

**Inspection under Section 10 of the
Schools Inspections Act 1996**

Welshpool High School

**Salop Road
Welshpool
Powys
SY21 7RE**

Report by H M Inspectors

School Number: 666 4013

Date of Inspection: 4 – 8 October 2004



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi Dros Addysg
A Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate
For Education and Training in Wales

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Welshpool High School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose of inspection is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents more information about their child's school.

The inspection of Welshpool High School took place between 4 October and 8 October 2004. A team of Her Majesty's Inspectors from Estyn, led by Ray Owen, undertook the inspection. The inspection team also comprised a nominee from the school and a lay inspector. Estyn is a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales.

The team was required to report on the standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management and the contribution made by the school to its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The five-point scale used to represent all inspection judgements in this report is as follows:

Grade 1	good with outstanding features
Grade 2	good features and no important shortcomings
Grade 3	good features outweigh shortcomings
Grade 4	some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
Grade 5	many important shortcomings

Year groups and key stages

Schools use a common system of numbering year groups from the start of compulsory schooling to 18 years age. This system emphasises the importance of continuity and eases communication among schools, governing bodies, parents and LEAs.

The term 'Reception' (R) refers to the year group of pupils in a primary school who attain the age of 5 during the academic year. Year 1 refers to the year group of pupils who attain the age of 6 during the academic year and so on. Year 13 is the year group of students who attain the age of 18 during the academic year.

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y 1	Y 2	Y 3	Y 4	Y 5	Y 6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y 10	Y 11	Y 12	Y 13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The national curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

Key stage 1	Year 1 and Year 2
Key stage 2	Year 3 to Year 6
Key stage 3	Year 7 to Year 9
Key stage 4	Year 10 and Year 11

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Context

The nature of the provider

- 1 Welshpool High School is an 11 – 18 mixed comprehensive situated on the outskirts of the market town of Welshpool. The school has pleasant, open surroundings with large playing fields, adjacent to the modern, attractive 'Flash' leisure centre and community facility. The school has 1,070 pupils on roll compared with 746 pupils on roll at the time of the previous inspection in 1999. There are 141 students in the sixth form. Pupils are drawn from an area that includes the towns of Welshpool and Montgomery and the surrounding villages. About 1% of pupils come from homes where Welsh is the predominant language; the great majority of pupils come from English speaking homes. Only 0.6% of pupils come from minority ethnic groups. The area the school serves has a wide socio-economic mix and 13% of pupils are entitled to free school meals.
- 2 A full range of ability is represented among the pupils. There are 41 pupils with statements of SEN and 214 on the SEN register.
- 3 The school continues to develop its facilities. Additional classrooms, laboratories and specialist sixth form facilities will soon become available. Work is about to begin on creating an all-weather pitch that will have community access.
- 4 There is a rapidly expanding sixth form. The school seeks to enable the majority of pupils to stay on at 16 to study academic and vocational courses.
- 5 The school has invested considerably in ICT and is quickly developing its use in the classroom with multi-media projectors and whiteboards.

The school's priorities and targets

- 6 Welshpool High School's mission statement is 'Raising achievement by raising expectations'. The school identifies its main priorities in the School Development Plan (SDP) 2004-2006. These include:
 - maintaining improvement by continuing to develop teaching and learning;
 - developing thinking skills;
 - mentoring and monitoring of pupil progress;
 - providing extra-curricular opportunities in sport, music and drama; and
 - developing the ethos of reward, encouragement and support.

- 7 The SDP (2004-2006) also sets out the school's test and examination targets. These are:

Key Stage 3 Tests

Mathematics	80% of pupils to achieve Level 5+
English	80% of pupils to achieve Level 5+
Science	90% of pupils to achieve Level 5+
CSI	70% of pupils to achieve Level 5+

Key Stage 4 Examinations

5+ A*-C at GCSE	75%
5+ A*-G at GCSE	98%
Points score/pupil	50
CSI	55%

Summary

- 8 Welshpool High School is a very good school with many outstanding features. Since the last inspection, there have been significant improvements in the quality of education and in the standards achieved by pupils. Whilst agreeing with many of the judgements made by the school in its self-evaluation report, the inspection team has given a higher grade for four key questions and, a lower grade for one.

Table of grades awarded

- 9 The inspection team judged the school's work as follows:

Key question	Inspection grade
1 How well do learners achieve?	1
2 How effective are teaching, training and assessment?	1
3 How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?	3
4 How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1
5 How effective are leadership and strategic management?	1
6 How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?	1
7 How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?	1

Standards

- 10 The school's results in test and public examinations are very good, with pupils achieving well in relation to their ability.
- 11 In the key stage 3 (KS3) tests, results have improved steadily over the last few years. Compared with similar schools in Wales, the school is in the top quarter for the core subject indicator (CSI), which is the percentage of pupils achieving at least Level 5 in each of English or Welsh, mathematics and science. Results are also better than the average for all schools in Powys.
- 12 In key stage 4 (KS4), GCSE results are very good. In recent years, compared with similar schools in Wales, the school has been in the top quarter for the percentage of pupils achieving five GCSE passes at A* -C, as well as for the CSI. These results are better than the average for all schools in Powys. As in Wales as a whole, girls perform better than boys in National Curriculum (NC) tests and GCSE.

- 13 In the sixth form, the school's AS and A level results have been consistently good, over recent years.
- 14 Standards in key skills are good. Pupils listen very well and are keen to volunteer answers to teachers' questions. Most pupils read fluently and write well, often at length. Pupils apply numeracy skills well in mathematics and in many other subjects. They also use ICT skills well to research and present work.
- 15 Bilingual competence is satisfactory.
- 16 Pupils' progress in learning is very good. Pupils of all abilities acquire new knowledge and skills, and understand what they need to do to improve. They develop very good personal, social and learning skills, and show very positive attitudes to learning, and respect the views and beliefs of others.
- 17 Pupils' behaviour is very good both in classes and around the school.
- 18 Attendance and punctuality are very good.

The quality of education and training

- 19 The quality of teaching in all lessons observed was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
23%	61%	15%	1%	0%

- 20 There were outstanding features in one out of every four lessons, and good features with no important shortcomings in over eight out of every ten lessons. This well exceeds the targets set by the Welsh Assembly Government for the quality of teaching to be at least satisfactory in 95% of lessons and good or better in 50% of lessons.
- 21 Teachers and pupils relate well to each other and teachers plan lessons to make sure that they meet all pupils' learning needs.
- 22 Sixth form students benefit from a disciplined, yet informal, learning atmosphere that enables individuals and groups to work effectively. Teachers regularly and constructively discuss with students the progress they are making.
- 23 The school's assessment procedures meet statutory requirements and there is a clear assessment policy that teachers effectively put into practice. Teachers accurately assess pupils' work, and provide pupils with constructive guidance on what they need to do to make progress. However, in a few cases, the marking provides pupils with little more than a grade for effort and attainment.
- 24 Parents receive three reports each year. These are based on a detailed tracking system that measures pupil progress over each term.

- 25 The school generally meets pupils' learning needs, and pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum. Many pupils' learning experiences are also enriched through the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school.
- 26 The school does not meet the statutory requirement for an act of daily collective worship. Also, the school is not able to offer the Welsh short-course to Year 10 pupils because of current staffing difficulties.
- 27 The school has very good links with local primary schools and the wider community, including local employers and Careers Wales. It has good links with parents.
- 28 The school has appropriate equal opportunities policies and a clear determination to provide access to the curriculum, and opportunities for all to achieve their potential. The effectiveness of the social inclusion strategy is an outstanding feature of the school. Pupils are very well supported by their teachers.
- 29 Strategies and procedures to increase attendance have led to significant improvements. The school has a very effective reward system that celebrates both academic and pastoral achievements.
- 30 The school has effective policies and procedures to deal with poor behaviour, when it arises.
- 31 The provision for pupils with special educational needs meets statutory requirements. The individual education plans (IEPs) provide teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) with clear guidance on what pupils need to do to meet their targets.

Leadership and management

- 32 The school achieves its overall aim of 'raising achievement by raising expectations' very successfully. It has clear aims, values and targets that are familiar to all. This is an outstanding feature.
- 33 The senior management team leads the school very well. The headteacher provides very clear, purposeful direction that has improved the quality of educational provision and the standards pupils achieve.
- 34 The school has good procedures to promote equality for all. It meets statutory requirements in respect of racial equality, disability and looked after children.
- 35 The school has very thorough procedures to monitor staff performance. This information is used effectively to put together the programme for continuous professional development. Senior managers work effectively with middle managers to achieve the departmental performance targets.
- 36 The governing body is very supportive and fulfils its responsibilities well.

- 37 The school has a well-established culture of self-evaluation that focuses clearly on standards and the quality of teaching.
- 38 The school has enough well-qualified teachers in all areas of the curriculum. Where needed, classroom assistants support teachers and pupils very well.
- 39 Resources have improved since the last inspection. In almost all subjects, there are enough good quality resources to enable teachers to teach and learners to learn effectively.
- 40 The school uses and maintains its accommodation well. The school has been successful in overcoming the inevitable difficulties caused by the increasing number of pupils. There are appropriate plans to address this issue, through the acquisition of additional space.
- 41 The school manages its resources very efficiently. Financial planning, administration and control are significant strengths. In view of the achievement of its pupils and the quality of its provision for them, the school represents very good value for money.

Recommendations

- R1 Reduce the gap in performance between boys and girls at key stage 3 and key stage 4.
- R2 Extend further the good practice in marking and grading of work so that all pupils receive consistently high quality written feedback on their work. *
- R3 Continue to develop the leadership skills of middle managers. *
- R4 Ensure that schemes of work contain clear indications of cross-curricular themes and issues such as Cwricwlwm Cymreig, sustainable development, and global citizenship.
- R5 Ensure that the school complies with statutory curriculum requirements by providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and providing a short course in Welsh to all key stage 4 pupils. *

(* The SDP for 2004-2006 includes actions to address these recommendations.)

- 42 The governing body is responsible for amending its current development plan to incorporate action in response to all the recommendations within 45 working days of receiving the report, showing what the school is going to do about the recommendations. The school will circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents at the school.

Standards

Key question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 1: Good, with outstanding features

- 43 In its self-evaluation report, the school judged this key question as Grade 2. The overall findings of the inspection team match those of the school. However, the inspection team judged pupils' achievements to be Grade 1 because there are some outstanding features.
- 44 The school's results in public examinations are very good. Pupils achieve well in relation to their ability. In the key stage 3 tests, results have improved consistently over the last few years. Compared with similar schools in Wales, the school is in the top quarter for the core subject indicator (CSI). Results are also better than the average for all schools in Powys.
- 45 In key stage 4, GCSE results are very good. In recent years, compared with similar schools in Wales, the school has been in the top quarter for the percentage of pupils achieving five GCSE passes at A* -C, as well as for the CSI. In 2003, the school was in the top quarter of similar schools for the percentage of pupils achieving 5 GCSE passes at grades A*-G. As in Wales as a whole, girls perform better than boys in NC tests and GCSE. However, the gap between girls and boys is greater than in Wales as a whole. This reflects the situation in Powys as a whole.
- 46 Pupils have good communication skills. Listening skills are very good. Pupils pay careful attention to what teachers and fellow-pupils say. Pupils' speaking skills are good. They are keen to volunteer answers and are usually confident and articulate when providing them. Reading and writing skills are good. Most pupils read fluently, and with confidence. They write well, often at length, and take care with the presentation of work.
- 47 Numeracy skills are good. Pupils develop and apply these skills well in mathematics and several other subjects, such as when measuring or drawing to scale. There are gaps in the knowledge of a small minority of pupils and, in some tasks, they do not exploit the skills that they possess.
- 48 Information technology skills are good. Pupils use ICT well to obtain information or produce interesting work. Most pupils develop a good range of information technology skills.
- 49 Bilingual competence is satisfactory. A small, but growing, number of pupils study Welsh first language to GCSE, and a few also study a small number of subjects through the medium of Welsh.

- 50 Pupils' progress in learning is very good. Pupils of all abilities acquire new knowledge and skills, and understand what they need to do to improve. In a few classes, pupils are sometimes held back because they carry on practising skills that are already secure.
- 51 Pupils develop very good personal, social and learning skills, and show very positive attitudes to learning. This is an outstanding feature. Pupils concentrate well, persevere with tasks and ask appropriate questions to find out more about things. There is a strong culture that it is acceptable and respectable to work hard and achieve highly.
- 52 Pupils' behaviour is very good, both in classes and around the school. They respect their teachers and fellow pupils. In a very small number of classes, a few pupils do not work as hard as they could. Standards of behaviour rarely fall below an acceptable level.
- 53 Attendance and punctuality are very good. Punctuality for lessons is outstanding. It ensures that lessons start promptly and pupils do not waste learning time.
- 54 Pupils develop a good understanding of other cultures through work in subjects such as English, history, geography, religious education, art and music. They respect the views, traditions and beliefs of others.

Sixth form

- 55 After GCSE, the great majority of pupils continue with their studies, either in the school sixth form or at a further education college. The proportion entering the school's sixth form has been about 40% for many years, but has recently increased to over 50%.
- 56 At A-Level, the school's results have been consistently good in recent years. In 2003, results were better than both Powys and Wales in the proportion of grades A-C and in the average points score per pupil. In 2004, results from a much larger cohort were not as good, but the pass rate was high, and two thirds of entries achieved at least grade C. In the last three years, some subjects, notably mathematics, biology, physics and geography, have achieved consistently good results. Results in English and, in particular, history have been outstanding.
- 57 Standards in key skills are good. Listening skills are very good, whilst skills in speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and use of ICT are all good. Students are confident and can offer thoughtful responses to teacher questions and their written work is detailed and always well presented. Their approach to private study tasks is mature and conscientious.
- 58 Attendance, behaviour and punctuality are all very good.

The quality of education and training

Key question 2: How effective are teaching, training and assessment?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

59 In its self-evaluation report, the school judged this key question as Grade 2. The findings of the inspection team match those of the school. However, the inspection team judged the quality of teaching and assessment to be Grade 1 because there are some outstanding features.

60 The quality of teaching in all lessons observed was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
23%	61%	15%	1%	0%

61 In key stages 3 and 4 there were outstanding features in one out of every four lessons. There were good features with no important shortcomings in over eight out of every ten lessons. This well exceeds the target set by the Welsh Assembly Government for the quality of teaching to be at least satisfactory in 95% of lessons and good or better in 50% of lessons. The outstanding features of the teaching include:

- excellent working relationships between teachers and pupils that are based on mutual respect and create a classroom ethos that promotes learning;
- the very wide range of activities that meet the individual learning needs of all pupils; and
- very carefully planned and structured lessons that proceed at a good pace and maintain the interest of pupils from start to finish.

62 In addition, there were many good features, including:

- the detailed knowledge teachers have of the subjects that they teach;
- the use of assessment to help pupils to know and understand how they can improve their work;
- the explanations of learning objectives at the start of lessons and consolidation of pupil learning with effective conclusions;
- the level of challenge, and use of open questions by teachers, that helps to develop pupils' thinking skills; and
- well presented demonstrations and explanations of processes and techniques in practical lessons.

- 63 In a very few lessons, however, teachers tolerate a low level of pupil chatter, overuse worksheets, some of which are inappropriate, and require pupils to copy text from the board with no clear learning objective.
- 64 The school meets statutory requirements for assessment and fulfils the regulations of examination boards. Teachers effectively apply the school's clear assessment, recording and reporting policy. They accurately assess pupils' work, and use this information well to plan subsequent lessons. In most instances, the quality of marking in exercise books is clear, detailed, and provides pupils with constructive guidance on what they need to do to make progress. However, in a few cases, the marking provides pupils with little more than a grade for effort and attainment.
- 65 Parents and guardians receive three reports each year. The reports are based on a detailed system that tracks pupil progress over the period of a term. This process is particularly effective because it includes target setting that involves the pupils in regular self-evaluation with their form tutor. Parents receive good quality information about pupil progress.

Sixth form

- 66 In the lessons observed in the sixth form, there were outstanding features in one out of every ten lessons, and good features with no important shortcomings in eight out of every ten lessons. Where the teaching is outstanding, the teachers:
- establish a disciplined, yet informal, atmosphere that is conducive both to individual and group work;
 - present relevant information, and probe and challenge students to consider different viewpoints; and
 - share specific objectives with students, including examination requirements.
- 67 A shortcoming is the slow pace and lack of variety in the learning tasks in a small number of lessons.
- 68 The quality of assessment, recording and reporting is very good. Regular and constructive discussions with teachers provide students with a clear indication of how they can make progress and achieve their potential.

Key question 3: How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

- 69 In its self-evaluation report, the school judged this key question as Grade 2. The findings of the inspection team match most of the judgements made by the school. However, the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship and a short course in Welsh to all key stage 4 pupils. This is deemed to be an important shortcoming, and, as a result, the inspection team awarded a Grade 3.
- 70 The school meets pupils' learning needs and pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum. The curriculum caters well for the whole range of pupils' needs, and enables a large number of pupils to make good progress and fulfil their potential. The school is clearly determined to implement its appropriate equal opportunities policy.
- 71 Many pupils' learning experiences are also enriched through the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered by the school. It uses the locality and the community particularly well. There are very strong partnerships with arts organisations.
- 72 Many subjects contribute well towards pupils' personal and social development, particularly at key stage 4 and in the sixth form. There is also an appropriate and relevant PSE programme throughout the school that takes very good account of careers education and work related education.
- 73 The school promotes effectively pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have many opportunities to reflect about themselves, and consider the perspectives and circumstances of others. The focus on building a climate of achievement in a happy, civilised environment builds pupils' sense of self-esteem and fosters co-operation between them. Pupils have many and varied opportunities to develop cultural awareness. However, collective worship does not contribute enough to pupils' spiritual development and the school does not meet statutory requirements for this. This is an important shortcoming.
- 74 The school has good links with parents and very good partnerships with the community. The links with primary schools are very good and are contributing to the popularity of the school in the area. These school links include bridging units in core subjects, and programmes to assess and act upon pupil disengagement.
- 75 There are long standing, successful partnerships with local employers both to develop learning activities in school and to provide placements for the extensive work-related provision in key stage 4 and the sixth form. Particular strengths of these partnerships are:
- the very strong links with Careers Wales;

- the social inclusion schemes in key stage 4; and
- the career-related placements for advanced level students.

- 76 In turn, the school's development of vocational courses takes careful account of the current needs and strategic development of the local economy.
- 77 There are two strands to the development of pupils' bilingual skills. The first is the very small scale, but growing, provision for the study of Welsh as a first language and the humanities subjects through the medium of Welsh. However, for the great majority of pupils, bilingualism is developed through Welsh as a second language. Recently, unanticipated staffing difficulties are preventing the school from providing the short-course in year 10. This is an important shortcoming.
- 78 The School Eisteddfod is a major part of school life for which all departments make well thought out contributions to the Cwricwlwm Cymreig. Displays about the eisteddfod give a prominence to the Welsh language. However, there are few bilingual signs.
- 79 Although several subjects, and some extra-curricular activities, provide useful inputs to the themes of sustainable development and global citizenship, there is a need to strengthen coverage of them. Schemes of work do not clearly identify the activities that can promote these themes.

Key question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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- 80 In its self-evaluation report, the school judged this key question as Grade 1. The findings of the inspection team match the judgements made by the school.
- 81 The effectiveness of the social inclusion strategy is an outstanding feature of the school. Teachers, form tutors, and heads of year, all provide very good support and guidance to pupils. Pupils also support each other very well in their work. They know that, if they report personal concerns, members of staff will deal with the issues quickly and sensitively. The school works very well with the relevant agencies to support pupils who, for example, have difficult home circumstances or who are looked after by their local authorities.
- 82 Strategies and procedures to increase attendance have led to significant improvements. The school has a very effective reward system that celebrates a range of achievements, including very good attendance. This motivates pupils and students throughout the school.
- 83 There are well-documented and appropriate procedures in place at the school for dealing with pupils' health and safety and child protection issues. The school works in pupils' best interests to safeguard their welfare and promote their development.
- 84 Pupils who have problems in controlling their behaviour are given effective additional support. While there was no evidence of bullying or aggressive behaviour, the school has good policies and procedures to deal effectively with these problems, if they arise.
- 85 Senior members of staff make formal arrangements to consult with pupils about issues that concern them. There is also a school council. However, a few pupils do not feel that they are able to influence developments in the school enough.
- 86 The department for learning support takes account of the statutory framework for inclusive education. Pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) are clear and useful. The SEN Co-ordinator informs all teachers about the content of the pupils' IEPs, so that teachers know what the pupils' targets are and what they need to do to achieve them. Teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) work very well as a team and with a wide range of additional specialist support agencies. This is an outstanding feature.
- 87 Disabled pupils are able to access most areas of the school and to follow relevant areas of the mainstream curriculum. No pupil is denied access to any aspect of the curriculum. The school promotes good race relations through a number of subjects and whole school activities.

Leadership and management

Key question 5: How effective are leadership and strategic management?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

- 88 In its self-evaluation report, the school judged this key question as Grade 2. The findings of the inspection team match those of the school. However, the inspection team judged the quality of leadership and management to be Grade 1 because there are some outstanding features.
- 89 The school achieves its overall aim of 'raising achievement by raising expectations' very successfully. It has clear aims, values and targets that are familiar to all. This is an outstanding feature that has contributed significantly to the growing popularity of the school since the last inspection. Teachers and non-teaching staff, at all levels, work together very effectively to make the school a place where pupils want to learn and success is rewarded.
- 90 The senior management team leads the school very well. The headteacher provides very clear, purposeful direction that has improved the quality of educational provision and the standards pupils achieve.
- 91 The school takes good account of the Welsh Assembly Government's priorities, as set out in 'The Learning Country'. In particular, managers are working effectively to ensure that:
- the school very effectively provides vulnerable pupils with tailor-made help that they need to succeed;
 - pupils continue to make good progress when they move from primary school to secondary school; and
 - the school broadens its curriculum to offer vocational courses and training for 14-19 year olds.
- 92 The head teacher and governors have prioritised the motivation and development of their staff as the key to running a successful school, and they have established very effective systems to achieve this. Senior managers are working well with department managers and support staff to identify and meet training needs and to link this in with performance management objectives. The school provides an effective programme of induction and mentoring for newly qualified teachers.
- 93 Governors provide very good support to the school and they fulfil their responsibilities well. In making decisions about the strategic development of the school, governors use a good range of information. They monitor the quality of provision well but are not involved enough in the development planning process.

- 94 The governing body fulfils most of its legal duties effectively. However, the school does not meet statutory requirement for collective worship and does not provide a Welsh language course for all pupils at key stage 4.

Key question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
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- 95 The school's self-evaluation report is comprehensive, evaluative and clearly identifies the school's strengths and weaknesses. Although the findings of the inspection team match those of the school, some key questions have been given a higher grade and, for one, a lower grade.
- 96 The school has a well-established culture of self-evaluation. An outstanding feature of the school's work on self-evaluation is that it clearly focuses on standards and the quality of teaching.
- 97 The school uses a very broad range of evidence, including regular and systematic classroom observations, analysis of performance information, reviews of pupils' work and surveys. There is a very thorough and detailed analysis of test and examination results. The school collects information on the performance of individual pupils and uses it to track pupils' progress and to identify any underachievement. The school also seeks and acts on the views of pupils and parents.
- 98 At all levels, members of staff are accountable for their work and have a clear understanding of how well they are performing. Much of the self-evaluation work is appropriately concerned with the priorities identified in the school and departmental development plans. The school is developing a more systematic approach to the writing of subject reviews. These reviews are generally evaluative and closely linked to the priorities in departmental development plans, but some do not contain enough detail or the right type of content.
- 99 The priorities for development at all levels are firmly based on the findings from the self-evaluation processes. There is a strong and effective link between the evaluations that come from performance management arrangements and professional development activities.
- 100 The SDP appropriately sets out priorities and actions over a two-year period. Within this period, the school also takes account of other issues that emerge from its self-evaluation processes, for example, from the analysis of test and examination results and classroom observations. Improvement plans contain clear information on priorities and targets, planned actions, timescales and resources. These plans link well to professional development activities. Where appropriate, departmental plans relate well to the priorities identified in the school development plan and they provide a suitable guide to the work of subject departments. Even though about a third of the written plans

have little detail, the departments concerned still plan effectively to improve standards and quality.

- 101 Overall, the school's work on evaluation and improvement planning is very effective. Over the last five years, the school's actions have led to significant improvements in the standards achieved by pupils and the quality of education. The school has fully addressed three of the four key issues identified in the previous inspection report. However, the school has only partially addressed a fourth key issue because there is still not a daily act of collective worship.

Key question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

- 102 In its self-evaluation report, the school judged this key question as Grade 1. The findings of the inspection team match the judgements made by the school.
- 103 The school has a sufficient number of well-qualified teachers in every area of the curriculum. The school has recently had difficulty in recruiting teachers of Welsh. Classroom assistants provide good, unobtrusive support for teachers and pupils, where needed. Administrative and other staff make sure that the everyday life of the school runs smoothly.
- 104 Learning resources have improved since the last inspection. In almost all subjects, there are enough good quality resources for effective teaching and learning. Provision for IT has improved significantly since the last inspection and teachers are beginning to make use of it across the curriculum. Sixth formers have good access to ICT.
- 105 The school makes good use of its accommodation. Pupil numbers have risen significantly since the last inspection, and this has meant that the school has had to work hard to overcome the inevitable difficulties caused by overcrowding. Cramped classrooms have an impact on teaching and learning in science, technology and physical education. However, the school has well thought-out plans to address accommodation issues in the very near future. The school looks after and maintains its accommodation well. As a result, pupils always have pleasant surroundings in which to work. Around the school there is some outstanding display work that both promotes the ethos of the school and encourages learning. Recent improvements to the library have created a very inviting and attractive environment
- 106 The school manages its resources very efficiently. Financial planning, administration and control are strengths. This is because there is a clear strategy for spending that members of staff understand. Appropriate people have responsibility for specific areas of financial management. Academic staff oversee curriculum expenditure, for example, whilst business staff oversee areas such as catering and premises.

107 Carefully planned spending ensures that any necessary savings are made from resource or accommodation expenditure rather than staffing levels. The school has sensible procedures for securing the best value it can from suppliers and contractors. It is beginning to look at the impact of its spending decisions in relation to the results in the classroom. In view of the achievement of its pupils and the quality of its provision for them, the school represents very good value for money.

School's response to the inspection

- 108 The Governing Body of Welshpool High School welcomes this very positive inspection report. The report represents an important validation of the school's work. In particular the Governing Body is pleased that the inspection team has concluded that the school's actions, since the previous Inspection, have led to significant improvements in standards achieved by pupils and the quality of education. Above all, the report confirms that Welshpool High is a happy and confident school where pupils can develop independence and responsibility, and fulfil their potential.
- 109 The inspectors have found that our pupils' progress is very good and they develop very good personal, social and learning skills. In addition, our pupils show very positive attitudes to learning as well as demonstrate very good behaviour in class and around the school. The skills and dedication of the teaching and support staff are duly acknowledged. Test and examination results are described as very good with pupils achieving well in relation to their abilities.
- 110 We welcome the recommendations provided by the team. They provide helpful feedback and will be incorporated into the School Development Plan. They also provide a basis for further improvement that will benefit pupils directly. The leadership team has already begun work on their implementation.
- 111 The school wishes to thank Estyn for the way it carried out the inspection. Inspections are inevitably stressful events. The Governing Body is grateful for the courtesy and care shown by the team, which made an important contribution to the whole process from notification to conclusion.

Appendix A

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Welshpool High School
School type	Maintained by the LEA
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Salop Road, Welshpool, Powys
Post-code	SY21 7RE
Telephone number	01938 552041

Headteacher	Mr Paul Coackley
Date of appointment	January 2000
Chair of governors	Miss Jenny Lake
Reporting inspector	Ray Owen HMI
Dates of inspection	4 October 2004 – 8 October 2004

Appendix B

School data and indicators

Year group	Y 7	Y 8	Y 9	Y 10	Y 11	Y 12	Y13	Y 14	Total
Number of pupils	207	185	189	184	164	91	50	0	1070

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	63	6	65.6

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16.3:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes	12:1
Average teaching group size	21
Overall contact ratio (percentage)	77%

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	94.2	93.6	93.7	92.7	93.2	93.2	91.9	93.8
Term 2	94.2	93.7	93.8	92.6	92.4	95.0	89.4	93.8
Term 3	94.2	93.5	93.8	91.3	92.4	92.6	90.2	93.5

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	13%
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	14

Appendix C

National Curriculum Assessment Results End of key stage 3:

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2004														
Total number of pupils in Y9: 180														
Percentage of pupils at each level														
		D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
English	Teacher assessment	School	0	1	0	0	1	5	15	41	21	15	1	0
		National	0	1	1	0	2	9	22	34	22	9	0	0
	Test	School	0	2	0		4	20	20	40	19	14	0	0
		National	0	3	2		8	21	31	23	10	0	0	0
Welsh	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0
		National	0	0	0	0	1	6	19	34	29	10	0	0
	Test	School	0	0	0		0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0
		National	0	2	1		4	19	35	28	10	0	0	0
Mathematics	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	1	3	16	26	29	26	0	0
		National	0	1	0	0	1	8	20	25	29	14	0	0
	Test	School	0	2	1		4	11	11	20	41	22	0	0
		National	0	5	1		7	19	19	21	32	14	0	0
Science	Teacher assessment	School	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	32	38	23	0	0
		National	0	1	0	0	1	8	21	32	25	11	0	0
	Test	School	0	3	0		2	7	7	29	35	25	0	0
		National	0	4	1		6	19	19	31	25	14	0	0

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

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

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

W Pupils who are working towards level 1

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

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school	73	In the school	70
In Wales	54	In Wales	54

Public Examination Results:

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ	
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2004:	164
Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil	47

The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2004:	School	UA	Wales
entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	91	89	87
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	64	60	51
attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	89	88	85
attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator)	51	46	38
entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE	96	97	97
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent	81	81	75
attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent	95	93	93
attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent	5	7	7
attained one or more Entry level qualification only	1	2	3
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1			
attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2			

For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs	
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2004	117
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2004	50
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2004	5

	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	58	72	68
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	96	95	95
Average points score per candidate entering 2 or more subjects	18	21	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2			
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3			

Appendix D

The evidence base of the inspection

Six HMI, one school nominee, and one lay inspector spent a total of 40 days at the school and met as a team before the inspection.

These inspectors visited:

- 66 lessons or part lessons; and
- a cross-section of registration or tutorial periods, acts of collective worship, and extra-curricular activities.

Members of the team had meetings with:

- the senior management team, governing body, parents and staff, before the inspection began;
- members of the senior management team and a wide range of teachers, support and administrative staff; and
- groups of pupils and students representing each key stage.

The team also considered:

- a selection of pupils' work, ensuring an appropriate range in terms of age and ability;
- comprehensive documentation provided by the school both before and during the inspection;
- responses to a parents' questionnaire; and
- comments from a wide range of pupils about the school.

Appendix E

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Name	Key question	
HMI Steffan James	1	
HMI Ray Owen	2	Reporting inspector
HMI Alun Morgan	3	
HMI Pru Davis-James	4	
HMI Andy Hawkins	5	
HMI Nigel Vaughan	6	
Jane Chesterfield	7	Lay inspector
Frank Bestwick		School nominee

The inspection team would like to thank the governors, staff and pupils of Welshpool High School for their co-operation during the inspection.