

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

*St Francis RC Primary School
Manor Road
Abersychan*

School Number: 678-3322

Date of Inspection: 4-6 May 2004

by

*Mr Phillip Edwards
Registered Inspector*

Date: 26 June 2004

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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:

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

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

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

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1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

St Francis RC Primary School is situated in the village of Abersychan in the county of Torfaen and is administered by Torfaen local education authority (LEA). It has a roll of 88 pupils aged four to 11 years; the majority come from Abersychan and the surrounding area with a significant number from Blaenafon. In general terms the school describes the area it serves as economically disadvantaged. The annual intake includes many less able pupils and few able pupils. Approximately 43 per cent of pupils are registered as being entitled to receive free school meals. All pupils come from homes where English is the main or only language. There are 27 pupils identified by the school as requiring special educational needs (SEN) support with one for whom a statement of SEN has been made.

Aims reflect the importance of the school's religious status, emphasising its pastoral intentions and its commitment to a "family" atmosphere. The school strategic plan (SSP) looks at the three year long term priorities of the school with emphasis in areas such as early years, foundation subjects, literacy and staff developments. This in turn leads to annual school development plans (SDP) which focus in more detail specific areas prioritised for improvement such as staff development in the form of performance management.

The school was last inspected in June 1998.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

St Francis RC Primary School has made significant improvements since the last inspection. It is very well led and has high aspirations for its pupils; a team spirit pervades the school where every one feels valued in a family atmosphere.

- The overall quality of the educational provision for the under fives is appropriate to their needs and the pupils make good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.
- Standards in the six areas of learning are as follows:

Areas of Learning	Reception
Language literacy and communication skills	Good
Personal and social development	Very good
Mathematical development	Good
Knowledge and understanding of the world	Good
Physical development	Good
Creative development	Good

- In both key stages, pupils' standards of achievement in the different subjects of the national curriculum (NC) are as follows:

Subject	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2
Welsh	Good	Good
English	Good	Good
Mathematics	Good	Good
Science	Good	Good
Design and technology	Good	Good
Information Technology	Good	Good
History	Good	Good
Geography	Good	Good
Art	Good	Good
Music	Good	Good
Physical Education	Good	Good

- As this is a voluntary aided school, religious education was not inspected as part of this report. The school's governors arranged for this subject to be inspected in accordance with Section 23 of the Education Act 1996 3.1.
- Standards of achievement in Key Stage (KS) 1 and KS2 are good or better in around 84 per cent of lessons seen. They are very good in approximately three per cent, good in about 81 per cent and satisfactory in around 16 per cent.
- National curriculum teacher assessments for summer 2003 show that at the end of KS1 the percentage of pupils achieving level 2 or above in English was a little above the national average. It is well above in mathematics and a little below in science. In all core subjects a significant number of pupils achieve the higher level 3. The percentage of pupils assessed by teachers to have achieved level 2 and above in all core subjects is above the national average. When compared with similar schools, assessments in KS1 are well into the upper quartile.
- National curriculum test and task results last summer showed that at the end of KS2, the percentage of pupils who achieve level 4 and above in all core subjects is significantly above the national average. When compared with similar schools, results in KS2 are well into the upper quartile.
- Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum in both key stages are very good in listening and good in speaking, reading, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT). Pupils in both key stages demonstrate satisfactory writing skills for a range of purposes. They use interesting language to add interest and vitality to their work in a range of different genres. Some pupils, particularly in KS2 are unable to write very well at length, particularly when limited to writing on worksheets.
- The school's provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school exudes a caring ethos arising from mutual respect and courtesy and strongly promotes very sound moral values. Pupils' social and cultural development is enhanced by a broad and interesting range of extra-curricular activities, including many visits to places of relevance, contributions from visitors to the school and by raising pupils' awareness of Welsh and other cultures. The school emphasises the need for equality for all including racial, gender and ability in its personal and social education (PSE) policy.

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- Standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. Standards of behaviour in the classroom and attitudes to learning are strengths of the school, and have a positive effect on the quality of life, and levels of achievement in the school.
 - Attendance levels are satisfactory and pupils' punctuality good; the recording of attendance conforms to statutory requirements. Attendance levels have increased significantly since the previous inspection. With few exceptions, children arrive in school on time.
 - The quality of teaching is good or better in 87 per cent of lessons seen. It is very good in approximately 36 per cent of lessons and good in around 51 per cent. It is satisfactory in about 13 per cent of lessons. Good classroom management and effective use of praise and encouragement motivate pupils to make more effort to produce better quality work. Teachers plan their lessons well to ensure continuity of purpose, content and progression and there is some exemplary practice in the organisation of the mixed age classes, but in a significant number of lessons the degree to which work is planned to cater for pupils of different abilities varies.
 - The quality of the school's assessment, recording and reporting is very good. There are clear guidelines for marking, assessing and recording pupils' progress and achievement. The policy is consistently and effectively implemented throughout the school. The school meets its statutory requirements for reporting to parents.
 - The school generally provides a broad, balanced and relevant range of subjects which meet the statutory requirements of the NC. The recent very good opportunities identified in the medium and short term planning to develop key skills across the curriculum are clear and relevant to enable pupils to make sound progress. However, at present they are not embedded sufficiently in the taught curriculum to have a significant effect on standards. The homework policy sets out procedures to ensure that all pupils reinforce their reading, research, numeracy and speaking skills. Strong emphasis is placed on PSE.
 - The quality of the school's provision for support, guidance and pupils' welfare is good; teachers know their pupils well.
 - The school's provision for pupils with SEN is very good. A particular strength is the effective use of realistic targets which are set in consultation with parents and pupils to inform planning of future work. The progress of pupils with SEN is closely monitored.
 - Overall, the partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions is good. The home-school agreement helps strengthen the partnership with parents. The school has a well established partnership with the community. The school has a close relationship with the parish. The school supports a number of charities at home and overseas, which helps make children aware there are people in the world less fortunate than themselves. The school has been accredited with the Investors in People award.
 - The school's partnership with industry is good. The school is open to new and innovative ways of working which will improve provision and raise standards. Children's understanding of the world of work is broadened significantly by occasional talks by visitors from industry and members of the community.
 - The school has developed a highly effective, self-critical culture for self-evaluation among staff and governors and there is a clear commitment to school improvement and the raising of standards. The significant improvement in standards since the previous inspection is reflected in the school's development of very good self-evaluation procedures.

- Leadership and efficiency are very good. The school is led very well by the head who is supported effectively by staff and governors. There is a clear commitment to equality of opportunity, inclusiveness, self-esteem and raising standards. The governors are proactive in their leadership and overall, curriculum leaders develop their role well; a good team spirit pervades among staff where they share a common sense of purpose and values. The head and governing body have been very effective managing and procuring all available resources to enable the school to support a good adult/pupil ratio, particularly at the end of KS1. The SDP is and useful working document which drives the school forward and is linked prudently to budget setting. Routine administration and organisation are efficient and effective and enable the school to function as a happy, well organised and harmonious community.
- The quality of provision for staffing, accommodation and learning resources is good. There are sufficient teachers and their strengths are well used with areas of responsibility matched appropriately to staff expertise. The staff make good use of the school buildings and grounds, despite its age limitations, to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils, including the under-fives. Overall, the school has a good range of learning resources to meet the different needs of pupils in all subject areas.
- The school has made significant progress since the last inspection particularly in raising standards of achievement of pupils.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards Achieved in Subjects and Areas of Learning

- Standards of achievement in KS1 and KS2 are good or better in around 84 per cent of lessons seen. They are very good in approximately three per cent, good in about 81 per cent and satisfactory in around 16 per cent.
- Standards of achievement in KS1 are good or better in around 91 per cent of lessons seen. They are very good in approximately nine per cent, good in around 82 per cent and satisfactory in about nine per cent.
- Standards of achievement in KS2 are good or better in around 80 per cent of lessons seen. They are good in approximately 80 per cent, and satisfactory in around 20 per cent.
- Standards of achievement in English, mathematics, science, Welsh as a second language, design and technology, information technology, history, geography, art, music and physical education are good in both key stages. As this is a Roman Catholic voluntary aided school, religious education was not inspected as part of this report. The school's governors arranged for this subject to be inspected in accordance with Section 23 of the Education Act 1996 3.1.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress through the school in line with their abilities.
- National curriculum teacher assessments for summer 2003 show that at the end of KS1 the percentage of pupils achieving level 2 or above in English was a little above the national average. It is well above in mathematics and a little below in science. In all core subjects a significant number of pupils achieve the higher level 3. The percentage of pupils assessed by teachers to have achieved level 2 and above in all core subjects is above the national average. When compared with similar schools, assessments in KS1 are well into the upper quartile.

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- National curriculum test and task results last summer showed that at the end of KS2, the percentage of pupils who achieve level 4 and above in all core subjects is significantly above the national average. When compared with similar schools results in KS2 are well into the upper quartile.

3.2 Standards Achieved in Key Skills across the Curriculum

Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum in both key stages are very good in listening, good in speaking, reading, numeracy and ICT and satisfactory in writing.

- The majority of pupils in both key stages develop good speaking skills. They talk about their work in a manner appropriate to their age; they speak clearly and confidently in a variety of contexts and use technical terms appropriately. They willingly enter into interesting discussions.
- Pupils listen very well in their lessons and in assembly. In class they respond to teachers' questions readily and speak clearly and audibly. In both key stages, they give very good regard to each other's contributions in all areas of the curriculum when they discuss their learning activities in small or large groups.
- In all classes pupils achieve good standards of reading; they read for pleasure and extract information from the Internet and some reference books from the library for subjects across the curriculum.
- Pupils in both key stages demonstrate satisfactory writing skills for a range of purposes. They use interesting language to add interest and vitality to their work in a range of different genres. Some pupils, particularly in KS2 are unable to write very well at length, particularly when limited to writing on worksheets.
- Standards in numeracy across the curriculum in both key stages are good. Pupils use a variety of graphs to interpret statistics in science, history and geography; they measure and calculate accurately and estimate reasonably, for example in their work in design and technology.
- Computers are used appropriately by pupils in all classes to support their learning. Pupils' ICT skills are generally good; they redraft their writing where appropriate, enter data in mathematics and science investigations and access the Internet for information.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress in key skills across the curriculum relative to their age and ability.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

The school's provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. It meets the requirements of the law to provide religious education and a daily act of worship.

- The pupils participate in daily worship and prayers are respectfully recited at the beginning and end of each day. In their work in art, music and poetry pupils appreciate the feelings and emotions expressed. There is often a strong spiritual element in lessons and during times for appropriate reflection in assembly.
- The school exudes a caring ethos arising from mutual respect and courtesy. Pupils feel secure in the supportive environment of their classrooms and other areas of the school.

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- The school, throughout its work, strongly promotes very sound moral values and guides pupils' behaviour. Pupils understand and accept the values and standards expected by the school. They are very aware of what is considered right and wrong in society and contribute willingly of their time and money to a number of charities at home and overseas.
 - Relationships between pupils and teachers and between the pupils themselves are very positive, friendly and supportive.
 - The *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is promoted effectively through subjects such as English, music, history, geography and art. The school raises pupils' awareness of other cultures appropriately.
 - Pupils' social development is very good and is encouraged by the school through its consistently good emphasis on collaborative learning in the classroom. It is enhanced further by a broad and interesting range of extra-curricular activities, including many visits to places of relevance and contributions from visitors to the school.
 - The pupils have a good awareness of their local area and its history through studies in history and geography. They celebrate St David's Day, sing Welsh hymns and songs, and know some Welsh prayers.
 - There is a consistent and natural use of incidental Welsh throughout the school day by all teachers and pupils which makes a significant contribution to raising standards in Welsh as a second language.
 - The school emphasises the need for equality for all including racial, gender and ability in its PSE policy.
 - The pupils' response to the school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

4.2 Behaviour and Attitudes

Standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good.

- When in the classroom or moving about the school pupils are respectful of others and behave in a quiet and orderly manner. Standards of behaviour in the classroom and attitudes to learning are strengths of the school, and have a positive effect on the quality of life, and levels of achievement in the school.
- In the upper and lower playgrounds pupils play happily together. They care for each other and are conscious of the lonely or friendless and are quick to include them in their groups.
- Teachers know their pupils well and make very good role models. Pupils are respectful and courteous to teachers, to each other and to visitors.
- The school's policies on behaviour and on anti-bullying are in place and understood. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are few, and are dealt with quietly and firmly.
- Throughout the school children show positive attitudes to learning and are able to sustain concentration over sometimes lengthy classroom sessions, although some fidgeting and shuffling creeps in particularly when sitting on the floor in the classroom or during assembly.

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- Parents themselves are satisfied the school promotes and achieves positive attitudes and values, and that the values and attitudes promoted by the school have a beneficial effect on their children.

4.3 Attendance

Attendance levels are satisfactory and pupils' punctuality good.

- The whole-school attendance averaged 94.1 per cent for the three terms prior to inspection, with very little unauthorised absence. Sickness and occasional holidays during term time are the main causes of absence. Attendance levels have increased significantly since the previous inspection, and the school is making steady progress towards its target attendance of 94.6 per cent.
- Registers are completed at the beginning of each session allowing lessons to begin on time. Registers are neatly maintained and absences appropriately codified. Information from the registers is uploaded weekly onto an electronic database which produces statistical data for review and analysis. The headteacher regularly reviews registers.
- Parents co-operate by notifying the school of reasons for their child's absence. Unexplained absence or lateness is immediately followed up.
- With few exceptions, pupils arrive in school on time, allowing the morning session to begin on time.
- The recording of attendance conforms to statutory requirements.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

The quality of teaching is good or better in 87 per cent of lessons seen. It is very good in approximately 36 per cent of lessons and good in around 51 per cent. It is satisfactory in about 13 per cent of lessons.

- The quality of teaching for children under five is very good consistently.
- The quality of teaching in both key stages is good or better in approximately 84 per cent of lessons seen. It is very good in around 22 per cent, good in about 62 per cent and satisfactory in 16 per cent.
- The quality of teaching in KS1 is good or better in 100 per cent of lessons seen. It is very good in approximately 42 per cent and good in around 58 per cent.
- The quality of teaching in KS2 is good or better in around 76 per cent of lessons seen. It is very good in approximately 12 per cent, good in around 64 per cent and satisfactory in about 24 per cent.
- All teachers display a very good knowledge of the subjects they teach.
- Teachers and pupils display mutual respect and have positive and productive relationships. This has a good effect upon the ethos of the school and gives pupils the confidence to improve their learning. Good classroom management and effective use of praise and encouragement motivate pupils to make more effort to produce better quality work.

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- Teachers plan their lessons well to ensure continuity of purpose, content and progression and there is some exemplary practice in the organisation of the mixed age classes, but in a significant number of lessons the degree to which work is planned to cater for pupils of different abilities varies.
 - Good and better teaching in the school is characterised by detailed planning, where learning outcomes and pupils' tasks are clearly stated and skills and knowledge are consolidated in plenary sessions.
 - In the best practice, teachers have high expectations of their pupils and provide interesting and thought provoking work to meet the often wide range of abilities of pupils; there is good variety and pace to the teaching and flexibility in class organisation.

5.2 Assessment, Recording and Reporting

The quality of the school's assessment, recording and reporting is very good.

- There are clear guidelines for marking, assessing and recording pupils' progress and achievement. The policy is consistently and effectively implemented throughout the school.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and written comments provide feedback for pupils. Relevant information is included about what the children can do, as well as whether or not support was provided for task completion. A symbol, as well as comment often provides feedback to children about the quality of their work. Where appropriate, words and short phrases are written in Welsh to reinforce the children's understanding and use of incidental Welsh.
- Very thorough and well detailed records of achievement are kept for every pupil. These clearly show how well children are progressing and performing in each subject. The procedures are consistent throughout the school and well established.
- Teacher's records and portfolios of work contain a full picture of pupils' achievement and progress, both academic and personal.
- Very good use is made of regular teacher assessments to monitor pupils' progress throughout the school. Assessment opportunities are clearly identified in schemes of work with clear references to NC programme of study requirements and level descriptions. Effective systems are established to moderate pupils work to ensure consistency between staff when levelling work throughout the school. Folders of pupils' work kept by subject co-ordinators include samples of work at all levels, criteria for assessment, and comments for the next stage of learning. This used effectively to set targets and inform planning in all subjects and assist continuity and progression.
- Targets are set for and with children. The headteacher meets with each pupil termly to examine their books, discuss their progress and review their targets.
- The requirements of the SEN Code of Practice are met and individual education plans (IEPs) are regularly reviewed.
- Baseline assessments are carried out on entry. A useful portfolio of children's work is maintained which includes information on standardised tests as well as tasks from teaching and learning episodes. The assessment of children in the early years effectively promotes the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.
- The school makes effective use of information gained from a range of assessments, including from NC assessments. These are analysed effectively to help teacher's planning

and improve pupils' performance and form part of the schools self-evaluation programme.

- The school meets its statutory requirements for reporting to parents. There are many opportunities for formal and informal contact between parents and teachers. They have opportunities to discuss their child's progress and write comments on the reading done at home. Following the annual written report to parents a formal interview is set up to discuss contents of the report and/or the results of statutory assessments.

5.3 Curriculum

The school generally provides a broad, balanced and relevant range of subjects which meet the statutory requirements of the NC.

- The curriculum accurately and consistently reflects the aims of the school and is well suited to pupils' needs, interests and abilities.
- Subject policies are available for all areas of the curriculum. Schemes of work are generally of good standard, with sufficient detail, and are accessible. There is a very good emphasis on the *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* in several subject areas and cross curricular links are appropriate.
- The recent very good opportunities identified in the medium and short-term planning to develop key skills across the curriculum are clear and relevant to enable pupils to make sound progress. However, their implementation is at an early stage of development and not embedded sufficiently in the taught curriculum to have a significant effect on standards.
- The homework policy sets out procedures to ensure that all pupils reinforce their reading, research, numeracy and speaking skills. Parents are on the whole pleased with the school's homework provision.
- Strong emphasis is placed on PSE. Pupils receive good support from teachers and peers alike. Good use is made of the weekly circle time for pupils to explore feelings and to share ideas. The school's policy and scheme of work meets the Qualifications Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC) framework.
- The school has a clear health education policy; the governors have agreed that sex education shall not be taught separately as part of the curriculum and parents have been informed.
- There are a wide range of extra-curricular activities which enrich the quality of their experiences, including drama, music, football, rugby, athletics, ICT and aerobics clubs.
- The curriculum is enhanced by visits to places of interest in each key stage linked with subject related work, the community and local businesses, including Big Pit, Caerleon Museum, and Techniquet in Cardiff and Bristol. Visitors, such as artists and people who work in the community, make a positive contribution to the work of the school.
- The school is socially inclusive; all pupils have equal opportunities and access to the curriculum in order to reach their full potential.
- Pupils with SEN are fully included in all aspects of the curriculum. The learning opportunities provided for these pupils by teachers are generally of a good quality, particularly when assisted by additional support staff.

5.4 Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare

The quality of the school's provision for support, guidance and pupils' welfare is good.

- The school provides a caring and nurturing environment for pupils. Teachers know their pupils well and there are good systems in place for monitoring pupils' academic progress, behaviour and attendance.
- The school has been successful in establishing an ethos in which all pupils feel valued and supported. Appropriate to its Church status, the school involves the parish community in its life and works.
- The school has appropriate health and safety procedures in place. Child protection procedures are clear and followed by staff. There is a child protection co-ordinator in the school. Procedures for referral to Social Services follow guidelines set down by Torfaen council.
- Good levels of support and guidance are provided to ensure that the children's entry to school is smooth. There are good links with parents and the school responds promptly and effectively to any issues which may arise.
- Parents have agreed to the sex education policy of the school which conforms to teachings of the Church.
- First Aid provision is adequate all staff have received first aid training.

5.5 Provision for Pupils with SEN

The quality of the schools provision for pupils with SEN is very good.

- The school has a comprehensive policy for SEN which complies with the requirements of the new Code of Practice. It gives clear guidance in SEN procedures and is implemented effectively and efficiently. Successful provision for pupils with SEN within the school is reflected in that eight children have recently been removed from the register and seven from Action Plus. At present seven pupils are at School Action stage and 19 at School Action Plus. One pupil is the subject of an SEN statement for moderate learning difficulties. Parents are involved and consulted at all stages.
- The SEN register is well maintained and all pupils included have IEPs and annual education plans (AEP). The IEPs are written in good detail. A particular strength is the effective use of realistic targets which are set in consultation with parents and pupils to inform planning of future work. Very useful information is included for addressing these targets and monitoring improvement. It includes tasks for parents/carers and pupils as well as identified teaching strategies. The plan is reviewed regularly, at least twice a year or termly. Success and/or exit criteria are also identified.
- The progress of pupils with SEN is closely monitored by the SEN co-ordinator (SENCO). Detailed records of baseline assessment and an appropriate range of tests such as Suffolk reading, National Foundation for Education and Research (NFER) and the 'Instep' programme allows pupils' achievements to be measured, individual needs met and their individual progress tracked throughout the school.
- Very thorough monitoring of the provision for SEN is evident through records of staff meetings held. It shows a whole school approach to this aspect ensuring that practices and procedures have been effectively adopted in practice.

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- All pupils are integrated into the normal organisation of the classroom ensuring that they have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. The SENCO leads in the assessment of pupils in discussion with the class teacher and monitors and reviews the action taken. The class teacher is responsible for planning and delivering an individualised programme.
 - The work undertaken in support sessions with small groups of pupils is appropriately matched to needs. They work well, with enthusiasm.
 - A member of the governing body has been appointed to take special interest in SEN provision.
 - The school has an equal opportunities policy for children with physical disabilities. Access to the main building and disabled toilet is available.
 - The school is sufficiently funded and resourced for SEN provision. There are good links with outside agencies.

5.6 Partnership with Parents and Community, Schools and Other Institutions

Overall the partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions is good.

- The school prospectus contains much useful information. Newsletters and letters to parents provide details of events, and the day-to-day happenings. The governors' annual report which meets requirements, reviews school activities, contains performance and target information and brief details of expenditure.
- Reports are issued annually, and parents have the opportunity to discuss them with teachers.
- Formal teacher-parent consultations occur twice each year, and at other times by arrangement. Informal contact occurs daily before and after school.
- The home-school agreement which meets requirements helps strengthen the partnership with parents. Parents are invited to attend the class assemblies each term and the school concert.
- Parents are encouraged to assist in school, and some do. They help run the library, assist in the classroom and as well as school visits.
- The 'Friends of St Francis' organise social and fundraising events which have raised considerable sums to provide additional resources and subsidise the cost of school trips.
- The school has a well established partnership with the community. Visitors to the school included the police and staff of the fire service, road safety and RSPCA. They talk about their work, and help pupils understand their role in the community. Children in the early years are taken for walks around the community. They learn road safety and visit shops and the library. For other pupils visits to places such as the 'Big Pit' and the iron works in Blaenavon, the Roman remains at Caerleon and the museum of Welsh life at St Fagan's, enrich their topic work.
- The school regularly partakes in community events such as the annual Eisteddfod at Pontypool and carol singing.
- The school has a close relationship with the parish. The local church has now closed, but the priest remains a regular visitor. He talks to the children, takes assembly and assists with religious education.

- Strong links have been established over the years with Brynteg and Hillside nurseries from which the great majority of pupils are drawn. The arrangements for transferring Y6 pupils to St Alban's RC High School are also well practised and ensures a smooth transition.
- The school provides good training opportunities for nursery nurses, and work experience for secondary school students.
- The school has been accredited with the Investors in People award.

5.7 Partnership with Industry

The school's partnership with industry is good.

- The school is open to new and innovative ways of working which will improve provision and raise standards. Its partnership with industry helps to achieve this aim.
- Pupils' understanding of the world of work is broadened significantly by occasional talks by visitors from industry and members of the community. They talk about their work and about the Abersychan of days gone by. Younger pupils have benefited from a 'behind the scenes look' at a local supermarket. Appropriate visits to places of interest such as Techniquet, are arranged for older pupils.
- Pupils care for the environment; they understand well the concept of conservation, renewable energy and the benefits of recycling.
- The school has benefited materially from its links with industry. Business concerns have provided additional equipment and resources, pupil files and supplies of paper.
- Whilst the headteacher has benefited from short secondment to a commercial concern the general development opportunities for staff provided by industry and commerce are under-developed.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of Self-Evaluation and Planning for Improvement

The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is very good overall.

- The school has developed a highly effective, self-critical culture for self-evaluation among staff and governors and there is a clear commitment to school improvement and the raising of standards. Parents are well informed of progress and areas for improvement and have opportunities to express their views through an appropriate survey.
- The school has very good procedures for the evaluation of standards achieved. Performance is measured very well in the core subjects against targets set for the school as a whole and comparisons made with local and national benchmarking data to identify areas for improvement for boys and girls.
- Curriculum leaders identify opportunities to move their subjects forward and plan improvements carefully. New priorities are generated through this ongoing process of whole-school self-evaluation.
- The SDP is a useful working tool for ensuring and promoting the school's future targets. It is very clear and concise, drives the school vision, and reviews the success of earlier targets at appropriate stages. It is regularly monitored by staff and governors; progress is reported to the governing body by the headteacher.

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- The significant improvement in standards since the previous inspection is reflected in the school's development of very good self evaluation procedures.

6.2 Leadership and Efficiency

Leadership and efficiency are very good.

- The school is led very effectively by the head who is supported well by the staff and governors.
- The school has an appropriate mission statement agreed by head, staff and governors. The aims and values adopted by the school contribute to a shared sense of purpose. There is a clear commitment to equality of opportunity, inclusiveness, self-esteem and raising standards.
- The governors are proactive in their leadership role and take an active interest and are well informed by the head and staff about the work and life of the school. The governing body meets regularly to discuss the curriculum and progress; appropriate minutes are kept of meetings.
- Curriculum leaders develop their role effectively and efficiently and a good team spirit pervades among staff where they share a common sense of purpose and values.
- The head and governing body are very effective in managing and procuring all available resources to enable the school to support a good adult/pupil ratio, particularly at the end of KS1. They ensure all available finance is used to maintain essential resources and sustain the high aspirations the school has for its pupils. The SDP is prudently linked to budget setting.
- Routine administration and organisation are efficient and effective and enable the school to function as a happy, well organised and harmonious community.

6.3 Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources

The quality of provision for staffing, accommodation and learning resources is good.

- There are sufficient teachers with appropriate knowledge and expertise to deliver the curriculum effectively. The strengths of the staff are well used and areas of responsibility are matched to staff expertise. This promotes strong and effective implementation of the curriculum.
- A staff development policy is in place to meet staff development needs of teaching and non-teaching staff. It also includes a policy statement for the induction of newly qualified teachers having regard for the statutory recommendations from Torfaen LEA. The staff skills' audit provides useful information to identify individual professional development needs. These are effectively met to ensure that staff are well updated to improve their quality of teaching.
- Clear guidance is set out for staff coordinating areas of responsibility within the school. The role of the subject coordinator is well developed to ensure good monitoring of each subject.
- A staff handbook provides relevant information for all staff regarding aspects of day-to-day school organisational procedures.
- The staff make good use of the school buildings and grounds to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils, including the under-fives.

- The school grounds are well kept and the yards have appropriate playground marking for the pupils, including the under-fives to participate in playground games. The garden is well maintained and provides a good additional resource for pupils' learning.
- Overall the school has a good range of learning resources to meet the different needs of pupils in all subject areas. The computer suite is well used. The library, presently situated in the entrance hall, is cramped with limited work surfaces.
- There are a good range of resources to assist pupils with SEN to meet their individual needs, particularly to further develop their reading. The school provides access for pupils with physical disabilities and a disabled toilet is available, although there are no physically disabled pupils on roll at present.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

Provision for the under-fives

The overall quality of the educational provision for the under-fives is appropriate to their needs and the pupils are making good progress towards the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. Standards are good overall.

Language, literacy and communication skills

Children achieve good standards in the development of language, literacy and communication.

Good features

- The children are developing language skills confidently. They listen attentively to others and take account of what they say when working in pairs asking and answering questions. They respond enthusiastically to a story contributing to discussion and expressing their thoughts including their likes and dislikes. Most children speak clearly and are beginning to use an increasing range of vocabulary. Children are developing their reading skills well; they have a good knowledge of phonics and can spell out words through sound. They can follow and read words in the text with the teacher. They make good attempts at early writing, the more able children showing clear letter formation and plausible phonic attempts at spelling. They can explain clearly what they have written. The children are familiar with a range of Welsh language patterns and respond very well to oral activities.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

Personal and social development

Children achieve very good standards in the development of their personal and social skills.

Good features

- The children make very good progress in their personal and social development. They respond well to high expectations of behaviour and can recognise and talk about aspects of good and bad behaviour from characters in a story. They show care and respect for others and establish effective relationships with other children and adults. They respond well in circle time, showing clearly that they understand and apply the class rules for demonstrating self control. They are able to take turns and work as a member of a group.

They show good cooperation with others when playing ball games involving passing to a partner and good understanding of abiding by rules to play class games.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

Mathematical development

Children achieve good standards in their mathematical development.

Good features

- Children can use mathematical language effectively when describing the shapes of different fruit and objects bought in a supermarket and can use appropriate language of capacity when engaged in activities with sand and water. They can create patterns showing understanding of colour and shape. They can generate their own criteria for sorting a range of fruit and vegetables. They can count soundly up to 20 and beyond and up to 10 in Welsh.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

Children achieve good standards in the development of their knowledge and understanding of the world.

Good features

- The children are able to talk about their environment and where they live, including the different types of houses, and can identify furniture for different rooms. They have an understanding of the idea of time and can draw about things they do at different times in the day. They can identify old and new. They can classify objects into living and non-living things and are able to name and describe external body parts. They use play dough well to create representational images including the human body and different fruit and vegetables. They use the senses effectively to describe food by its appearance, texture and smell.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

Physical development

Children achieve good standards in their physical development.

Good features

- The children use malleable materials effectively to make shapes and models. Manipulative control is developing through using a range of small and large equipment. They increasingly show accuracy when using crayons and scissors. They move confidently in the hall and the yard developing co-ordination and bodily control in a range of gross motor skills and are developing a variety of ball skills alone and with a partner.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

Creative development

Children achieve good standards in their creative development.

Good features

- The children explore and use a range of mediums to create pictures from life and imagination. They develop imaginative play through role-play activities. They sing songs from memory and recall rhymes.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

English

Standards of achievement are good in both key stages.

Good features

- In KS1, pupils achieve good standards in speaking. They express themselves clearly and confidently and respond well to questioning on a range of topics. They are keen to contribute when asked for their opinion and can justify their point of view.
- Key Stage 1 pupils display good listening skills when responding to activities and instructions from the teacher. They interact well with one another and use appropriate language in class discussions.
- By the end of KS1 most are reading fluently, some with expression and they can talk about what they have read when questioned. Pupils use phonic knowledge to build words and blend sounds to sound out unfamiliar words.
- Pupils make good progress in their writing. Many are able to spell monosyllabic and common polysyllabic words accurately and use phonetically plausible words when writing independently.
- In KS2, pupils respond enthusiastically when questioned by the teacher. By the end of the key stage, pupils express themselves confidently in discussion demonstrating an understanding of main points. They make relevant contributions and comments.
- Key Stage 2 pupils read confidently and fluently, the majority with expression and can discuss aspects of the text. Pupils benefit from working with 'reading buddies' which helps them to maintain interest and raise standards in reading particularly the less fluent readers towards the end of the key stage. Many pupils say that they enjoy reading and read regularly at home.
- Pupils' writing in KS2 shows imagination in descriptive writing and on the whole the handwriting style is clear, joined and legible.
- Pupils in both key stages write well for a variety of purposes and are confident to attempt spellings independently.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement are good in both key stages.

Good features

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- Younger pupils in KS1 can count forwards and back up to 20 confidently, including in multiples of five. They know odd and even numbers and ordinals well to 20, count in pennies and can give change in whole pounds.
 - Younger KS1 pupils have a sound knowledge of basic three-dimensional shapes and simple line symmetry. They can tell analogue time on the hour and measure length with non-standard measures.
 - Pupils in KS1 use vocabulary related to capacity well with increasing understanding through practical activities with water and containers. They compare directly containers of differing capacities and investigate purposefully how many times they can be filled to the top, nearly filled and filled half way.
 - The majority of older pupils in KS1 are secure with place value of numbers up to a 100 and have a good facility with ordering numbers. For example they can count on and back in tens or hundreds from any number to a 1000 in sequence. They become increasingly confident in comparing numbers and sequencing them in order of size.
 - Older pupils in KS1 sort and classify data when they sort shapes according to whether they have three or four sides. They have a good knowledge of a range of two and three-dimensional shapes. They can tell the time to quarter and half past the hour accurately.
 - Younger pupils in KS2 are very secure with number bonds up to 20. They can add two multiples of 10 for example, $30 + 40 = 70$ and use inverse addition effectively to confirm answers are correct. More able pupils have a good facility with converting capacity measures such as five litres into 5000 millilitres.
 - Older pupils in KS2 order decimal numbers rapidly; they solve real life money problems effectively through role-play. For example they set up stores to sell goods to their peers who buy them within a given budget. They record what they buy and explore different strategies to find the best way to calculate the change to be given and the total cost.
 - Pupils in KS2 use co-ordinates effectively to translate shapes on a graph using negative and positive numbers.
 - By the end of KS2 pupils are proficient with using common or decimal fractions and simple percentages. They become adept at devising problem solving techniques independently, in pairs and in groups.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

Science

Standards of achievement are good in both key stages.

Good features

- Younger pupils in KS1 are able to name and label the main external part of the human body well. They consolidate the names effectively through appropriate singing and playing games and label pictures accurately.
- Pupils early in KS1 investigate and record appropriately properties of materials which bend and squash. They mix household materials such as salt and flour with water after predicting the outcomes and giving reasons. They record their findings methodically.

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- Younger pupils in KS1 gain a good knowledge of sound and light and the forces of push and pull; they have a clear concept of living and non-living things.
 - Older pupils in KS1 carry out an investigation methodically to find out if plants need light to grow. They become more familiar with the need to make the test fair and making a variation. They make appropriate predictions, then observe and measure carefully.
 - Older pupils in KS1 have a sound knowledge of how materials such as wood, cotton, metals and glass are used in society. They know the application of forces can change the shape of some materials and investigate appropriately the effect of heat and cooling on chocolate.
 - By the end of KS1 pupils have a good knowledge of magnetism and electricity, including some of their applications and construct simple electric circuits.
 - Younger pupils in KS2 investigate which materials conduct electricity through the effective use of a simple circuit. They understand that like poles of magnets repel and opposite poles attract.
 - Pupils in KS2 demonstrate a clear understanding of how food chains illustrate feeding relationships in an ecosystem. They understand that food chains are all connected into food webs by their energy links and that it is nature's way of passing on energy. Pupils are at ease with their use of appropriate scientific language such as 'primary' and 'secondary' consumers in the context of ecosystems.
 - Pupils in KS2 know and can recall and describe the function of chlorophyll in plants; they have a good understanding of the function of different parts of a flower. They carry out investigations on ideal and poor conditions for the germinations of seeds with good understanding.
 - Pupils in KS2 know the relative positions of the earth and other planets in the solar system and have a good understanding of the effect the distance of a planet from the sun has on the length it takes for it to orbit the sun.
 - Pupils by the end of KS2 have a sound knowledge of forces, including direction of force and friction and understand that heavy ships float due to the force of up thrust by water. They demonstrate a secure understanding of the importance of a fair test when carrying out experiments on forces.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings, but a significant minority of pupils' understanding of a fair test in KS1 is insecure and younger pupils in KS2 seldom indicate the purpose of an investigation.

Welsh second language

Few lessons were seen during the inspection to form secure judgments about standards. However, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of written work along with clear evidence of the consistent and natural use of incidental Welsh throughout the school indicate that standards of achievement are good in both key stages.

Good features

- The majority of pupils listen attentively to teachers, respond enthusiastically to questions and work well with each other. They can sing a range of Welsh songs confidently from memory and with clear diction.

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- There is a good understanding of basic incidental Welsh by pupils and they are able to respond appropriately.
 - In KS1, pupils understand familiar words and phrases and make steady progress. They can recognise and name a range of colours in Welsh; they count to ten confidently and can answer ‘How Many?’ questions with a sentence including a number.
 - Younger pupils in KS1 can greet each other in Welsh and ask and express which food they prefer.
 - Older pupils follow instructions given in Welsh confidently during physical education lessons. They read sentences they write which use the word ‘a’ (and) well. They have a secure grasp of the use of prepositions and can spell a range of words independently.
 - As pupils progress appropriately through the key stages, they write short sentences to consolidate their oral work.
 - At the end of the KS1 pupils speak with intelligible pronunciation and intonation.
 - Younger pupils in KS2 demonstrate appropriate proficiency in recalling previous work. They listen and respond well to the stories in Welsh and reinforce their knowledge of names of common pet animals in Welsh through matching pictures to words and games such as word search.
 - By the end of KS2 pupils can write the date, know the days of the week and months of the year in Welsh confidently. They are able to write a short passage about themselves well using a story board as a base. They can express an ability to do something and state preferences.
 - They are able to recall and understand a range of familiar vocabulary and sentence patterns. Older pupils in KS2 have a good grasp of basic vocabulary including a range of colours and a significant number can count up to a hundred in Welsh confidently.

Shortcomings

There are no major shortcomings.

Design and technology

Standards of achievement are good in both key stages.

Good features

- Pupils throughout the school develop a sound knowledge and understanding of the purposes and importance of design and technology to modern living.
- Pupils undertake well an appropriate range of making activities, through food technology, construction; collage and modelling with reclaimed materials. They have a developing knowledge of basic materials and use simple equipment for cutting, shaping and joining.
- Younger pupils in KS1 begin to understand and are able to name, group, examine and describe a range of fruit and vegetables. They develop a sensory vocabulary and describe texture, smell and appearance and draw accurately what they observe.
- Pupils in KS1 establish sound design skills and can express whether or not if they are satisfied with their final design. They use scissors, glue, paper and card well to make a dragon.

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- Younger pupils in KS2 collaborate well in pairs to investigate and make stable structures from lollipop sticks. They use knowledge learnt to design photograph frames with appropriate detail in their technology work books. They design and make a healthy sandwich and a moving monster.
 - Older pupils begin to work to a design brief. They draw sketches to show simple mock-ups of their designs and are aware of some materials and joining methods that would enable them to realise their designs successfully.
 - Pupils structure the task carefully, acknowledge the importance of teamwork and ensure all members of their group are fully involved. They have good awareness of safety considerations when using simple tools and equipment.
 - In discussions pupils also show some understanding of the importance of practical or decorative 'design' features that influence a consumer's choice and in discussions make satisfactory links between their own work and possessions and the real world.

Shortcomings

There are no major shortcomings.

Information technology

Standards of achievement are good in both key stages.

Good features

- Pupils use a variety of information technology hardware confidently to enhance their learning, such as listening centres, video recorders and a digital camera. Some are becoming conversant with operating a new interactive whiteboard.
- Pupils develop their information technology skills steadily in a variety of contexts with increasing confidence and competence as they progress through the key stages.
- Pupils in KS1 develop good mouse and keyboard skills and can select and access features on a CD-ROM.
- Younger pupils in KS1 use a paint program well to create colourful pictures which many can print off independently. For example when drawing a racing car they use tools such as the eraser, paintbrush, fill and spray effectively. They begin to learn appropriate data handling skills.
- Older pupils in KS1 record and use directional language effectively to produce a sequence of instructions to control the movement of a programmable robotic device to make a large and small square.
- By the end of KS1 most pupils can save and retrieve their work and understand that information is stored in the computer. They construct bar graphs in colour and use a tool bar to change the size, type and colour of a font. They use data collected to insert in a graph unaided. They type with increasing skill using the shift key to create capitals, underline and add punctuation. They can insert a picture art and print off independently.
- Pupils in KS1 use a database to classify a group of objects and create a branch database. They collaborate well in groups as physically sort fruit and vegetables. They transfer this information to a computer database and sort and retrieve required information by carrying out a search; they record their results correctly and with understanding.

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- Pupils in KS2 develop skills to process and present their work combining text and graphics to good effect.
 - Younger pupils in KS2 enter appropriate logo commands to move a turtle in different directions on a computer screen. When conducting a survey they input information independently.
 - In some areas of the curriculum pupils in KS2 use the Internet appropriately to search for information linked to their work; they also use CD-ROMs effectively to support their learning.
 - Key Stage 2 pupils give a sequence of accurate instructions to make their screen cursor move in different directions. They show that they can apply and extend this knowledge effectively.
 - In KS2 some pupils can create a spreadsheet, explore the effects of changing data and produce a graph to display the information.
 - Older pupils in KS2 use data logging effectively to control a program to find the temperature of seed in the classroom, fridge and outside the building.
 - Older KS2 pupils enter data and formulae on to a spreadsheet. They explore ways to use the spreadsheet to calculate the total a set of numbers in a range of cells. They understand well that computers can calculate cost and adjust automatically for variables entered.
 - Pupils in KS2 can access CD ROMS to download and import images for topic work such as World War II casualties.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

History

No lessons were observed during the inspection in KS1. Evidence from discussion with pupils and teachers, scrutinising teachers' planning and pupils' work indicate that standards of achievement are good. In KS2 standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- In KS1, pupils compare their own homes with those from the past. They know how life has changed since the Victorian era and can describe the changes.
- They use a range of historical sources including text and photographs to research information about the past including designers and architects and discuss famous historical people and write about them, for example Florence Nightingale.
- They use diary entries relating to the Great Fire of London to sequence historical events and are able to give reasons why people in the past acted as they did.
- In KS2 pupils recall facts from previous lessons and use a range of resources to research information about Roman soldiers. They can explain why the Romans were successful in battle and respond well to questioning.
- Towards the end of the key stage pupils demonstrate a good understanding of what life was like during World War II by writing interesting accounts about different characters of that time.

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- Following visits to Blaenavon iron works and the Museum of Welsh Life at St Fagan's, pupils show that they have relevant knowledge and understanding about how the past in the their own locality has helped to fashion the present.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

Geography

Standards of achievement are good in both key stages.

Good features

- In KS1 pupils demonstrate a secure and developing knowledge of the locality. They can identify cities on a map of the British Isles and are able to produce simple journey plans from Pontypool to other places.
- Pupils can recall the points of the compass and are confident in giving directions for sight seeing in Dublin using the interactive whiteboard.
- They are developing skills associated with the use of maps and display good map reading skills. Many understand and use four figure grid references successfully. They are able to draw plans of a room and know the importance of using a key to read plans and maps.
- In letters they write to children of Botswana they show that they are able to generate questions about another place. They understand the difference between physical and human features through comparing and contrasting the different countries and observe and describe features expressing opinions about them.
- In KS2, pupils use photographs to discuss changes and developments in the local area.
- They use information technology to develop their geographical enquiry skills and develop a growing understanding of the relationship between people and the environment. Through collecting data and the use of graphs younger pupils discuss the types of litter that affect the environment and older pupils investigate the effect of traffic pollution near the school. They express their own opinions regarding these issues.
- By the end of the key stage, pupils are confident in applying mapping skills and use six figure grid references to find places in different countries and can identify places at different ground height. They discuss confidentially physical and human geographical features to compare and contrast Wales and Peru and use information from maps to identify and discuss the similarities and differences between the cities of Cardiff and Lima.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

Art

Standards of achievement are good in both key stages.

Good features

- Throughout both key stages, pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of artists from different periods and cultures. They make mosaics linking to the Roman period and projects with local artists have contributed to the good standards achieved by pupils. These include paintings developed with Mary Lloyd Jones, a local artist, and links with Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre for printmaking.
- Pupils in both key stages use sketch books effectively to record images from direct observation and memory.
- In KS1, pupils use photographs to discuss aspects of pattern and shape. They explore long and short lines to reproduce patterns and shapes that they observe from houses. They enjoy drawing pictures from observation or memory. They are able to use shading

effectively with pencil and charcoal to produce pictures using dark and light tones. They develop observational skills showing attention to detail through side portraits of their friend. They enjoy using paint to mix colours and producing pictures with 'blow pens'.

- Pupils use paint effectively to express their feelings from listening to music.
- In KS2 pupils investigate a range of materials for designing a collage. They explore possibilities and use imagination to discuss ideas in groups in relation to pattern, colour and texture. They use ICT to assist with developing pattern and to research information about designs used in Celtic jewellery. Pupils show understanding of colour mixing using paint and use shades of colour as well as pencil shading for still life studies. Decorated pots that the pupils have made show an understanding of geometric design.

Shortcomings

- Some pupils in KS1 showed limited use of line and detail when drawing from memory.
- Techniques for using shading effectively are underdeveloped for some pupils in KS2.

Music

Few lessons were observed in KS1 but evidence gained from records and detailed teachers' planning and discussion with pupils indicates that there is a systematic approach to improving standards in music. Standards are judged to be good in both key stages.

Good features

- In both key stages pupils enjoy singing and have a good repertoire of songs. They sing with clear diction, good phrasing and pitch.
- In KS1, pupils clap rhythms showing an awareness of timing, beat and pace. They use silence to good effect. They use a selection of percussion instruments to explore a range of sounds.
- They listen to a range of music and use paint appropriately to express their opinions about the mood it creates.
- Evidence provided by teachers indicates that pupils select suitable sounds effects to create a composition relating to the story of Gelert from traditional Welsh folklore.
- In KS2, pupils sing in two-part harmony and maintain their parts well. They understand and use musical terminology effectively and can identify that a minor key is suitable for composing a sad song.
- Pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of a range of percussion instruments by making imaginative and thoughtful suggestions when selecting suitable sounds to create the mood of a rainforest in a whole-class composition. They show good sense of rhythm and can follow the lead of a conductor, whether fellow pupil or teacher, to perform their composed piece. They reflect on, discuss and evaluate the sounds they make and amend where necessary to achieve the sounds they want.
- A large number of interested pupils in the school are given opportunities for instrumental tuition in a range of musical instruments including guitar, recorder, clarinet flute and keyboard. These pupils are progressing well and their growing ability to read music helps raise overall standards in the school.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

Physical Education

Although the full range of physical education activities was not seen, evidence provided by the school confirms that standards of achievement are good in both key stages.

Good features

- In both key stages pupils understand the effects and health benefits of exercise on the body; they know how to prepare the body for exercise and why they should cool down after physical activity.
- The majority of pupils in KS1 have good hand eye co-ordination and good concentration. They listen well to instructions and work hard to improve their performance.
- Younger pupils in KS1 practise and develop their sending and receiving skills with a quoit well, correctly and safely. They evaluate their own and others' performances.
- Older pupils KS1 are able to demonstrate rolls, balances and travelling movements on the floor when they warm up for a lesson. They go on to throw bean-bags high and low with a good range of catching skills. They are well aware of space and avoid collisions successfully when throwing and catching a large ball on the move.
- Younger pupils in KS2 co-operate well when taking part in athletic team relays. They understand the importance of a smooth handover to improve the performance of the team. Pupils consider actions and suggest appropriate improvements to enhance their performance.
- By the end of the KS2, the majority of pupils achieve good standards in swimming, survival and life saving. They visit a local leisure centre to experience appropriate outdoor pursuits and develop the skills they learn effectively.

Shortcomings

- There are no major shortcomings.

Religious Education

This subject is inspected in the Section 23 report.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress Since the Last Inspection

There were six key issues for action identified in the previous report.

The school needs to:

- Develop the work for pupils with learning difficulties and, in particular, take steps to improve standards of literacy.

There has been an improvement in the standard of achievement of pupils with learning difficulties through targeting and increased development of their work. Standards of literacy have improved significantly.

- Improve levels of attendance on a consistent basis and ensure that registers are marked in accordance with Welsh Office requirements.

Attendance levels have increased significantly since the previous inspection, and the school is making steady progress towards its target attendance of 94.6 per cent.

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- Ensure that priorities set out in the SDP have clearly defined targets for development and improvement.

The SDP has clearly defined targets for development and improvement which has a good effect on school improvement overall.

- Improve standards in design and technology in KS2 and information technology throughout the school.

Standards have improved significantly in both these subjects which are now good in both key stages.

- Continue to refine schemes of work and planning documents so that outcomes in terms of achievements are more closely linked to class activities.

The school has effective detailed schemes of work in all subjects and planning in the medium and short-term is closely linked to class activities.

- Develop the work in music in KS2.

Work in music has developed well and standards have improved overall, particularly in composing.

8.2 Key Issues for Action

In order to continue to improve the school needs to:

- maintain the good standards in all subjects in the NC;
- ensure consistency in the differentiation of work in all classes;
- * continue to embed the recently agreed effective strategies for developing key skills, particularly in writing throughout the school.

* The school has identified this area of for development in its current SDP.

APPENDIX

A. Basic Information About the School

Name of School	St Francis RC Primary School
School type	Roman Catholic Voluntary
Age-range of pupils	4-11
Address of school	Manor Road Abersychan Pontypool
Post-Code	NP4 7DY
Telephone Number	01495 772566

Headteacher	Mr F Fulgoni
Date of appointment	1 January 1998
Chair of Governors	Fr D Hayman
Registered Inspector	Mr P D W Edwards
Dates of inspection	4-6 May 2004

B. School Data and Indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>								
Year group	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
Number of pupils	8	16	15	14	13	9	13	88

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	5	0.4	5.4

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil : teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery and special classes)	16.3:1
Average class size, excluding nursery and special classes	22
Teacher (fte) : class ratio	0.74:1

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>				
	R	KS1	KS2	Whole school
Term 1	92.8	94.4	93.6	93.7
Term 2	95.75	95.5	92.9	93.74
Term 3	95.8	95.2	93.9	94.9

Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	0
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C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

END OF KEY STAGE 1: 2003

National Curriculum Assessment KS1 Results: 2003			Number of pupils in Y2: 14					
Percentage of pupils at each level								
			D	W	1	2	3	4
ENGLISH:	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	14	43	43	0
		National	0	4	14	63	20	0
EN: Reading	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	14	43	43	0
		National	0	4	14	55	27	0
EN: Writing	Teacher Assessment	School	0	3	14	78	7	0
		National	0	5	14	70	11	0
EN: Speaking and listening	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	7	50	43	0
		National	0	3	12	63	22	0
MATHEMATICS	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	0	50	50	0
		National	0	2	11	63	24	0
SCIENCE	Teacher Assessment	School	0	0	14	43	43	0
		National	0	2	10	66	22	0

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 2 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment

In the school:	86	In Wales:	79
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D Pupils who have been disapplied under sections 364 and 365 of the Education Act 1996 or, in the case of the Task/Test were absent.

W Pupils who are "working towards" level 1, but have not yet achieved the standards needed for level 1.

END OF KEY STAGE 2: 2003

National Curriculum Assessment KS2 Results: 2003

Number of pupils in Y6: 9

As the number of pupils eligible for assessment at the end of Key Stage 2 in was greater than four but fewer than 10, overall performance indicators only are included

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 4 in mathematics, science, and either English or Welsh (first language)

by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school:	67	In the school:	89
In Wales:	70	In Wales:	70

D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection

The inspection was carried out by a team of three inspectors over a period of 2.5 days.

- Pre-inspection meetings were held with the headteacher, staff and governing body.
- Fifteen parents attended a meeting with two members of the inspection team.
- Thirty-six questionnaire responses were analysed and summarised.
- All documentation submitted by the school was analysed and discussed, including the SDP, policy and curriculum documents and teachers' planning files.
- Pupils were observed as they arrived and departed from school and during the midday and other breaks.
- At various times during the day, inspectors took the opportunity to talk to pupils and to discuss their work.
- Forty-five lessons or part-lessons were observed.
- Pupils were heard reading and were examined in their knowledge and understanding of English, mathematics, science and other subjects.
- A wide range of pupils' written and other work was examined in each class.
- Inspectors discussed pupils' work with class teachers and examined assessment records.
- Discussions were also held with the headteacher, curriculum co-ordinators and other staff.
- The work of pupils with SEN was examined.
- Minutes of meetings and documents relating to the financial management of the school were discussed.
- Budget figures were examined and discussed with the headteacher.
- Attendance and pupil records were inspected.
- Inspectors attended acts of collective worship.
- Two members of the team met teachers and governors to give an oral feedback after the inspection.

E. Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team

Inspector	Type	Aspect Responsibilities	Subject Responsibilities
Mr Phillip Edwards	RgI	Context Main findings of the report. Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning. Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Teaching Curriculum Quality of self evaluation and planning for improvement Leadership and efficiency Progress since last inspection Key issues	mathematics science Welsh 2 nd language design and technology information technology physical education
Elaine Perry	Team	Behaviour and attitudes Assessment, recording and reporting Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Provision for pupils with SEN Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	children under five English history geography art music
Charles Brentnall	Lay	Attendance Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions Partnership with industry	

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