

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

***YSGOL RHIWABON  
RUABON  
WREXHAM***

***School Number: 665-4044***

***Date of Inspection: 6-9 May 2003***

***By:***

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Registered Inspector***

***Date: 25 June 2003***

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## **CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES**

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

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

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

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

## **GRADE DESCRIPTIONS**

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

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

## LIST OF ACRONYMS IN COMMON USE

A	Advanced
ACCAC	Qualifications Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales
AS	Advanced Subsidiary
ASDAN	Award Scheme Development and Accreditation
CAD	Computer-aided Design
CAM	Computer-aided Manufacture
CASE	Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education
CATs	Cognitive Abilities' Tests
CLAIT	Computer Literacy and Information Technology
ESW	Education Social Worker
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
INSET	In-service Training
KS	Key Stage
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
LSR	Learning Support Resource
NC	National Curriculum
NOF	New Opportunities Fund
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
PS(H)E	Personal and Social (Health) Education
RoA	Records of Achievement
SATs	Standard Assessment Tasks
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SMT	Senior Management Team
SDP	School Development Plan
UA	Unitary Authority
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
WRE	Work Related Education
Y1-Y13	Year 1 - Year 13

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## 1. CONTEXT

### **The school and its priorities**

Ysgol Rhiwabon is an 11-18 mixed community school maintained by the County Borough of Wrexham. There are 577 pupils on roll, including 90 in the sixth form. Numbers are similar to those at the time of the last inspection.

The school serves the community of Ruabon, to the south-west of Wrexham, and the surrounding area. The school's sixth form provides for students of Ysgol y Grango, as well as for its own students, and for students from other 11-16 schools. The area has a significant degree of social and economic disadvantage together with some relatively prosperous districts, and pupils thus come from the full range of socio-economic circumstances. Eighteen per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, a figure below the national average of 20 per cent. The vast majority of pupils speak English as their first language and there are few pupils from minority ethnic heritages.

Pupils also represent the full range of ability, though the proportion of less able pupils is larger than the proportion of able pupils. Pupils in the current Year (Y) 11 had lower attainment scores on entry than other year groups in school. Twenty-nine pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN), an above average proportion, which includes 15 pupils in the learning support resource (LSR) funded by the unitary authority (UA). A further 36 pupils have been identified as needing some support, a below average proportion in the school as a whole.

The school has six clear aims, to develop pupils academically, personally and socially and a development plan to translate these aims into practice.

The headteacher took up his post in September 2002. All other members of the senior management team (SMT) are well established at the school.

## 2. MAIN FINDINGS

### **The main findings of the report**

Ysgol Rhiwabon provides good opportunities for pupils' academic, personal and social development. It has made steady progress since the last inspection and it is continuing to move forward purposefully, with an energetic new headteacher and many new facilities, to serve its community well.

### **Educational Standards Achieved**

#### **Good features**

- Standards were at least satisfactory in 95 per cent and good or very good in 62 per cent of classes observed across all key stages.
- Standards are very good in drama at key stage (KS) 4 and in the sixth form and good at KS3. Standards at all key stages in geography, modern foreign languages and music are good.
- The large majority of pupils of differing abilities have good attitudes to learning and make steady progress.

- Results in the National Curriculum (NC) tests at the end of KS3 in 2002 were above the national average in science.
- Results in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) have improved. The percentage of pupils gaining at least five grades A\*-C was above the local average and just below the national average in 2002.
- Results in a number of option groups add a measure of progress to pupils' prior attainment.
- All but one per cent of pupils left school with qualifications, and 95 per cent gained at least one GCSE grade in 2002.
- The average points score at Advanced (A) level in 2002 was only just below the national average, with open access to the sixth form.
- Pupils' key skills of listening and reading are good.
- **Shortcomings**
- Standards in design and technology at KS3 are unsatisfactory; NC requirements are not met.
- Results in the core subjects of English and mathematics at the end of KS3 and KS4 have been below the national average, and the average for schools of a similar intake.
- A small minority of pupils at KS3 and a significant minority at KS4, mainly of average and lower ability, underachieve through unsatisfactory attitudes to learning, poor attendance and failure to complete homework or coursework.
- Standards at KS4, and in particular in Y11, are lower than at other key stages.
- There are shortcomings in the key skills of speaking, writing, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT) among pupils at KS3 and KS4 and sixth formers do not currently gain qualifications in key skills.
- In only a very small proportion of classes observed were standards very good.

**Standards in Subjects**

Subject	KS3	KS4	Sixth Form
English	Good	Satisfactory	Good
Mathematics	Good	Satisfactory	Good
Science	Good	Satisfactory	Good
Welsh	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
Design and Technology	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	-
Information Technology	Satisfactory	Good	Good
History	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Geography	Good	Good	Good
Modern Foreign Languages	Good	Good	Good
Art	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
Music	Good	Good	Good
Physical Education	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Religious Education	Good	Satisfactory	-
Drama	Good	Very Good	-
Theatre Studies	-	-	Very Good
Business Studies	-	Satisfactory	-
Media Studies	-	Satisfactory	-
Catering	-	Satisfactory	-
Construction	-	Satisfactory	-
Sociology	-	-	Good
Economics	-	-	Good
Health and Social Care	-	-	Satisfactory
Leisure and Tourism	-	-	Good
Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE)	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	-

**Standards in Key Skills**

Key Skill	KS3 & KS4	Key Skill	Sixth Form
Listening	Good	Communication	Good
Speaking	Satisfactory	Application of Number	Good
Reading	Good	ICT	Good
Writing	Satisfactory	Improving own Learning and Performance	Good
Numeracy	Satisfactory	Working with Others	Good
ICT	Satisfactory	Problem Solving	Good

**Quality of Education Provided**

**Good features**

- Teaching was at least satisfactory in 95 per cent of classes and good or very good in 65 per cent.
- The school offers a broad curriculum, with drama taught throughout KS3 in addition to the NC, and with a wide range of GCSE and A-level courses for the size of the school.
- This provision is enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities, strong in music, drama and sport, in homework clubs to support learning, and in visits in the United Kingdom and abroad.

- Links with the community are very good and enhance learning experiences.
- The new library, (though not yet fully stocked), and the very good ICT resources provide good opportunities for independent study, including after school.
- The new facilities for music, drama, physical education and the sixth form have also enriched the quality of education and provided an attractive learning and social environment.
- Primary links have been strengthened to ease transition and ensure greater continuity in learning.
- Careers education and guidance prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education or the world of work.
- Provision for pupils with SEN in the LSR, in small classes, with support assistance, is good.

### **Shortcomings**

- In only a small proportion of classes observed was teaching very good, as it can be over-prescriptive and inhibit independent learning, or not cater for the wide spread of ability within the group.
- In a small minority of classes, behaviour is not well managed and some individuals interrupt the learning of the group. The school has experienced some lack of continuity in staffing because of long-term illnesses.
- Pupils' progress across the curriculum is not adequately tracked at all key stages, or compared with prior attainment to measure progress or underachievement. The setting of targets for improvement does not yet strongly motivate pupils.
- The curriculum at KS4 has no accredited courses of a vocational nature and the sixth form curriculum does not offer sufficient breadth of provision outside examination courses.

### **Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development**

#### **Good features**

- Pupils' and students' moral and social development is good. Their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
- The large majority of pupils behave well in class and around the school. They are polite and friendly to visitors and sixth formers are mature and responsible.
- There is good support for individuals and relationships between teachers and pupils are good.
- There is good liaison with support services where appropriate, and a trained counsellor in school on one day a week.
- Older students, trained as counsellors, help younger pupils who have any concerns about bullying. In discussion, pupils felt that the school would solve any problems of bullying which arose. Year 10 pupils also help younger pupils with their reading.
- Pupils and students are outward-looking; the school has won an award for its weekly service of providing a talking newspaper for the blind and sixth formers lead the school's efforts to raise money for charities, including a twinned school in Ghana.

- The school council is becoming an increasingly effective forum for pupils and students to participate in decision-making about the school.

### **Shortcomings**

- There is no provision for religious education in the sixth form, and pupils and students do not all participate in a daily act of collective worship, both required under statutory regulations.
- Some pupils and students arrive late by bus, which does not prepare them adequately for the world of work. The school is working hard to resolve this issue. Tutor time in the morning is often interrupted by late arrivals, and time is not always used to best effect for pastoral care and for the delivery of PSE.
- The Welsh dimension is not strong within the school.

### **Leadership and Efficiency**

#### **Good features**

- The new headteacher has made an enthusiastic start in setting out and communicating his plans with all sections of the school community.
- He already has a detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development, and is showing strong leadership in implementing appropriate initiatives.
- Members of the SMT have clearly defined responsibilities to take the school forward, and they have well-established links with middle managers.
- The governing body has a good overview of the school and has been pro-active in planning for the substantial improvement in the accommodation.
- There is good practice at middle management level in a number of academic and pastoral areas.
- Staff are well qualified, committed and deployed effectively.
- The school has won a number of awards for good practice and has had Investor in People status for a number of years for the quality of its staff development.
- Financial planning has been careful, with a surplus each year and control procedures were deemed appropriate in the latest Auditor's report.
- There has been effective progress in over half the key issues from the last inspection report and progress generally in the life and work of the school.

#### **Shortcomings**

- Current monitoring of classroom practice is not sufficiently rigorous to eliminate shortcomings and plan for the sharing of best practice. There is some variation in standards achieved in different subjects and in examination results.
- Cross-curricular aspects of provision are not co-ordinated and evaluated effectively. There are thus inconsistencies in practice in, for example, literacy, numeracy, ICT, PSE, work-related education, provision for pupils with SEN and those who are gifted and talented.
- Effective management in a few areas is hindered by insufficient non-contact time.
- A few health and safety issues were reported to the school.

**KS3 and KS4****3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS****3.1 Standards Achieved in Subjects and Areas of Learning**

At KS3, standards are good in English, mathematics, science, geography, modern foreign languages, music, religious education and drama. They are satisfactory in information technology, Welsh, history, art, physical education and PSE. Standards in design and technology are unsatisfactory; NC requirements are not met.

Results in the NC tests at the end of KS3 in 2002 were below the national average and below average for schools of a similar intake. Forty-three per cent of pupils reached level 5 and above in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science combined, compared to 50 per cent in Wales. Science results were above average, and results in English and mathematics were below average both in comparison to schools nationally and to schools with a similar intake.

At KS4, standards are very good in drama. Standards are good in information technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. They are satisfactory in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, Welsh, art, religious education, business studies, media studies, catering, construction and PSE. In no subject are standards unsatisfactory.

Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were an improvement on those of the previous year and a significant improvement on those at the time of the last inspection. Forty-six per cent of pupils gained at least five grades A\*-C, compared to 36 per cent in 2001, and 31 per cent in 1997. The figure in 2002 was above the local average and just below the national figure of 50 per cent. Across the full range of grades (A\*-G), the percentage of pupils gaining five subjects was just below the local and national average. However, all but one per cent of pupils left school with qualifications, and 95 per cent with at least one GCSE, a better picture than nationally. Results in a number of option subjects have been good, and added a measure of progress to pupils' prior attainment, particularly in French, Welsh, history, music, science and English literature. Results in English and mathematics have been below average and resulted in the proportion of pupils gaining a grade A\*-C in the three core subjects being below the local and national average. In some indicators, GCSE results were below average for schools of a similar intake.

In the 153 classes observed at KS3 and KS4, standards were at least satisfactory in 93 per cent and good or very good in 54 per cent. These figures mask a significant difference between the two key stages. Pupils make better progress at KS3 than at KS4. The proportion of good and very good work was 61 per cent at KS3 and 44 per cent at KS4.

The large majority of pupils of differing abilities make steady progress through good teaching, good relationships between teachers and pupils and by their own commitment. They could, however, be further challenged as the proportion of classes in which standards were very good was only four per cent overall, with little difference between the two key stages. Also, a small minority of pupils at KS3 and a significant minority at KS4 underachieve through unsatisfactory attitudes to learning, poor attendance and failure to complete homework or coursework. In the current Y11, these factors have adversely affected achievement over a number of years and standards are lower than in any other year group.

Within this overall picture, the most able pupils make the most progress in relation to ability, though there is little extension work for the gifted and talented, and progress is better in top

sets than in mixed ability groups, where there is often a lack of specific challenge to the most able. The degree of challenge is higher in mathematics, science, geography, modern foreign languages, physical education, religious education and drama at both key stages, and in English at KS3, than in other subjects. Pupils of average to lower ability are generally more successful at KS3 than at KS4, and particularly in English, science, information technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages and religious education. By the end of KS3, there are some signs of disaffection which hinder progress at KS4. Pupils with SEN make good progress in the LSR in Y7 and Y8 in literacy and numeracy, in small classes, with support assistance. They also make good progress, with support, in some subjects in the mainstream at KS3, particularly science, information technology, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education, though the behaviour of individuals can slow the progress of the group. At KS4, as with pupils of average to lower ability, there are some signs of disaffection in mainstream classes in core subjects and in some option groups and thus some underachievement.

The extent to which boys and girls make progress varies between subjects and year groups, though the presentation and quality of girls' written work is better than boys'. Boys have done better in mathematics and in science, and their performance in English, whilst below that of girls, is better than in many schools. In art and design and technology, however, girls' work is significantly better. As year groups are relatively small, statistics can vary considerably from one year to another, and boys' examination results at KS4 have surpassed girls' by a considerable margin in some recent years. There is no significant overall trend.

### **3.2 Standards Achieved in Key Skills across the Curriculum**

#### **Communication**

Standards of listening are good. The large majority of pupils listen with respect to teachers and to each other. They also listen carefully to audio-visual resources and can extract specific information in answer to questions. Pupils are too passive in some classes, however, and rarely react to what they have heard by asking questions of the teacher. A minority of pupils do not listen with attention.

Standards in speaking are satisfactory. Pupils are keen to respond to questions and will offer short answers in all subjects across the curriculum. However, their understanding is not probed sufficiently and they do not give extended answers to explain a point of view, challenge opinions or give presentations sufficiently often. Consistently good practice was observed in modern foreign languages. In all other subjects, extended speech is not developed sufficiently or consistently across the department. Pupils do not easily talk with authority about what they are doing to visitors.

Standards of reading are good. Pupils who have reading difficulties are diagnosed on entry and receive help in small groups in the LSR and through the 'Buddy' scheme with older pupils. This is effective, and reading ages improve significantly. In mainstream classes, there is some learning support assistance and in general pupils cope well with the reading required to complete tasks. Little reading aloud was heard, however. Pupils acquire the skills of skimming and scanning, though insufficient guidance is given to promote these skills. They extract information from texts and oral responses to specific questions are good. Pupils undertake extended reading in preparation for coursework and project work, but extended reading is not a regular feature of the work of most subjects, especially at KS3. The new library is not yet fully stocked or used as a focus for research on a regular basis. Pupils, do, however, use ICT facilities for research and have appropriate reading skills to make best use of the data available.

Standards of writing are satisfactory. Pupils complete an appropriate amount of written work in subjects, in a variety of formats which include narrative, argument and empathetic accounts. The presentation of work, by a significant minority of pupils, is, however, untidy and the quality of writing is marred by errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Work is also incomplete in a number of pupils' books. Extended writing for coursework requirements is good at KS4 in the majority of subjects, but there is insufficient extended writing at KS3 as a regular part of practice. Good examples were seen in modern foreign languages, history and geography.

**Numeracy**

Standards of numeracy at KS3 and KS4 are satisfactory. The school has conducted a curriculum audit at KS3 to determine numeracy needs of other subjects and this is good practice. Some recommendations have been made and there has been some staff development. However, as yet a school policy has not been produced on this aspect. A Catch-up programme is used with weaker pupils in Y7 to improve their numeracy. In religious education, percentages, time lines and graphs are used. In history, pupils can use time lines to determine events chronologically and can extract information from tables. In English, sequencing is used. In science, able pupils use numerical ideas in investigational and problem-solving work. However, a number of pupils have difficulties in substituting formulae and with graphical work. In geography, percentages were calculated to determine the results in a shopping survey done with KS4 pupils. There is widespread use of graphs in this subject and data-handling is used well in the management of environments topic in Y8. In Welsh, there is an opportunity to use monetary values and the same is true in modern foreign languages. In ICT, spreadsheets are used as appropriate and the results of formulae are emphasised and there is good estimation evident. In design and technology, pupils measure and weigh ingredients correctly, interpret data as required and cost materials accurately. In music, pulse and time are effective through each key stage and the use made of number in business studies is sound and it is planned in the scheme of work.

**Information and communications technology**

Standards are satisfactory overall.

Good use is made of ICT to promote learning in SEN where, for example, presentation software is used to teach spelling. Information and communications technology is a strength of the learning support provision being used to motivate the pupils to learn and to address specific learning difficulties. Some specialist software is available and effective use is made of the interactive whiteboard. Information and communications technology is used well in geography and in religious education where the Internet provides pupils with valuable resource material. Except in science, where little use is made of ICT, and English where there is only limited use of word-processing, provision in other subjects is satisfactory. Effective use is made in most subjects of presentation software and pupils enhance their own work with desk-top publishing software. Generally however, there is inconsistency in the application of ICT to learning. All teachers have received their entitlement under the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) training scheme, although the impact of this programme has been limited.

## 4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

### 4.1 Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

The school is committed to supporting pupils' personal development. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and pastoral care is a strength of the school. The moral and social development of pupils is good while the spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.

Spiritual awareness is well developed in religious education where pupils reflect upon the meaning of life, the wonders of creation and man's need to worship and are able to think about their own beliefs and values. Time for reflection also occurs in English and history but in several other subjects opportunities to add to this provision are missed. There are good links with the local parish church which is visited by all pupils in Y7. Pupils attend two year group assemblies each week; these are orderly and well constructed but are lacking in spiritual content and time for reflection. On days when pupils do not attend assembly, a "Theme for the Week" is provided for use by form tutors but in the tutor periods observed during the inspection this was rarely used. Statutory requirements for the provision of collective daily worship are not met.

The emphasis placed upon moral development is good. The school promotes clear values; its expectations of behaviour are high and pupils know right from wrong. The vast majority show respect for each other, for their teachers and for other adults. The discussion of moral issues is integral to the programmes of study in a number of subjects including English, history, geography, modern foreign languages, Welsh, religious education and science. Moral judgements also form the basis of the PSHE programme which includes modules, amongst others, on health, sex, drugs, prejudice and the environment. Pupils acquire a good understanding of issues surrounding sustainable development in geography, science and religious education. The PSHE programme and other subject areas ensure pupils' awareness of global citizenship. Pupils are outward-looking; their concern for others within the community and the wider world is revealed by the many fund-raising activities which they undertake. The school has won an award for its weekly service of providing a talking newspaper for the blind which is sent out to a number of people over a wide area. Coffee mornings and concerts are provided for members of the local community and pupils participate in a sponsored walk each year. Money is raised for a number of local and national charities and for a twinned school in Ghana.

Social development is strongly promoted. The vast majority of pupils are friendly, courteous and helpful. They mix well socially and, when group and pair work is used, pupils interact well. The quality of pastoral care offered by members of the SMT, form tutors and particularly heads of year is a strong factor in enabling individuals to overcome personal difficulties as well as maintaining a calm and inclusive atmosphere for all. The school is a close, friendly, caring community. Pupils are anxious to help one another. Year 10 pupils help younger pupils with their reading and have received training to enable them to do this. Students in the sixth form have received NSPCC counselling training to enable them to offer confidential counselling to younger members of the school community. The school council is becoming an increasingly effective forum for pupils in decision-making about the school. Pupils also benefit from the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities in a variety of sports, outdoor pursuits, music, drama and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. A number of subjects run after-school clubs. The music and drama departments engage KS3 pupils in a workshop which tours the feeder primary schools. There are regular school productions; this academic year saw a performance of "Bugsy Malone".

The quality of the pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Work in English, drama history, music and geography contribute well to this. The religious education department gives pupils the opportunity to experience something of the major world religions and their associated cultures. There is a racial equality policy in place and the small number of ethnic minority pupils are well integrated. Certain subjects especially history, geography, art and Welsh make a contribution to pupils' understanding of the heritage and culture of Wales; opportunities for this development in other subjects are often missed. Pupils at all key stages attend Welsh language courses at Urdd camps at Colomendy and Glanllyn. The school celebrates St David's Day. It has been the custom to hold an eisteddfod although building work has prevented this from taking place in the last two years. Overall, however, the Welsh dimension is not strong within the school. Regular visits are made to the theatre. The French department takes pupils from all key stages to France each year and this year there is also a ski course to the French Alps.

Interviews with pupils during the inspection bore witness to the success of the school's provision in these areas. Pupils' social skills are good, they are able to make moral judgments and are appreciative of the facilities and opportunities provided for them by the school.

The school has made good progress in these areas since the last inspection but still does not meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

#### **4.2 Behaviour and Attitudes**

The overall quality of pupils' behaviour, their attitude towards learning and the interest they show in their work in the vast majority of cases are good and discipline is fairly administered. There are effective and well implemented arrangements in place for promoting good behaviour. The school places considerable importance on ensuring that every pupil is valued as an individual and has respect for the views and property of others.

Pupils behave in an orderly fashion during break and lunch times and, in parts of the school where circulation is difficult, due to narrow corridors, pupils' good behaviour assists in overcoming overcrowded situations.

Relationships between staff and pupils are good and are based on mutual respect and the staff's thorough knowledge of individual pupils. As a result the vast majority of pupils feel valued, are motivated and their attitude towards work and school life has an evident effect on the standards and progress achieved.

The school has a comprehensive and clear policy on behaviour management and also has in place a well-explained code of conduct for pupils and an effective anti-bullying strategy. These policies provide clear guidance for pupils, parents and staff on what is expected of everyone during school time. The school's code of conduct and rules succeed most of the time in achieving the aim of ensuring a positive atmosphere where teaching and learning can thrive.

Whilst behaviour in general is good in lessons and supports learning it does vary between the key stages. At KS3 it is good, but at KS4 only satisfactory. The vast majority of pupils listen well to teachers and concentrate on their work but a sizeable minority of pupils, mainly at KS4, display a poor attitude to learning and interest in their work. In a small minority of classes, behaviour is not well managed and some individuals disrupt the learning of the group.

The school's merit award system operates effectively at KS3 but the system is in the process of being reviewed at KS4. Clear and well-administered referral and sanctions arrangements are in place for pupils who break school rules or display unacceptable behaviour.

The school has a well-established pastoral structure and procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Excluding a pupil is regarded as a last resort action but in the last three terms, 73 pupils were temporarily excluded and one permanently.

### **4.3 Attendance**

Attendance rates remain at the same levels as during the time of the last inspection. Despite good efforts by the school staff to improve attendance levels, pupils' attendance on the whole remains unsatisfactory. At KS3, over the last three completed terms, attendance was at 89.6 per cent but at KS4 it was only 86.8 per cent. The senior management and staff are fully aware of the need to improve attendance levels and a detailed strategy to address the matter is in place, including the installation of an electronic registration system at the start of the next academic year.

The school has a well-explained policy on attendance and it emphasises the importance of ensuring good attendance for a successful education. Detailed guidance is provided for staff, pupils, parents and guardians on the procedures to follow in the event of unexpected absence.

The school has a well-administered system of first day absence calls to parents when pupils are absent and senior staff believe that it is already having an effect on improving attendance levels.

The majority of parents respond well to the school's efforts towards improving attendance levels and governors and senior management have set a target of increasing attendance to satisfactory across the whole school.

Although strategies are in place to monitor attendance by senior staff and the heads of year, the school has identified as one of its immediate targets the need to strengthen further these arrangements. Weekly meetings to discuss individual pupils' attendance are held between heads of year and the Education Social Worker (ESW) who is at the school some three and a half days a week. However the school has experienced some lack of continuity due to the permanent ESW's recent long-term sickness. Effective arrangements exist to support the school's efforts by external agencies including the police with truancy patrols.

The school maintains an accurate register of attendance and the system of recording attendance conforms fully to the statutory requirements.

Punctuality to lessons is good. However, a significant number of the pupils are bussed to school and punctuality at the start of the day suffers accordingly. The school has a detailed dossier of parental and senior management concerns over bussing arrangements.

## **5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **5.1 Teaching**

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 93 per cent of the 153 classes observed at KS3 and KS4. It was good or very good in 54 per cent, though only very good in four per cent. Teaching is better at KS3, where it was judged good or very good in 61 per cent of classes, compared to 44 per cent at KS4. There have been, and are still some problems of long-term illness and temporary staffing.

There is a significant proportion of good teaching in most departments, with some very good teaching in drama, science, modern foreign languages and geography. Teachers are well qualified and plan their lessons carefully. Many are experienced and have been committed to the school for a number of years. There is a clear ethos of care for individual pupils among

the staff and a high level of commitment to providing opportunities, inside and outside the classroom, by which pupils may develop academically, personally and socially. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.

Teaching is effective in imparting knowledge and developing understanding. However, it can be over-prescriptive, with teachers' presentations too long and pupils given little opportunity to develop skills and show initiative. Group work and extended speech by pupils are not sufficiently encouraged in some departments and research opportunities are limited overall. The range of strategies used is too narrow in some lessons in English, mathematics, science, Welsh, history, geography and religious education. By contrast, there is a wide range of techniques, including good preparation for independent learning in modern foreign languages and drama.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils and plan work appropriate for pupils' needs. In setted groups in a range of subjects from Y8 onwards, there is a generally good match of work to the ability level of the group, though some scope for further challenge as indicated. In mixed ability groups, where there is a wide spread of ability, there is insufficient emphasis on differentiated work to extend the most able and support the least able. Teachers give much help, praise and encouragement to individuals, but the nature of the work is not always appropriate for the extremes of the ability range. At KS4, this can adversely affect the motivation of some pupils.

The good relationships, high expectations of good behaviour and teachers' classroom management skills result in a positive and pleasant working atmosphere in most classes. However, in the seven per cent of classes in which teaching was judged unsatisfactory, weak classroom management was the most common factor.

Teachers use resources well. The introduction of interactive whiteboard technology has resulted in some innovative teaching and all departments have embraced ICT technology on a regular basis. Other, more traditional resources are also used well, though the potential of the new library is not yet realised.

Overall, the quality of teaching contributes significantly to the standards of achievement.

## **5.2 Assessment, Recording and Reporting**

The quality of assessment, recording and reporting is satisfactory.

The school's assessment policy has appropriate principles and aims. Departmental policies for assessment, recording and reporting are generally in line with the main school policy.

The accuracy and consistency of assessments are satisfactory overall. In the majority of subjects good use is made of identified assignments and end of module tests to assess pupils' progress and these are often linked to NC levels at KS3 and GCSE grades at KS4. However in the formative stages of assessment there are a number of weaknesses. In a majority of subjects, day-to-day marking is not detailed enough and pupils are not informed how to raise the standard of their work. Although the school has made progress in informing the core subjects of target grades for pupils at KS3, this has not been translated across other curricular areas. In KS4, target-setting is not embedded into the assessment processes of most subjects, therefore pupils are not clear of how well they are achieving. Self-assessment is under-developed in most subjects.

The arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' achievements and progress are satisfactory. Teachers in the majority of departments keep suitably detailed records of pupils' progress. However these are not monitored for consistency on a regular basis by all heads of department or the line manager. In a small number of departments pupils' progress is tracked

effectively, enabling underachievement to be recognised sufficiently early and a strategy planned for improvement; in others, procedures are not focused enough at all levels to identify and address weaknesses. In Y11, through the mentoring system, members of the SMT and teachers meet with groups of pupils to discuss progress. The role of the form tutor to provide educational guidance to pupils has not been developed in the tutorial programme except when annual reports are being completed.

The school meets requirements for the assessing of pupils' progress in the NC. Pupils with SEN have appropriate individual education plans (IEPs) in line with the Code of Practice. Statements are reviewed annually; only a small percentage of parents attend these meetings.

The quality of reports is satisfactory overall. The school fulfils statutory requirements for reporting to parents. Parents receive a full report once a year. Reports contain a wide range of information summarising a pupil's academic and personal progress. Teachers' comments are sometimes too general and do not identify strengths and weaknesses and ways for them to improve the standard of their work. Targets for improvement have insufficient subject specific detail.

The well-organised system of Records of Achievement (RoA) is used effectively to celebrate and promote achievement and to emphasise the positive progress made by each pupil. Pupils are encouraged to summarise their achievements and activities in school and in the community, complete a personal statement, include certificates awarded, the work experience report from employers and career plan from the careers adviser. The final documents are well presented and are valued by the pupils.

The school's analysis of data and the impact it has on improving pupils' performance and in monitoring its equal opportunities policy are satisfactory. Early in Y7, KS2 test results and all Wales reading tests are used to determine target grades for all pupils in the core subjects. This information is made available to all teachers. However, there is insufficient dialogue with pupils to ensure that they are aware of their targets and monitoring at all levels is under-developed. In KS4, target grades are determined using Yellis scores and KS3 data. Again pupils are not sufficiently informed to identify areas of improvement or to strongly motivate them. The analysis of examination results is detailed and is often used by curricular areas to set objectives for development plans.

### **5.3 Curriculum**

The quality of learning experiences for pupils is good in KS3 and satisfactory in KS4.

In both key stages, pupils are offered a good range of extra-curricular activities. They are closely involved in community education.

In KS3, the curriculum is broad. It meets statutory requirements with the exception of design and technology. Pupils do not cover work on structures and, consequently, there is a lack of both continuity and progression. The curriculum is socially inclusive and ensures full access and opportunity for all pupils, including those with SEN. Subjects, including drama, are allocated an appropriate number of lessons with the exception of allocation within design and technology. There are no discrete ICT lessons in Y8 and Y9; pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in this subject are developed as part of the design and technology allocation of time. This results in long periods where ICT is not taught and adversely affects the pupils' experiences in design and technology. Some pupils with SEN are withdrawn from some PSHE to follow a "catch up" course in literacy and numeracy. This boosts their key skills.

At KS4, pupils choose from a satisfactory menu of options in addition to the statutory core subjects of English, mathematics, science, physical education, PSHE and religious education.

Provision is extended by courses in media studies, drama, business studies, catering, construction and physical education. There are, however, difficulties over access to the full course in religious education; there is no course in religious education available at Entry level. Most pupils have good access to GCSE courses and a number of pupils are appropriately entered for Entry level examination. This is particularly successful in business studies. There is a small number of double entry for GCSE and Entry level. However, pupils are not offered accredited vocational courses. Overall work-related education is not given a sufficiently high profile in KS4. Curricular provision for pupils with SEN in the LSR is good. Pupils have access to a broad curriculum, are well supported in small classes and are fully integrated in school life. No pupils are disapplied from the NC.

The recently established Alternative Curriculum for pupils who have SEN or who are disaffected with school is beginning to make a small but valuable contribution to raising pupils' self-esteem and motivation. Pupils are out of school for various good projects including Compact Plus, Youth Gateway and national vocational qualifications (NVQ) courses at the local college. This non-attendance at lessons affects progress in some subjects, but pupils have recently won an award for their Young Enterprise work.

Schemes of work for most subjects are appropriately detailed and follow the NC programmes of study. They are comprehensive and include useful guidelines for teachers. Homework is structured but inconsistent in its application. Pupils have a homework book aimed to support their learning. These are inconsistently used to best effect.

The quality of planning for the development of key skills across the school is unsatisfactory mainly due to insufficient co-ordination and evaluation. However, the school is working towards the basic skills quality mark. The extra lesson in numeracy in Y7 is having an improving effect on standards. The *Cwricwlwm Cymreig*, similarly, has only a light touch across the curriculum except in geography and history. Pupils are introduced to very few writers from Wales in English, or Welsh composers in music. There is little incidental Welsh spoken or apparent in the school. Multi-cultural aspects are well developed mainly in religious education. There is good continuity between KS2 and KS3, particularly in the transition projects in English, mathematics and science.

Provision in mainstream classes for pupils with SEN and those deemed gifted and talented is inconsistent. It is unstructured and not monitored. Extra-curricular provision is good in some subjects especially drama, music, sport, enterprise and in trips to France for modern foreign languages and other visits, including residential experience in the Urdd camp at Glan Llyn.

#### **5.4 Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare**

The quality of support and guidance offered to pupils is good and is a strength of the school. The school provides a happy, safe and caring environment where pupils are valued and respected. Good relations exist between form tutors and their classes and between pupils and subject teachers, ensuring effective support and guidance in the pupils' day-to-day school experience. Pupils know that they will receive every assistance from their teachers and are confident that any problems will be dealt with quickly and effectively.

The school has a clearly defined pastoral policy with two members of the SMT, year heads and form tutors working together to ensure the pastoral needs of all pupils are met. Heads of year play a prominent role in this provision and give freely of their time to deal with the pastoral needs of individuals. Pupils feel able to approach them, knowing that they will receive help and support. Staff and pupils know each other well. Bullying is not tolerated and clear procedures are in place to deal with any incidents. Pupils know what these procedures

are and feel confident about their effectiveness. Those interviewed during the inspection described the school as friendly, close-knit and supportive.

Very good links exist with feeder primary schools. Primary school pupils visit the school to spend time in various subject areas while the music and drama departments take a touring workshop into the primary schools. The head of Y7 is known to the pupils before they arrive and every effort is made to ensure they settle in easily. Pupils are well supported. There is a lunchtime activities club for pupils in KS3 and Y7 pupils are supported by reading "buddies" from Y10 and Y11. Students in the sixth form receive counselling training to enable them to provide a counselling service for younger pupils. An NSPCC counsellor is also available in school one day a week. Mentors from industry support a few Y10 pupils. The school keeps in regular contact with parents and works closely with the ESW who, when required, arranges multi-agency meetings. The school takes any behavioural problems very seriously and works hard to rectify them.

Pupils receive support in the form of a merit system. Awards are also given to pupils who achieve full attendance. Good support is given by subject teachers who are generous in the time given to pupils, especially those in KS4, for extra tuition out of school hours. Revision guides, option choice and careers advice are also readily provided by subject tutors.

Arrangements for a pastoral programme and PSHE are satisfactory. All year groups have an extended tutor group period once a week when time is divided between pastoral matters and the promotion of literacy. The quality of this provision is variable; the time spent with form tutors is not always used well. Tutor time in the morning is often interrupted by late arrivals by bus. Pupils have one hour of PSHE in the fortnightly timetable. The programme is being brought into line with the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC), PSE framework and Guidance. Sex education and health education modules contain appropriate detail with Y10 benefiting from a "Health Day" involving outside agencies. Global citizenship features well. The delivery of the PSHE lessons seen during the inspection was inconsistent but some good lessons were observed. Across the key stages the programme is enhanced by the attention given to ethical and moral issues in religious education and to environmental and citizenship questions in geography and science.

The provision for careers education and guidance is good and is being brought in line with the ACCAC work-related education (WRE) framework and guidance. It begins in Y7 and through KS3 forms part of the PSHE programme. At KS4 there are additional discrete careers lessons albeit on a carousel basis making the time allocation quite short. Pupils are well prepared for the option choices at the end of Y9 by the deputy head responsible for this area, by subject teachers, and by Careers Wales officers with whom the school works closely. All Y9 pupils take part in the Careers Wales "Aim Higher" programme which encourages pupils to consider further and higher education. A careers officer is regularly available in the school for drop-in sessions so that pupils can seek advice on a one to one basis; a careers officer is also present at parents' evenings. Good use is made of ICT facilities with programmes such as KUDOS being available for use by pupils, along with a satisfactory careers library. Some use is made too of outside speakers. All pupils in Y10 enjoy one week's work experience arranged by the careers education co-ordinator although the timing, during the last week of the summer term, makes debriefing difficult. Key Stage 4 pupils are well prepared for the choices they have to make regarding A-levels, vocational training and the world of work.

There is a clear policy on child protection with a named teacher and guidance on recognising key signs and appropriate action to be taken by teachers. Procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils are good. A small number of health and safety issues were reported to

the school during the inspection. The school has an appropriate range of policies including sex education, equal opportunities and racial equality.

Since the last inspection the school has maintained and enhanced its effective system for the support and guidance of pupils.

## **5.5 Provision for Pupils with SEN**

Provision for pupils with SEN is satisfactory.

There are 36 pupils on school action and school action plus. A further 29 pupils have statements of SEN which represents five per cent of the school population. This figure is above the average for Wales but it includes 15 pupils who are resourced by the UA in the LSR. There are no disapplications and all statutory procedures are carried out rigorously in line with the Code of Practice. The annual governors' report to parents does not comply with Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) requirements in relation to SEN. Pupils have access to the same broad, balanced curriculum as their peers. Pupils resourced by the UA and pupils identified by the school receive a modified mathematics and English curriculum in the LSR. They follow mainstream lessons in all other subjects with learning support assistant (LSA) support available in some of these lessons. The school successfully provides inclusive provision. Links with primary schools are good and the transition to the local further education college where pupils participate in link courses is well planned.

Most pupils with SEN achieve at least satisfactory standards in most subjects across KS3 and KS4. The use of multi-sensory strategies and good teaching in the LSR enable pupils to achieve good standards in mathematics and English. Differentiation in other subjects is not always effective or well planned and there are not sufficiently close links with all departments. Good progress is made in reading through closely monitored paired reading sessions for over 30 pupils in Y7 and Y8. These pupils are very well supported by trained Y10 pupils who act as tutors. The withdrawal provision for additional spelling for identified pupils is very well structured and pupils make good progress. There are also well-attended lunchtime activity sessions which provide good opportunities for pupils to gain help with homework and to develop social and practical skills.

Individual educational plans are good and contain targets which effectively identify pupils' learning needs. These are placed in pupils' planners and some exercise books which is good practice. However there is insufficient monitoring of progress against targets in subjects other than mathematics and English. Year-on-year collation of data for individual pupils with SEN would assist in identifying pupils' progress and needs. Learning Support Resource pupils are fully involved in the target-setting process. This practice is not yet generalised to all pupils with SEN.

The SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) manages the department well. Staff and resources are deployed effectively and regular pupil-centred meetings are held at all levels. However her time allocation to the English department, whilst beneficial, impinges on her role as SENCO. She is well supported by SMT, the head of the LSR, a part-time teacher and a small team of LSAs. Pupil information is regularly updated and given to all departments. In order to ensure all the good strategies devised are fully implemented, a much more rigorous and documented procedure for monitoring pupils' progress in subjects other than mathematics and English is required.

The small but strong team of LSAs provides good support for pupils particularly where they have been involved in planning with teachers.

Since the last inspection the school has rigorously reviewed those pupils receiving support at school action and school action plus to enable more effective targeting of provision. Individual Education Plans are much improved and specific. The SENCO with the support of the newly appointed headteacher has good, well-advanced plans to develop further the inclusive structure of the SEN department.

## **5.6 Partnership with Parents and Community, Schools and Other Institutions**

Partnership with parents, local community, partner primary schools and other external agencies and institutions is good. The commitment to developing and nurturing close partnerships with other schools and external agencies is central to the work of the school. The school is steeped in community life.

The school provides regular and good information for parents including a well-designed school brochure with a wide range of information to new and sixth form parents. A range of other, more regular correspondence on school activities is provided including newsletters, and a well-designed web-site is being developed, which has received an award as the best secondary school web-site in Wrexham.

Good use is made of the pupils' diaries to provide information about the school and its procedures to parents. The homework diaries are regularly monitored by school staff and parents are asked to scrutinise and sign their child's work programme.

The school has a welcoming atmosphere, operates an open-door policy and staff work hard to maintain regular contact with parents, guardians and the wider community. In addition to parents' evenings, open and induction evenings, school performances and careers' events, parents are always welcome to make appointments to discuss their children's work at any time during the academic year. Parents respond well to the school's requests for them to join in school activities. A home-school agreement is in place.

Although the Parents' Teachers' Association is no longer in being, many parents and friends of the school make a good contribution to the life of the school by actively supporting the arranging of fund-raising and social events organised by school staff throughout the year.

The partnership with the community is very good. The school's calendar of events and local press coverage folder fully outline the extent of the school's and pupils' participation in the life of the community and the notable contribution to events in the village, surrounding area, local functions and festivals. The school has a thriving choir, band and drama group and they participate in community, inter-school, county and also Urdd Eisteddfod events. Pupils' participation in musical, cultural, environmental and sporting competitions is wide ranging and they bring acclaim and recognition to the school. A wide range of events is organised to support groups such as the blind and partially sighted, local, national and international charities and the annual school walk, supported by local businesses, raises significant sums of money. Pupils and staff also support some of the activities of local groups and organisations such as the village action group, local hospices, Communities First, Rhiwabon Heritage and the River Dee Trust.

The recently opened leisure facilities at the school enable local groups to make good use of the school. Evening classes are held at the school and the Communities First urban regeneration committee also makes use of the facilities.

Pastoral and other links with the partner primary schools are very good and the further strengthening of the continuity and progression arrangements from KS2 to KS3 remains a target of the school. A structured programme of developments, agreed by all the schools, is

in place and being implemented effectively. The Communities First project also plays a significant part in this partnership. The parental, pastoral and academic processes in place for the induction of Y6 pupils from the partner primary schools into the school are effective and a good programme of transition arrangements is in place for pupils and parents. Links between the headteachers and other staff of the secondary and primary schools are well developed and there has been staff development through visits and observation of practice. Senior staff and teachers actively participate in curricular-based links particularly in the core subjects, including the development of teaching bridging units. Further links are currently being developed in physical education, art and drama.

Good links exist with a range of external agencies. Partnership arrangements with initial teacher training institutions, although intermittent, are well organised when they occur. Budgetary considerations have inhibited the school's regular participation in teacher training programmes although it has always been responsive to the needs of individual students. In this current academic year the formal partnership with Bangor University has been restored.

There are good links with Careers Wales which support pupils to develop appropriate knowledge and skills. Many members of the community, including voluntary and charitable agencies, local artist and performers, fire, police and the armed forces share their expertise with the pupils and staff and provide good support to the school.

## **5.7 Partnership with Industry**

The existing school partnership strategies with industry are satisfactory but the links with the world of work are limited and are in need of development. Where partnerships and links exist, these make a contribution to curricular provision, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world of work.

The school has yet to introduce a whole-school policy for WRE and has no co-ordinated strategy for staff to implement.

Apart from one or two instances where a very few members of staff have either worked with industry and business or have had industrial experience prior to joining the school, teacher placement in industry is significantly under-developed.

The school has already committed itself to working towards the WRE framework and there are several examples of good practice, where in certain curricular areas such as design and technology, geography, science, art and vocational studies, pupils' learning is deepened by world of work contacts. These visits enable the pupils to apply skills and deepen their knowledge and understanding of world of work concepts and processes learnt in the classroom.

Close links exist with a range of industrial and commercial concerns in the area; representatives from local shops, public services as well as voluntary organisations support the school in many ways, including visiting the school to talk with the pupils and sponsoring events.

A good feature of the world of work experience provided for pupils is the school's involvement with Enterprise Education. The experiences and world of work knowledge opportunities provided for older pupils over many years by participating in the Young Enterprise scheme are good. Pupils have regularly won awards. Another good feature is the participation in the Careers Wales Youth Gateway 'Go for it' scheme for Y10/Y11 pupils. Although not currently in place this year, the school has had close involvement with local businesses in providing enterprise morning activities for Y9 pupils.

Although the timing of the Y10 work experience programme is not ideal, nevertheless it is effectively organised and well implemented. The scheme involves the support of over 50 business organisations in the area.

## **6. MANAGEMENT**

### **6.1 Quality of Self-Evaluation and Planning for Improvement**

The quality of self-evaluation and planning is barely satisfactory at present, but the development of self-evaluation is a target of this year's SDP, and progress is being made.

The headteacher has gained a comprehensive and detailed knowledge of the school in his first two terms and the self-assessment report prepared for the inspection is an accurate reflection of the school's current stage of development. He has seen the vast majority of staff teach, and the deputy and assistant headteachers, who are also linked to departments, have done some monitoring of classroom practice. The links between all members of SMT and middle managers, both academic and pastoral, are well established over a few years, with timetabled meetings once a fortnight. These are a useful means of regular communication with a view to solving problems and give senior managers an overview of all areas of the school. The process is not yet sufficiently rigorous, however, in monitoring standards, and the quality of teaching and learning, leading to planning to eliminate shortcomings and share best practice.

At middle management level, there has been some monitoring of practice in departments and of pupils' work, but there is not yet an agreed set of criteria, clear timescales nor consistency of practice. On the pastoral side, there is good monitoring of the behaviour of individual pupils, but not enough monitoring of the pastoral work in tutor groups, nor of all pupils' progress across the curriculum, compared to prior attainment. The monitoring of whole-school issues such as literacy, numeracy, WRE and provision for both the most able and pupils with SEN, is currently adversely affected by lack of policies or co-ordinators or management time.

The quality of planning for improvement is better established and more effective in practice. The SDP has appropriate aims, timescales, success criteria and resource implications. Plans for each area of the school match the aims of the SDP and also contain specific targets. Whilst some are insufficiently detailed, many are appropriate.

The process of planning has involved different sections of the school community, to good effect. Governors have been fully involved in strategic planning over many years, including a huge input into the planning for the considerable new facilities, and also annual priorities. It is proposed to develop the student voice, so that pupils can be involved in both monitoring and planning for improvement. They feel that they have a growing involvement in decision-making through the school council.

Pupils' performance in the Cognitive Abilities' Tests (CATs) on entry, and their results in external tests/examinations at the end of each key stage are available for the period since the last inspection and such data are shared with middle managers. However, insufficient analysis is made of such data and the process of setting targets is at an early stage of development. Thus useful information is not yet having maximum impact on learning and standards.

These shortcomings have been recognised and a comprehensive programme of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is in draft form, with resource implications considered. There is a clear commitment to a more self-evaluative culture within the school.

## 6.2 Leadership and Efficiency

Ysgol Rhiwabon has made steady progress since the last inspection. Standards and examination results have improved and it has maintained its caring ethos. Facilities have improved substantially with additional and refurbished accommodation for physical education, drama, music, the sixth form and the library. Information and communications technology resources have also increased considerably and are now very good. These developments have entailed careful planning by governors and senior management, and, inevitably, disruption during the building period. There have also been several long-term illnesses of staff. The progress is testament to the quality of leadership over time, on which the current headteacher, appointed at the start of this academic year can build.

He has made an enthusiastic and energetic start, by reviewing all areas of the school and setting out plans for further improvement, shared with all sections of the school community. The areas identified for further development are appropriate and he is showing strong leadership in implementing these plans. Members of senior management have clear responsibilities to take the school forward and they have well established links with middle managers, both academic and pastoral, by which to develop practice consistently. Members of SMT carry out their specific management responsibilities conscientiously and have a clear commitment to the school.

The quality of middle management is good in a number of areas and aspects. There is a strong sense of teamwork and good communication, with a substantial number of middle managers effective in both academic and pastoral roles. A few of these staff do not have sufficient non-contact time to be able to exert their management responsibilities effectively. As yet, middle managers and SMT do not monitor practice with enough rigour or regularity, but this is planned. The management of some whole-school issues is not yet effective, either.

The governing body has worked very hard in strategic planning for the development of the school's facilities and members have a good overview of the school's performance. They work effectively through meetings of committees and of the full governing body and have a clear view of the future development of the school. The chairman has given strong leadership over a considerable period of time.

Financial planning, by governors and an assistant headteacher, is careful, with appropriate emphasis placed on the recruitment and retention of good staff and an increase in resources. The spending on resources is above average, with a very good investment in ICT equipment. Capitation to departments has a good balance between maintenance and development, and financial planning is clearly linked to development planning. There has been an appropriate surplus at the end of each financial year. The latest Auditor's report found control procedures appropriate.

Resources are well managed. Staff are deployed effectively to their subject specialisms, and the accommodation is used well, with the new facilities providing additional opportunities.

The school operates smoothly on a daily basis. There are two staff briefings a week, bulletins, a staff handbook and high quality publications to parents. Administrative and technical staff make a valuable contribution to the smooth-running of the school.

Statutory requirements are met except for the daily act of collective worship and NC requirements for design and technology at KS3.

### **6.3 Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources**

#### **Staffing**

The calibre of teaching staff is good and the staff are highly committed to the success of the school and its pupils.

The school has suitable staff to meet its curricular needs and the qualifications or experience of all the permanent staff match the curricular areas they teach. The school has taken positive steps to find temporary replacements to cover for staff on long-term sickness. When staff teach outside their subject specialism they are given good support and as a result standards are not affected. There are 34 full-time teachers including the headteacher and four part-time teachers. The pupil:teacher ratio is acceptable, as is the contact ratio. Some teachers with important management and pastoral roles have heavy teaching loads. Staff turnover in the school is low. In a few departments the staffing is fragmentary because of other commitments.

The in-service training (INSET) provision is well organised by an assistant headteacher who co-ordinates the needs of staff and controls this budget. The effect of INSET is good and appropriate methods of disseminating information are used to ensure relevant staff benefit from courses attended. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, have opportunities to attend courses and a detailed record is kept of the courses each teacher has attended. Information is also disseminated to all staff through the school's Continuous Professional Development journal. The recent Education and Learning Wales report, enabling the school to be awarded Investors in People status again, was very positive about the support given to staff.

The support staff include classroom assistants, the administration officer, secretarial and clerical staff, receptionist, technicians, librarian and one full-time and one part-time caretaker. They are all very supportive and all make a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the school. All clearly understand their role. The ICT technician makes a very positive impact and is also responsible for entering data about courses attended by staff onto the staff database.

Staff have job descriptions that reflect their roles. Non-contact time is generally in line with responsibilities, with a few exceptions.

#### **Accommodation**

The accommodation is adequate for the number of pupils on roll and has a good effect on pupils' standards of achievement.

The school now operates on one site. The school has had new building developments to be able to consolidate on one site and the facilities now for indoor and outdoor sporting activities and the new library are excellent and a valuable addition for the school. The sporting provision is shared with the community outside school hours. Accommodation is grouped so that areas or classrooms used for all subjects are close together. Departments use the extensive ICT (Three rooms) facilities as well as those in the library. Accommodation is generally of a good size, except for history where accommodation for top sets in Y8 is inadequate but good display work is evident, which contributes to the pupils' learning and achievement. Furniture is of good quality and appropriately set out in languages for oral work. Accommodation for business studies and media studies is unsatisfactory and hampers pupils' learning experiences. Occasionally in music there are clashes with rooms so that the small peripatetic room has to be used for lessons in KS4.

Corridors are narrow but this does not create problems since pupils are generally well behaved. There is an extensive outside playing field and hard play areas for games, which are

well used although drainage in one area of the playing field is poor. There is no path from the school to the playing fields and the access is over Offa's Dyke, but the school deals effectively with this. The school is warm and well maintained, with no evidence of graffiti or real damage. It makes good use of the accommodation available and overcomes any difficulties very well. During the inspection week some changes had to be made to the internal routes taken by pupils because of external examinations in the old gymnasium and in the assembly room. This was very effective and well directed. The toilet facilities are adequate and are maintained. Fire drills are held on a regular basis but there is no central record of when the fire alarms are tested. A few health and safety matters were brought to the attention of the school, which were virtually all immediately resolved.

### **Resources**

The school has a satisfactory provision of learning resources. It makes good use of the available resources to enable pupils to achieve in all subjects.

The ICT provision in the school is very good with a computer for every four pupils. Computers are all relatively modern and have CD drives; 12 are multimedia machines. In addition there are six interactive whiteboards in school which are available to some departments. These are used to good effect to improve standards. Other departments who as yet do not have access to this technology are keen to be involved and there is a development plan. The computers have a broadband link via the UA to the Internet. There is also a variety of digital cameras and scanners. In the LSR there is a good range of appropriate reading books available for the pupils. In science and mathematics there are sufficient texts for every pupil in KS3 and KS4, but in science pupils do not have a textbook to take home. In a significant minority of subjects worksheets are of modest quality, are over-used or are too repetitive in content. In English there have been purchases to enable literacy work to be developed but considerably more resources are needed to deliver the planned literacy programme.

In mathematics there is good cataloguing of the resources available. In many subjects good use is made of audio-visual equipment but sometimes when overhead projectors are used the writing of the teacher is too small to be seen adequately by pupils sitting at the back of the classroom. Information and communications technology is effectively used in many subjects to research for information to complete coursework and good use is made of CD-ROMs. In subjects such as Welsh a monthly magazine is used and national and local teaching resources have a positive effect on standards. In religious education, good use is made of videos and artefacts, but the textbooks are rather dated, although the school-produced booklets in the subject are useful. There are insufficient resources for business studies in the library.

The modern library is under-resourced in stock terms, the number of books being below requirement for a school of this size by a considerable factor. The librarian is very aware of this and has a good understanding of suggested stock levels. The Kathleen Davies Trust has recently given the school a considerable sum of money to purchase books for the library and this has proved to be very beneficial. The capitation allowed for the library is currently low, but there are plans to increase stock. The departmental capitation is determined by formula but some money is held back annually for contingencies, which is acceptable.

## 7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

### Standards achieved by pupils

#### English

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

#### KS3 and KS4

##### Good features

- Year 7 pupils make good progress in reading and writing as a result of the transition project which they begin in Y6.
- Pupils in Y8 and Y9 progress well in their problem-solving approach to some texts.
- Pupils listen well and follow instructions accurately and promptly. Pupils also listen carefully and constructively to the contributions made by other pupils.
- Many pupils read with satisfactory expression and confidence. They encounter a wide range of challenging reading materials and can interpret the writers' work with good understanding. They skim and scan print competently and demonstrate sensible insights into character, plot and setting.
- Pupils participate well in the paired reading scheme.
- Pupils in both key stages write in a range of formats including poetry, diary, script, reports, newspaper articles and instructions and writing for a purpose.
- There are many examples of effective re-drafting of work in KS3 and KS4 where pupils of all abilities are developing an analytical approach to English. Many use writing frames constructively to help structure their work.
- In both key stages, homework tasks are well structured and relevant to pupils' language development.
- Pupils with SEN who work in the LSR make good, at times, very good, progress in developing their language skills.
- Pupils involved in the "Press Team" hone their writing skills and extend their understanding of how newspapers work in an interesting way.

##### Shortcomings

- Although some pupils speak confidently and fluently and, particularly some KS3 pupils, work well in pairs, too many pupils have limited spoken vocabulary, do not discuss for long in a focused way and do not use formal language when it is appropriate.
- There are examples of competent word-processed writing, particularly to aid the re-drafting process but, overall, there is limited use of ICT to support learning in literacy or enhance thinking or presentation.
- Progress in pupils' basic skills is inconsistent. Pupils of all abilities and in both key stages make errors in punctuation.

- Although analytical and factual writing is developing satisfactorily in KS4, many pupils are not producing sufficient more free, creative work.
- More able pupils do not use higher order thinking skills sufficiently.
- Pupils with SEN in mainstream classes make slow progress, generally, because they work at the same tasks as the rest of the class.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- Since the last inspection there has been a significant improvement in reading and writing in KS3.

**Mathematics**

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and satisfactory at KS4. Examination results at GCSE were below those for Wales and the UA at both grades A\*-C and A\*-G in 2002. Results at the Entry level examination for those not entered for GCSE are good.

**Good features**

**KS3**

- Pupils in the school at this key stage have a real desire to learn and to improve their understanding of the subject in all the topics covered from the schemes of work.
- The able pupils complete a substantial amount of work during Y7, Y8 and Y9 that enables them to attain level 5 or better in the NC tests as reflected in the results for 2002 which were close to average for the results of schools with a similar intake. These pupils are able to interpret and enumerate formulae in symbols that relate mathematically.
- Pupils with SEN understand how to apply the four rules of numbers and understand place value as well as realising that add is the inverse of subtract and that divide is the inverse of multiplication.
- Pupils of middle ability have a satisfactory understanding of algebraic and geometrical topics according to their ability and all follow the same work in the courses covered.
- Pupils can determine perimeters, areas and volumes of various shapes and can recall and apply the correct formulae.

**KS4**

- The most able pupils do very well and complete an acceptable amount of work which is generally accurate. These pupils also complete their coursework to a good standard and the equations derived are clearly set out in practical mathematics.
- The able pupils have a good recall of the topics covered and they are able to apply their knowledge to complete quite complex problems to an acceptable standard.
- Pupils know basic mathematical facts and can quote relevant formulae.
- Middle ability pupils can calculate price rises or price reductions by applying percentages to given figures and they are able to use trial and improvement methods to determine the solution to an equation.

**Shortcomings**

**KS3 and KS4**

- A significant minority of pupils do not complete the homework set and hence opportunities to practise in the topic being covered are lost.
- The attention of some pupils wavers when the teacher is explaining the work that is to be done and hence important points are lost and this creates errors.
- There is a clear inability amongst some pupils to recall basic facts such that some take a great deal of time to complete questions or find answers to parts of the problems set.

**KS3**

- Standards are adversely affected when pupils are not completely confident in manipulating numbers mentally and when they do not complete sufficient work in a lesson.
- Some are unable to recall to mind easily work covered previously and hence their ability to understand a new topic is diminished.

**KS4**

- There is a significant amount of incomplete work in exercises book with homework not being completed by an appreciable number and a significant number of exercise books are poorly presented.
- Some of the graphs drawn are not done in pencil and, when errors are found, changes then made are unclear, creating mistakes in sub-parts of questions.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- Standards at KS3 have improved since the last inspection.

**Science**

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and satisfactory at KS4. In 2002, the percentage of pupils obtaining level 5 and above in the national tests at KS3 was above the national average. In 2002, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C at GCSE was close to the national average.

**Good features**

**KS3**

- More able and average ability pupils have a good understanding of a wide range of topics covering all aspects of the NC.
- They have a good recall of key concepts and ideas and apply them to a range of problems and applications in everyday life.
- A small majority of pupils with SEN make good progress relative to their abilities. They often use correct scientific terminology well to explain basic principles.
- The development of practical skills is satisfactory for the practical activities identified in the schemes of work.

**KS4**

- More able and a minority of average ability pupils have a detailed understanding of the more complex principles developed in the key stage in life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical properties.
- They are able to apply their knowledge and understanding to a range of problems, many related to health education and environmental issues in everyday life.
- The quality of investigations overall is satisfactory. For a small minority of able pupils it is good.
- Pupils work safely and collaborate well during practical work.
- In both key stages, the majority of pupils make satisfactory use of mathematical skills in scientific contexts.

**Shortcomings**

**KS3**

- A significant number of lower ability pupils have a less secure understanding of current and previous work. They often have difficulty in applying scientific principles to a range of applications in everyday life.
- The standard of investigative skills is satisfactory overall. The skills of planning, analysing and evaluating are not developed to sufficient depth in the key stage.

**KS4**

- Whilst the majority of average and lower ability pupils make satisfactory progress, some work seen was unsatisfactory. These pupils have a less secure recall of previous work, and their limited understanding of key concepts restricts progress.
- The standard of a significant minority of investigations is unsatisfactory. There are significant shortcomings in the quality and completion of the skill areas of planning, analysing and evaluating.
- A significant number of average and lower ability pupils do not complete homework on a regular basis and progress is hindered by irregular attendance.
- At both key stages, homework is not set regularly enough. Therefore pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to extend their learning and apply their knowledge to more demanding tasks.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- Standards at KS3 have improved since the last inspection.

**Welsh second language**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory at KS3 and KS4. Examination results have been good, adding a measure of progress to pupils' prior attainment.

**Good features**

**KS3 and KS4**

- Pupils across the ability range respond well in the target language to whole-class question and answer sessions and use language games and audio tapes effectively to improve their pronunciation.
- Pupils in high ability sets at KS3 and those who follow the full GCSE course at KS4 are able to discuss at length a range of topics, which are outside the context of the lessons.
- Pupils use their proficiency in their oral skills to enhance their work in reading and writing tasks.
- Reading aloud is well developed and pupils follow an independent reading programme, which contributes to the raising of standards.
- Pupils in high ability sets at KS3 and those who follow the full GCSE course at KS4 are able to compose extended written work, which includes appropriate emphasis on expressing their opinions and backing up their contentions with reasons. Some pupils in lower ability groups make good use of writing frames as aids to extended writing.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **KS3 and KS4**

- Many pupils in middle and lower ability sets at KS3 and those who follow the short course at KS4 experience difficulty responding to questions which are beyond the immediate context of the lesson.
- Extended writing is mainly confined to high ability sets and pupils who follow the full GCSE course at KS4.
- Some lessons lack pace with limited opportunities for pupils to engage in communicative tasks and this has an adverse effect on standards.

### **Progress since the last inspection**

- Standards of achievement have been maintained since the last inspection at KS3 and KS4. The numbers of pupils following the full course at GCSE have been steadily rising in recent years.

### **Design and technology**

Standards of achievement are unsatisfactory at KS3; NC requirements for design and technology are not fully met at KS3. At KS4, standards are satisfactory and are reflected in the examination results at GCSE. Standards of achievement in GCSE examinations are lower than the corresponding figure for the UA and Wales.

#### **Good features**

#### **KS3 and KS4**

- By the end of KS3, pupils have a good understanding of the designing and making processes, which they apply in resistant materials and food technology.
- Overall, pupils work confidently with equipment, tools and machinery.
- In both key stages, practical outcomes are generally satisfactory, with some examples of work of a good standard.
- Pupils gain knowledge of, and apply good health and safety, and hygiene procedures. At KS4, all pupils pursuing the food technology course gain a food hygiene certificate.

- Pupils' understanding of control and computer aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) is satisfactory overall, with some good examples.
- Appropriate use is made of the Internet to research information, and ProDESKTOP to present design ideas; standards of achievement are satisfactory.
- With constant teacher support and guidance, pupils with SEN make satisfactory, occasionally good progress, in relation to ability.

### **Shortcomings**

- Pupils do not gain experience of all areas of study for the subject at KS3.
- At the end of KS4, in particular, a significant number of coursework folios are unsatisfactory; some more able pupils are underachieving.
- Pupils of average and lower ability frequently produce work that is insufficiently well considered and documented.
- Evaluations are also, on occasion, superficial and do not relate to the original specification.
- Information and communications technology skills do not make a consistent and well-integrated contribution to the communication of information and data, and to enhancing presentation.
- Standards are frequently affected by absence.

### **Progress since the last inspection**

- The standard and application of ICT skills for CAD/CAM and control, and the introduction of ProDESKTOP have improved overall.

### **Information and communications technology**

Standards of achievement at KS3 are satisfactory. At KS4, they are good. The good standards at KS4 are not yet reflected in examination results which have been below national averages. However, teacher assessments at KS3, together with targets for pupils' achievement indicate that there is likely to be a considerable improvement in examination performance by the present cohort of pupils in Y10 and Y11.

#### **Good features**

##### **KS3**

- Pupils are confident and competent users of both hardware and software, and their ICT skills are used to good effect with pupils exploiting and combining work from a range of sources to produce good quality outcomes.
- Pupils can use appropriate hardware and software to create simple spreadsheet models which they can then alter to answer "what if" type questions.
- Pupils use a range of ICT equipment and software efficiently to create presentations of their own design, integrating several forms of information. They use the Internet to search for relevant material and collect and amend the information to suit their own purposes.

##### **KS4**

- Pupils show a good range of research skills using the Internet to good advantage as a source of material for their presentations.
- Pupils design their own web-sites and pages including links to other pages/sites and show a keen sense of audience.
- Pupils can assemble relevant collections of data and interrogate the resulting databases with complex queries. Most are able to refine queries to produce more tightly focussed results.

### **Shortcomings**

- The most able pupils are not sufficiently stretched and some of the less able struggle to keep pace with the rest of the class, although pupils with SEN are well supported in lessons.
- In the past there have been problems of staff illness which have adversely affected continuity of progress.

### **Progress since the last inspection**

- There has been an improvement in standards and resources.

### **History**

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

#### **Good features**

##### **KS3 and KS4**

- Pupils at KS3 have good levels of background knowledge and understanding and their recall skills are secure.
- Many pupils have good listening skills and are keen to achieve good standards in the learning objectives identified for them in each lesson.
- Pupils have good levels of chronological awareness and they have a good ability to read and evaluate a variety of sources of historical evidence. They are successful in making meaningful links between the evidence and their own knowledge of a topic as in their study of life in the First World War trenches.
- From Y7 onwards, pupils are able to distinguish between primary and secondary sources and recognise that historical sources are often incomplete. More able pupils in Y8 are able to detect and explain the concept of bias.
- The least able and those with SEN achieve well when presented with active learning opportunities such as selecting cards to categorise sources of information.
- Year 7 pupils are beginning to appreciate the relationship between cause and effect and in Y8 they are able to identify economic, political and religious factors and distinguish between short and long-term causes in the study of the dissolution of the monasteries.
- Key Stage 3 and KS4 pupils produce good and sometimes very good quality written work. Pieces of extended writing are neatly presented, well planned and logically argued. They record their learning in a range of styles and formats such as letters, reports, diagrams and essays. They select relevant material thoughtfully and organise their arguments logically.

- At KS4, pupils successfully build upon the range of skills acquired at KS3. Year 10 and Y11 pupils are confident in their use of source materials and understand that contemporaries and historians can interpret the same event in different ways. They are able to select evidence to support alternative interpretations of events.
- In their work on the Cultural Revolution in China and Hitler's Germany, they demonstrate a good ability to employ strategies, which enable them to make informed judgements on the reliability and usefulness of conflicting primary and secondary sources of information.

### **Shortcomings**

- In the Y7 mixed ability situation, inattentive pupils have an adverse impact on the pace of the work undertaken and result in more able pupils being insufficiently challenged.

### **Progress since last inspection**

- Standards have improved since the last inspection in the consistency of assessment at KS3 and in the increased use of ICT by pupils to obtain information to support their own historical investigations.

## **Geography**

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

### **Good features**

#### **KS3 and KS4**

- The majority of pupils achieve work of quality and demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of basic geographical concepts.
- Pupils' acquisition of knowledge, understanding and subject specific skills are enhanced by their effective use of atlases, written texts, maps and graphically presented information.
- Pupils' skills of enquiry and observation are developed and strengthened by fieldwork undertaken in all year groups in the local area and beyond. The detailed individual studies completed by KS4 pupils on scree slopes, beach material analysis and retailing in Llandudno progresses the pupils' understanding and knowledge of patterns and processes in geography.
- Pupils' handling and interpretation of source material whether written, diagrammatic, map or statistical are good. Y10's study of 'Changing Shopping Habits' obtained by a questionnaire survey and Y8's study of the Sea Empress disaster are particularly good examples.
- Year 11's work on the problems caused by tourists in National Parks and the concept of sustainable tourism in Kenya leads to a greater understanding and knowledge of the inter-relationship between man and his environment.
- Pupils demonstrate a good level of analytical and interpretative skills in respect of geographical data with the ability to express their decisions in a variety of formats such as written, graphical, map or with the aid of ICT.

- Pupils' key skills levels in geography are good. The majority of pupils can complete extended written exercises, construct and interpret graphs, use and draw sketch maps with confidence.
- The majority of pupils can understand and use geographical terminology with accuracy both orally and written.

### **Shortcomings**

- A minority of pupils of average ability experience difficulty in the use of geographical terminology.
- A minority of pupils have gaps in their work, or work is poorly presented and organised.

### **Progress since the last inspection**

- Standards since the last inspection have improved at both key stages.

### **Modern foreign languages**

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and KS4. These are reflected in the GCSE results which have shown a measure of progress on pupils' prior attainment over several years, with a high proportion of top grades.

### **Good features**

#### **KS3**

- Pupils respond with enthusiasm orally. They have good recall of vocabulary and structures and use language creatively, particularly when recording on tape.
- Pupils use extended writing from Y7 onwards.
- They listen to the teacher and to each other and can understand the target language in spoken and written form, with relative ease.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress.

#### **KS4**

- Most pupils use extended speech confidently and with a fair degree of accuracy.
- Standards in listening and reading comprehension develop well.
- The written work of the large majority of pupils is good, with extended writing on the full range of topics covered to a reasonable standard of accuracy.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **KS3**

- Pupils too readily turn to prompts to support their oral work in class.

#### **KS4**

- Some pupils lack confidence in speaking in unrehearsed situations.
- Some make grammatical errors in speech and writing.

### **Progress since the last inspection**

- Standards have improved overall, and in oral work in particular.



## **Art**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory at KS3 and KS4. In tests at the end of KS3, the majority of pupils are working to the nationally expected level. At GCSE, all pupils achieve grades A\*-G. Results at the higher grades A\*-C are well below the national average for both boys and girls.

### **Good features**

#### **KS3**

- Pupils develop an awareness of colour, shape and texture.
- Pupils develop new craft skills in delightful batik designs.
- Pupils develop three-dimensional skills in imaginative paper sculpture.
- Pupils develop spatial awareness when working with clay in the style of Henry Moore.
- Pupils regularly look at and write about art.
- Pupils have a broader understanding of art from working with artists-in-residence.
- Pupils develop an understanding of the art of other cultures in practical tasks.
- Pupils use computers creatively to form letter and number shapes in line and colour.
- Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress.

#### **KS4**

- The work of artists, such as Gaudi, is successfully reinterpreted in pupils' own designs.
- Sketchbook work shows an imaginative and experimental approach.
- Pupils know how to use computers as an aid to research and as a creative tool.
- Pupils are able to use art to express moral and social issues.
- Pupils are familiar with Welsh artists and the art of Wales.
- Pupils develop an understanding of the art of other cultures.
- Pupils develop an awareness of historical and contemporary art from visits to galleries.

### **Shortcomings**

- Observational drawing skills are insufficiently developed over both stages.
- Standards at KS3 are limited by a lack of attention and concentration by pupils on their tasks.
- Standards at KS4 are limited by poor attendance and a lack of interest by some.
- Pupils do not sufficiently express their personal opinions or judgement in their writing.
- Pupils are not sufficiently accustomed to talking about art in response to questions.
- Much of the material found from computer research is merely printed out and not used to improve personal knowledge.
- Pupils do not yet use the art vocabulary to which they are regularly exposed.
- Pupils of higher abilities are not extended by more demanding tasks.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- Since the previous report there has been satisfactory progress.

**Music**

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and KS4. In 2002 the percentage of pupils achieving grades A\*-C at GCSE has been significantly higher than the national and local average.

**Good features**

**KS3**

- Pupils can demonstrate technical competence and accuracy, appropriate to their development, in instrumental performance.
- They can perform effectively individually and in groups, showing a sense of style and occasion.
- Pupils can explore a range of sound sources from which they select, combine and arrange sounds effectively, imaginatively and with musical expression.
- They can improvise and create completed compositions in response to a variety of stimuli.
- They can appraise music cultures perceptively, focusing on specific musical elements.
- Pupils acquire musical knowledge, skills and understanding through practical activities.
- They make progress through regular practice in performing, composing and appraising activities.
- They use ICT to store work in progress as a means of improving standards.

**KS4**

- Pupils are able to build on previous experiences, further developing their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- They demonstrate fluency and accuracy in intonation and rhythm, and conviction in interpretation.
- Overall performances display the pupils' understanding of the composer's style and of the connections between the performance and the relevant area of study.
- Pupils explore a range of sound sources from which they select, combine and arrange sounds effectively.
- Compositions have good musical ideas, showing development and understanding of the medium.
- Outcomes are musically interesting and satisfying, realising the intention of the brief with some success.
- Pupils can analyse and evaluate music using musical terminology.
- They can identify and compose the distinctive characteristics from a wide range of styles and traditions.
- They can identify the impact and understand the development of ICT on music.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **KS3**

- In ensemble work a minority of pupils are unable to play in time to a common pulse.
- In vocal performance the posture of a significant minority was not well controlled.

#### **KS4**

- The evaluations of a minority of pupils are brief and superficial. These pupils are unable to build on previous experiences and this results in flawed judgements.

### **Progress since the last inspection**

- Standards of achievement have improved across all key stages since the last inspection, particularly in composition and appraising.

### **Physical education**

Standards of achievement at KS3 are satisfactory and are good at KS4. Good standards are reflected in GCSE examination results which are good in relation to the capabilities of pupils. The good extra-curricular programme of inter and intra-school competitive activities is enhanced by very good links with the leisure centre and national sports initiatives to promote wider recreational participation.

### **Good features**

#### **KS3**

- Pupils of middle and lower ability, including those with SEN, demonstrate at least satisfactory standards in cricket, rounders, badminton and athletics.
- Participation rates are good with effective involvement of non-participants in evaluating the progress of others.
- Pupils remember work covered in previous lessons and build effectively on their knowledge.

#### **KS4**

- Standards are good throughout but are better at GCSE than in the core programme.
- Pupils show good practical skills and understanding of positioning especially in cricket and badminton.
- Girls are particularly responsive to questions which test their understanding.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **KS3**

- The most able are insufficiently and inconsistently challenged.
- Pupils' skills in planning and evaluating their own work and that of others are underdeveloped.

#### **KS4**

- Pupils lack confidence in using technical vocabulary.

- Some pupils have difficulty working independently of the teachers, planning solutions for themselves, assessing progress, practising and refining work.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- Standards have improved since the last inspection particularly in the provision of very good facilities.

**Religious education**

Standards of achievement at KS3 are good and at KS4 are satisfactory. At KS3, pupils follow the Wrexham agreed syllabus. At KS4 all pupils, except those in Y10 taking the full course religious studies at GCSE level, follow the GCSE short course in religious education. In 2002 results were good.

**Good features**

**KS3**

- By the end of KS3, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of Christianity and the other major world faiths.
- They can identify key religious figures and understand the part they play in their religion.
- They understand the significance of faith to believers and how it shapes their lives.
- They are able to distinguish between the different religions and appreciate that each has its distinctive practices and beliefs.
- They are able to identify religious artefacts and use material gleaned from a variety of stimuli including video.
- They appreciate the significance of symbolism in religion and are able to use religious terms.
- Oral work is good; pupils respond well in class discussion and brainstorming.
- The standard of written work over the key stage is generally good. Pupils are able to write in a variety of forms including newspaper reports, obituaries and diary extracts.
- Good creative work is produced in the form of posters and other art work.
- Pupils with SEN and less able pupils participate well in lessons and produce work commensurate with their ability.

**KS4**

- Pupils have a satisfactory, and in many cases a good, knowledge and understanding of the short course units which they have covered.
- They are able to relate religious belief and practice to contemporary moral and social issues.
- Their oral work is satisfactory and sometimes good; many respond well to question and answer sessions and in class discussion.
- They produce written work which is of a satisfactory and sometimes good standard.

**Shortcomings**

### **KS3**

- Pupils do not produce enough extended answers either orally or in writing.

### **KS4**

- Some pupils find it difficult to produce balanced answers with arguments for and against a particular viewpoint.
- Pupils do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning.
- A significant minority do not take the subject sufficiently seriously.

### **Religious studies**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory. At KS4, pupils are able to follow a full GCSE in religious studies in Y10 for the first time for a few years. Unfortunately, there are timetabling arrangements which hinder pupils from having a free choice.

#### **Good features**

- Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the units covered.
- They are able to relate moral and social issues to their own life experiences.
- Oral work is satisfactory and sometimes good; many respond well in question and answer sessions and in discussion work.
- Written answers are satisfactory.

#### **Shortcomings**

- Evaluation answers lack balance and detail.
- Some pupils resent the fact that they have had to follow this course because they are studying Welsh and do not always give of their best.

#### **Progress since the last inspection**

- Good progress has been made at both key stages in religious education and religious studies since the time of the last inspection.

### **Personal and social education**

Standards in PSE are satisfactory at KS3 and KS4.

#### **Good features**

##### **KS3 and KS4**

- Pupils encounter a wide range of topics which are relevant to their development. In the best practice, pupils relate well to their peer and teacher and work co-operatively in pairs and small groups.
- Many KS3 pupils have a strong sense of social responsibility when discussing issues related to rules, describing anti-social behaviour and articulating its effect on others. They have good recall of salient points of their assembly and understanding of the message given. They appreciate the importance of good communications and the need to recognise and be sensitive to differences in order to promote harmony.
- The majority of KS4 pupils are keen to complete their RoA in detail and to share with the class their plans for the future.

- In their work on how to deal with criticism, pupils consider their own responses to a partner's work, try to make constructive criticism and are beginning to value the process and realise that it is their own responsibility to learn from criticism.
- Some Y11 pupils discuss issues within sex education, such as HIV, sensibly and sensitively.

### **Shortcomings**

- Too many pupils are content to leave many pieces of work incomplete.
- The quality of discussion in most PSE classes is unsatisfactory. Many pupils are either passive, give brief or ill-considered answers or chat about issues irrelevant to the topic.
- Standards across KS3 and KS4 are inconsistent, reflecting the lack of whole-school monitoring of the subject.

### **Progress since the last inspection**

- Personal and social education was not reported on separately in the last report.

### **Business studies**

Standards of achievement at KS4 are satisfactory. GCSE examination results have been satisfactory. Entry level results have been good.

### **Good features**

- Pupils are confident and competent when using ICT across a range of applications.
- Pupils quickly become less reliant upon teachers for guidance in their research work. Many pupils are independent in their ICT work. They take the initiative to research and evaluate before deciding upon the next steps to take in their writing.
- Pupils with SEN make very good progress. Group work draws upon pupils' own experiences to reinforce learning.
- Many pupils express themselves clearly and articulately, orally indicating a breadth of knowledge.

### **Shortcomings**

- The progress of a minority of pupils, especially the less able, is hindered by their absences from lessons.
- A minority of pupils' presentation of work is below an acceptable standard. Also, errors in spelling and punctuation mar pupils' written work.

### **Progress since the last inspection**

- Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Standards have been maintained at an appropriate level. Weaknesses identified have been addressed. Considerable investment in textbooks has taken place. Standards in computer work have progressed.

### **Catering**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in this recently introduced KS4 course.

### **Good features**

- Pupils display satisfactory understanding of good hygiene practice, food poisoning, and how this can be reduced with safe kitchen procedures.
- They have satisfactory knowledge of food commodities and food preparation.
- Pupils have good knowledge of nutrients and generally make considered healthy choices when planning dishes and menus for various situations.
- Practical outcomes are generally of a good standard; work is well planned and costed; the most successful evaluations analyse nutritive content.
- Pupils use satisfactory ICT skills to produce practical preparation sheets and related recipe books as coursework records.

### **Shortcomings**

- A small number of pupils do not display sufficient commitment to their work and to achieving good standards.
- Some coursework files contain incomplete records of work and unsatisfactory presentation.

### **Drama**

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and are very good at KS4. Standards are reflected in results at GCSE where pupils achieve very good standards in relation to their capabilities.

### **Good features**

#### **KS3**

- Pupils confidently take on a range of roles in performing and directing their work and that of others.
- They use subject terminology appropriately in describing their work and are keen to talk about what they know or share their ideas.
- Pupils concentrate on tasks producing some imaginative work in interpretation of character.
- Pupils of all abilities make good progress.

#### **KS4**

- Practical work shows a very good range of technical skills and awareness of audience. Performance work is of very good quality.
- Pupils create and sustain believable characters which are well researched.
- They work effectively, alone or with others, sharing ideas and helping each other towards common goals.
- Pupils are very responsive. They understand and apply subject disciplines, focus on tasks and approach their work with imagination and enthusiasm.

### **Shortcomings**

#### **KS3**

- The quality of oral contributions of the lower ability pupils is unsatisfactory and of boys is variable.
- The behaviour of some pupils in large groups is inappropriate.

**KS4**

- Absenteeism has an adverse effect on groupwork.
- Oral contributions, especially of boys, in whole-class discussion work are weak.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- Standards have improved since the last inspection, and also in the provision of facilities.

**Media studies**

Media studies is only available at KS4 where standards of achievement are satisfactory. GCSE results have been above local and national averages.

**Good features**

**KS4**

- Written work is well produced within the confines of the available resources.
- The most capable pupils make good progress in understanding and applying the key marketing and promotional techniques adopted by the news media.
- Projects demonstrate imagination and good research.
- Pupils have sound basic knowledge of the terminology of the subject.

**Shortcomings**

- There is a lack of critical analysis in both oral and written work, especially from the middle and lower ability pupils.
- There is missing or incomplete work due to absenteeism.
- Pupils' work does not contain a wider consideration of different aspects of the media.

**Progress since the last inspection**

- This is a new course introduced since the last inspection.

**Construction**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in this school produced practical skills course.

**Good features**

- Pupils gain good experience of working with a satisfactory range of materials and processes.
- With additional teacher support, pupils work successfully with tools and machinery.
- Using liquid plastic to join a stem and base, for example, is completed to a good standard.
- Pupils successfully complete industrial heat treatment processes such as vacuum forming.

**Shortcomings**

- Folio work is incomplete in some instances.
- Standards of outcomes do not consistently reach a good standard.
- Absences affect progress and standard.

## 8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

### 8.1 Progress Since the Last Inspection

#### 1. Continue and extend the development of strategies to tackle underachievement in some aspects of art, music, science, physical education and Welsh.

There has been action and standards are now at least satisfactory overall at all key stages, and good in some. In Welsh and science, there has been some lack of continuity in staffing, because of illness.

#### 2. Develop and implement a whole-school policy for the assessment of information technology, and ensure that the application of information technology across the curriculum is in line with existing policy.

Arrangements have been made to assess information technology, delivered across the curriculum in Y8 and Y9, which meet NC requirements. However, greater rigour and INSET are still needed if all pupils are to be fully challenged. Standards in ICT across the curriculum are now satisfactory.

#### 3. Make appropriate curricular provision for the delivery of the Agreed Syllabus for religious education at KS4 and in Y12 and Y13, and take steps designed to enable the school to meet statutory requirements for the daily act of collective worship.

At KS4, the time is now sufficient but the school does not meet statutory requirements with regard to religious education in the sixth form and the daily act of collective worship.

#### 4. Take appropriate steps to address the potential health and safety hazards occasioned by class sizes in technology in Y7 larger than those recommended in current guidelines.

Good progress has been made in the size of classes.

#### 5. Take further measures to improve consistency in the quality of monitoring standards of achievement and assessment in the classroom.

Since the last inspection, members of SMT have become linked to departments and there are regular meetings to discuss progress. However, the system of monitoring is not yet rigorous enough and this remains a key issue.

#### 6. Strengthen subject links with feeder primary schools in order to improve progression.

Good progress has been made on this issue. Links are now very good and enhance continuity between KS2 and KS3.

### 8.2 Key Issues for Action

In order to build on current achievement the school should:

- Continue to improve standards generally, and, in particular improve standards in:
  - Subjects in which standards are satisfactory
  - Design and technology at KS3
  - Pupils' key skills, especially extended speech, writing and numeracy.
- Extend the proportion of very good teaching, through a wider range of strategies.

- Promote self-evaluation through more rigorous monitoring and sharing of good practice.
- Develop the role of the form tutor in the process of tracking pupils' progress across the curriculum and the setting of targets for improvement.
- Promote greater consistency, in practice, in the cross-curricular themes identified in the main findings.
- Continue to support those pupils at risk of becoming disaffected, particularly at KS4, by providing an appropriate curriculum, and encouraging good learning attitudes and attendance.
- Meet statutory requirements and follow Welsh Assembly Government guidelines in the areas indicated in the report and resolve health and safety issues.

## **YSGOL RHIWABON-THE SIXTH FORM**

### **CONTEXT**

Ysgol Rhiwabon is an 11-18 mixed community school maintained by the County Borough of Wrexham.

The school serves the community of Ruabon to the south-west of Wrexham, and the surrounding area. The school's sixth form provides for students of Ysgol y Grango, as well as for its own students, and for students from other 11-16 schools. The area as a whole has a significant degree of social and economic disadvantage, though students come from the full range of socio-economic circumstances.

The sixth form at present has 90 students. There are 60 students in Y12 and 30 in Y13. There are roughly equal numbers of male and female students in Y13, but female students outnumber their male colleagues in Y12 by two to one. The school has an open access policy to the sixth form. The majority follow A-level courses; however, there are opportunities to study two vocational courses at GNVQ Intermediate level.

The vast majority of students speak English as their first language. There are few students from minority ethnic heritages in the sixth form.

### **MAIN FINDINGS**

Overall, students achieve good standards. Standards were good or better in 92 per cent of the lessons inspected and satisfactory in the rest. Ten per cent of lessons were judged to be very good. In the 2002, examinations the average points score at A-level was only just below the national average with open access to the sixth form. A significant majority of students complete the courses they begin in Y12, and achieve results close to their target grades. Students are not currently entered for key skills qualifications.

The vast majority of students display positive attitudes towards their study and make the most of their time in the sixth form. Their attendance is satisfactory. They behave maturely and contribute in a positive way to the life of the school.

The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching was good or better in 95 per cent of the lessons inspected and satisfactory in the rest. There was very good teaching in 13 per cent of lessons. The vast majority of lessons are well planned, teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are effective in meeting the needs of the students. Students experience a wide range of activities. In most subjects independent learning is being developed.

The quality of assessment of students' work is good. Students' work is thoroughly marked with detailed comments given, indicating strategies for improvement. Subject teachers review progress on a regular basis. Target grades are used effectively. Reports to parents are satisfactory and contain an estimated grade in Y13. The majority indicate how a student can improve in a subject; a minority are too general. There is one parents' evening for each year. Attendance is rarely more than 50 per cent; this is unsatisfactory.

The curriculum offered is satisfactory overall. The provision for A2/Advanced Subsidiary (AS) courses is good with 16 subjects being offered. Students are able to choose from the full range of courses, and considerable effort is then made to timetable all combinations. There is a small number of clashes in Y12; in Y13 there are none. The school offers a modest programme of vocational courses with health and social care and leisure and tourism included at intermediate level. There is no key skills programme in the sixth form at present, neither are physical education and religious education timetabled for students in either year. Although PSE is timetabled for one lesson in the two-week cycle, the programme of study is too narrow, focusing mainly on career paths and preparation for higher education.

Students contribute to many activities in school and in the community. A small number have trained to act as counsellors in the school's buddy system, and many organise fund-raising events in the community and play a leading role in school productions.

Students are given good advice about the courses they should follow. The induction programme is effective. Form tutors carry out an annual review. However this is too late and infrequent to monitor overall educational progress and develop strategies for improvement. Careers Wales provides personal careers guidance for each student. Work experience is optional. However a number of students have the opportunity to shadow employers in a range of vocational areas.

The sixth form is well managed by the head of sixth form, who has only been in post since September. At present, her teaching commitment is too large to allow her sufficient time to develop all initiatives and her role. Through a number of marketing strategies the sixth form is growing in numbers, and twelve students from other schools have made applications to follow courses at the school from September.

The SMT monitors the quality of courses on an annual basis by analysing examination outcomes with each curriculum leader. However, sixth form lessons have not been observed on a regular basis. Students are able to make their views known and to influence matters that affect them by representation on the School Council.

Courses are appropriately staffed in all subjects with the exception of information technology, music and art where students in Y12 and Y13 are taught together for some lessons. There are good facilities for private study, but the common room needs further development. Students have good access to reference books, computers and the Internet. The new facilities in drama, music and physical education enrich the quality of education for students and provide an attractive learning and social environment.

## STANDARDS

### 1. How well do students achieve?

#### Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

In the classes inspected, standards were very good in 10 per cent, good in 82 per cent and satisfactory in eight per cent. These are good figures.

The standards students are currently achieving in their courses are listed below:

1. Very good standards	GCE theatre studies
2. Good standards	GCE English
	GCE mathematics
	GCE biology
	GCE chemistry
	GCE physics
	GCE information technology
	GCE Welsh
	GCE history
	GCE geography
	GCE French
	GCE art
	GCE music
	GCE physical education
	GNVQ leisure and tourism
	GCE sociology
	GCE economics
3. Satisfactory standards	GNVQ health and social care

There is open access to the sixth form and students of all abilities are encouraged to return. In 2002, results represented good progress in relation to ability. The average points score (18) was not far below the national average of 20 and the local average of 21. This was a considerable improvement on the previous year, when the average points score was 14. However, with small numbers in the sixth form, statistics fluctuate from year to year. Across the full range of grades in 2002, (A-E), results were very close to the national and local averages—93 per cent of students gained at least two grades A-E, compared to 94 per cent nationally and 95 per cent locally. At the higher grades, results were well below average—48 per cent of students gaining at least two grades A-C, compared to 66 per cent nationally and 68 per cent locally.

The standards students achieve in the six key skills are as follows:

2. Good standards	Communication
	Application of number
	ICT
	Improving own learning and performance
	Working with others
	Problem solving

In practice, students have good key skills which they apply in their subject studies. They interact well with the teacher and with other students, though numbers are sometimes small for extended discussion. They work together collaboratively to solve problems, applying numbers well, when appropriate. The very good ICT facilities enable them to make extensive use of ICT in the library and resource rooms during the day and after school. However, students do not currently have classes in key skills nor enter portfolios to gain qualifications in key skills.

About 85 per cent of students have completed their courses this year. All pupils in Y11 who wish to start sixth form courses are given the opportunity and some who returned found the work too challenging or failed to attend regularly. Those who left were given careers guidance.

Students' attendance overall is satisfactory. The attendance figure over the last three terms was 90 per cent. However, excluding periods of authorised absence allowed for study leave, the attendance figure was 93.7 per cent. Attendance is recorded daily and the monitoring of absences is rigorous, often followed by a telephone call to the home.

Students arrive at school punctually, unless there are transportation difficulties with the buses, and they turn up for lessons on time.

Their behaviour is very good in lessons and throughout the school. They display positive attitudes towards their study, they are eager to learn and visibly enjoy their life in the sixth form. The vast majority of students are focused and well motivated to achieve success, display evidence of independent learning and prepare well for lessons. The relationship between students and their teachers is a mature one, displaying mutual trust and respect.

Students take their responsibilities in the general life of the school very seriously in such areas as the School Council, supporting younger pupils with reading schemes and acting as 'buddies' for pupils that may have difficulties in such areas as bullying.

## **THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

### **2. How effective are teaching and assessment?**

#### **Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

The overall quality of teaching is good. It was very good in 13 per cent of classes inspected, good in 82 per cent and satisfactory in five per cent. In all subjects teaching is good overall.

Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subject and present information effectively. In most lessons there is a good range of strategies. Information and communications technology is used well to present and manipulate data, especially in geography. Relationships between staff and students are very good and students are confident in asking for help when necessary. They are encouraged to be independent learners in most subjects and tasks are set which involve research and preparation for lessons. A very good feature is the quality of resources given to students, and particularly the booklets at the start of courses which outline content, assignments, assessments, deadlines and reference materials. Teachers set high standards for their students and, because numbers are small, offer extra support and tuition whenever necessary.

The quality of assessment and recording is good; reporting is satisfactory overall. Students are set a wide range of assignments in different subjects. These are marked regularly and many teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses. Many supplement their marking

with effective feedback to the whole class or to individuals, making clear how work can be improved. A good system of target setting has been established in the sixth form and this has already proved to be successful in helping students to raise standards of achievement.

The monitoring of progress and the dialogue to set target grades are good at subject teacher level. Grades are recorded in teachers' mark books, so that there is a close scrutiny of the standards achieved on a regular basis.

All students receive an annual report which includes an estimated grade in Y13. All reports describe the content of the course followed. However a significant number are too general and do not specify target grades and identify clear strategies for improvement. A parents' evening is organised for each year, attendance at which is unsatisfactory with only 50 per cent of parents attending.

In the sixth form, the school makes good use of a range of data to predict students' future performance. Each curriculum area carries out an annual examination review to analyse performance, and to identify areas for improvement and strategies to achieve them.

### **3. How well do learning experiences meet the needs and interests of students and the wider community?**

#### **Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

The quality of the post-16 curriculum is satisfactory.

Students in Y12 and Y13 study four subjects chosen from 16 AS courses and many students are content that their needs are being met. There is an e-learning course in music, which is shared with three other schools.

Overall students are offered a good range of academic subjects and the curriculum responds directly to the needs of those students considering university places. The time allocated to each subject per fortnight is generally adequate. In art, music and information technology students from Y12 and Y13 are taught together for some lessons. There is minimal effect on standards as classes are small. However although media studies and religious education are offered at GCSE, there are not currently courses at AS or A2 level. Furthermore the post-16 curriculum does not provide statutory religious education, recreational physical education or a structured PSE programme. Neither does it offer sufficient vocational education. This confines the breadth and quality of experiences available to sixth form students. However there are good extra-curricular opportunities given to students including music, drama and visits abroad.

The school is aware that the planning for the key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT is unsatisfactory at present but the SDP includes plans for implementation in the next academic year. This will form part of the school's planning to be in the second pilot phase of the Welsh Baccalaureate.

Students play a full part in the life of the school fully contributing to its activities in cultural, sporting, fund-raising and charity events such as the Macmillan Coffee morning, the annual sponsored school walk and the Village Action Group. Opportunities exist for the students to experience the world of work by job shadowing sessions of chosen professionals such as speech therapists, solicitors, accountants and doctors. Students in Y12 have also participated in the Young Enterprise scheme.

The school participates in the training of trainee teachers and a notable feature of its activities is the organising of a one day induction course for trainees on sixth form education.

#### **4. How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?**

##### **Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

Sixth form students are well cared for by their subject teachers, form tutors and by the head of year. The fact that students choose to join the sixth form from other schools is a tribute to its' caring reputation. In some subjects, students participate in taster sessions for sixth form subjects while still in Y11. In others, an induction programme helps students to make the step from GCSE to sixth form study. Subject teachers know their students well and are able to tailor their teaching to their needs. Work problems are discussed openly and measures taken to solve them. Teachers are generous with their time. Extra tuition and revision lessons take place after school and in the school holidays. Subject teachers regularly monitor the progress of their students. Form tutors also conduct a review of the progress of students in both Y12 and Y13 but it takes place too late in the year for realistic remedial action to be taken.

Good careers advice is available from subject teachers, the head of year and Careers Wales. Speakers from a number of universities go into school to give advice on university applications. Students attend a careers day at North-East Wales Institute (NEWI) organised by Careers Wales at which representatives from the universities, the army, Royal Air Force and many companies are present. Open day visits are arranged for Liverpool, Manchester and other universities. The head of year provides all students with a day's tuition on the writing of Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) forms using the electronic application system. Students have regular meetings with the Careers Wales officer. There are opportunities for work shadowing in a number of professions. Students also take part in the Wrexham Maelor hospital's "Medical Day".

There is no structured PSE programme for the sixth form and in this respect opportunities for a broader educational base are lost. There is no provision for religious education and thus statutory requirements are not being met. There are currently no opportunities for students to attend key skills classes or to be entered for key skills examinations.

The head of sixth form gives generously of her time to support her students. She is available to discuss personal problems, academic problems and life beyond school. The students are appreciative of the support which they receive. As a result, drop out rates are low with most students completing their courses. Relationships are cemented by social activities. The head of sixth form takes the students on a day visit to London each year. A sixth form dinner is also held annually. These activities are valued by the students and contribute to their social development.

Clear policies exist for child protection, racial equality and equal opportunities. No entry qualifications are set for entry into the sixth form; students are encouraged to pursue the course most suited to their ability and interest.

**Leadership and management****5. How effective are leadership and strategic management?****Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

There has been a significant increase in the number of Y12 students this year and the school is planning to build on this growth. Its' marketing strategy has included a new, attractive, sixth form brochure, a comprehensive web-site, for which it has won an award for the best secondary school web-site in Wrexham, and presentations by the head of sixth form in neighbouring 11-16 schools. Though too early to judge its long-term effects, there are encouraging signs of interest from students within and outside Ysgol Rhiwabon.

The headteacher, in post for two terms, has reviewed sixth form provision and members of senior management are carrying forward a number of appropriate initiatives. There are plans for further links with other providers of courses, to make the sixth form more cost-effective and further development of e-learning. There are also plans to develop further the facilities which sixth formers have and to increase the student voice in the management of the school.

The day-to-day management of the sixth form is led by the head of sixth form, supported by three form tutors. Students spoke highly of her accessibility and effectiveness in dealing with problems. However, she has insufficient time for management as she carries a heavy teaching load. A member of the SMT has oversight of Y12 and Y13 and meets regularly with the head of sixth form. The two Presidents (head boy and girl) give an effective lead to their contemporaries, sit on the School Council and chair their own sixth form council.

**6. How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?****Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings**

There is insufficient formal evaluation of sixth form provision by regular monitoring of lessons but the draft self-evaluation policy will soon implement more rigorous processes.

There has, however, been some monitoring of classroom practice by senior managers and heads of department, and much exchange of information and discussion between senior management and the head of sixth form. Students' progress is also kept under review, with staff informing the head of sixth form about any student who is under-achieving, through an established communication system.

Data are analysed by senior managers and shared with departments, particularly on examination results and these form part of the discussion in regular, timetabled meetings.

All departments have development plans, focused on standards, teaching and learning, although these do not relate specifically to the sixth form. Progress in achieving these aims is also regularly discussed between senior and middle managers.

The recent building developments have substantially improved students' social accommodation and also the library and ICT facilities, for independent learning. Sixth form provision and standards continue to be a focus of development within the school.

**7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?****Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

Sixth form teachers are well qualified either by qualifications or experience to teach AS, A2 and vocational courses. Students are very positive about the support they receive in their subjects from their teachers. In music, the new laboratory and instruments have enhanced the provision. In some subjects visits and visiting speakers are used to good effect.

Students have good facilities for private study. An alcove off the library is available for them to use and they can also access the ICT equipment that is there including accessing the Internet to research on any topic studied. In science there is a small sixth form laboratory available. Common room provision is satisfactory; and it has a pool table that can be used outside lesson times. The school has excellent recreational facilities, which are not greatly used by the sixth form since they have no recreational time allocated.

Students are loaned textbooks in all subjects and in some subjects there are extra books and revision packs available that they can use. The school also provides students' stationery. The library also has a good selection of texts appertaining to the subjects studied. There are enough computers for students to use and this provision is regularly used.

Generally the school provides value for money and has made positive progress since the last report. Each year the school sponsors three or four students for their higher education, from a trust fund.

**SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING****English**

Standards of achievement are good. At A2/AS level, results are good in relation to students' ability.

**Good features**

- Year 12 and Y13 students have a sound knowledge and understanding of the texts they study and many demonstrate keen critical skills in written work.
- They debate critically and demonstrate a tenacious approach to interpreting and criticising the challenging writing they encounter.
- Overall, they respond positively and intelligently to the rigorous teaching they receive. When asked to present their own work, many do so assertively and coherently.
- Many use effective research and independent learning skills when investigating the historical and cultural context of the selected authors.

**Shortcomings**

- Some students do not read sufficiently widely, outside the chosen texts.

## **Mathematics**

Standards of achievement are good. Examination results at AS and A2 are positive for the school with all students entered gaining a grade.

### **Good features**

- Students follow courses in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics in Y12 and Y13 to good effect and in pure mathematics they know the required conditions for two straight lines to be parallel or perpendicular to each other.
- In statistics they can explain the advantage and disadvantage of sampling a set of results against taking a census.
- The students can model a set of circumstances and use appropriate equations to determine forces.
- They can integrate and differentiate expressions or functions and understand the difference between a definite and an indefinite integral.

### **Shortcomings**

- There is a tendency with some students to rush their work and this in turn creates careless errors.
- The students are not always able to spot the basic algebraic requirements that could be used to simplify to ensure that the final expression is in its lowest terms.
- The appropriate method to use to solve a question is not immediately clear to the students in some circumstances.

## **Science**

Standards of achievement are good in biology, chemistry and physics. In the 2002 A2/AS examinations, a significant majority of students gained grades in the A-E category.

### **Good features**

- The majority of students make good progress in biology, chemistry and physics.
- They have a good understanding of key concepts and can apply their theoretical knowledge and understanding to a wide range of problems in the three subjects.
- Practical skills are good. Experiments are well planned, students work systematically, they make appropriate observations and collect accurate data. Results are well analysed and interpreted using appropriate scientific theory.
- The majority of students have a mature approach to their studies, and are developing good organisational skills to manage their learning.

### **Shortcomings**

- A minority of students have a less secure knowledge and understanding of key facts, concepts and ideas.

## **Welsh second language**

Standards of achievement are good.

### **Good features**

- Students are able to discuss at length a wide range of topics and literary forms thoroughly and use their comprehensive vocabulary to good effect.
- Good standards of written work are maintained with the students able to draft and re-draft their work to good effect and use various evidential sources.
- Many students take advantage of the extra-curricular activities offered by the department, which help to raise standards.

### **Shortcomings**

- Some students are diffident when discussing issues, which are beyond the immediate context of the course.

## **Information and communications technology**

Standards of achievement are good. A-level results represent good achievement.

### **Good features**

- Information and communications technology is offered at AS level in Y12 and A2 level in Y13. Students show independent learning skills.
- They put them to good effect designing complex database applications.
- Students' assignments have real relevance to the world of work.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no significant shortcomings.

## **History**

Standards of achievement are good, reflected in the examination results.

### **Good features**

- Students use acquired skills and techniques with accuracy. Year 12 and Y13 students have a good ability to analyse, synthesise and interpret evidence. They demonstrate an understanding that historical interpretations change over time and can give reasons why such changes occur.
- They can use their knowledge and the evidence from the sources to construct opposing arguments when considering historical issues such as the reasons for the spread of Lutheranism in Germany.
- Relative to the ability of students, written work is often of good quality. Essays and other written presentations are the result of careful research and thoughtful planning and benefit from information obtained from texts and via ICT. Students are increasingly analytical in presenting their ideas and arguments.

### **Shortcomings**

- There are no significant shortcomings.

## **Geography**

Standards of achievement are good. The AS and A2 level results are good in relation to students' abilities.

### **Good features**

- The majority of student files are systematically organised with neatly presented notes and diagrams. Their map and graphical work is of a good standard.
- Students are confident in the extraction and interpretation of data from primary sources including the Internet. Year 12's work on the 2001 Population Census demonstrated their ability in handling data and being able to present detailed and valid conclusions.
- Students can apply the skills and techniques already learned with increasing understanding and to new situations.
- The majority of students display a mature and diligent approach to their work.

### **Shortcomings**

- A minority of students are reluctant to contribute orally to class discussion.
- The progress of a minority of students is hampered by an irregular attendance pattern.

## **Modern foreign languages**

Standards of achievement are good. Results in A-level examinations have been good, adding a measure of progress to students' prior attainment, and with a high proportion of top grades.

### **Good features**

- Students' oral skills develop well so that they speak with increasing fluency, and particularly on topics which they have prepared.
- Extended writing is well structured and of a good standard of accuracy.
- Students can extract information appropriately from a spoken or written text in response to questions.
- Their understanding of grammar is developing well, resulting in the correction of errors and increasing accuracy.
- Their spoken and written work is well-informed in its French context. Students carry out surveys among French people on their regular study visits to France, to good effect.

### **Shortcomings**

- Some students make grammatical errors when speaking and writing.
- Some students are hesitant when speaking on issues they have not prepared.

## **Art**

Standards of achievement are good. This is a new course attracting a small number of students from within the school and from other centres. In the first year of the AS examination, students achieved satisfactory grades.

### **Good features**

- Students are developing well as independent artists.

- Sketchbook work shows much imagination.
- Students are developing good individual research skills.
- They understand how to use experimental glass techniques very creatively.
- They acquire and successfully exploit new printmaking skills.
- They experiment successfully with new three-dimensional craft processes.
- Students know how to manipulate images creatively in digital camera work.
- They talk confidently about their art and are able to use their Welsh language skills to enrich their art.
- Students regularly work with professional artists.
- They broaden their understanding of contemporary art by visiting art galleries.
- They explore and use the art of other cultures to support their own original work.
- They use the good range of resources provided to broaden their knowledge of the artists of Wales.
- Practical work benefits from students' ready access to a studio in private study time.

#### **Shortcomings**

- Observational drawing skills are not sufficiently developed.

#### **Music**

Standards of achievement are good. Numbers have been small at A level but results have been good.

#### **Good features**

- Students' performances are secure in terms of both rhythm and pitch, and are committed, persuasive and well projected.
- They display a mature understanding of period and style, demonstrated by sensitivity to musical detail.
- Compositions are musically interesting; ideas are well developed within a framework which demonstrates an understanding of balance, form and structure.
- The deployment of voices and instruments demonstrates a sensitivity towards timbre and texture.
- Students have the ability to make critical judgements and support opinions, applying knowledge and understanding, and making connections across time and/or cultures using relevant musical vocabulary.

#### **Shortcomings**

- There are no significant shortcomings.

## **Physical education**

Standards of achievement are good. Examination results have been variable, reflecting the difficulty some students have in the transition from GCSE to A level study.

### **Good features**

- The most able students show insight and understanding of complex issues of sports psychology and skill acquisition.
- Extended writing shows good planning and organisation of ideas.

### **Shortcomings**

- There is lack of discussion or debate and wider reading about issues.
- Students' note-taking skills are not well developed.

## **Theatre studies**

Standards of achievement are very good.

### **Good features**

- Students demonstrate a very good range of performance techniques and devices.
- Lively discussion indicates thorough knowledge of directing style which is translated effectively into the directing role.
- Students have very good knowledge and understanding of text and sub-text in a range of works including Shakespeare.
- Performances show very good insight into character with students very effectively developing comedy or audience sympathy into their portrayal of a role.

### **Shortcomings**

- The range and variety of working within very small groups are limited.
- Critical evaluation, especially in written work, is not sufficiently developed.

## **Sociology**

Standards of achievement are good. Examination results have been satisfactory.

### **Good features**

- Standards of speaking and listening are generally good.
- Students use ICT effectively as a research tool and as an aid in writing up projects.
- Most students' written work is carefully structured and indicates a sound understanding of sociology.
- In oral work, students reveal a mature grasp of sociological ideas and a familiarity with the language of the social science.
- The best students are able to initiate and sustain discussion about complex issues raised by the teacher.

### **Shortcomings**

- Limited resources in the library hamper students' wider reading.

- Some students handle the mechanics of the English language inaccurately.
- Not all students do sufficient independent work.
- The progress of a significant number of students is adversely affected by absence.

### **Economics**

Standards of achievement are good. Examination results have been satisfactory.

#### **Good features**

- Students work with enthusiasm and collaborate well in group discussions.
- Standards in numeracy and ICT are good.
- Students show increasing maturity in making their own notes from discussion.
- Students show good skills in working independently.

#### **Shortcomings**

- Written work is sometimes marred by errors of literacy.
- There are gaps in some students' work.

### **Vocational Education**

#### **GNVQ Health and Social Care-Intermediate Level**

Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

#### **Good features**

- Students develop satisfactory research skills and are slowly taking responsibility for their own learning.
- Students benefit from placements in realistic situations related to health and care; they gain valuable first-hand experiences and gain in confidence.
- Students make satisfactory progress in understanding issues related to the vocational areas.
- Health profiles, including the physical, social, intellectual and emotional aspects of health, together with ways of coping, are addressed satisfactorily.
- Potential risks to health and well-being are clearly identified and targets successfully listed.
- Satisfactory, and on occasion, good use is made of ICT skills to communicate and present information.
- Students benefit from constructive teacher comments to re-draft assignments; standards of achievement improve during the course.

#### **Shortcomings**

- Too much information is copied from source; insufficient attention is given to personal writing.
- A number of students have not yet taken sufficient control of their own learning and are over-dependent on teacher support and guidance.

- Analysis and evaluation skills are not evident in the vast majority of assignments.
- Absence affects progress and standards of achievement in a number of instances.

### **GNVQ Leisure and Tourism-Intermediate level**

Standards of achievement are good.

#### **Good features**

- Students' files and portfolios demonstrate a good level of understanding and knowledge of the leisure and tourism industry particularly as applied to the local area.
- Assignments, coursework material and investigational tasks are well organised and neatly presented using ICT.
- Students work with interest and enthusiasm within a well-structured course.
- Students' ability to evaluate their work and to action any amendments required is good. The role-play exercise with reference to customer care is a particularly good example.

#### **Shortcomings**

- The progress of a minority of students is hindered by irregular attendance.

### **Recommendations**

In order to build on current achievement the school should:

- 1) Extend the curricular provision to include key skills, physical education, religious education and a broader PSE programme.
- 2) Develop the role of form tutors in the process of monitoring and reviewing the progress of students and the setting of targets for improvement.
- 3) Provide more non-contact time for the head of sixth form to carry out and develop her role.
- 4) Meet statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the timetable for all students.

## Appendix

### A. Basic Information

Name of School	Ysgol Rhiwabon
School type	Community
Age -range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Ruabon Wrexham
Post-Code	LL14 6BT
Telephone Number	01978 822392

Headteacher	Mr Peter Shaw
Date of appointment	1 September 2002
Chair of Governors	Mr J Penri Williams
Registered Inspector	Miss Glynis Owen
Dates of inspection	6-9 May 2003

### B. Results of Public Examinations

<b>For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs</b>			
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2002: 36			
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2002: 29			
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2002: 13			
	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	48	68	66
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	93	95	94
Average points score per candidate	18	21	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	5		
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	N/A		

### C. THE EVIDENCE-BASE FOR THE INSPECTION OF THE SIXTH-FORM

- Thirty-nine lessons were inspected, covering all curricular areas.
- Inspectors attended tutorial sessions.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, deputy and assistant headteachers, the head of sixth form, heads of department and staff with whole-school responsibilities. The Registered Inspector met the governing body and all members of staff before the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised students' work in all subjects.
- The sixth form co-ordinator met a group of students from Y12 and Y13.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents relating to the work and life of the sixth form.

**APPENDIX**

**A. Basic Information About the School**

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**B. School Data and Indicators**

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>								
Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	85	110	97	102	93	60	30	577

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	34	4	36.4

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	15.85 :1
Average teaching group size	20.68
Overall contact ratio	76.6%

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Summer 2002	87.2	88.7	86.7	87.5	53.6	83.7		81.2
Autumn 2002	94.0	90.5	88.2	90.5	87.7	93.0		90.6
Spring 2003	91.9	89.1	89.1	86.5	82.1	93.0		88.6

<i>Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection</i>	<i>73 temporary 1 permanent</i>
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### C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2002															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 100															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
EN	Teacher assessment	School	0	4	0	0	0	2	10	25	38	15	6	0	0
		National	0	1	1	0	0	3	10	22	34	21	8	0	0
	Test	School	0	4	7	-	-	-	3	28	38	14	6	-	-
		National	0	3	2	-	-	-	9	22	33	19	10	-	-
MA	Teacher assessment	School	0	2	0	0	0	2	11	22	32	23	8	0	0
		National	0	1	0	0	0	1	10	23	25	26	13	-	-
	Test	School	0	8	2	-	-	-	10	22	25	24	9	-	-
		National	0	6	1	-	-	-	8	22	22	27	13	-	-
SC	Teacher assessment	School	0	3	2	0	0	0	5	23	39	20	8	0	0
		National	0	1	1	0	0	1	10	24	31	23	9	0	0
	Test	School	0	3	0	-	-	-	8	19	43	23	4	-	-
		National	0	4	1	-	-	-	9	22	29	24	10	-	-

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school	48	In the school	43
In Wales	50.3	In Wales	50

D - Pupils exempted under statutory arrangements from part of the NC  
 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 KS3 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: 105			
The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2002:			
	School	UA	Wales
were entered for 5 or more GCSEs	80	84	86
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C	46	45	50
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-G	79	83	85
achieved GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language	27	32	37
entered at least one CoE, GCSE short course or GCSE	99	99	97
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-C	64	70	74
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-G	95	90	92
achieved no graded GCSE	5	10	8
achieved one or more CoE only	3	6	3
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	46	45	50
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent	79	83	85

vocational qualifications or a combination of both			
<b>For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs</b>			
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2002: 36			
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2002: 13			
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Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3			

#### **D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection**

- Seventeen inspectors spent the equivalent of 50 days at the school.
- One hundred and fifty three lessons were observed at KS3 and KS4, including full and part sessions, covering all curricular areas including PSE.
- Inspectors attended a sample of assemblies, pastoral periods and extra-curricular activities.
- Inspectors held discussions with the SMT, all heads of department, representatives of the support and guidance teams and staff with whole-school responsibilities and some members of the administrative and support staff.
- Work across the curriculum, from representative pupils in Y7-Y11 was examined, together with work in each subject.
- There was formal discussion with a group of pupils from KS3 and KS4 and informal discussion with many other pupils.
- The Registered Inspector met the staff and governing body prior to the inspection.
- Eleven parents attended the parents' meeting and 100 replies to the questionnaire were received.
- Documentation provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection.
- Feedback was given to departments and senior management during the week of the inspection and to the SMT and governors after the inspection.

**E. Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team**

<b>Inspector</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Aspect Responsibilities</b>	<b>Subject Responsibilities</b>
G Owen	RgI	Context Main findings of the report Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum (Communication) Teaching Quality of self evaluation and planning for improvement Leadership and efficiency School improvement	modern foreign languages
G Jones	Lay	Behaviour and attitudes Attendance Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions Partnership with industry	
G Davies	Core	Assessment recording and reporting Sixth form annexe	science
P Francis	Core	Staffing accommodation and learning resources Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum (Numeracy)	mathematics
M Meredith-Jones	Core	Curriculum	English; PSE
G Owens	Core	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Support, guidance and pupils' welfare	religious education; religious studies
R Bagguley	Team		science
G Briwnant-Jones	Team		design and technology; health and social care; catering; construction
D Rhodes	Team	Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum (ICT)	information technology
G Barker	Team		history
H Llewelyn	Team		geography; leisure and tourism
R Roberts	Team		Welsh
E Forster	Team		art
S Williams	Team		music
D Makin	Team		physical education; drama; theatre studies; media studies
N Carr	Team		business studies; sociology; economics
L Wilson	Team	Provision for pupils with SEN	

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