertake a work placement for nine days in the summer of each year as an integral part of the careers education and guidance and PSE programmes. They are thoroughly prepared for a comprehensive and interesting range of placements and pupils, teachers and employers are fully involved in evaluating their experiences. The provision is very well managed.

The world of business and local industry is very supportive and the school receives valuable support and some additional income from a number of organisations including Careers Wales, ELWa. The range and extent of teacher placements in industry are satisfactory.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement

The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is very good. Action planning and reviewing procedures are very well established, fully understood and all staff and the governing body are effectively involved in their implementation. The current school development plan, 2002-2003 is a core document, which provides an effective focus for planning, monitoring and evaluating throughout the school. It is detailed and addresses six

key priority areas. All departments and key development areas produce development plans which are well focused on the whole school priorities and targets for improvement. The system provides sufficient flexibility for departments to address their own specific requirements as well as whole school plans. Development plans are thoroughly reviewed with link members of the senior management team and governors are effectively involved in procedures. All departments and areas undertake and record a detailed evaluation of progress which informs future planning. Development plans identify realistic tasks, strategies and responsibilities and are resourced in terms of money, staff, INSET requirements and time. Many success criteria are measurable. Roles and responsibilities are identified and very well understood. Strategies are very effective, provide an informed basis for further improvement and allow a prompt response to new educational initiatives.

Procedures to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of a comprehensive range of curricular and whole school activities and programmes are an integral part of the culture of the school. Whole school issues such as the Y6 curriculum liaison, the alternative curriculum, attendance, the provision for pupils with SEN, the affective curriculum are carefully monitored and evaluated. A current focus for review across the school is key skills including ICT. Area coordinators and coordinators of key development areas are effectively involved in the process. There is a good range of first hand evidence collected which includes direct observation of teaching and learning. Pupils are consulted effectively. Detailed reports are produced and provide an important focus for disseminating good practice. There is also a programme of monitoring and evaluating undertaken at departmental level. The first hand evidence collected includes direct observation in the classroom, scrutiny of exercise books and schemes of work. Non contact time is identified and monitoring and evaluating exercises are built into the planning cycle.

Challenging whole school and departmental targets for improvement are set for raising achievement in KS3 and KS4. The process uses information from primary schools, CATs and NFER data and assessment information from departments. Examination results are very thoroughly analysed, monitored and evaluated. National and local data are used to compare performance in all subjects and staff are effectively involved in procedures and governors are informed.

The whole school monitoring programme is successful and the senior management team and staff with whole school responsibilities have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Monitoring and evaluating at departmental level is good in almost all departments.

6.2 Leadership and efficiency

The school has a clear vision of what it wants to achieve and effective strategies are being implemented to bring about improvements. There is a shared sense of common purpose to improve standards of achievement, maintain high expectations and develop a community where all pupils fulfil their potential, experience, recognise and celebrate success and behave responsibly.

The head teacher provides a clear vision and very effective leadership. He is very ably supported by the three deputy head teachers and the manager for finance and administration, who form the senior management team. The senior management team displays a clear educational direction and a shared commitment to implement improvements. The school is

very well organised. Members of the senior management team have clearly defined whole school responsibilities as well as links to identified departments and year groups. Liaison with the departments is very good. Key stages are divided into year groups. There is a coordinator of the affective curriculum and each year group has a pastoral team leader and a team of form tutors. Year teams work well together to monitor pupils' academic and pastoral progress and provide effective support. Communication between the departments and the pastoral teams is very good. The quality of management of the senior management team and those teachers with whole school responsibilities is very good. The quality of leadership displayed by heads of departments is at least good in almost all departments. It is very good in almost half.

Governors are very well informed, provide a wide range of expertise and show a very good understanding of what the school is achieving. They are committed to the success of the school and are actively involved in financial decisions, school action planning, target setting, the curriculum and staff appointments.

Communication is very good throughout the school and whole school initiatives are very well coordinated. There are regular newsletters, briefings and a planned programme of effective meetings at all levels. Teaching and associate staff communicate and collaborate well so that the routine organisation of the school is very good.

The financial management of the school is very good. There is effective liaison between the senior management team, the finance sub-committee and other members of the governing body. Financial management is closely related to the priorities and activities identified in the school development plan. The office manager is responsible for implementing the day to day running of the finance of the school and provides regular, instant budget updates for the head teacher and manager for finance and administration. The governing body and the finance sub-committee meet regularly and are actively involved in monitoring and evaluating expenditure and financial decisions. Astute financial management ensures best value for money. The school income is augmented by the revenue generated by the use of school facilities and services and the successful bidding for additional finance from national and local sources.

Funding for the departments is effective and related to their development plan. Heads of departments receive instant breakdowns of current balances. The few minor recommendations identified in the most recent audit report have been addressed. The efficiency and effectiveness of the management of available resources is very good.

6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing

Staff are highly committed to the success of the school and are a major strength. There are 41 full time and 9 part time teachers at the school, to give a full time equivalent of 45.6. The pupil/teacher ratio is 17:1 which is average for the size of school. Teachers are well qualified and there is a good balance between experienced teachers and those new to the profession. Almost all are graduates and have teaching qualifications. There are 24 associate staff: they include office, finance and clerical staff, laboratory, ICT and workshop technicians, a librarian, a nurse, and learning support assistants. Associate staff make a very valuable contribution to the life of the school. They provide very effective support across a wide

range of duties and responsibilities and a number implement coordination and management roles effectively. Staff are very well deployed to cover their curricular and pastoral roles. Non contact time is in line with responsibilities.

The INSET provision is very good. It is very well organised by a deputy head teacher. All staff, both teaching and associate staff are fully involved in the programme. INSET needs are identified by individual staff and by heads of department. Whole school and individual training is carefully allocated to meet whole school priorities and needs identified by individuals and departments. The effect of INSET is good in almost all departments. Staff evaluate training and maintain files of their individual professional development.

The induction programme for newly qualified teachers is very good. They are very well supported by departments and the induction coordinator and their programme is well adapted to meet their identified needs. Staff new to the school and supply teachers are provided with clear information when they arrive at the school and are well supported. The school has no current links with an initial teacher training establishment

Accommodation

Accommodation is good. It is sufficient to meet the curriculum and pastoral needs of pupils and provides a good environment. A great deal of thought has been invested in its use. The facilities available for physical education are good and are used extensively by the school and the community. The main hall is used as a dining hall and this is well managed. Catering arrangements are well organised and well adapted to meet the needs of pupils. There is a very good provision of designated areas for pupils to use out of lessons. The school demonstrates its respect and trust in the pupils by allowing access to classrooms during the lunch hour. Almost all subject rooms are arranged to allow good communication within the department

The school buildings are well maintained, caretakers are efficient and procedures for dealing with site problems are effective. Committed cleaning staff ensure a high level of cleanliness. The school is free from graffiti and litter. Decoration and displays throughout the school are uniformly good. Space in corridors is used very effectively to celebrate the wide range of school activities and pupils' achievements. Throughout the school, classrooms provide a stimulating learning environment and subject identity with records of pupils' work, technical vocabulary and posters.

Resources

The quantity and quality of resources across the school are consistently good. In a number of subjects booklets of very good quality are produced within the department. Across the curriculum, there is good, often very good, use made of a wide range of well chosen resources and this contributes to the good quality of teaching and standards achieved in the school.

Facilities for ICT are good. The ratio of pupils to computers is 4:1 which is better than the national average. Computers have been recently updated and extended and this includes access to the Internet and broad band. Pupils have good access to IT facilities in the lunch time and after school and make very good use of the computers to enhance their standards of achievement in many subjects.

The library provides a good whole school resource centre. It is supervised all day and is well resourced with a suite of computers and a good stock of books for reading and research. The librarian is efficient and helpful and many departments including science, English, history and geography use the facilities well. Pupils make good use of the library during the lunch time and out of school hours.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

English

Standards of achievement are very good both in KS3 and KS4.

In the results of National Curriculum tests in KS3 in 2002, achievement was above the Wales average with 66% of pupils gaining level 5 or above. In the GCSE examinations in English and English Literature, 63% of pupils in the cohort gained a grade at A*-C and 87% of pupils gained a grade at A*-G. These figures are considerably higher than local and national averages and represent good progress.

Good features

KS3 and KS4

- Pupils are articulate and confident and make appropriate use of standard English.
- They are keen to respond to teachers' questioning and responses are usually detailed and suitably extended.
- They express ideas and opinions clearly, generate their own questions and effectively develop ideas through talk.
- They take part in drama activities such as role play and hot seating with enthusiasm and skill. Oral work in response to poetry and drama in KS4 is outstanding.
- Very good collaboration in pairs and small groups is a feature of most lessons. Discussion is focused and increasingly mature and thoughtful. While showing respect for each other's views, pupils are able to question and challenge what is said when they feel this to be necessary.
- Pupils demonstrate very good listening skills. They listen attentively and with respect to each other and to the teacher, showing very good attitudes to learning and concentration.
- Pupils read aloud clearly, audibly and with appropriate expression.
- The skills of location, reorganisation, inference, evaluation and appreciation of style and of the techniques used by writers for particular effects are appropriately and progressively developed and are increasingly strong. Pupils' written work in response to a range of challenging texts is very good and that of some able pupils is outstanding.
- Research skills are increasingly good across the key stages and pupils use reference books and IT resources with confidence.
- Many pupils, especially in KS3, read regularly for pleasure and information.
- Pupils show an increasing understanding of the need to edit and revise their written work so that final drafts of assignments in KS3 and coursework in KS4 are of very good quality in relation to ability. The work is extended and detailed, content is appropriate and often lively, organisation is generally good and there is a high degree of accuracy.

- Pupils often use IT to enhance the presentation of their work and this makes a significant contribution to the very good standards achieved.
- Initiatives such as the Netscape and Refugee Writers projects are of very good quality and provide both motivation for pupils and a real sense of audience and purpose for their writing.
- Standards of work by pupils with SEN are very good and pupils respond very well to schemes of work which provide appropriate access to the mainstream curriculum.

Since the last inspection, there has been good progress in KS3 and KS4.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and KS4.

In 2002, the percentage of pupils gaining at least a level 5 in the National Curriculum tests in KS3 was 65%. This was above both the national average and the LEA average. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, 88% of pupils gained grades A* to G, just above both the national and the LEA averages. 61% of pupils gained grades A* to C which was well above both the national average and the LEA averages. Girls' results were better than those of boys.

Good features

KS3

- Most pupils are confident and enthusiastic to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding by answering questions orally in front of the remainder of the class. Their answers are clear and are usually accurate.
- They have a good knowledge of whole numbers, fractions, percentages and the relationships between them.
- They can perform calculations involving simple and compound interest.
- They understand the basic concepts of probability both experimentally and theoretically.

KS4

- Pupils have a sound knowledge of ratio and proportion and their applications in every day life.
- They can solve linear simultaneous equations both graphically and by using algebraic techniques.
- They have a sound knowledge of the equations of straight lines and some curves and their respective graphs.
- More able pupils can apply Pythagoras's theorem and the trigonometry of right-angled triangles to regular three-dimensional objects.

KS3 and KS4

- Most pupils make sound, appropriate use of calculators and are aware of the need to check answers by estimation.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress.

Shortcomings

- Less able pupils do not always complete their work
- Pupils use ICT insufficiently in a mathematical context.

Since the last inspection there has been good progress and standards of achievement have improved from unsatisfactory to good in both KS3 and KS4.

Science

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and very good in KS4. In the end of KS3 National Curriculum tests in 2002, the percentage of pupils gaining level 5 or more was above the national average. In the GCSE examinations, all pupils who entered the examinations gained grades A*-F and the percentages of boys and girls gaining A*-C grades were well above the relevant averages for Wales.

Good features

KS3 and KS4

- In KS3, pupils make good progress in knowledge and understanding across a wide range of topics of the National Curriculum.
- In KS4, pupils make very good progress in knowledge and understanding of key scientific concepts from KS3.
- Pupils in both key stages, are able to apply what they know to new situations and can explain new phenomena using knowledge gained earlier.
- They have a good understanding of how scientific ideas relate to their every day lives and can apply what they have learned to industrial contexts.
- They make good progress in understanding health and environmental issues.
- In both key stages, pupils use scientific terms accurately in their oral answers and make good progress in expressing their ideas in written form.
- In KS4, pupils are very confident to explore their scientific understanding and are able to share and develop their ideas through discussion with other pupils and their teachers. They understand the investigative nature of science.
- Pupils make good use of ICT for a wide and often innovative variety of activities for desk top publishing, word processing, and to research information from the Internet. They select and analyse information and data well.
- Pupils of all abilities make good progress in developing the skills of scientific investigation.
- They have a good understanding of the need for completing preliminary work and the key factors in planning. They can apply knowledge and understanding at the planning stage.
- They obtain accurate readings, repeat readings and understand the need to average results. They understand fair testing.
- They present results in accurate tables and use appropriate graphs for analysis. Pupils can often identify anomalous results and there is often a good line of best fit.
- In KS4, pupils often evaluate their investigations in sufficient detail and refer to underlying theory. They can suggest appropriate improvement in procedures.

Shortcomings

- Pupils do not have sufficient hands-on experience of data collection.

Standards of achievement have improved since the last inspection.

Welsh second language

Standards of achievement in KS3 and KS4 are good. More able pupils make very good progress in both key stages. In 2002, all pupils who entered the GCSE examinations gained grades A*-E and 78 % gained grades A* - C. These results exceed the LEA average and are in line with the national average.

Good features

KS3 and KS4

- Pupils across the ability range are confident to offer contributions to question and answer sessions.
- They listen well to authentic recordings, to the teacher and each other. During group and paired working they listen to the contribution of others and respond to them purposefully. More able pupils make very good progress and are able to make extended contributions.
- Pupils are able to express their opinion and give reasons to support their point of view. They speak with good pronunciation and intonation and with a good degree of accuracy.
- The majority of pupils use the knowledge gained in oral activities to enhance their written work.
- Most pupils read aloud clearly. They read familiar passages from work sheets, short dialogues and paragraphs confidently, with a good understanding of the text, and can often extract relevant information.
- Pupils are able to compose extended written work in a range of forms.
- More able pupils produce extended written work of a very good standard. Pupils of middle and lower ability make a good use of writing frames as aids to extended writing.
- Pupils are confident to use word processing and desk top publishing to enhance their written work

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- A minority of pupils are not sufficiently confident in using familiar language in a new context such as an unrehearsed conversation.
- Pupils do not read for enjoyment from a sufficiently wide range of sources.

Many pupils take advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered by the department which helps to raise standards. The department makes a very good positive contribution the Cwricwlwm Cymreig within the school.

Progress since the last inspection has been good. Standards of achievement in KS3 and KS4 have improved from satisfactory to good.

Design and technology

Standards are good at KS3 and very good at KS4. Standards are very good in GCSE product design. GCSE examination results in 2002 were well above the national average for grades A*-C and most pupils gained a pass at A*-G. Around 34% of pupils entered in 2002, which is near the national average.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils understand how a design process helps them to design better products.
- In project work, pupils usually develop specifications to guide their designing.
- Research skills are good.
- In most modules, pupils develop their ideas well.
- Making skills are very good. Pupils usually work with accuracy and finish their work well.
- Very good use is made of a wide range of ICT skills including CAD/CAM and design applications.
- Electronic control principles are understood and appropriately embedded in project work.
- Pupils' microprocessor control work demonstrates a sound understanding of the use of flow charts to develop control sequences.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of materials, processes, components and their applications is good.
- Pupils' presentation of their written and drawing work is good.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress.

KS4

- Design work is good with effective use of a design process to guide pupils' work.
- Research and presentation skills are well developed.
- Design specifications are well constructed and effectively guide pupils' work.
- Evaluations are appropriately linked to design specifications.
- Making skills are often very good. Pupils work accurately, produce a good finish and work creatively with materials.
- Project work is often innovative.
- Understanding of materials, their properties and working characteristics is good.
- The use of ICT for research, presentation, CAD and CAD/CAM is very good.
- Pupils working at entry qualification level are making good progress

Shortcomings

KS3

- The generation of ideas is underdeveloped. Most pupils do not understand the link between specification and evaluation.
- Pupils have insufficient knowledge and understanding of structures and load failure calculations.

There has been a significant improvement in standards of achievement in KS4 since the last inspection.

Information technology

Standards of achievement in KS3 are good and are very good in KS4. Standards of achievement in GCSE IT are very good. In 2002, just over a quarter of the cohort were entered for GCSE; this is lower than the national average. Results at grades A*-C were well above the national average and all pupils gained a pass at A*-G.

Good features

KS3

- In Y7, Y8 and Y9 pupils make good progress in their development of IT competencies.
- Pupils manage computers effectively. In Y7 they confidently conduct fundamental computer operations such as logging on, calling up and saving their work, and also access appropriate applications and the Internet.
- Standards of communicating information are good and sometimes very good. Pupils confidently combine text and images, and change and arrange fonts and layouts in appropriate combinations, according to their designs.
- Design work is often good and results in the use of a wide range of communicating information techniques, including importing images and text from the Internet and modifying it to suit requirements.
- Pupils are able to set up databases, understand terminology and carry out simple interrogations.
- Pupils understand the function of a spreadsheet and are able to set up basic spreadsheets, conduct calculations and model number using appropriate formulae.

KS4

- Pupils develop a comprehensive range of IT skills in the portfolio component of the GCSE course. They confidently communicate, handle and model information for a variety of purposes and audiences to a high standard.
- Pupils' project work displays confidence in handling and modelling information using databases and spreadsheets.
- Research, analysis and problem solving skills are often very well developed and are enhanced, in most instances, by real life problem solving contexts.
- Pupils make very good use of the Internet to support their research.
- Pupils present their work well and are able to explain clearly why they have chosen specific IT applications.
- Pupils have a good understanding of theory.

Shortcomings

- In KS3, pupils consider social, economic, ethical and moral issues related to the use of ICT insufficiently.
- There are no significant weaknesses in KS4.

Standards of achievement have improved significantly in both key stages.

History

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and KS4. In 2002, 27% of the cohort, entered GCSE examinations in history. All pupils gained a grade in the A*-G range and 67.5% gained A*-C grades. These results were above national averages.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils have a secure grasp of chronology and can use and design accurate time lines. They acquire a good knowledge and understanding of the events, personalities and developments studied. They recall information accurately from their work for instance on World War II.
- They use historical terms appropriately and are able to make clear links between cause and consequence, change and continuity. Pupils can provide valid causes for events. The majority of pupils can distinguish between long term and short term causes.
- Pupils show increasing confidence in extracting accurate information from a variety of sources of historical evidence. A significant majority of pupils use the sources appropriately to justify their views and record their learning effectively. Pupils understand that not all sources are equally reliable and can appreciate that there is often more than one valid interpretation of a given topic.
- Pupils show a capacity to share ideas, form opinions based on evidence and present their findings knowledgeably.
- Pupils demonstrate competence in tackling enquiry based tasks and produce research projects of good quality for instance on the Dunkerque evacuation.
- More able pupils and those of average ability are able to think critically and make judgements about the impact of change.
- Work for instance on the Norman Conquest, demonstrates pupils' ability to empathise with the lives and attitudes of people in the past.
- Pupils can present information in a variety of forms. Written work produced by the majority of pupils is carefully planned logically argued and well presented.
- Pupils knowledge and understanding of the history and culture of Wales is well developed through topic work and a range of visits to sites of historical importance.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress.

KS4

- Pupils have a secure knowledge base, recall their work well and use historical terms aptly.
- They can identify and analyse causal factors to explain for instance the conflict between the Plains Indians and White Americans in the American West.
- Pupils can make judgements based on sources and can evaluate and interpret evidence with greater precision than in KS3. When evaluating sources as evidence, more able pupils show appropriate understanding of criteria for determining utility and reliability. They can compare sources effectively and can successfully recognise and explain propaganda in source material for instance in sources related to the growth of Nazism in 1930's Germany.
- Pupils can use their knowledge and understanding to compare, contrast and judge various interpretations.
- Oral and written work shows growing maturity in the depth of response to questions and in pupils' insights into motivation and attitudes of people in the past.

- Pupils demonstrate competence in tackling enquiry based tasks and produce research projects of good quality on for example the development of high tech surgery in the 20th Century.

Shortcomings

- In KS3, lower ability pupils make limited responses to historical questions. Their work often lacks adequate range and depth. They are not able to draw on subject knowledge and understanding to judge the worth and validity of sources.
- In KS4, less able pupils make insufficient use of sources in order to construct convincing arguments. As a result their work lacks detail. They tend to focus on the content rather than on the limitations of a source or the circumstances of its production.

Good standards of achievement have been maintained since the last inspection in KS3 and KS4. Developments in ICT have made a significant contribution to teaching and learning and the standards achieved.

Geography

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and very good in KS4. A significant proportion of the cohort, above the figure for Wales, is entered for GCSE examinations. In recent years, results at GCSE level have closely paralleled or been above LEA and national percentages at A*-C and A*-G grades.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils acquire a range of skills and techniques, particularly those associated with the use and interpretation of maps, both atlas and Ordnance Survey. They improve their vocabulary of key words which they apply with increasing precision.
- They have a good understanding of the work of rivers and explain how floods are often the result of a combination of physical and human factors. They work productively in small groups to debate possible locations for the site of a new reservoir.
- They are keenly aware of the inequalities in the economic development of countries and how the spread of today's multinational companies into less economically developed areas of the world can bring both positive and negative effects. They appreciate how the concept of "Fair trade" helps to overcome exploitation.
- Across the key stage, pupils adopt an enquiry-based approach to their work. They benefit from a programme of extra-curricular visits both locally and further afield.

KS4

- Pupils have an awareness of the cultural and economic diversities of countries and their populations. They effectively link theory and practice and apply their knowledge of Welsh examples to case studies in other continents.
- They consolidate previously acquired information and make very good use of a range of primary and secondary sources of evidence including computers. For their coursework assignments, they collect, record and evaluate the facts and reach substantiated conclusions.

- Pupils use statistical and numerical data accurately and precisely in their investigations into features of a local stream. They extend their understanding of patterns and processes in physical aspects of the subject.
- Pupils have a secure understanding of the interaction between people and the natural habitat. They extend their knowledge of fragile environments and have a very good understanding of the interaction between people and the natural habitat. They appreciate that development can lead to a conflict of interests.
- They make very good use of their skills of investigation and cooperation to identify and contrast areas of urban development

Shortcomings

- In KS3, individual pupils experience locational problems while others are uncertain in the use and spelling of more complex terminology.

The department has made good progress since the last inspection and has successfully maintained and improved standards of achievement.

Modern foreign languages

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS3. In KS4, standards are good. In GCSE level examinations in 2002, all pupils who entered for French gained an A*-G grade. 68.9% gained an A*-C grade, which is just below the national average. Of the four pupils who entered for German, all gained an A*-C grade.

Good features

KS3

- Most pupils listen well to the teacher and to authentic recordings.
- They can extract specific information from the language they hear on cassette.
- Pupils have a good recall of vocabulary and grasp new structures quickly.
- They can answer a range of questions on familiar topics and speak in full sentences.
- They usually volunteer answers readily and work well together in paired work.
- Pupils show greater confidence and initiative in oral work in classes where the foreign language is used as the normal means of communication.
- Pupils read aloud clearly and reading comprehension skills are good.
- All pupils do a great deal of written work, including regular extended writing.
- They occasionally adapt the language they have learnt for their own purposes and there is some good descriptive writing, e.g. in Y7.

KS4

- Listening comprehension skills are good. Pupils understand the gist of cassette recordings and can extract specific information.
- Pupils are confident speakers, both in class and pair work.
- Pupils of middle and lower ability can carry out familiar role play activities and answer a range of questions.
- More able pupils can use their initiative to take part in an unrehearsed conversation. They can improve their own performance and give extended answers.

- Reading comprehension skills are good.
- Coursework provides a supportive framework which enables the less able to achieve success in writing.
- More able pupils produce good coursework. They can use a range of tenses and structures and the best produce interesting, imaginative writing.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Pupils are not developing the ability to use the foreign language for routine classroom exchanges.
- They do not read from a wide range of sources, e.g magazines or the Internet, to develop greater independence.
- Pupils do insufficient writing from memory.
- A small number of pupils with SEN are extracted from mainstream French classes to work in a small group in Y7 to Y9. In Y9, the scheme of work for this group does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum; the progress made by these pupils is therefore unsatisfactory.

KS4

- A significant minority of pupils of middle ability produce confused coursework. Meaning is unclear and accuracy is weak, particularly in verb formation.

Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in standards of achievement in KS3 and KS4.

Art

Standards in art are good in KS3 and very good in KS4. In 2002, all pupils who entered GCSE examinations gained grades A*-G and results at grades A*-C are above the national average for both girls and boys.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils make good progress in developing their observational drawing skills.
- They understand and use the essential elements of line, tone, pattern and texture well.
- They understand colour relationships and know how to create tones and tints.
- They understand how to use clay to express their ideas in three-dimensional forms.
- They understand how to use different artists' techniques to improve their own work.
- They are able to design expressive letterforms and logos in their graphic tasks.
- They know how to use computers to creatively develop their graphic designs.
- Pupils know how to use computers to find out about different artists.
- The majority of pupils are acquiring and using an appropriate art vocabulary.
- They enrich their work by a study of Celtic pattern forms.
- Pupils have an understanding of contemporary art from working with visiting artists.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress in tasks that are amended for their needs.

KS4

- Pupils make very good progress from KS3. They are developing as independent artists in work that shows individual flair.
- Observational drawing is completed with care and skill.
- Sketchbook folder work demonstrates an imaginative and experimental approach.
- Pupils know how to use computers to research art, to present their writing and to generate creative artwork.
- They are able to use traditional craft printing techniques with skill.
- They develop good problem-solving skills in complex multi-colour printing exercises.
- They develop good three-dimensional skills in figurative ceramic ware.
- They demonstrate an understanding of colour and pattern in delightful textile work.
- They are beginning to appreciate and use the art of other cultures.
- Pupils have an understanding of contemporary art from working with visiting artists.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Pupils have little knowledge of artists associated with Wales and do not investigate and use the art of other cultures sufficiently

There has been good progress in standards of achievement since the last inspection.

Music

Standards of achievement are good in KS3, and very good in KS4. All pupils who entered the GCSE examinations gained A* - G grades. In recent years, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*- C has been significantly higher than national averages.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils can demonstrate technical competence and accuracy, appropriate to their development, in both vocal and instrumental performance.
- They perform confidently and fluently on a number of instruments, with increasingly sophisticated techniques and with control of subtle changes within the musical elements.
- They explore a range of sound sources from which they select, combine and arrange sounds effectively and imaginatively.
- Pupils can improvise and create complete pieces of music in response to a wide range of stimuli.
- They produce musically interesting outcomes.
- They discuss and evaluate live and recorded music, including their own compositions and performance.
- Pupils acquire musical knowledge, skills and understanding through practical activities.
- They make good progress through regular practice in these activities, and by evaluating their own work and that of others.
- They use ICT to store work-in-progress and finished compositions using recording equipment.

KS4

- Pupils are able to build on previous experiences, further developing their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- They can increasingly take responsibility for their own learning, particularly in composition and performing tasks.
- Pupils demonstrate an increased understanding of how sounds are organised to produce effective compositions with a very good sense of structure and colour.
- They can work confidently in the chosen medium or style.
- In many compositions, pupils demonstrate flair, effective and idiomatic use of instruments, voices and sound sources.
- They can perform accurately and fluently in terms of pitch and rhythm.
- Pupils have a sound understanding of period and style, demonstrated by attention to details, such as tempo, phrasing, articulation and diction.
- They display a high degree of sensitivity and control of the expressive and communicative features of the music.
- They can discuss and evaluate music with perception and depth.
- Pupils are able to appraise music from a broad range of styles and cultures.
- Very good standards have developed naturally as a direct result of the pupils enjoyment of music in all its aspects.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Pupils occasionally sing with inadequate control of dynamics and unclear diction.

Extra curricular activities complement the work of the department and are supported by the peripatetic voice and instrumental tutors. Good quality peripatetic tuition is provided for 11% of the school population. Pupils respond well to the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided including the annual school performance. These provide excellent musical opportunities and experiences for many pupils and raise the profile of the school in the community.

Standards of achievement across all key stages have improved since the last inspection.

Physical education

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and in KS4. In 2002, a relatively low proportion (12.5%) of the Y11 cohort entered the GCSE examinations. They all achieved grades A* to E, and 77.8% achieved grades A*- C. These results are significantly above the LEA and national averages.

Pupils' participation levels are good. The large majority of pupils are able to plan, observe and evaluate performance well, and use teacher observation and feedback constructively to further improve personal performance. They are able to practice, repeat and refine initial responses to secure greater accuracy and control of their work. Pupils of all ages and ability recognise the importance of warming up and cooling down within physical activity, and understand the benefits of an active lifestyle and the positive effects of exercise on the body. They understand the importance of rules, and work within the parameters of the task, and in

the spirit of fair play in competitive situations. There are examples of very good individual performance in all activities. Pupils with Special Educational Needs achieve well in all aspects of the subject.

Good features

KS3

- In rugby and hockey, pupils are confident at sending and receiving the ball when working in pairs and small groups. They can sustain these qualities to good effect when competition becomes more intense. In badminton, pupils understand the basic principles and rules of the game and cooperate well in practising and refining serving skills and techniques.
- In swimming, pupils in Y7 make good progress. They display good skill levels in a range of strokes and competence in water safety and personal survival.
- In gymnastics, girls demonstrate control and versatility of the body in action and in stillness on floor and on apparatus and produce work with clarity of shape and body tension.

KS4

- Pupils practise and perform their actions with improved control and accuracy. They demonstrate increased efficiency and fluency in practical work and show technical proficiency in team games. They recognise progress in performance and accurately identify targets for improvement.
- Pupils are capable of sustained physical activity and have an increased understanding of health related issues and skill development. They show effective planning by thinking ahead, of anticipating the responses of others and by cooperating well to outwit opponents.
- Health related fitness sessions are performed enthusiastically. Pupils display obvious enjoyment in these sustained physical activities and are able to plan a schedule successfully.
- In GCSE lessons, most pupils make good progress in developing knowledge and understanding of underlying theory.

Shortcomings

- In KS3, in gymnastics, the performance of a small minority of boys in Y9 is constrained by weak body management skills and insufficient understanding of safety.
- In GCSE examination work the progress of a minority of pupils in Y10 is restrained by a short term recall of information and by inattention on the part of a handful of pupils.

There is a well organised programme of extra curricular activities and inter school games which enhances and enriches the curriculum. Pupils respond well and there are many notable team and individual performances which bring credit to the school.

Since the previous inspection standards have improved.

Religious education

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and in KS4.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils across the ability range have a good knowledge and understanding of the topics of the local agreed syllabus.
- Pupils develop good knowledge of how and why believers from different religions worship, reflect and celebrate their faiths.
- They understand how religious beliefs affect the way people live and appreciate that this can be difficult at times and requires regular commitment.
- They know how people who belong to the main religions in Britain worship and celebrate their faith.
- In class discussion and group work, pupils are confident and express their opinions lucidly.
- They are developing the research skills to investigate different aspects of religion, and can select information and present it in different ways, sometimes using ICT.
- Pupils with SEN are well integrated into the classes and make good progress.

KS4

- Pupils are able to discuss their own and other peoples' beliefs, moral and social values.
- They are willing to express opinions on questions and issues raised by their experience of the natural world and human relationships, and the more able give extended contemplative responses.
- They understand that people have different views and most show respect for the beliefs of others.
- They understand the significance of key people and teachings in the religions they have studied.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- In their oral and written work, a minority of pupils are not confident to evaluate and express their own views at length and support their arguments with good evidence.

Religious studies

Standards of achievement are good. In 2002, nine pupils entered the GCSE examinations. All pupils gained grades A*-C

Good features

KS4

- Pupils have good factual knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- They are developing a good awareness of the questions and issues raised by contemporary moral and social issues, and of the ways in which religious beliefs and practices address those questions.
- They develop a range of skills that enable them to explore religion and human experiences independently.

- The vast majority of pupils are able to give a thoughtful response to religious and moral issues and they show a growing confidence to reflect on their own and others' beliefs and values.
- Written work is good and pupils complete a range of different tasks successfully. By the end of Y11, written work often displays good planning, effective use of information and good interpretation. Pupils are developing the ability to consider and evaluate their ideas and express their views at some length.
- Pupils can recall previous topics and apply what they have learned in new contexts in discussion. More able pupils support their views with extended and balanced accounts

Shortcomings

- A minority of pupils are inclined to be too narrative and less analytical in their oral and written work.

Personal and social development

Standards in PSE are very good in KS3 and good in KS4.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils show care and consideration for others and are sensitive to their feelings.
- They have respect for themselves and others.
- They have a responsible attitude towards keeping the body safe and healthy.
- They value equal opportunities and cultural diversity and respect the dignity of all.
- They are disciplined and take responsibility for actions and decisions.
- They are committed to practical involvement in the community.
- They have developed a sense of personal responsibility towards the environment.
- They listen attentively and respond appropriately.
- They can communicate feelings and views and maintain a personal standpoint with conviction.
- They can work both independently and cooperatively.
- They can recognise expressions of prejudice and stereotyping.
- They are developing an understanding of the nature of the local community with reference to justice, law and order.
- They understand the link between good diet and exercise and good health, and know some of the effects of and the risks from legal and illegal drugs.
- They recognise moral issues and dilemmas.
- They know what they believe to be right and wrong actions.
- They have a developing understanding of their aptitudes, interests and personal qualities in order to make informed choices about learning and occupational options.
- They have some understanding of how to use preferred learning styles to improve their own performance.

KS4

- Pupils show progression in the knowledge, skills and understanding developed in KS3.
- They are ambitious, adaptable and open to new technologies.

- Most are able to be assertive and resist unwanted and other peer pressure.
- Pupils are willing to ask for help, support and advice.
- Many pupils can review their own learning and performance, can action plan and set targets for themselves.
- Pupils have a developing awareness of their rights and responsibilities in the local and wider community.
- They know about the main global issues that pose a threat to the environment and display an increasing commitment to live and act sustainably.
- They are aware of the range of sexual attitudes and behaviours in society and understand the risks involved in sexual behaviour which might allow transmission of infections including the HIV virus.
- They increasingly understand how their beliefs and values affect their identity and lifestyle.
- They are increasingly aware of the relevant opportunities available to them in education, training and employment and of how best to use the careers service.
- They are aware of a range of study skills and techniques for examination preparation.

Shortcomings

- Pupils' action planning and target setting is sometimes insufficiently precise and subject-specific.
- A very small minority of pupils in KS4 show insufficient involvement in PSE lessons.

PSE was not a subject of the curriculum at the last inspection.

Drama

Standards in KS3 are good and are very good in KS4. In 2002, about 19% of pupils entered the GCSE examinations. All pupils gained grades A*-E and 93% gained grades A*-C. These results exceed national and LEA averages.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils think creatively and work effectively in small groups to explore issues directly related to their everyday experience, and those related to literature and media texts.
- They show good emotional understanding of the contexts they work in, and in their work with others.
- They develop a wide range of drama skills such as hot seating, freeze-framing and improvisation, which are improved over the key stage.

KS4

- Pupils are engaged with their work at a high level.
- They have very good self-discipline in their dance, movement and improvisation. They make good use of evaluation of their own and others' work to improve their performance.
- They use IT effectively in research, and in the presentation of coursework. They take good advantage of opportunities to achieve in costume design and stage management as well as performance.

Shortcomings

- In KS3, pupils do not develop their confidence and audibility sufficiently in speaking to an audience

There has been progress in standards of achievement since the last inspection.

Home economics, Food and Nutrition

Standards in this KS4 course are very good. Approximately 10% of the cohort entered for the GCSE examinations in 2002. All pupils gained grades A*-D and 93% gained A*-C. These results are well above local and national figures.

Good features

- Pupils acquire very good knowledge and understanding of nutrition, food commodities and safe food preparation.
- Investigative work is well undertaken and pupils are able to identify a range of dietary needs and record relevant strategies for promoting good health.
- Pupils display effective organisational skills. They prepare detailed work plans involving time scales, risk assessment and costings.
- Making skills are very good. Pupils produce innovative, well finished food products and pay careful attention to decoration and garnish.
- Coursework projects show in-depth research, critical analysis and reflective evaluation. Here pupils take responsibility for their own learning.
- The use of ICT for a range of purposes is good and enhances the overall quality of the work.

This subject was not reported on separately in the last inspection.

Vocational education

The Diploma of Vocational Education course at foundation level is offered in Y10 and Y11 in four vocational areas. All pupils succeed at this course, and gain certification; and a good number of pupils gain credits and distinctions. Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the structure of the vocational area and of the various personnel and their functions within the area.
- They can relate the work they do in class to industrial and social settings within the local community, drawing on the experiences gained through visits.
- Pupils demonstrate personal and interpersonal skills by working in groups, sharing ideas, voicing opinions and considering the views of others.
- They complete a number of tasks which together form a coherent piece of work.
- They can investigate a variety of resources and work in a variety of styles.

- Pupils can handle information using a variety of methods including graphs, pie charts, leaflets and posters.
- They have good numeracy and ICT skills and apply these effectively to enhance the quality of their work.

Shortcomings

- A few pupils plan and organise their work ineffectively.
- Oral responses are sometimes brief and superficial.

Standards of achievement have improved since the last inspection.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress since the last inspection

The previous report identified three key issues for action. There has been good progress made in addressing all the key issues. Progress in key issues one and two has been very good. There has been good progress in issue three.

- 1. Improve the organisation of provision for SEN pupils at KS3 in order to raise their standards of achievement in English and mathematics.*

The provision for pupils with SEN is now very good. The standards of achievement of pupils with SEN in English and mathematics are very good.

- 2. Continue to raise standards of achievement, as identified in the school development plan, in particular by:*

- a) Providing greater intellectual challenge in the work of the more able pupils*
- b) Improving standards in mathematics, especially in KS3*
- c) Improving standards in the cross-curricular use of IT*

The standards of achievement of more able pupils are now good in KS3 and very good in most subjects in KS4.

Standards of achievement in mathematics have improved and are now good in KS3 and KS4. Standards of achievement in ICT, across the curriculum are now good in both key stages.

- 3. Continue efforts to ensure that attendance and punctuality improve.*

Punctuality has improved since the last inspection and is good. Attendance has also improved and it is now satisfactory. This key issue requires continuing action.

8.2 Key issues for action

The head teacher, staff and governors should build on improvements already achieved. In order to improve the good standards of achievement and quality of provision that already exist, they should:

- Raise standards of achievement in those subjects where a key stage is identified as satisfactory in the report
- Continue to implement the range of effective strategies and improve attendance.
- * Share the good practice that already exists in the school to:
 - ❖ Develop effective procedures in KS3, to track an individual pupil's progress across the curriculum in terms of the learning objectives of the National Curriculum.
 - ❖ Further improve self assessment and target setting strategies so that pupils identify their strengths and weaknesses more effectively and understand what they must do to improve their standards of achievement.
 - ❖ Ensure that this information is shared with parents.
- Ensure that the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is fully met.

Aspects of key issues identified with an asterisk are in the school development plan.

Acknowledgement

The registered inspector and team wish to thank the governors, headteacher, staff and pupils for their co-operation and courtesy before and during the inspection.

APPENDIX

A. Basic information about the school

Name of School	Pontarddulais Comprehensive School
School type	Comprehensive
Age -range of pupils	11-16
Address of school	Caecerrig Road, Pontarddulais, Swansea.
Post-Code	SA4 8PD
Telephone Number	01792 884556

Headteacher	Mr J. M. Radford
Date of appointment	March 1994
Chair of Governors/ Appropriate Authority	Mr H. Beynon City and County of Swansea
Registered Inspector	Mrs A. Powell
Dates of inspection	17/03/03 to 20/03/03

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	156	165	156	155	160				792

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	41	9	45.6

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	17.4:1
Pupil:adult (fte) ratio in special classes	7:1
Average teaching group size	22
Overall contact ratio	78%

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>						
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Whole school
Term 1	91.81	92.20	90.93	90.35	93.48	91.75
Term 2	91.14	89.21	85.80	90.88	95.99	90.60
Term 3	91.52	91.69	89.25	88.90	92.99	90.87

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	25%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	58 temporary 1 permanent

C. Results of National Curriculum assessments and public examinations

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2002															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 162															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
EN	Teacher assessment	School	2				1	3	7	16	44	18	10		
		National	1				1	3	10	23	32	22	9	1	
	Test	School	11						4	21	41	16	8		
		National	8						9	24	32	19	9		
MA	Teacher assessment	School	3				1	3	8	12	22	34	20		
		National	1					2	11	23	26	26	12	1	
	Test	School	9						9	14	21	34	14		
		National	8						9	23	23	25	13		
SC	Teacher assessment	School	2					1	8	22	35	26	6		1
		National	1					2	11	26	31	22	9		
	Test	School	9						4	20	31	30	7		
		National	6						9	26	28	23	9		

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school:	61	In the school:	52
In Wales:	51	In Wales:	50

D - Pupils excepted under statutory arrangements from part of the National Curriculum

A - Pupils who have failed to register a level because of absence

F - Pupils who have failed to register a level for reasons other than absence

W - Pupils who are working towards level 1

EP - Exceptional Performance, where pupils at Key Stage 3 perform above level 8.

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, CoE, GNVQ and NVQ			
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2002:144			
The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2002:			
	School	UA	2001 Wales
were entered for 5 or more GCSEs	86	-	86
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C	56	49	50
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-G	85	83	85
achieved GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language)	47	36	37
entered at least one CoE, GCSE short course or GCSE	97	94	96
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-C	82	-	73
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-G	92	-	92
achieved no graded GCSE	3	-	5
achieved one or more CoE only	4	3	2
achieved a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	-		
achieved a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	-		
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	-		
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	-		

D. The evidence base of the inspection

In total, 203 classes were inspected. Many form registrations, assemblies and extra-curricular activities were observed. Most teachers were seen teaching two or more times and there were planned discussions with senior staff, heads of department, external personnel as well as many other teaching and non-teaching staff.

Inspectors scrutinised written and other work in all subjects across the curriculum of a representative sample of able, average ability and less able pupils from each of years 7 to 11. Subject inspectors also saw a large amount of written and other work when they visited classrooms, workshops and laboratories. There were discussions with pupils both in the classroom and during the lunchtime on their work and other aspects of school life.

The substantial and very well-presented documentation provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection and formed the basis of pre-inspection planning and meetings. Further documentation provided by the school during the inspection week also contained valuable information. The registered inspector held pre-inspection meetings with the school staff, the governing body and parents to explain the inspection process and obtain their views on aspects of the school. An analysis was made of the 63 responses to questionnaires as well as comments received from parents and others. These all informed inspection planning.

E. Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
A. Powell	Science , biology, careers, support DVE	Main findings Standards of achievement Standards in key skills Quality of teaching Attendance Self-evaluation and planning for improvement Leadership and efficiency Staffing, accommodation and learning resources Progress since last inspection Key issues for action
H. Evans	Religious education, religious studies.	Pupils with SEN. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
M. Page	English, drama.	Communications. Support and guidance. PSE coordinator
A. Edwards	Mathematics	Numeracy Assessment, recording and reporting. Support efficiency.
S. Gale	Design and technology, IT, support DVE.	Curriculum. Support accommodation and resources.
J. H. James		Support PSE Sample of classes Behaviour and attitudes, support attendance Links with industry, educational establishments and the community
G. Jones	Welsh	
M. Herbert	Support design and technology and DVE	
R. Powell	History.	
E. Forster	Art	
A. Woods	Modern foreign languages	
E. Bowyer	Geography.	
S. Williams	Music, DVE coordinator	
A. Caughter	Physical education	
G. Davies	Science, physics.	
A. T. F. Woods	Science, chemistry	
L. Hinckley	Support English and drama.	

