

REPORT

on the

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

OF

**SANDYCROFT COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL
LEACHES LANE
MANCOT
DEESIDE
FLINTSHIRE
CH5 2EH**

School Number: 664/2053

Date of Inspection: 08 – 12 July 2002

By

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CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES

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

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

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

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

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

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1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

Sandycroft Community Primary School is a large primary school, built in 1957, and situated in Mancot, Deeside, North Wales. It is maintained by Flintshire LEA and caters for 375 pupils (full-time equivalent or fte) from Reception to Y6, and a further 54 (fte) children of Nursery age. The school's numbers on roll have been relatively stable in recent years and are in line with its recommended capacity. Most pupils who attend the school live in the immediate area.

- The school reports that 50 percent of pupils come from homes, which are, in the main, neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged, and 50 percent of pupils come from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds. There are 11 percent of pupils eligible to receive free school meals, which is below the national average. The pupil population is predominantly white and English-speaking. A small proportion (one percent) of pupils is from a minority ethnic background. No pupils speak Welsh as their first language.
- There are approximately 31 percent pupils on the register of special educational needs (SEN), which is significantly above the national average. Three pupils have formal statements of SEN.
- Large, open playgrounds and playing fields surround the school and it has a secure environment.
- There are 18 teachers, including the headteacher (17.2 fte), one SEN support teacher, one traveller support teacher, a Welsh language peripatetic teacher (athrawes fro), a number of peripatetic music specialists, four NNEB-qualified assistants a general classroom assistant and 15 classes.
- The school was last inspected in November 1996. Key issues from the previous inspection report included the need to:
 1. maintain the good standards in the nursery and reception classes and in the majority of subjects in KS1 and KS2;
 2. secure even higher standards in Welsh as a second language, design and technology, information technology and religious education, building upon existing achievements in those subjects;
 3. raise the quality of teaching in one class;
 4. finalise and implement a whole-school scheme of work in religious education;
 5. within the School Development Plan (SDP), detail issues concerned with the longer term development and growth of the school.

- Sandycroft was awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark in 1999, and successfully secured the Quality Mark for a second time in February 2002. It was first recognised as an Investor in People in 1999 and was successfully awarded Investor in People status for a second time in December 2001.
- The school's aims and commitments, as expressed in the SDP, are to:
 - be a happy, caring school providing high quality learning for all;
 - maintain an atmosphere where learning is purposeful;
 - develop the potential of each child;
 - retain a friendly open relationship enabling staff and parents to work together;
 - encourage staff to develop professionally; and
 - strengthen links with the community.
- The school's priorities, as expressed in the SDP for 2002 to 2005, are to:
 - ◆ maintain the high standards throughout the school;
 - ◆ further develop the culture of self-evaluation;
 - ◆ have pupils who talk about what they have learned, not what they have done;
 - ◆ have an elected pupil council;
 - ◆ improve the external facilities of the school; and
 - ◆ develop the staff's leadership and management roles.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

Sandycroft Primary School is a very good school as shown by:

- the high standards pupils achieve by the age of 11;
- the good quality of teaching, including that which is innovative, knowledgeable, challenging and pacy;
- the very good leadership, and the quality of self-evaluation;
- the strong provision for moral and social development;
- the very good arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting attainments;
- the quality of support and guidance provided for pupils;
- the provision for pupils with special educational needs;
- the flourishing partnership with parents and the community;

This school gives very good value for money.

Standards of achievement for children aged under five

- Children aged under five achieve good standards in all areas of learning except personal and social development, where standards are very good. Most children have below-average attainments on entry to the school, as shown by baseline assessments. Most make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

The six areas of learning for children under five	Standards of achievement
Language, literacy and communication skills	Good
Mathematical development	Good
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Good
Personal and social development	Very good
Creative development	Good
Physical development	Good

Standards of achievement for pupils by the age of 7 and 11

- Overall, standards of achievement are good and many pupils make good progress. Standards were satisfactory or better in all the work scrutinised, being very good in 18 percent of the work, good in 55 percent, satisfactory in 25 percent, and unsatisfactory in two percent. Standards have been improved upon or maintained in nine subjects since the last inspection.

Subject	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
English	Satisfactory	Very good
Mathematics	Satisfactory	Very good
Science	Good	Very good
Welsh second language	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Design and technology	Good	Good
Information and communications technology (ICT)	Satisfactory	Very good
History	Good	Good
Geography	Satisfactory	Good
Art	Good	Very good
Music	Good	Very good
Physical education	Good	Good
Religious education	Good	Good

- In KS1, the school's (NC) Test results in 2001 in mathematics and science were above the national average, but in reading and writing were below the national average. The number of pupils who attained NC Level 3 was below the national average in English, mathematics and science. The average standards achieved by pupils in all three core subjects were below the national and county averages.
- Results in the KS2 (NC) Tests in 2001 in English, mathematics and science were above national and county averages, and have been high for a number of years. The average for English, mathematics and science has risen steadily to 81 percent of pupils achieving NC Level 4 or better, which is well above county and national averages.
- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) achieve good standards, and make good progress, relative to their ages and abilities, through KS1 and KS2. Pupils from families who travel achieve well and are supported well by the school.
- Standards in the key skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing, numeracy and ICT in a range of subjects are good.

- Pupils' behaviour is good. Their attitudes to learning are good in KS1 and very good in KS2. Pupils are articulate and often show maturity and sensitivity in their dealings with others. The school has very effective measures in place to prevent racism, bullying, sexism and other forms of discrimination. Attendance levels are satisfactory.

The quality of education provided

- The overall quality of teaching is good. The quality of teaching was good or better in 71 percent of lessons, being very good in 26 percent of lessons, and good in 45 percent. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 99 percent of lessons, and unsatisfactory in one percent.
- The quality of assessment, recording and reporting to parents is very good. Teachers' assessments are accurate and consistent. Assessment is used well to promote higher standards. The extent to which the school analyses assessment data in order to improve pupils' performance is very good. Teachers issue useful and timely reports to parents.
- The quality of the curriculum for children aged under five is very good, for pupils in KS1 is good, and for pupils in KS2 is very good. The quality of whole-school planning for the development of key skills is very good. The school's curriculum meets the requirements of the NC and for religious education, and is very inclusive. The school is very effective in giving all pupils equality of opportunity and full access to the NC, regardless of their ethnicity, gender or prior achievements. Very good provision is made for pupils with SEN.
- The arrangements for personal and social education are good. The curriculum is, in some cases, modified effectively to suit the needs of individual pupils, such as those who come from families who travel.
- Planning for the Welsh Dimension is good. Through the visits they make, and through subjects such as English, history, geography and music, pupils gain a broad perspective on the culture and heritage of Wales.
- The school's provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. Teachers run good extra-curricular clubs for pupils to improve their skills in art, chess, computing, dancing, drama, orchestral performance, singing and sport. Pupils perform excellently on occasions such as school assemblies. Extra-curricular provision makes a substantial contribution to pupils' personal and social skills as well as their academic knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils' learning is enriched by a broad range of visits within the locality and further afield, to places such as Pentrellyncymer and Erddig. Teachers organise visits to the school by specialists, such as a team from a local quarry-mining company, or talented poets and artists-in-residence. Some of these are educational experiences of the highest quality, which enrich the curriculum, benefit pupils' learning and help raise their standards.

- The school has a good partnership in learning with the majority of parents, and 75 percent of parents have returned the home-school agreement.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- The provision for moral and social development is very good. The provision for spiritual and cultural development is good. The quality of assemblies and acts of collective worship are usually good, and occasionally excellent. Pupils' response to this provision is very good.

The management and efficiency of the school

- The quality of leadership provided by the headteacher, deputy headteacher, and senior management team is excellent. Management systems are very effective. The school gives very good value for money and has a clear sense of direction.
- The scope and effectiveness of the school's procedures for evaluating standards achieved and the quality of its provision are very good. The range and nature of objectives for improvement that the school has set in response to its self-evaluation are also very good. Development planning is highly professional and has a broadly shared ownership. Target-setting is realistic, detailed and frequent. Development plans for the whole school and for subjects are implemented, monitored and evaluated well.
- Governors provide good leadership and undertake their duties conscientiously. They are closely involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's provision and the standards pupils achieve.
- The quality of subject leadership is satisfactory. Co-ordinators in a number of subjects have monitored the quality of provision, and guided subject planning and development knowledgeably. This happens through formal and informal discussions, as well as through observation of teaching and by teachers exchanging classes.
- Developments in some subjects, such as ICT and design and technology, have been very positive, and standards have risen accordingly. Subject leaders in a number of subjects have not been able to monitor standards or influence development in lessons enough.
- Financial management is very good. The school's routine administration and organisation are highly efficient and effective. It is a smoothly run organisation, which complies with the statutory requirements and guidelines of the National Assembly for Wales.
- The quality of staffing is good. In general, a talented and hardworking team of teachers works very well together. Support staff, including NNEB-qualified assistants, other classroom assistants, administrative staff, caretaking staff, catering staff and other helpers, make an effective contribution to the overall quality of school life and pupils' development.

- The quality of accommodation is satisfactory, in that it is good for children aged under five, satisfactory for pupils in KS1 and KS2, but unsatisfactory in the arrangements for outdoor physical education.
- Throughout the curriculum, the provision of learning resources is good. The school makes very good strategic use of grants and additional funding to meet its needs.
- Displays feature prominently in corridors and classrooms and help create an environment conducive to learning. Standards of cleanliness both inside and outside the building are good.

The effectiveness with which the five issues identified in the previous inspection have been addressed

- The school has made good progress in addressing all the issues raised in the last inspection.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Overall, standards of achievement are good and many pupils make good progress. Standards are satisfactory or better in all the work scrutinised, being very good in 18 percent of the work, good in 55 percent, satisfactory in 25 percent, and unsatisfactory in two percent. Standards have been improved or maintained in nine subjects since the last inspection.

- The educational provision for children aged under five is good. Good standards are achieved in all areas of learning except personal and social development, where standards are very good. Baseline assessment results indicate attainment on entry is below average for most children. Most make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.
- In KS1, the school's NC Test results in 2001 in mathematics and science were above the national average, but in reading and writing were below the national average. The number of pupils who attained NC Level 3 was below the national average in English, mathematics and science. The average standards achieved by pupils in all three core-subjects were below the national and county averages.
- Results in the KS2 NC Tests in 2001 in English, mathematics and science were above national and county averages, and have been high for a number of years. The average for English, mathematics and science has risen steadily to 81 percent of pupils achieving NC Level 4 or better. This is well above county and national averages.
- Pupils with special educational needs usually achieve good standards, and sometimes very good standards in KS1 and KS2. Most make good progress, relative to their ages and abilities.
- Pupils, from families who travel, achieve well and are supported well by the school.

- Standards of achievement in English and mathematics are satisfactory with good features in KS1, and very good in KS2.
- Standards of achievement in science, art and music are good in KS1, and very good in KS2.
- Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) are satisfactory in KS1 and very good in KS2. Standards in geography are satisfactory in KS1, and good in KS2.
- Standards in design and technology, history, physical education and religious education are good in KS1 and KS2.
- Standards in Welsh are satisfactory in KS1 and KS2.

3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum

Standards achieved by pupils in KS1 and KS2 in applying key skills in a range of subjects are good in speaking, listening, reading, writing, numeracy and the use of ICT.

- Children aged under five have good opportunities to develop their skills of language, literacy, numeracy and use of ICT and make good progress in applying their skills in all six areas of learning.
- Pupils develop good skills in speaking as they mature. Younger pupils are keen to share their ideas and experiences with the whole class. Older pupils use their speaking skills in a wide variety of contexts, such as drama, reading aloud, presentations of research findings and poetry recitations. As a result, they achieve very good standards of speaking by the end of KS2.
- The ability of pupils to listen purposefully for an increasing length of time and to respond appropriately increase as they move through the school. In “*Circle Time*” for example, younger pupils listen with interest to the anecdotes of their peers. Older pupils pay attention to the views of others in small group discussions and make contributions that take account of their views.
- Pupils develop good reading skills. Younger pupils are encouraged to develop good reading habits through the provision of an interesting variety of books. Older pupils read for pleasure and also make good progress in using their reading skills when researching topics in subjects such as history and geography. They obtain information efficiently and effectively from books and also through the use of websites on the Internet.
- Pupils use their developing skills in writing in all subjects. Younger pupils write reports of their visits to places such as local churches and Erddig. Pupils in KS2 write well in subjects such as history, geography and religious education. Older pupils write many pieces of extended writing of high quality.
- Pupils use their numeracy skills well in subjects other than mathematics. In science lessons, for example, younger pupils know how to use and interpret a Venn diagram to

record the results of their investigations into floating and sinking. Older pupils use their knowledge of shapes to help them describe rocks and fossils. They are developing a good mathematical vocabulary, which they apply well in relevant contexts.

- Pupils make good progress in using ICT to extend their learning across the curriculum. In English lessons younger pupils can use the computer to click and drag sentences in a correct sequence, which helps them learn how to structure a narrative. Older pupils use the Internet and CD ROMs to research information about the Egyptians in history and about volcanoes in geography.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. The provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good. Pupils respond well to the opportunities the school provides.

- The school meets the statutory requirements for collective worship. Daily assemblies, whether for the whole school, or infant and junior, are well planned, and sometimes have a strong moral theme. Pupils' contributions to assemblies through dramatic performance, singing or playing musical instruments, make a very strong contribution to their social development and self-confidence. The contribution made by Y5 pupils, for example, in an excellent whole-school assembly, demonstrated they had developed high standards in history, oracy, singing, dancing, orchestral performance and religious education. It was also notable that pupils provided their own choreographer, and teachers encouraged them to direct themselves.
- Opportunities for spiritual development are missed, on occasion, however, because teachers do not give pupils sufficient opportunity to reflect how the themes of assemblies might apply to their own lives. Music is played when pupils enter, and it sets an appropriate tone, but there is not always an opportunity to reflect on the spiritual dimension of such music.
- Religious education lessons and circle-time sessions make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development because pupils have the chance to reflect on and explore the topics covered. They consider, for example, feelings of jealousy and the importance of friendship and relate these to their own experiences.
- Pupils have the opportunity to learn about and to understand compassion and empathy for others, for example, through the many fund raising events that are organised. Teachers have provided further opportunities through English and history lessons where older pupils have considered the harshness of life during World War II.
- Relationships amongst pupils are good and between pupils and staff are very good. Teachers are very good role models. They effectively promote good attitudes, good behaviour and wholesome values amongst pupils. Pupils are very proud of their school.

They show respect for the school environment and property, which is clean, and free of litter or graffiti.

- Most pupils show respect for other pupils and teachers. The school's arrangements for promoting racial harmony are good. In discussions, older pupils convey their understanding of racial equality very effectively.
- Pupils develop very good moral values and respect the viewpoints of others. In lessons and during individual discussions they express their views and opinions, on a range of issues, without fear of ridicule. There is, however, no forum, such as a school council, for pupils to regularly express their views or opinions about school life. Nevertheless, pupils' views have been sought informally in the past, on issues such as the kind of educational games to be provided for each class for use in wet playtimes.
- Pupils undertake duties in the classrooms and around the school. They carry out these responsibilities reliably and efficiently. They show initiative, for example they volunteer to show visitors the way to classrooms and check if they require help. The vast majority of pupils collaborate well during group and pair work and play and socialise together well.
- Opportunities such as team sports, extra curricular activities, residential visits, school concerts and productions make a significant contribution to pupils' social development.
- The school's emphasis on the culture of Wales is good. Pupils take part in the Urdd, and an annual Eisteddfod. Key events such as St David's Day are celebrated. Teachers take full advantage of opportunities to use the work of Welsh artists, poets and musicians in lessons. The culture of Wales is also emphasised in subjects such as history and geography. Most pupils respond well to opportunities to use the Welsh language.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of their immediate locality and awareness of other major world cultures. They take part in art and music festivals. Dancers, for example, have performed *BAKA Beyond* at the Theatre Clwyd. Teachers use art and music effectively to broaden pupils' cultural awareness through the study of famous artists, composers and a range of differing music. Pupils' awareness of the richness and diversity of life in a multi-cultural society is heightened in subjects such as geography and religious education.

4.2 Behaviour and attitudes

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to their work are good. The oldest pupils have very good attitudes towards their lessons. These strengths have a positive impact on pupils' progress and the standards they achieve.

- The school has high expectations of good behaviour and most pupils try hard to live up to this. In lessons, pupils' behaviour is almost always good. Because of this most pupils are able to get on with their work and learn well. Pupils' behaviour is also good when moving around the school, such as to and from assemblies.

- Pupils’ relationships with their peers are good and with adults who work in the school they are very good. Most pupils play well together during lunchtimes. Older pupils help to look after younger children in the playground. Pupils are polite and friendly towards adults in the school and to visitors.
- There were two fixed-term exclusions during the year prior to the inspection. The school tries hard to support pupils who are at risk of exclusion and only uses this strategy when all other avenues have been explored. It often accepts pupils who have been excluded from other schools in order to give them a fresh start. In several cases it has been successful in enabling them to complete their education at the school.
- The school has very good systems in place to promote good behaviour and to recognise and reward effort and achievement, both in and outside school. Pupils appreciate these arrangements, especially the “superstar of the week”. They understand the need for appropriate punishments. They say teachers are firm but fair.
- Parents confirm they are happy with the standards of behaviour achieved.
- Pupils’ attitudes to their work and to school are almost always good. The oldest pupils have very positive and mature attitudes both to school and to their work. In lessons, pupils are attentive, listen well and try hard. Most pupils enjoy their lessons, are keen, well motivated and want to do well.
- In lessons where behaviour and attitudes to work are satisfactory this is usually because sessions are too long or work set is not interesting and demanding of the pupils. In these instances pupils drift off task and this results sometimes in inappropriate behaviour.
- The school has very good arrangements to prevent bullying, racism or sexism. Pupils confirm they are aware of these procedures, and say they are confident that the occasional incidents of bullying which occur are dealt with effectively.

4.3 Attendance

Attendance is satisfactory.

- The attendance of most pupils is good.
- Most absences are caused by pupils' illness. However, some families take holidays during term time and other families travel for part of the year. Because of these factors, the school's overall attendance figures are reduced.
- The school's system to monitor and follow up absences is very thorough and effective. The school cares well for those pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern. The education social worker (ESW) is involved where appropriate.
- Registration periods are efficient and registers are completed on time. Lessons and school sessions start and finish on time.

- A small number of pupils often arrive a few minutes late each morning; but the school day usually starts punctually and is well organised.
- Attendance targets have been set and the school does all it can to promote the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

The overall quality of teaching is good, with over a quarter being very good. The quality of teaching was good or better in 71 percent of lessons, being very good in 26 percent of lessons, and good in 45 percent. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 99 percent of lessons, and unsatisfactory in only one percent.

Good features

- Many teachers demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. The majority do not speak Welsh as their first language but make positive efforts to learn and teach Welsh.
- Teachers plan effectively for the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in most areas of the curriculum. In the best teaching, teachers lead, guide and shape lessons without reference to their plans, showing confidence in their subject, and make their aims and objectives clear.
- Teachers have high expectations, making clear what they expect of pupils in terms of achievement and behaviour. They use praise judiciously and help build pupils' self-esteem. Throughout the school, teachers focus particularly on what pupils can do and create a positive climate for learning.
- Teachers use a very good range of organisational strategies. They provide pupils with good opportunities to work as a whole class, in groups, pairs and as individuals. They also use a good mix of teaching techniques to enliven their lessons. Lessons are further enriched by the involvement of visiting specialists in design and technology, art and English.
- Most teachers know their pupils well, value them as individuals and establish good relationships with them. They display a caring attitude towards them and offer a firm, fair and consistent approach to discipline. Consequently, pupils feel happy and secure.
- Most teachers match work well to pupils' abilities. They also make very good provision for pupils with SEN.
- Teachers provide pupils with exemplars of the standard of work expected of them. Pieces of work are read aloud to the whole class and pupils focus upon various good features. Portfolios of work in a range of subjects help celebrate pupils' achievements.

- In the best lessons, teachers encourage pupils to develop an enquiring attitude to learning by asking, as well as answering, searching questions.

Shortcomings

- A few teachers in KS1 do not match work in English or mathematics sufficiently to the needs and abilities of pupils.

5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting

The overall quality of assessment, record-keeping and reporting is very good

- A comprehensive policy provides good guidelines and effective procedures for assessing pupils' achievements. The arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' achievements and progress are very good.
- Pupils are assessed rigorously and teachers use the information gained well to help them improve. The school sets challenging targets for improvement. These are regularly reviewed and shared with parents and pupils.
- The school assesses pupils' attainments in the core and foundation subjects, key skills, and various other aspects of learning. This provides a comprehensive picture of each child and of how they can improve. This assessment now includes pupils' work skills and multiple types of intelligence.
- In the Early Years department, teachers discuss *On Entry* and *Baseline Assessment* with parents. These assessments indicate that over 50 percent of children achieve below average results on entry to the school. This provides the school with useful information for curriculum planning.
- At the beginning of KS1, all pupils are screened. Any pupil identified as having SEN is given close individual support. The school places a high priority upon early identification of pupils with SEN and positive intervention. Those identified with a particular need follow appropriate programmes of work. Further formal assessment is held in Y1 and Y2 in English and mathematics.
- Systems for assessing pupils with SEN are very good and assessment information is used well by teachers and support staff to set targets in pupils' Individual Education Plans (IEPs).
- Annual assessment results are accurately recorded and constantly evaluated. They are used regularly as a reference to measure progress, inform planning, and monitor the Equal Opportunities Policy. The results of these assessments are used well to promote higher standards throughout the school.
- Teachers involve pupils in self-assessment in order to involve them more in their learning and raise their self-esteem.

- Procedures for assessment at the end of KS1 and KS2 meet statutory requirements. Senior managers make very good use of statutory test results, and targets are set regularly to raise standards further.
- The school gives parents many opportunities to discuss their children's work. Termly meetings are held to report on progress.
- The annual reports to parents comply with statutory requirements, are of high quality, and provide an accurate picture of pupils' progress in all subjects.

Shortcoming

- The quality of day-to-day marking varies from class to class.

5.3 Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum for pupils in KS1 is good. The curriculum for pupils in KS2 is very good. The quality of whole-school planning for the development of key skills is very good. The school's curriculum meets the requirements of the NC and for religious education, and is very inclusive. The arrangements for personal and social education are good. The curriculum is, in some cases, modified effectively to suit the special needs of individual pupils, such as those who come from families who travel.

- The quality of the provision for the under-fives, in the Nursery and Reception classes, is very good and is linked closely to the six areas of learning. The curriculum for those aged under five prepares children well for the NC.
- Policies and schemes of work are of good quality and provide teachers with good guidance. Good planning provides an essential focus for teaching. As a result, most teachers plan their lessons well, and state their aims and objectives clearly.
- Teachers pay good attention to the locally-agreed syllabus for religious education, and its requirements are met.
- Planning for *Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig* (The Welsh Dimension) is good. Through the visits they make, and through subjects such as English, history, geography and music, pupils gain a broad perspective on the culture and heritage of Wales. Good displays and portfolios, the Eisteddfod and the celebration of St. David's Day also contribute well to the Welsh Dimension.
- The school's provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. Teachers provide good extra-curricular clubs for pupils to improve their skills in art, chess, computing, dancing, drama, orchestral performance, singing and sport. Pupils perform excellently on occasions such as school assemblies. Extra-curricular provision makes a substantial contribution to pupils' personal and social skills as well as their academic knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils' learning is enriched by a broad range of visits within the locality and further afield, to places such as Pentrellyncymer and Erddig. Teachers organise visits to the school by

specialists, such as a team from a local quarry-mining company, or talented poets and artists-in-residence. Some of these are educational experiences of the highest quality, which enrich the curriculum, benefit pupils' learning and help raise their standards.

- A substantial minority of pupils benefit from peripatetic music teaching, which develops their confidence, and enables them to take a more active role in music lessons, class and school orchestras.
- Some homework is set, mainly confined to literacy and numeracy objectives. The school has a good partnership in learning with most parents, and 75 percent of parents have returned the home-school agreement.
- The school affords pupils equality of opportunity and full access to a rich curriculum, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, social background or prior achievements.
- The planning for teaching and learning key skills is consistently good.
- The history curriculum is overloaded with study of too many historical eras.

5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

The overall provision made by governors and staff for pupils' support, guidance and welfare is very good.

- The school provides a welcoming and caring environment where pupils, including the under-fives, feel safe, happy and secure.
- Each pupil's academic progress and personal development are carefully assessed and monitored. Pastoral guidance is good; pupils feel that they can approach their teachers or the school nurse if anything worries them.
- Specialist staff provide very good support for pupils with SEN. Pupils' needs are carefully assessed and their individual education programmes are tailored to address those needs. They make good academic and personal progress as a result.
- Parents are very happy with the help and guidance their children receive and feel that teachers know children's personal circumstances well. They also value the informal opportunities available for them to talk to teachers about their children.
- Child protection arrangements are well organised, staff are appropriately trained, and highly committed to ensuring pupils' well being.
- Governors play a prominent role in ensuring the health and safety of pupils. Regular health-and-safety tours are undertaken, and concerns are dealt with efficiently.
- Four members of staff are trained in first aid, and information about first-aid procedures is kept in a prominent place. Medical needs are catered for well. Medication procedures are clear, and agreed procedures are followed.

- The recently-introduced *Circle Time* has a very positive impact on pupils' personal and social education and is successful in helping pupils deal with sensitive issues. Younger pupils discuss how to deal with feelings such as jealousy. Older pupils share their ideas about friendship and discuss moral dilemmas that might occur as a result of being friends with someone.
- Bullying rarely occurs but the school's effective anti-bullying policy ensures that incidents are dealt with quickly and efficiently.
- The part-time Traveller Support Teacher gives very good educational guidance and support, where necessary, for the children of families who travel. Their needs are identified and good support given through withdrawal sessions. Specific targets are written for each pupil, and progress is checked regularly. Assessment records show that most make good progress. The integration of these pupils into the school life is sensitive and effective.
- A Racial Equality Policy has been written in draft, soon to be discussed by staff and governors. Older pupils have developed a good understanding of and respect for people of other cultures, ethnicity and faiths.

5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)

The school's provision for pupils with SEN is very good and allows full access for all pupils to a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs usually achieve good standards, and sometimes very good standards in KS1 and KS2. Most make good progress, relative to their ages and abilities.

- The school's SEN policy is regularly reviewed and is a clear, detailed document which has already been modified under the guidance of the new SEN Code of Practice for September 2002.
- The special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) provides a clear and very positive lead to the school. She is very efficient and her co-ordination arrangements for SEN throughout the school are very knowledgeable and effective.
- SEN records are very detailed, well organised and kept fully up to date. Records are useful working documents, the details of which are used successfully to track the progress of individual pupils and to provide appropriate support.
- Support for withdrawal groups is provided in a suitably resourced room. The quality of teaching in these sessions is very good. Planning is detailed and the work is well structured and relevant to pupils' needs. The suitable range of activities, including the use of a computer, and the positive and supportive teacher relationship with pupils, contribute effectively to the raising of pupils' self-esteem and confidence.
- The school makes effective use of diagnostic assessment to identify pupils with specific learning difficulties and to provide relevant support as soon as possible.

- The SEN management team meets regularly to discuss pupils' progress and to prepare or review individual educational plans (IEPs). These plans identify realistic and achievable targets for individual pupils in their learning. Parents are kept well informed at all stages and invited to regular meetings, including parents' evenings.
- Links with outside agencies are good and effective use is made of additional support and guidance.

5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions

The partnership and liaison with parents and the community are very good. The partnership with schools and other institutions is good. These positive features make a significant contribution to pupils' standards of achievement and their personal development. The information provided for parents is also very good.

- The school values the partnership it has with parents. In response to the questionnaires and at the pre-inspection meeting, parents expressed positive views and support for the school and its work.
- other relevant agencies.

5.7 Partnership with industry

The school's partnership with industry is good.

- The school has developed an effective strategy to link elements of the curriculum to local commerce and industry. This enriches pupils' curriculum experiences and work-related education.
- Pupils have had a range of opportunities to experience the world of work as part of project work linked to the curriculum. These include visits to the local quarry and power station and participation in a project linked to the local newspaper.
- The school actively seeks sponsorships to enhance provision, purchase additional resources and provide pupils with additional learning opportunities. It receives good support from local and national business and commerce in the form of donations, for example, to purchase design and technology equipment, library books and musical instruments.
- Several teachers have undertaken industrial placements, which have benefited the school. Consequently, the teaching of subjects, such as science and design and technology, has been given added richness.
- The school's relationship with the Education and Learning Wales Agency (ELWa) is developing well and matched funding has been obtained to enable the school to purchase additional resources.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement

The quality of the school's approach to self-evaluation and planning for improvement is very good.

- The school's self-evaluation report is a well-written document that gives a clear analysis of recent progress and the current situation. It is effective and fully focused on school improvement in areas of curriculum, staffing, accommodation and resources.
- The school development plan (SDP) is a useful working document, with clear priorities, costing and success criteria. It has a genuinely shared ownership, which includes the headteacher, senior management team, staff and governors.
- The professional development of all staff is closely linked to the SDP. In-service training and education (INSET) is monitored for its impact on standards. The headteacher, and class teachers, monitor the quality of teaching formally and informally, and all teachers, NNEB-qualified assistants, learning support assistants, and cleaning staff are appraised each year.
- The school evaluates assessment arrangements, records of achievements, analysis of results, target-setting and tracking of individual pupils very effectively. The headteacher and his colleagues make good use of national and local data in order to compare aspects of the school's performance with that of similar schools.
- The headteacher's leadership and vision ensure a strong drive to improve standards. He has successfully established a self-evaluative culture within the school and is held in high regard.
- The headteacher and governors monitor closely the progress the school makes towards the challenging but realistic targets they set.

6.2 Leadership and efficiency

The quality of leadership provided by the headteacher, deputy headteacher, and senior management team is excellent. Management systems are very effective. The school gives very good value for money and has a clear sense of direction.

- The school's ethos for learning and sense of purpose are very good. Most teachers have high expectations about standards. The school's aims, values, and policies are appropriate for its pupils.
- Governors undertake their duties conscientiously, and have a good awareness of their responsibilities. They meet regularly with the headteacher and staff and are up-to-date with new developments. They are closely involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's provision and the standards pupils achieve.

- The quality of subject leadership is satisfactory. Co-ordinators in a number of subjects have monitored the quality of provision, and guided subject planning and development knowledgeably. This happens through formal and informal discussions, as well as through observation of teaching and by teachers exchanging classes.
- Developments in some subjects, such as ICT and design and technology, have been very positive, and standards have risen accordingly. Subject leaders in a number of subjects have not been able to monitor standards or influence development in lessons enough.
- Staff in Flintshire LEA have played an important role in guiding and supporting the improvement of Sandycroft Primary School. The involvement of County advisers in helping teachers improve teaching and learning has helped improve standards in, for example, ICT.
- Financial management is very good. The school's routine administration and organisation are highly efficient and effective. It is a smoothly run organisation, which complies with the statutory requirements and guidelines of the National Assembly for Wales.

6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

The quality of staffing and resources for learning are good with satisfactory elements in the accommodation.

- The school's inclusive approach to its employees has recently been confirmed again, in that it has recently been recognised as an Investor in People for the second time.
- The quality of staffing is good. There is an adequate number of suitably qualified teachers who work well as a team. Support teachers, NNEB-qualified assistants and other classroom assistants work closely with teachers in planning, assessing, and reviewing suitable programmes of work, particularly for pupils with SEN. Administrative staff, caretaking staff, catering staff and other helpers, make a very effective contribution to the overall quality of school life and pupils' development.
- Formal appraisal arrangements are in place, as are procedures to identify the professional developmental needs of staff. These are matched to priorities identified in the SDP. There are arrangements for teachers to disseminate information effectively to colleagues.
- Teachers have benefited from thorough in-service training and this is evident in their teaching.
- Accommodation is adequate in relation to the numbers on roll, and some major modifications have been made to the building to improve provision in the Early Years and KS1. There is insufficient storage space for the work produced and equipment used by pupils in KS2. There is little room for children to play with large toys in the Early Years department. The playground and the school field are below sea level and have a tendency to flood during wet weather. This limits access to outdoor activities in KS1 and KS2 and offers a health and safety risk at wet play times.

- Teachers have organised very good displays of pupils' work in corridors and classrooms. Standards of cleanliness both inside and outside the building are good, but outside woodwork and guttering are in a poor condition.
- Throughout the curriculum, the provision of learning resources is good. The school makes very good strategic use of grants and additional funding to meet its needs. They have, for example, received substantial grants from MBNA bank and ELWa. The money has been used well, amongst other things, for ICT equipment.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

Provision for the under-fives

The school makes good provision for children aged 3 – 5 years, with some very good features. The curriculum promotes the expected Desirable Learning Outcomes well. The children in the nursery (aged 3-4 years old) and reception classes (aged 4 - 5 years old) achieve standards that are at least good in all areas of learning.

Language, Literacy and Communication Skills are good.

Good features

- Despite many basic language problems on entering the school, the 3 – 4 year old children make good progress in acquiring early language skills. Most are keen to talk about their experiences and their work. They recite well-known rhymes enthusiastically. Most enjoy looking at books and listening to stories, and make good attempts to control a pencil.
- The 4 – 5 year old children make good progress in their learning. They listen very well, often for long periods and join in enthusiastically with discussions. Most can retell a story and talk about their favourite characters. Many have good pencil control and are able to copy words and sentences as they begin to write independently.
- Children in nursery and reception learn Welsh and respond to familiar commands. They learn many Welsh songs and phrases.

Shortcomings

- Children do not always have the opportunity to make informed choices about their daily activities.

Personal and Social Development is very good.

Good features

- The 3 – 4 year old children make very good progress in their personal and social skills. They quickly settle into the well-established routine of the session and move confidently from one activity to another. They listen and respond well to directions from the staff. Most behave very well and are learning to share and take turns with favourite resources. Most are independent in personal hygiene, and are able to dress themselves for indoor or outdoor physical education activities with some help.
- The 4 – 5 year olds continue to make very good progress. Most share resources sensibly, establish effective relationships with other children and adults, and work well independently or as part of a group. The children take turns in helping to give out snacks and help the staff to tidy up at the end of each session. They listen to what others have to say and respect their views in discussion.
- The majority understand the difference between right and wrong and follow their teachers' directions when working with others in a small group or independently. On the whole, they persevere with their tasks and concentrate well. They are enthusiastic, self motivated and eager to learn.

Shortcomings

There are no major shortcomings.

Mathematical development is good.

Good features

- In the nursery, children's mathematical development is generally good. Children count confidently to 10; understand mathematical concepts such as "less than" and "more than" and begin to use a variety of appropriate mathematical language. They learn number rhymes and counting games, and sort and match according to colour and shape. They can talk about their work and attempt to solve practical problems using previous experience.
- In reception classes, children's mathematical development is good. Children count confidently to 50 and most can count forwards and backwards and sequence number confidently, knowing "one more than" and "one less than". Children match shapes confidently and begin to identify some simple 2D shapes. They develop a good understanding of the mathematics of money in role-play activities and can identify and organize most of the resources and equipment needed for a task. They use comparative language, for example, in size, weight or capacity, and investigate and explain practical problems. Most are able to match numbers to sign and source.

Shortcomings

They have limited understanding of the mathematics of money.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World is good.

Good features

- In the nursery, the children develop a good knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Most of the 3 – 4 year olds talk about themselves and their families and pets. They show interest in the world around them as they observe and explore the work that people do on their walk in the immediate area surrounding the school. They recognise living things and events in the natural world. They consolidate what they learn as they take part in role-play about the work of the lollipop man, the farmer, or the postman. They observe the sequence of traffic lights and learn about road safety as they cross the road.
- The 4 – 5 years olds make good progress. They are beginning to grasp mapping skills as they work through their *Journeys* project. They know the names of animals and their young and talk about their characteristics. After a visit from a local farmer their knowledge and understanding is developed further in their role-play activities as they act out the roles of the farmer. Children use the computer independently and operate simple language and number programs. They talk about and record observations and ask questions as to why things happen and how they work. They are particularly knowledgeable about space.

Shortcomings

- Some children have a limited vocabulary to express their ideas.

Physical Development is good.

Good features

- In nursery, physical development is good. The children have regular daily opportunities to move confidently with increasing control and co-ordination around the unit and with small physical education equipment. They use small tools with increasing control and many are able to fasten buttons.
- The children respond well to planned activities, indoors and outdoors. They develop their fine motor skills as they cut, stick, or draw. They use increasing control to build models and take part in games and puzzles that foster the concept of taking turns.
- Reception children take part in physical activities in the school hall, which is also used as a canteen. Most move around sensibly and independently without bumping into others. Children listen well to their teachers' instructions and travel in different directions, walking, hopping, or skipping on command. Most are developing their skills in balancing well. They have very good spacial awareness. Both groups are aware of health and safety issues, respect each other's space and enjoy movement lessons.

Shortcomings

- Lack of indoor space limits opportunities for play with large apparatus.

Creative Development is good.

Good features

- Children aged 3 – 4 years make good progress and respond well to a very wide range of creative activities. They explore textures and colour through discovering the properties of materials and mixing paints. Most use their imagination in well-structured role-play and can name primary colours. The children have good opportunities to express their thoughts and ideas by participating in activities such as painting, drawing, responding to music and making choices about colour and medium. They listen to and copy rhymes, and repeat some sequences. They enthusiastically take part in small world play. They appreciate the work of others and discuss their own progress.
- The children continue to make good progress in the reception classes. The 4 – 5 year olds communicate their ideas and feelings by using a widening range of materials and tools to design and make their own models in a variety of media. They play a range of untuned instruments to accompany the songs and rhymes they have learned which they sing with gusto. Imaginative play is well directed to support children' ideas and develop their vocabulary. In the space ship, children choose their props, working well with one another to create their play, and play co-operatively on an aircraft made for them by Y5 pupils. They can mix colours and draw and paint from imagination, observation or memory. They know and use their senses, and use the computer confidently to create a sequence of patterns.

Shortcomings

There are no major shortcomings.

English

Standards of achievement are satisfactory with good features in KS1 and very good by the end of KS2.

Good features

- Pupils in KS1 make good progress in respecting the conventions for taking turns in discussion. Many recount their experiences confidently and at increasing length. They use their skills in speaking and listening purposefully in role-play activities in the class *travel agency*.
- By the end of KS1, pupils know some characteristics of fiction and non-fiction texts and enjoy browsing among books. They choose sensibly from the wide variety available to them and some of them can give reasons for their choices. Most pupils understand and have good recall of details of the texts they read.

- Pupils write in a variety of forms for different purposes and in response to a range of stimuli including recipes, poems, book reviews and their own experiences. They are developing an increased understanding of the purpose of writing through their contributions to class anthologies.
- By the end of KS1, the writing of most pupils communicates meaning. More able pupils write stories of increasing length and their writing shows an awareness of some of the features of narrative and of punctuation marks such as capital letters, full stops and speech marks.
- Pupils in KS2 listen carefully to their teachers and to one another in discussions. They respond appropriately, often with appreciation, to presentations made by other pupils. They enjoy frequent opportunities to engage in dramatic presentations and as a result they make very good progress and develop confidence in speaking to a variety of audiences.
- Y3 pupils orally compose the possible content of a formal or informal letter. By Y6 they exchange opinions about stories in the news and collaborate effectively to share ideas and plan the content of their own newspaper articles.
- During KS2 pupils make good progress in their reading skills. They know a number of authors and express opinions about their books. From Y3 they know how to use the library classification system and they steadily develop the skills of skimming and scanning to locate the information they need.
- They show an increasing understanding of the way in which language is adapted to suit different contexts. They also develop an understanding of how language is used to persuade. For example, Y4 pupils can identify some of the key words and phrases used to persuade people to buy a house in estate agents' advertisements.
- Pupils make very good progress in their appreciation and writing of poetry. For example, Y5 pupils write imaginative, vivid poetry which closely mirrors the style, format and spirit of the Yoruban poetry of West Africa they have studied.
- By the end of KS2, pupils show good knowledge of journalistic styles of writing and many of their accounts include touches of humour and some witty headlines. Other pieces of writing have achieved a maturity of style and a real sense of voice and place.
- Handwriting is appropriate for its purpose; a fast script for initial drafts, legible and neat in final versions. Pupils take pride in the appearance of their work. They employ a range of punctuation including speech marks for quotes and bullet points for note-taking. A high percentage of words are correctly spelt.

Shortcomings

- Many pupils in KS1 find it difficult to listen attentively throughout lengthy whole class introductions and discussions.
- Pupils in KS1 have a limited ability to plan, review and improve on their initial attempts at writing, and in considering the effectiveness of alternative words and phrases.

- Many pupils in KS1 have a limited awareness about the importance of presenting their work well. Some finished pieces are marred by crossings out, untidy handwriting and spelling errors.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS1, with good features in the development and use of mental strategies. Standards are very good in KS2.

Good features

- Younger pupils can sort, match and sequence numbers correctly. They count to 20 and beyond confidently and are beginning to look for and recognise number patterns, including odd and even numbers. They happily sing along with a counting song developing number concepts and patterns of 2, 5 and 10.
- Older pupils in KS1 further develop their understanding and use of number in simple addition and subtraction tasks. They are developing ways of working orally using mental strategies and previous knowledge of number patterns and place value.
- Pupils can sort objects using various criteria and display data in pictograms and bar charts.
- Most pupils recognise the value of coins and can make small purchases and calculate the change from 10p, 20p or 50p.
- They are able to identify and name a range of simple 2D and 3D shapes and are developing some understanding of their properties.
- Generally, pupils are beginning to tell the time, to use standard measures and to understand simple fractions.
- In KS2, pupils continue to reinforce their work in numeracy with an increasing understanding of patterns and relations. They have a firm command of place value, including in decimals, a good knowledge and recall of multiplication facts, and a mastery of complex multiplication and division sums.
- Pupils' skill in mental arithmetic grows steadily throughout KS2 and by the end of the key stage they use a range of appropriate strategies, with speed and precision, when making calculations.
- They are confident with fractions, decimals and percentages and understand the relationship between them.
- Pupils measure the perimeter and area of regular and irregular shapes correctly, measure and draw different angles accurately, use standard measures confidently and appreciate the need for scale when working with co-ordinates.

- Y6 pupils understand rotational and reflective symmetry well, can name and describe the features of 2D and 3D shapes, and show good kinaesthetic intelligence in devising new tessellations.
- The majority of pupils collate data to draw and analyse graphs based, for example, on class questioning.

Shortcomings

- In KS1, pupils' estimating and measuring abilities, using standard measures, are underdeveloped. Worksheets are not always appropriately matched to pupils' abilities and, consequently, progress is slower.

Science

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and very good in KS2.

Good features

- Pupils in both key stages demonstrate a positive attitude and sound knowledge about aspects of the natural world, and an understanding of the behaviour of plants, animals and inanimate objects through the study of life cycles and materials.
- In Y1 and Y2, they are beginning to apply their understanding of key scientific concepts to unfamiliar situations and offer explanations on the behaviour they observe. They were able, for example, to apply the concept of fair testing when setting up experiments on dissolving substances in differing temperatures of water.
- Pupils' ability to predict is well developed and they are able to record their results using a suitable computer program. They understand simple circuits and the uses and dangers of electricity and make effective use of simple experiments to investigate whether objects may float or sink.
- In KS2, pupils study the practical applications of science and how these influence the quality of their lives through the study of forces. They improve their knowledge by researching into the materials used to make common objects, for example, a bucket and modern building materials.
- In Y3 and Y4, they gain information from a range of primary and secondary sources in their study of habitats. They use the well-stocked wildlife area behind the school and supplement this with visits to local areas of study, the beach, and quarries. This gives pupils the opportunity to apply their understanding of key concepts to varying situations.
- In upper KS2, pupils have high standards, particularly in their project on space. This gives them excellent opportunities to improve their knowledge and skill in using ICT for the tracking of satellites via NASA, and plan their own mission to a planet.

- Pupils in Y5 and Y6 present ideas in a form that can be investigated, plan systematic enquiries and carry out experimental work purposefully and safely. This was particularly effective in the work with solutions in which they were able to use scientific language accurately to describe their accounts and select appropriate measurements to record results.
- In KS1 and KS2, pupils develop a good knowledge and understanding of classification. Younger pupils discuss simple categories such as natural and man made, whilst older pupils extend this skill to rocks and fossils.
- The majority of older pupils demonstrate good prediction and planning skills and good understanding of the concept of fair testing as they prepare to investigate differences and similarities in rock samples.

Shortcomings

- In KS1, more able pupils do not achieve as highly as they might because they are not provided with sufficient challenge.

Welsh second language

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS1 and KS2.

Good features

- Through the ‘helpwr heddiw’ policy and the regular brief usage of Welsh during the course of the day, as in giving or responding to simple commands, counting and recording the weather, the pupils in KS1 increase their vocabulary and confidence in the use of Welsh.
- They know a selection of songs and action rhymes, enjoy stories in Welsh and become familiar with the characters. They accurately describe the position of the character ‘taid’ in different pictures and show a basic understanding of simple text.
- Pupils show a familiarity with simple forms of greetings, comments and questions and they respond well.
- In KS2, pupils develop confidence in speaking and offering responses. They know a range of colours, numbers and comments about the weather.
- Older pupils can tell the time accurately, give their own date of birth and know the days of the week and the months of the year. They can comment on their likes and dislikes of different items, such as activities or food.
- Most pupils pronounce words well, with clear diction, and can extend a comment with simple prepositions such as *ond*.

- The majority of pupils show a very good attitude to the learning of Welsh and are enthusiastic during lessons. They collaborate well in pairs to produce simple dialogues.
- They read familiar words and sentences confidently and are developing a satisfactory range of written sentence patterns.
- The classroom displays and labels, the teachers' enthusiasm (including those who are themselves learning the language) and the lively input of the 'Athrawes Bro', contribute to the development of the Welsh language throughout the school.

Shortcomings

- Pupils are less confident in speaking and listening when they work without the support of the class teacher and visual aids.
- The use of incidental Welsh is inconsistent and not sufficiently progressive throughout the school.

Design and technology

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and KS2.

Good features

- In KS1, pupils can connect plastic parts together and have designed and built houses in the style of Erddig. These have been finished to a good standard. They experiment well with the tactile qualities of different materials.
- Pupils consider in writing how their work might be improved, and their written evaluations are more tightly focused because they use writing frames. They have used straw, card, glue and felt effectively in construction. They also use good mathematical vocabulary.
- Younger KS1 pupils have designed and made their own seed packets. This work included evaluative booklets. They have also made good animal pictures with moving parts and storybooks with moving parts. Their animal masks also have sections that move with levers and connections.
- KS1 pupils have made fabric Santa bags of good quality for Father Christmas to use. They have made vehicles with wooden wheels out of reclaimed materials. They have used cotton reels, fabric paints, needles and thread.
- In Y3 and Y4, pupils have made toys with moving parts using dowel rods, cogs, glue, card and coloured paper. Most achieved good standards in this work. Pupils have also designed and made bridges, including prototypes of suspension bridges. Most were good and a few were very good. Pupils have made vehicles, some simple, some complex, all with working axles and wheels. Most have used levers, split pins and card.

- Y3 pupils are making and decorating toy masks out of self-hardening clay. These are of very good quality.
- Y5 pupils reach very good standards in their book designs for KS1 pupils, based on the work of a talented artist-in-residence. This project also helped raise standards in the innovative use of ICT as pupils used computers and scanners to put textile constructions into digital format.
- Y5 pupils have also designed and made safety jackets for a variety of purposes. They have also been involved in the manufacture of mechanical toys. The castles they have made are of good quality, with turrets, tessellations and working drawbridges.
- In Y6, pupils have produced some work of very high quality, such as when they designed and constructed a jig and programmed a robot buggy in the style of the European Airbus equipment in nearby Broughton. Visits to the site, which manufactures the giant wings for the European Airbus, have inspired and informed pupils to even higher standards in their work.
- Y6 pupils' work is presented to a good standard, includes the use of ICT, and has involved prototypes based on photographs and sketches of the A380 aeroplane. Pupils have used K'NEX and Lego blocks to construct working miniature buggies.
- Pupils are developing more advanced skills in control technology through the improved quality of resources such as *RoboLab*.
- Pupils have good attitudes to this subject and cooperate well with each other.

Shortcomings

- Pupils' standards are not celebrated sufficiently, nor teachers provided with enough guidance, such as in a portfolio of work with ascribed NC levels.

Information and communications technology

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS1 and very good in KS2.

Good features

- KS1 pupils are encouraged to use computers to support their research, for example, by using encyclopaedias on multimedia compact discs. They have also used ICT to express themselves in Welsh conversation on subjects such as the weather.
- Pupils have used ICT to support their learning about mathematics, for example, by using a digital talking clock, in developing graphs, and in working through addition and subtraction programs. Pupils have made Christmas cards on computers for parent helpers. Their log books show that most have worked on computers quite often throughout the year, apart from one Y1 class where little ICT work has been produced.

- Standards in KS2 are very good, and more able pupils in particular achieve very high standards.
- In Y3, pupils have used commercial, graphics programs to produce and print good-quality symmetrical patterns. Y4 pupils have used the Internet to conduct research into the castles built in Wales.
- In KS2, concepts of control technology are introduced when the teacher demonstrates the use of a screen turtle to extend pupils' learning. Pupils develop their understanding further through learning how to control a programmable robot. In this, they succeed in making it move between pre-set points, turn a set number of degrees, before moving to a finish point.
- Pupils have used the Internet adroitly to research independently about the planets and the solar system. Most pupils in KS2 have some skill in accessing and using appropriate sites on the Internet.
- Y5 pupils have written and word-processed excellent, empathic poetry about the English Civil War. Some have produced very good project folders on Charles I and the Civil War. They have achieved very good results in their artwork, by mixing digitised photographs, amended with graphic tools, to recreate the effects of their textile work to represent the solar system.
- Pupils have improved their ICT capability in written work, for example, by using a range of fonts and styles of text in poetry and letters. Y6 pupils have produced very good project work about force in their science studies. In Y6, the quality of evaluation is very good.
- Most older pupils can find appropriate files in their own directories on a hard disk, and can open and use them. The more able are familiar with shortcut combinations of keystrokes and help teach other pupils about a range of ICT skills.
- Most KS2 pupils have used a digital camera to record their work and their achievements, and data-logging software to record data produced in scientific experiments.
- Pupils use ICT often to report on their visits out of school, or to continue work inspired by visitors to their classes.
- Pupils have started to use electronic mail, mostly to a limited degree, but with a few, this is at a more sophisticated level, involving the attachment of various files to mailings.
- Pupils improve their standards in Welsh through drafting and redrafting their work using word-processing software.
- Pupils are able to use spreadsheets to calculate simple formulae.
- Pupils have used control technology software (LOGO) to write their names using a screen-based robot.

- Pupils with SEN achieve well when they use computers to support their learning. Those who are gifted or able learn a great deal about ICT in the popular after-school club. They have, for example, been involved in advanced studies of the weather, using a satellite receiving station.

Shortcomings

- Pupils' standards of presentation and communication are inhibited because there are insufficient opportunities to design web pages.

History

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and KS2.

Good features

- Pupils' understanding of the past is enhanced through regular visits to historical sites and buildings, where they often participate in role-play activities. Such visits and experiences are well remembered and foster an interest in and enjoyment of the subject. Pupils draw on these experiences to appreciate changes in their own lives and in the lives of adults around them.
- Pupils in KS1 are developing a good understanding of the distant past through discussions about their own families and how they themselves have changed over time.
- They can talk about the differences between then and now, after a recent visit to Erddig, especially the every-day life of the poor and rich people who lived there.
- They sequence 'old and new' items correctly and can arrange events in a story chronologically.
- They know about the life of Betsi Cadwaladr in detail and can offer reasons for the problems she encountered.
- Pupils have a good recall of stories about children in the past such as Albert the chimney sweep and Susan Rees, a pit girl, and show empathy for them.
- In KS2, pupils study the lifestyle of people in different periods of history and have a good recall of facts about each period.
- Pupils develop a good understanding and knowledge of historical eras, and empathy with different characters, through role-play. This is a strong feature of the school's work. Examples of this were seen in the re-enacting of the '*Great Fire of London*' of 1666 and the rebellion of the rural Welsh poor in the 'Rebecca Riots' in 1839.
- Pupils develop a sense of chronology through regular use of historical time lines.

- Through regular research opportunities and discussions, pupils learn and understand the possible causes and consequences of some of the main historical events. They appreciate the importance of primary and secondary evidence and how to interpret them correctly.
- Pupils write imaginatively about the past. They identify very convincingly with characters from the past and choose details correctly when creating background and atmosphere.
- Y6 pupils produce work that is extensive and thorough, showing very good research skills. It is presented neatly, often using ICT skills, and shows great care and pride.

Shortcomings

- Some of the work in lower KS2 lacks depth of study in the prescribed historical periods.

Geography

Standards are good in KS2. No lessons in geography were timetabled in KS1 during the week of the inspection therefore no overall judgement can be made. However, scrutiny of pupils' books and discussions with pupils and teachers indicate that standards in KS1 are at least satisfactory.

Good features

- Younger pupils in KS1 conduct a traffic survey of roads near the school and communicate their findings in the form of simple tally charts. Most pupils use their numeracy skills effectively to count and record the number and type of vehicles that pass by and can interpret the graph to explain their findings.
- Y2 pupils can compare their own locality with the Scottish island featured in the "Katie Morag" books and discuss similarities and differences in life style and landscape. Most of them can identify Wales on a map of the British Isles and have a basic understanding of compass points.
- By the end of KS1, pupils know the difference between natural and human features of the environment and understand and use geographical terms such as riverbanks, floods and mountains. They understand that the riverbank has been reinforced in order to prevent floods and express opinions about rubbish in the river and the damage it does to the environment.
- Pupils in KS2 build effectively on the environmental awareness they have developed during KS1. Fieldtrips to a good variety of geographically interesting places deepen their understanding of geographical patterns and processes.
- Following their field trip to Aberduna Quarry, Y3 pupils show an awareness of the impact of quarrying on the environment. They know that it will destroy animals' homes, but also recognise the conflicting need for people to have houses. They understand how the pond at the quarry protects and preserves wildlife.

- Y4 pupils understand how the sand dunes at Talacre were formed, the processes that cause them to change and how to safeguard them. They can use a map of the Dee Estuary to plot a route from the school to Talacre.
- In upper KS2, pupils collect information from a wide variety of sources, including the use of ICT, to research geographical questions. They recall a large number of facts about mountains they have studied, use appropriate geographical vocabulary to explain their findings and locate mountain ranges and rivers using atlases.
- By the end of KS2 pupils have a good understanding of the contrasting locality of St. Lucia; its climate, work patterns and the effect of tourism on the economy. They record and present the results of their research in a rich variety of ways.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Art

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and very good in KS2. Displays of work around the school are of high quality.

Good features

- In KS1, pupils develop their fine motor skills through painting portraits, large plants, animals, and familiar objects. They use thick and thin brush strokes and control a mouse well to create colourful computer images.
- They are effective at separating colours when illustrating their favourite stories such as Granma Tika and Osa, and demonstrate good hand-eye co-ordination when they paint realistic models of Erddig.
- The pupils have developed keen observational skills and produced good work using pencil on the theme of vegetables and plants, recording images effectively from direct observation.
- In KS2, standards in art are promoted well. Pupils learn about a variety of techniques well, use different media, and appreciate a range of art, including the work of individual artists. They participate in good quality, large-scale, group work. For example, Y4 pupils produced excellent panels for the Queen's Jubilee Pageant, using Perspex and feathers.
- Older pupils demonstrate an understanding of the visual language of tone, line, colour, patterns, texture and shape, form and space, and apply it when expressing their individual creativity.

- Pupils have worked with many professional artists who infuse lessons with highly imaginative experiences in textiles, environmental art, wax resistant materials and the performing arts. They have enabled pupils to select, control and experiment with a range of materials, processes and techniques in 2D and 3D work. A recent National Lottery - New Opportunities Fund grant has funded much of this work and the results are sometimes excellent.
- Older KS2 children produced some very good weaving exhibits using net, wool and ribbon based on the topic of space and produced effective 3D models using wire and paper.
- Pupils study many famous artists throughout KS1 and KS2, including Welsh artists, and have produced very good work on landscapes in the style of Vincent Van Gogh and Pablo Picasso.
- The school takes part in many art competitions and supports a flourishing, after-school Art Club.
- Pupils in KS2 respond practically and imaginatively to the methods and ideas of others and, after critical appraisal, are able to review and modify their work appropriately.

Shortcomings

- In some areas of KS1, pupils lack the opportunity to express their individual creativity.

Music

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and very good in KS2

Good features

- Standards are effectively enhanced by good support from peripatetic teachers and the musical ability of the co-ordinators. There are additional lessons in woodwind, brass, percussion and strings for interested pupils who make progress through regular practice.
- Most pupils in KS1 listen attentively to the music of others and make broad distinctions within the musical elements. They use simple terms and symbols to create music with varying rhythm and pulse, and some demonstrate technical competence and accuracy appropriate to their development.
- They know and sing an appropriate number of songs, including Welsh songs. They sing tunefully with clear diction, using regulated tempo and volume as directed, performing with confidence and expression.
- Pupils are able to compose and appraise their own work from a broad range of styles and culture.

- In KS2, pupils use relevant vocabulary and know the names of a good range of musical instruments.
- They understand a pentatonic scale and compose music on the theme of Castles and Dungeons using voice music, tuned and untuned instruments and computer graphics by exploring a range of sound sources from which they select, combine and arrange imaginatively with good musical expression.
- Older pupils compose the missing *Pluto* from the Planet Suite. They are able to record their efforts and evaluate them against Colin Matthew's version of *Pluto*.
- By the end of KS2, pupils achieve very good standards of performance. Pupils read music notation, clap, and chant time crisply and accurately, with complex and opposing rhythm. They can perform musical sequences using a variety of instruments. After frank discussion, pupils are able to evaluate and improve their own performance. They apply what they have learned in a wider context.
- The school provides opportunities for pupils to hear visiting orchestras and choirs, and the school choir and band are very active on the local music scene. They produce imaginative work, which shows very good technical standards.
- Standards of singing are good and the choir perform songs on a range of themes from simple nursery rhymes to musical extravaganzas such as *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

Shortcomings

- In KS1, some pupils are not familiar with a variety of untuned instruments.

Physical education

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and KS2.

Good features

- KS1 pupils are developing effective control of their body movements and their awareness and use of space is good.
- When passing and receiving a ball or beanbag, they have good hand and eye co-ordination skills.
- Y2 pupils express an image through movement in response to music imaginatively. They show good body control and co-ordination when stretching, jumping and landing. Pupils work hard and quietly to produce a good performance.
- In KS1 and KS2, they work hard and make determined efforts to improve their performance. Pupils evaluate their own and other pupils' efforts judiciously. They listen carefully to instructions and most respond promptly to the teacher.

- In KS2, pupils show good control, balance and poise when practising, refining and repeating a series of actions to make a sequence of movements on the floor and, in the case of Y6 pupils, on the apparatus. Pupils demonstrate very good examples of controlled rolling, jumping and landing while transferring their weight from one shape to another.
- Pupils collaborate well in pairs or as a group, to plan a sequence of movements and they move mats and apparatus sensibly and safely.
- They show a good sense of rhythm and control when performing a dance to music.
- They develop good running, throwing and jumping techniques for athletic activities and work hard to improve on their targets, which they record with obvious delight.
- Older pupils attend regular swimming lessons and records show that the majority are competent swimmers and gain certificates by the end of the key stage.
- The school engages in a number of sporting activities locally, with good results, and opportunities for further development of pupils' skills are given through a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The school recently received the SportsMarc Cymru award.

Shortcomings

- KS1 pupils' throwing and catching skills are underdeveloped.

Religious education

Standards of achievement are good in KS1 and KS2.

Good features

- Pupils, in KS1 and KS2, recall a range of Bible stories and are able to distinguish moral elements relating to their own lives and the lives of others.
- Pupils gain a good understanding of some of the beliefs and rituals of the Christian faith through visits to the school by local vicars, and by visits to local churches and chapels.
- Pupils in KS1 understand that babies are special and need love, care and attention. They are aware that a baptism is an occasion of special importance and know the significance of some of the symbolism and artefacts associated with it, for example, the priest's robes, the baptism candle and the font.
- They talk about aspects of religious belief, practice and lifestyle. Some of them ask searching questions such as "*What do you mean by the Holy Spirit?*" They understand that churches are special places and can explain the purpose of some of the objects and furnishings found there.

- Pupils in KS2 develop an understanding of, and respect for, other religions, by studying the beliefs and festivals of faiths such as Judaism, Islam and Hinduism.
- Pupils in Y4 are aware of the special character of sacred books and their importance for believers. Their dramatic improvisations of the story of Mary Jones and her Bible help to underline their importance.
- Pupils in Y5 consider the relationship between human beings and other living creatures in their study of St. Francis of Assisi. In their imaginary conversations with animals they ask questions such as “*What is it like being in captivity?*” Their questions and answers show empathy with the plight of animals and the need for humans to respect them.
- By the end of KS2, pupils ask and pursue more perceptive questions about issues raised by stories and by their own experiences. For example, they can identify what a story tells us about friendship, and reflect on their own experiences as friends.
- They have developed an understanding that religious beliefs inform life styles. They also understand some of the complexities of moral guidance, for instance, that sometimes people find it difficult to practise what they preach.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress since the last inspection

Good progress has been made in addressing the issues raised in the last inspection report.

Key Issue 1: Maintain the good standards in the nursery and reception classes and in the majority of subjects in KS1 and KS2:

Overall standards have risen. Standards have been maintained or improved in nine subjects and good progress made.

Key Issue 2: Secure even higher standards in Welsh as a second language, design and technology, information technology and religious education, building upon existing achievements in those subjects:

Standards have been raised in three of the above four subjects, and good progress made.

Key Issue 3: Raise the quality of teaching in one class:

The quality of teaching has been improved and good progress made.

Key Issue 4: Finalise and implement a whole-school scheme of work in religious education:

The scheme has been written and is now in use. Good progress has been made.

Key Issue 5: Within the SDP, detail issues concerned with the longer term development and growth of the school:

The SDP now covers development from 2002 to 2005 and is a very good working document for school improvement.

8.2 Key issues for action

Within the context of a very good school, which has made significant progress over time, the headteacher, staff and governors now need to:

- raise standards in Welsh throughout the school and in other subjects where they are only satisfactory;
- fully implement a systematic cycle of monitoring and evaluating of standards by subject leaders in every subject. ♦

♦ *The school has already identified and planned for this cycle to be introduced in its SDP but needs to attach a higher priority to its completion.*

APPENDIX

A. Basic information about the school

Name of School	Sandycroft Community Primary
School type	Community
Age -range of pupils	3-11
Address of school	Leaches Lane Mancot Deeside, Flintshire
Post-Code	CH5 2EH
Telephone Number	01244 532083

Headteacher	Mr I Kelly
Date of appointment	September 1994
Chair of Governors	Mrs J Jenkins
Registered Inspector	Mr R A Isaac
Dates of inspection	08 – 12 July 2002

B. School data and indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>									
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	54	42	58	54	50	62	55	54	429

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	17	1	17.2

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	23 :1
Pupil:adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	13.5 :1
Pupil:adult (fte) ratio in special classes	N/A
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	26.7
Teacher (fte) : class ratio	1.1 : 1

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>					
	N	R	KS1	KS2	Whole School
Summer 2001	80	89	91	90	90
Autumn 2001	82	93	95	93	94
Spring 2002	81	88	94	92	91

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	11
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	2

C. Results of National Curriculum assessments and public examinations

NATIONAL CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT RESULTS; END OF KS 1: 2001

National Curriculum Assessment KS 1 Results: 2001			Number of pupils in Y2: 54					
Percentage of pupils at each level								
			D	W	1	2	3	4
ENGLISH:	Teacher Assessment	School	0	9	26	52	13	0
		National	0	4	14	64	18	0
EN: Reading	Teacher Assessment	School	0	6	28	50	17	0
		National	0	4	14	56	26	0
	Task/Test	School	0	0	31	54	11	
		National	0	4	14	56	26	
EN: Writing	Teacher Assessment	School	0	19	20	57	4	0
		National	0	5	14	70	11	0
	Task/Test	School	0	17	22	54	4	
		National	0	6	11	74	9	
EN: Speaking and listening	Teacher Assessment	School	0	6	20	54	20	0
		National	0	3	12	64	21	0
MATHEMATICS	Teacher Assessment	School	0	6	15	65	15	0
		National	0	2	10	65	23	0
	Task/Test	School	0	6	7	78	7	
		National	0	2	7	63	27	
SCIENCE	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	15	78	7	0
		National	0	2	11	70	17	0

Of those entered for the statutory English Spelling Test, the percentage at each level was as follows:

	W	1	2	3	Abs
School	0	21	61	18	0
National	0	15	60	25	

CORE SUBJECT INDICATOR: Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment			
In the school:	65	In Wales:	80

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

NATIONAL CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT RESULTS

END OF KS 2: 2001

National Curriculum Assessment KS 2 Results: 2001		Number of pupils in Y6: 74										
Percentage of pupils at each level												
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	4	12	41	43	0
		National	0	0	1	0	1	6	21	48	22	0
	Test/Task	School	0		0	0	0	2	4	40	53	0
		National	0	2		1	0	5	17	48	26	0
Welsh	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		National	2	0		0	1	6	27	47	16	0
	Test/Task	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		National	2	2		N	N	4	25	48	17	N
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	5	10	40	45	0
		National	0	0		0	1	5	22	47	24	0
	Test/Task	School	0		0	0	0	1	13	40	46	0
		National	0	2		0	0	5	22	44	25	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	4	9	51	36	0
		National	0	0		0	1	4	17	53	25	0
	Test/Task	School	0	0	0	0	0	1	8	55	37	0
		National	0	3		0	0	3	14	55	26	N

CORE SUBJECT INDICATOR: Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and English			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school:		In the school:	81
In Wales:	61	In Wales:	62

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

D. Evidence base of the inspection

The inspection team of five inspectors, including the lay inspector, was at the school for a total of 19 inspector days.

- During this time all teachers were visited and all classes were seen. A total of 91 sessions, part sessions or interactions were inspected and pupils' work in every subject area was scrutinised. Inspectors talked to pupils about their work and life in the school, and listened to them reading.
- A very full range of documentation made available by the school was scrutinised. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, staff and pupils. Pre- and post-inspection meetings were held with governors and staff, and 11 parents attended a pre-inspection meeting with inspectors. Questionnaires, completed by 101 parents, were analysed.

E. Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr Rob Isaac Registered Inspector	Design and technology Information and Communications technology	Context Main findings Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning Teaching The quality of the curriculum Leadership and efficiency Progress since the last inspection Key issues for action
Mrs Denise Shields Lay Inspector		Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Behaviour and attitudes to learning Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions Partnership with industry
Mrs Stephanie J. James Team Inspector	English Geography Religious Education	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Attendance Standards achieved in Key Skills across the curriculum
Mrs Jean Hannam Team Inspector	Early Years Science Music Art	Assessment, recording and reporting Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
Mr Merfyn D Jones Team Inspector	Welsh second language Mathematics History Physical Education	Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement Special Educational needs

Acknowledgement

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