

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

***YSGOL TRE-GIB
BETHLEHEM ROAD
FFAIRFACH
LLANDEILO***

School Number: 669-4028

Date of Inspection: 10-14 February 2003

By:

***Mr D Gwynfor Evans
Registered Inspector***

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CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES

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

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

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

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

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

LIST OF ACRONYMS IN COMMON USE

A	Advanced
AS	Advanced Subsidiary
AVCE	Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education
CAD	Computer-aided Design
CAM	Computer-aided Manufacture
CoEA	Certificate of Educational Achievement
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
INSET	In-service Training
KS	Key Stage
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages
NC	National Curriculum
PS(H)E	Personal and Social (Health) Education
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SATs	Standard Assessment Tasks
SDP	School Development Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SMT	Senior Management Team
SDP	School Development Plan
UA	Unitary Authority
Y1-Y13	Year 1 - Year 13

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1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

Ysgol Tre-Gib is an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school serving the town of Llandeilo and the surrounding rural area in the county of Carmarthen. There are 935 pupils on roll, of whom 142 are in the sixth form. At the time of the last inspection in April 1997, there were just over 900 pupils on roll, of whom 130 were sixth form students.

The school is a naturally bilingual school and although the percentage of pupils who speak Welsh as the predominant language in the home is around 12 per cent, the school estimates that approximately 40 per cent can speak it as a first language or to an equivalent standard. All pupils study Welsh to age 16 at a level suited to each individual's ability and linguistic background. Welsh medium teaching is available in a number of subjects in Year (Y) 7 to Y9 and up to and including Advanced (A) level in history, geography, religious studies and drama.

The school caters for pupils representing a full range of academic ability and socio-economic background. Eleven per cent of the pupils are registered as being entitled to free school meals, a figure below the national average. There are currently 146 pupils with special educational needs (SEN) including 50 who have statements.

The school has a clear set of aims and objectives which cover all aspects of education. The current school development plan (SDP) includes specific targets for raising pupils' standard of achievement with particular emphasis on continuity from Key Stage (KS) 2 to KS3; further developments in Welsh language and Welsh-medium teaching; information and communications technology (ICT); bullying, social inclusion and the review of sixth form provision.

The current headteacher took up her post in September 1997.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

Tre-Gib school is a very successful school promoting high achievement in a very positive, friendly and caring ethos. Standards are high and continue to improve owing to the appropriately high expectations of both staff and pupils; a high proportion of the teaching is good or very good and pupils respond positively to the provision made for them; the quality of leadership at all levels is very good.

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Strengths

- In National Curriculum (NC) tests in 2002 at the end of KS3, 61 per cent of pupils achieved level 5 or above in mathematics, science and either Welsh or English in combination, compared to 51 per cent nationally.
- The percentage of pupils gaining at least five subjects at grades A*-C in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations rose from 53 per cent in 1996 to 69 per cent in 2002. The national figure for 2002 was 50 per cent.
- The percentage of pupils who achieved grades A*-C in all core subjects in 2002 was 52 per cent, compared to 37 per cent nationally.

- Advanced level results have been broadly in line with national averages in recent years. In 2002, 66 per cent achieved two or more grades A-C corresponding to the national average, and 95 per cent gained grades A-E compared to 94 per cent nationally.
- Results in vocational examinations are also very good.
- Pupils' standards of achievement were satisfactory or better in all the classes observed during the inspection. Standards were very good in 22 per cent of the total, good in 61 per cent and satisfactory in the remainder (17 per cent). These figures indicate a significant improvement since the last inspection, when standards were good or very good in 60 per cent of the classes compared to 83 per cent in this inspection.
- Standards are particularly high in the sixth form overall, in mathematics in KS3 and in Welsh, geography, history, information technology, modern foreign languages (MFL), physical education and sociology and business studies in KS4.
- The performance of boys has improved significantly in recent years. In KS3, the percentage of boys reaching at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh in combination in 2002 was 59 per cent compared to around 46 per cent nationally. In KS4, the percentage of boys achieving five or more GCSE grades A*-C rose from 45 per cent in 1999 to 60 per cent in 2002.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress and achieve good standards.
- Most pupils listen attentively, speak confidently, read well and write for different purposes effectively. Their numeracy skills are generally good. They collaborate well with others and their creative and problem-solving skills are good.

Shortcomings

- Where standards are satisfactory as opposed to good, there are some shortcomings to be eliminated.
- Pupils do not make regular use of their ICT skills in their work across the curriculum.

Standards in key skills across the curriculum

Listening	Very good
Speaking	Good
Reading	Good
Writing	Good
Numeracy	Good
Information and communications technology	Satisfactory
Working with others	Good
Creative	Good
Problem-solving	Good

Standards in subjects and areas of learning

Subject	KS3	KS4	The Sixth Form
Welsh	Good	Very good	Very good
English	Good	Good	Good
Mathematics	Very good	Good	Good
Science	Good	Good	-
Biology	N/A	N/A	Good
Chemistry	N/A	N/A	Very good
Physics	N/A	N/A	Very good
Design and Technology	Good	Good	Good
Information Technology	Satisfactory	Very good (GCSE-full course) Good (GCSE-short course)	
Computing			Very good
History	Good	Very good	Very good
Geography	Good	Very good	Very good
Modern Foreign Languages	Good	Very good	Good
Art	Good	Good	Very good
Music	Good	Good	Good
Physical Education	Good	Very good	Very good
Religious Education	Good	Satisfactory	-
Religious Studies	-	Good	Good
Sociology	-	Very good	Good
Drama	-	Good	-
Home Economics (Child Development)	-	Satisfactory	-
Personal and Social Education	Good	Good	Good
Economics	-	-	Very good
Business Studies	-	Very good	
Business Studies AVCE	-	-	Very good
Art and design AVCE	-	-	Very good
Information Technology AVCE	-	-	Very good
Health and Social Care AVCE	-	-	Good
Leisure and Tourism GNVQ	-	-	Good
Travel and Tourism AVCE	-	-	Good

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Strengths

- The quality of the teaching is a particular strength of the school. In the classes observed, the quality of the teaching was very good in 27 per cent of the total, good in 57 per cent, and satisfactory in 16 per cent. The overall quality of teaching, good or very good in 84 per cent of lessons, is high and exceeds the national target for 2002 of 50 per cent. The 100 per cent of lessons satisfactory or better also exceeds the national figure of 95 per cent.
- In the sixth form, 93 per cent of the teaching was either good (44 per cent) or very good (49 per cent).

- A key feature of all lessons is the very good relationships between teachers and pupils and this is a significant factor in the success of the school. Many teachers give generously of their time outside of lessons to help individual pupils and to offer extra-curricular activities.
- The provision made for pupils with SEN is very good. Pupils with SEN are well supported by teachers and the learning assistants to enable them to achieve in accord with their ability.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum in KS3, KS4 and the sixth form. A good range of subjects is available including vocational courses in the sixth form.
- The quality of planning for the development of key skills in the sixth form is good and the plans are effectively implemented.
- The very effective arrangements for the assessment and recording of pupils' achievement and progress are a particular strength of the school. The overall quality of assessment, recording and reporting is very good.
- The quality of personal and social education (PSE) is good and careers education and guidance is very good.
- Behaviour of pupils is very good. The school has effective arrangements for promoting good behaviour and to prevent and eliminate bullying. Pupils have very positive attitudes to work.
- The school gives pupils support and advice of very good quality. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils are built upon effectively in order to facilitate the personal development of pupils and their educational progress. There are appropriate procedures for the promotion of pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- The school's links with parents and the community makes a very positive contribution to pupils' overall development and standards of achievement.
- Links with industry and the school's strategies for work-related education are very effective. The school's involvement in the Celtic Experience Project and the Youth Enterprise scheme is impressive and both schemes have brought great credit to the school and participating pupils. The school has had notable achievements in the Youth Enterprise competition at UK and European levels.

Shortcomings

- Although the school has made good progress in developing its provision for Welsh-medium education in KS3, the take-up in KS4 and the sixth form is disappointing. This issue is being addressed in the current SDP.
- Religious education provision in the sixth form does not meet Agreed Syllabus requirements.
- Despite the school's constant efforts to improve attendance, the attendance of pupils in Y10 and Y11 was unsatisfactory in two out of the last three terms.

PUPILS' SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Strengths

- Pupils' spiritual development is good. In a number of subjects and through acts of collective worship, pupils are encouraged to formulate their own beliefs and opinions.
- Pupils' moral education is very good and is a strong feature of the school. Within an atmosphere of trust, pupils display courtesy, respect and care for others.

- Pupils' social development is very good. Pupils of all abilities enjoy equal access to a wide range of classroom and extra-curricular activities. They readily take responsibility such as through their active and regular support for charities and the various responsibilities undertaken by sixth form students.
- Pupils' awareness of their culture and Welsh heritage is successfully promoted in classes and in extra-curricular activities. Their understanding of multicultural matters is also well developed.

Shortcomings

- Statutory requirements for the provision of daily collective worship are not met.

MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Strengths

- The school has a very caring, friendly and supportive ethos. The very good leadership of the headteacher, the senior management team (SMT) and the governors gives clear direction to the work of the school and promotes high standards.
- The senior staff and governors know what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve further. The SDP is an effective tool to guide whole-school developments.
- The governing body takes an active interest in all aspects of the school's work. The governors are very supportive and undertake their responsibilities effectively.
- Departmental leadership is good or very good in all subjects. The quality of management of the sixth form and of the pastoral teams is very good. The careers guidance programme is effectively arranged and delivered.
- The budget is prudently and efficiently managed. Financial control procedures are effective. The school gives very good value for money.
- Overall, the school makes very good use of its learning resources and of the staff and the accommodation.
- The daily administration of the school is effective and efficient. The non-teaching staff, both clerical and technical, provide effective support and make a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the school.

Shortcomings

- There is limited access to ICT facilities for pupils in some subjects and the library is underdeveloped as a multi-media resource base for learning.
- A few minor health and safety issues were reported to the school.

Effectiveness of the ways in which the school has addressed issues identified for action in the last inspection

Overall, the school has made good progress in addressing issues identified for action in the last inspection.

- The school has continued to build on the strengths identified in the last inspection particularly in respect of raising pupils' standard of achievement and maintaining the very good standard of behaviour and quality of communal life.
- The school has made good progress in extending the provision for bilingual education in KS3. The number of pupils following courses through the medium of Welsh in Y7 to Y9 has

increased significantly since the last inspection. However, the take-up from KS3 to KS4 and into the sixth form remains disappointing. This issue is being addressed in the current SDP.

- The SDP contains appropriate development aims, success criteria and specific targets for pupil attainment.
- National Curriculum attainment levels are now effectively included in curriculum planning and assessment in KS3, and in the monitoring and reporting of pupils' attainment.
- The school has made progress in reducing the number of teachers teaching outside their subject specialism but it still exists in a small minority of subject areas.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards Achieved in Subjects and Areas of Learning

The standards achieved by pupils, relative to their ability and prior achievements, are very good overall. Pupils achieve these very good standards because much of the teaching they receive is of good or very good quality and because of their positive attitudes to learning. Pupils' learning is enhanced by the very good system of assessment and by a very good provision of support and guidance.

The analysis of pupils' results in NC tests taken at the end of KS2 and of the results of cognitive ability and reading tests conducted by the school shows considerable discrepancies in pupils' standards of achievement on entry to the school. Overall, the results in the KS2 NC tests for the last three years are higher than county and national averages whilst the results of the reading and cognitive ability tests reveal a significant proportion of pupils performing below their chronological age.

As observed during the inspection, standards were satisfactory or better in all of the classes. Standards were very good in 22 per cent of the lessons, good in 61 per cent, satisfactory in 17 per cent. The best standards were seen in the sixth form where they were good or very good in 93 per cent of the classes. The corresponding figures for KS3 and KS4 were 80 per cent and 81 per cent. These figures display a significant improvement on the last inspection when standards were good or very good in 60 per cent compared with 83 per cent in this inspection.

In KS3, standards of achievement are very good in mathematics, good in Welsh, English, science, design and technology, history, geography, MFL, art, music, physical education and religious education and satisfactory in information technology.

In the NC tests at the end of KS3 in 2002, 61 per cent of pupils gained at least level 5 or above in mathematics, science and either Welsh or English (core subjects indicator), compared to the all Wales figure of 51 per cent. This shows a significant increase from a fairly stable figure of 50 per cent in recent years. Results in all the core subjects were also above national averages. Compared with percentages in schools with similar socio-economic backgrounds, results in science and mathematics are in the upper quartile and slightly above average in Welsh and English. The core subject indicator places the school in the upper quartile.

In KS4, standards are very good in Welsh, information technology, history, geography, MFL, physical education, business studies and sociology, good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, music, art, religious studies and drama, and satisfactory in religious education and child development.

Examination results at the end of KS4 have improved since the last inspection. The number of pupils who achieved GCSE and equivalent qualifications, and the number achieving five or

more GCSE A*-C grades has risen from 53 per cent in 1996 to 69 per cent in 2002. The comparable figure in 2002 for the Unitary Authority (UA) was 57 per cent and for Wales, 50 per cent. Over the same period, the figure for five grades A*-G has risen from 77 per cent to 92 per cent which was again higher than the figure for the UA and Wales. The percentage of pupils who achieved grades A*-C in all core subjects was 52 per cent compared to 37 per cent nationally. Results of the Certificate of Educational Achievement (CoEA) examinations are good. Value-added data indicate that Y11 pupils in 2002 performed significantly better than expected in the vast majority of subjects at the end of KS4 and in comparison with their achievements in the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) at the end of KS3. Compared with schools with similar catchments, the school's external examination results at the end of KS4 indicate that the school's performance places it in the upper quartile of schools in which pupils achieved five or more GCSE A*-C grades, between the median and upper quartile for pupils achieving five GCSE A*-G grades, and in the upper quartile with regard to core subject indicator.

The highest standards are those achieved in the sixth form. Standards are at least good in all subjects and the proportion of very good work is substantial. Standards are very good in Welsh, physics, chemistry, computing, ICT Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE), history, geography, art (A level and AVCE), physical education, economics and business studies. Standards are good in English, mathematics, biology, religious studies, MFL, design and technology, music, sociology, leisure and tourism, travel and tourism and health and social care. The high quality of teaching, regular assessment, the tracking system and support all contribute substantially to the standards achieved.

In recent years, examination results at the end of the sixth form are broadly in line with national averages. The percentage of students who achieved two or more A-C grades in 2002 was 66 per cent compared to a county average of 68 per cent and a national average of 66 per cent. The percentage of those achieving two or more A-E grades, namely 95 per cent, was higher than the county and national average. The average points score per student in 2002 was 19, which is slightly below the county and national figure of 20. Results of the Advanced Subsidiary (AS) examination in 2002 were good with 76 per cent of students achieving grades A-C. Results in vocational examinations were also good.

Standards in PSE are good in KS3, KS4 and in the sixth form.

The most able pupils achieve well in examinations and the percentage of grades A*/A combined at GCSE has been well above the national average in recent years. Pupils of high ability achieve good or very good standards in all subjects. These pupils are provided with work that both motivates and challenges them to succeed. Pupils and students of high ability achieve very good standards in Welsh, English, history, science and physical education in all three key stages

Pupils of average ability and below achieve well and sometimes very well in most subjects throughout the school because teachers and pupils have suitably high expectations. These pupils respond well to the encouragement they receive from teachers. Improvements in standards of literacy have been of particular benefit to these pupils. Where standards are satisfactory, as is the case with a small minority of classes in KS3 and even a fewer in KS4, the progress of these pupils is sometimes hindered because the tasks they are given lack sufficient challenge. The range of learning opportunities, particularly through the use of ICT, is limited, and a few of the pupils have low expectations.

Pupils with SEN reach good standards. In small groups, they make steady progress in key skills and in subjects across the curriculum. There are examples of very good achievement in English, mathematics, history, geography, religious education and physical education with good achievement in the vast majority of the remaining subjects.

The school has employed a number of strategies to reduce the gender gap in KS3 and KS4. Additional funding and new resources for pilot work in languages and design and technology in the last three years together with target setting and mentoring have raised the standards achieved by boys in both key stages. In KS3, the percentage of boys achieving the core subject indicator rose from 41 per cent in 2000 to 59 per cent in 2002, a figure that is well above the national average. Boys outperform the girls in the tests in mathematics and science but the opposite is true in English and in Welsh, and in Welsh, there was a considerable gap in 2002. Generally, girls perform better than boys in the external examinations at the end of KS4 in the majority of subjects, as happens nationally. In 2001, the school succeeded in closing the gap between them to six per cent but it widened to 18 per cent in 2002 largely as a result of girls achieving high standards. Nevertheless, the performance of boys has improved significantly at this level. The percentage of boys achieving five or more GCSE grades A*-C has grown from 45 per cent in 1999 to 60 per cent in 2002.

3.2 Standards Achieved in Key Skills across the Curriculum

Standards in the key skills are good throughout the school in literacy, numeracy, creative skills and problem-solving. They are satisfactory in ICT. The school was awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark in October 2001. The level of its success in achieving this is indicated by the fact that it was then asked to provide a case study on its provision.

Language and literacy

Standards of literacy are good in English. The school has an effective whole-school literacy policy for the improvement of English. This was initiated in an extensive in-service training (INSET) programme involving five twilight sessions for all faculty and departmental groups and is enjoying notable success, particularly at KS3. An equivalent literacy policy for Welsh is not currently in place.

Across the curriculum and across the age and ability ranges, pupils are given opportunities to contribute to oral work in whole-class discussions, in pair and group work and in individual presentations. Listening skills are particularly strong and contribute significantly to the standards of achievement reached in all subject areas. Oral expression is generally good. Pupils discuss their work confidently and express themselves fluently and naturally. Most pupils, especially in KS4 and the sixth form, respond to questioning readily and can convey their own ideas and opinions with some confidence. The quality of discussion in the PSE lessons is good, though there is an element of diffidence amongst some pupils in all ranges of ability that makes them less willing to contribute orally on more sensitive issues in the classroom situation.

Reading and writing skills are developed well throughout the school. Pupils' reading and spelling ages are assessed on entry to the school and the low achievers who are identified by this process are provided with an intensive literacy programme by the Support Faculty. Those who remain in mainstream classes are withdrawn from some French and Welsh lessons for continued support. This process is being refined by developing links with the primary feeder schools so that tests can be taken before entry into the secondary school and special needs identified as early as possible. Pupils are screened again before Y8 so that their needs can be reviewed. Great strides have been made in English in KS3 as a result of this programme. However there is no comparable provision for Welsh and the practice of withdrawing pupils from Welsh lessons in order to provide increased support for English reduces opportunities for developing literacy in Welsh.

There is a successful post-16 programme for the attainment of the Key Skills qualification. It is offered to all pupils in the sixth form and the co-ordinator provides a thorough and detailed handbook to identify and link the different aspects of the qualification and to guide students

through the field. The programme is quite well subscribed, communication being the most popular area, with a developing interest in ICT. Numeracy has so far proved the least popular.

Creative and problem-solving skills

Pupils' creative and problem-solving skills are well developed in all subject areas. They have very good opportunities to develop their creative skills in art, music, design technology, child development and business studies. Project and practical work features significantly in drama, geography and science, and creative writing is a strong element in English and in Welsh in both first and second language classes.

Pupil-centered learning is a strong element in almost all subject areas and classes; pupils are constantly challenged to solve problems individually and in pairs and groups and to plan, verify and evaluate their results. Problem-solving exercises are clearly identified in schemes of work and highlighted in class/home assignments. Pupils of all ability levels, including those with special needs, respond well to these challenges, enjoying taking the initiative and making decisions. Pupils' readiness and ability to work together is an important contribution to the learning experience and indicates the success of this approach in the school community as a whole.

Numeracy

Pupils develop good skills of numeracy in their mathematics lessons. They benefit from the time devoted to teaching numeracy and from practice of mental mathematical skills.

Standards in numeracy across the curriculum are good overall. Every department has identified areas of work where numeracy can be promoted, and every department has contributed to the whole-school policy on numeracy. Pupils are required to exercise their numeracy skills, for example, when using formulae in spreadsheets in information technology, presenting statistical data in geography or business studies, data analysis in history, handling shapes and measuring in art, dimensions and calculations in design and technology, and using a wide range of mathematical applications in science and achieve good standards.

In the sixth form, students are offered numeracy lessons as part of the key skills provision, and are able to proceed to gain the key skills qualification if they so wish.

ICT across the curriculum

Standards in ICT across the curriculum are variable; overall, they are satisfactory. The school has made a substantial investment in ICT equipment in recent years. There are four well-equipped ICT suites and networked PCs in virtually all departments. Pupils have equal opportunities to gain proficiency in ICT through time-tabled lessons. Staff are generally competent in the use of ICT but a number of departments are under-resourced with equipment and access to designated information technology areas is difficult because of discrete timetabled information technology lessons. Where resources are sufficient, as in the design and technology, science, art and music departments for example, standards are good. In design and technology, schemes of work have been modified to include computer-aided design/manufacture (CAD/CAM) work and pupils are encouraged to make appropriate use of ICT from Y7 to Y13. They are introduced to a number of specialist software programmes as well as using word processing, databases, spreadsheets and the Internet to enhance the quality of their work. In the music and art departments, pupils' experiences in KS3 are limited but good use is made of facilities in music to store and refine work in composing in KS4 and in the sixth form, and in art, good creative ICT work in KS4 with examples of outstanding design work in the sixth form. Standards are also generally good in physical education. Knowledgeable and well-motivated staff encourage pupils to use various software packages to improve their work and extensive use is made of the Internet by sixth form students in their assignments. Pupils make good use of presentation software in English, leisure and tourism, travel and tourism and business studies, and practical work in science makes good use of ICT. In other areas of the curriculum, pupils

make insufficient use of their ICT skills to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the subject they are studying.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Overall, the pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is very good.

The pupils' spiritual development is good. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to explore values and beliefs. Pupils are encouraged to gain self-confidence and self-reliance and to develop empathy with others. The teaching styles adopted throughout the school place great value on pupils' questions and staff provide space for pupils to develop their own thoughts and express concern over contemporary issues.

The older pupils are provided with opportunities for extended discussion on values and the social and gender bases of power. For instance, a GCSE sociology group explores the values of differing communes, for example, Kibbutz and Iona. They explore the meaning of trust and show great respect for the opinions of others. Celebrations such as the Christian Eucharist are explored in considerable detail in English as well as in religious education.

The acts of collective worship, which are broadly of a Christian nature, are generally of very good quality, with appropriate and interesting themes and a high level of pupil participation.

There are good quality devotional contributions from both staff and pupils, and the high quality rendering of classical music by composers such as Brahms and Handel together with the accompaniment provided for the singing by the school's large orchestra in the school hall, make a very positive contribution to the reverential atmosphere. In the year assemblies, each class takes it in turn to make presentations. These are normally well rehearsed, relevant and topical. Sometimes the quality of pupils' contributions cannot be fully appreciated by their peers on account of the poor acoustics. In keeping with the school's policy of social inclusion, pupils with special needs are fully integrated into all the collective acts of worship.

On days when pupils do not have assembly, many of the tutor periods do not meet statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship.

Pupils' moral development is very good. Pupils and students are very courteous to staff and visitors. There are frequent discussions on topics such as bullying and racial prejudice in which pupils put forward very lucid and pertinent arguments; others explore contemporary moral dilemmas such as debating whether or not international sports and politics should be totally separate from each other. In geography, pupils explore problems that arise from population migration and the conflicting demands made on the use of National Parks. In Welsh and history, pupils have good opportunities to discuss and debate moral and social issues. Similar issues are frequently examined again and in greater depth, within the school's effective PSE programme.

The social development of pupils is very good. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds mix easily with one another. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and adults are very good. The policy of social inclusion is very effective and contributes to the good morale among pupils and staff. Many pupils enhance their social skills through active involvement in the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided. Students in the sixth form show their organising skills in their roles as prefects, as members of the Sixth Form Council and Y12 students in shouldering the responsibility for arranging the school's annual eisteddfod. A group of pupils, mostly Y7 befriend and support pupils with severe learning difficulties through the newly established 'Circle of Friends'. Pupils throughout the school work well together in pairs and small groups and there is strong evidence of constructive co-operative work.

Pupils' cultural development is very good. The school promotes racial equality very effectively and the contributions made by a wide range of subjects including Welsh, music and religious education, effectively heighten pupils awareness of both Welsh and other cultures. The *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* features strongly across a wide range of subjects and pupils regularly compete in Urdd eisteddfodau. A strong Welsh ethos pervades the whole school. Comparisons between Welsh, French and German cultures are a feature in the MFL classes. Cultural and sporting trips abroad are regularly arranged by many departments. At lunchtime and after school, the school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities which are well supported by the pupils. Pupils of all ages and ability have the opportunity of performing in plays, musical shows and concerts periodically arranged by the school. Pupils contribute positively to their own community by for instance, performing in homes for the elderly, especially at Christmas time. They also contribute regularly and generously to many national and world wide charities.

4.2 Behaviour and Attitudes

The overall quality of pupils' behaviour, their attitude towards learning and the interest they show in their work is very good and disciplinary procedures are fairly administered. The school has very good arrangements for promoting good behaviour and achieves its aim of ensuring that the vast majority of pupils attain high standards in every undertaking, whether academic, sporting, cultural or social. The school places considerable importance on ensuring that every pupil is valued as an individual and has respect for the views and property of others. The very wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs makes a very good contribution to the quality of pupils' school life.

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

Clear sanctions are in place for pupils who break school rules or display unacceptable behaviour. The school has detailed guidance procedures in place for staff to follow when misbehaviour occurs and the roles and responsibilities of governors, staff, pupils and parents are made clear.

The home/school agreement, the school contract for pupils and parents to sign and the effective use of the pupils' contact book, underpin the emphasis on pupils' good behaviour and parental participation in the school's endeavours and strategies.

Behaviour is very good in lessons and supports learning. The vast majority of pupils listen well to teachers, concentrate on their work, share information and skills, work well in pairs or groups and are confident and responsible individuals. Pupils behave in an orderly fashion and in parts of the school where circulation is difficult, due to narrow corridors, pupils' good behaviour assists in overcoming overcrowded situations.

The school has introduced a merit awards system in this academic year for KS3 pupils for a range of academic, attendance and behavioural achievements. Pupils keep a tally of merits in their contact books and rewards are given twice a year.

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

The school works closely with local authority agencies, such as the Behaviour Support Service in Carmarthen, in providing good and effective support and programmes of work for pupils with behavioural difficulties and others who are demotivated by academic life.

Exclusion procedures follow the National Assembly for Wales guidelines. There have been 31 temporary exclusions for boys and six for girls in the last three terms. One boy and one girl were permanently excluded. This was the consequence of the school's consistent approach to ensuring high standards of behaviour in the classroom and throughout the school.

4.3 Attendance

Attendance is satisfactory. Despite good efforts by the school staff to improve attendance, the overall attendance figure for the school over the last three completed terms remains at around 90 per cent, the same as reported in the last inspection. The school is fully aware of the need to improve attendance levels. The senior management and governors continue to express concern over sporadic absences and the increasing tendency of pupils to take holidays during term time.

The school has a detailed written policy on attendance and punctuality that emphasises the importance of ensuring pupils' high attendance with a clear expectation to be punctual at all times. Detailed guidance is provided for staff, pupils, parents and guardians on the procedures to follow in the event of unexpected absence.

Recently the school has introduced a system of first day absence calls to parents when pupils are absent. Early indications are that it is already having an effect on improving attendance levels.

The majority of parents respond well to the school's efforts to improve attendance levels and governors and the SMT have set a challenging target of increasing attendance rates to 95 per cent.

Effective strategies are in place to monitor attendance daily by one of the deputy headteachers and the heads of year. Regular meetings are held with the Education Welfare Officer to discuss individual pupil attendance.

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

Although a significant number of the pupils are bussed to school, throughout the period of inspection, pupils' punctuality at the start of the day and to lessons was in the main good. There were however a number of examples of individual pupils arriving in lessons late who were not questioned by form and class teachers.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

The quality of teaching is a notable strength of the school. In the classes observed, the quality of the teaching was very good in 27 per cent of the total, good in 57 per cent, and satisfactory in 16 per cent. The overall quality of teaching, good or very good in 84 per cent of lessons is high and exceeds the national target for 2002 of 50 per cent. The 100 per cent of lessons satisfactory or better also exceeds the national figure of 95 per cent.

The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. The percentage of good or very good teaching has risen from 66 per cent during the last inspection to 84 per cent in this inspection. The quality of teaching is highest in the sixth form; 93 per cent of the lessons were judged to be good (44 per cent) or very good (49 per cent). Teaching is better in KS4 than

in KS3; the proportion of very good teaching in KS4 was 31 per cent whereas in KS3, it was 13 per cent. Teaching was good in 69 per cent of lessons in KS3 and in 48 per cent in KS4.

Good teaching is a regular feature in almost every subject across all key stages. Examples of very good teaching were observed in the vast majority of subjects. Pupils with statements of SEN receive good teaching, care and support. Teachers have a good knowledge of these pupils. They make effective use of individual education plans (IEPs) to provide work of appropriate challenge. Learning support assistants provide good care and support to help pupils with SEN to achieve well.

The quality of teaching in the PSE lessons is good in general. It makes an important and valued contribution towards pupils' personal development. Pupils gain a good understanding of issues about health and citizenship. They receive good opportunities to consider and discuss spiritual, social, moral and cultural issues. The school has a very good careers education programme.

Teachers are well qualified and they have a good knowledge of their subjects and course requirements. Often their enthusiasm for the subjects motivates and encourages pupils to enjoy their lessons. They organise and manage their classes well and use a good range of techniques and strategies to enable pupils to make good progress. In many lessons, teachers use well-planned questions to probe pupils' understanding and to encourage them to think about their answers before responding.

The planning of lessons is generally good in all departments. Most lessons are conducted at a suitably brisk pace that reflects the generally high expectations that teachers have of their pupils both in respect of achievement and behaviour. Schemes of work are well planned and the planning for the development of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is generally good. Planning for the use of ICT to raise standards within subjects is under-developed in a minority of subjects.

Teachers make use of some very good displays of pupils' work and of subject related materials on the classroom wall to motivate pupils to learn well.

A key feature of all lessons is the very good relationship between teachers and pupils. Discipline is based on mutual respect and learning occurs in a friendly but well-structured atmosphere. In the sixth form, students are regarded as young adults and treated accordingly. They appreciate this and respond in a mature way. Many teachers give generously of their time outside of lessons to help individual pupils and to offer extra-curricular activities.

Teachers help pupils to consolidate and extend their learning by setting homework of appropriate challenge and interest. The homework, often and suitably, includes work to develop pupils' creative and investigative skills. Teachers help pupils' progress through constructive marking that shows pupils how to improve.

In a number of subjects a proportion of the teaching, though satisfactory and containing several good features, has a few shortcomings. In a minority of lessons, pupils are insufficiently challenged, there are limited opportunities for pupil participation, the range of learning activities is restricted and insufficient use is made of ICT to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of certain topics.

5.2 Assessment, Recording and Reporting

The quality of assessment, recording and reporting is one of the strengths of the school. Very effective procedures are in place and a clear whole-school policy acts as a framework for individual department and faculty policies. Its aims are to recognise the whole range of pupils' achievements, to take a positive approach to monitoring progress and to set clear and explicit learning targets identified in collaboration with individual pupils. The process begins with the

recording of test results in Y7. Thereafter, detailed records are kept of each pupil's achievement throughout the key stages, so that scores and predictions can be compared to performance, in order to assess achievement in relation to ability and improvement rate. Underachievers and pupils who need review are identified in two yearly reports from each department and they are given targeted support by the SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) and the Support Faculty. Comprehensive data relating to the individual pupil is used within departments to monitor progress in each subject area and to inform future planning and teaching. This close monitoring is further developed in Y10 and Y11 when pupils are interviewed individually by a member of the SMT at crucial points within the key stage to discuss achievement and progress and to set targets for further improvement.

Assessment of written, oral and practical work is undertaken regularly across all departments and comments are generally constructive and helpful. Targets, which are set regularly by class teachers, are most useful when they are accompanied by clear advice on how to reach them. Pupil self-evaluation also features and is clearly helpful when closely related to the targets set. Contact books are effectively used to monitor the completion of homework and to involve parents in the process, and the tracking system, which has recently been put in place to monitor sixth formers' performance, is very effective.

Reports are issued twice a year. The interim report records a grade for achievement and effort in all relevant subjects, together with the pastoral tutor's observations. End-of-year reports are detailed and informative, including examination results, subject specific observations about performance and general information about performance and behaviour, but they do not include any assessment of statutory religious education in KS4 or in the sixth form. The quality and nature of this report vary within and across departments, the most useful commenting on pupils' performance in relation to specific skills and outlining targets for improvement. The good practice of including NC levels as well as grades on Y9 reports helps to provide a coherent guide for pupils and their parents.

The school analyses a wide variety of data, including statistical analyses of results, to identify added value and to promote higher standards. Departments use this data to evaluate their own performance and to inform future planning. The success of the recent initiatives in the English department to tackle the underachievement of boys highlighted in the comparative data is an indication of how valuable such a system can be.

5.3 Curriculum

The quality, breadth and balance of the curriculum for pupils of all abilities, including those with SEN, are good in all key stages. Pupils of all ages enhance their learning through their involvement in a very good and wide ranging provision of extra-curricular activities. All the statutory requirements are met, apart from the allocation of insufficient time to statutory religious education in KS4 and no formal provision for the subject in the sixth form.

In KS3, pupils are taught in an appropriate combination groups of mixed ability and sets. All pupils study French as their main foreign language, and the most able linguists in Y8 and Y9 are offered two lessons of German; this is at the expense of one physical education lesson. Pupils in Y7 have two timetabled lesson in information technology every fortnight and in Y8 and Y9, they have one lesson every fortnight; there is insufficient time allocated to drama within the key stage. All pupils in Y7 and Y8 have four lessons in design and technology every fortnight, and this is reduced to three lessons in Y9. Some teaching groups in this key stage, particularly in the core subjects, tend to be large. The school's provision of Welsh-medium courses in Y7 to Y9 has increased substantially since the last inspection; it now offers drama, music, games, design and technology, history, geography, religious education, French, physical education,

information technology and mathematics through the medium of Welsh. In the next academic year, the number of first language teaching groups in Y7 will be increased from two to four groups.

All pupils in KS4 study an appropriate common core of Welsh, English, mathematics, science, information technology and physical education; pupils also study one lesson of religious education every fortnight, and can choose to take the GCSE short course in Y11. In addition, they choose one subject from each of four option groups which cover a wide range of subjects and cater for most pupils' individual interests. To ensure that every pupil follows a balanced curriculum, the school carefully monitors individual choices at the beginning of the key stage. The most able pupils in Y11 are given the opportunity of following distant learning courses in some additional subjects in their own time. Courses through the medium of Welsh are available in religious studies, history, geography, drama and mathematics but the take-up is disappointing considering the number of pupils pursuing Welsh-medium courses in KS3. Most courses offered lead to GCSE, but some subjects are offered at CoEA level for a small minority of less able pupils. In Y11, the school, in conjunction with the local College of Further Education, offers a small number of pupils an alternative curriculum; the SMT review the content of this curriculum on a regular basis to ensure that it meets with NC requirements.

In the sixth form, the school offers a wide range of A and AS level courses, together with a good range of vocational courses. Most courses attract viable numbers, and the option arrangements allow the vast majority of pupils to follow courses of their choice. There are no formal religious education lessons, but guest speakers from the local community are invited to address the students on a religious theme once a week. Although there is no general course in physical education, students are encouraged to help in other lessons, and to use the facilities available; AS and A level courses operate for those students who have chosen the subject at examination level. A small number of students follow some courses through the medium of Welsh, being taught in English-medium groups, but receiving extra lessons to assist them with translation work.

There are additional subjects offered which are taught after school hours including Latin and psychology.

Curricular provision is socially inclusive ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all pupils including those with SEN.

In most subjects, schemes of work are detailed and provide good guidance for teaching and learning. Overall, the planning for the development of key skills at whole-school level is good.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) at KS3 and KS4 is provided within a prescribed period of 30 minutes one morning every week, together with some follow-up in tutorial periods. Pupils achieve good standards through this arrangement, and the quality of the provision is good. It embraces good careers education and guidance, sex education, and, in Y10 and Y12, a week's work experience for all pupils and students.

The *Cwricwlwm Cymreig* is well developed across the key stages. All departments identify areas in their schemes of work where it can be promoted, and it is also strengthened by various contributions from numerous extra-curricular activities.

The timetable is organised as 50 one-hour periods a fortnight, thereby meeting the recommended total teaching time of 25 hours per week. The distribution of lessons throughout the fortnight is generally good.

The school has a well-considered policy on homework. In the majority of subjects, homework suitably complements work done in class. Most pupils make good use of their contact books to record the homework set in lessons.

Curricular links with the primary schools are being developed and strengthened; continuity and progression from KS2 to KS3 is one of the priorities in the current SDP.

The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities open to all pupils who wish to participate. These make a positive contribution to pupils' overall development, particularly in the sixth form, where students are encouraged to take responsibilities. Musical and physical education activities are particularly well-supported, as are numerous lunchtime clubs. Visits to Europe and beyond, field trips and links with outside agencies contribute positively to the pupils' education.

The school gained the School's Curriculum award in June 2000 and continues to strive to meet the award's criteria.

5.4 Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare

The quality of support, guidance and pupils' welfare is very good. Pupils and parents, quite rightly consider the school to be a very supportive and caring community giving clear guidance to the pupils on what is expected of them at all times and in all situations in school. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good.

The pupils are very well behaved, respectful and courteous at all times and are a credit to their school and their community.

The pastoral care system is effective. Pupils are well supported through a form tutor and heads of year structure which is well established and well led by a deputy headteacher. Form tutors and heads of year follow the pupils through from year Y7 to Y11 enabling them to build effective relationships with pupils. The heads of year undertake their responsibilities conscientiously and are aware of their key role in maintaining the very good ethos of the school. They collate very good information on academic progress, pupils' strengths and weaknesses and concerns within the school and outside. They are also responsible for the PSE programme in their respective years.

The school has a policy on bullying and senior staff are raising awareness by including bullying in the current SDP. The few identified incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively.

Pastoral support plans are used effectively to support the inclusion of pupils; a small number of pupils in Y11, who are in danger of being excluded, follow an alternative programme arranged in collaboration with the Youth Access Programme.

The quality of the careers guidance is very good and the lessons at KS4 are well structured covering key areas such as completing application forms, producing a CV and preparing for interviews. The school also has the service of an external Careers Officer. The careers room is well equipped with access to KUDOS and CID among other programmes on four computers. Pupils and sixth form students are very positive about the work experience programme and value the experience they acquire. The service provided by this department is very good.

The facilities provided for sixth form students have been modernised recently under the strong influence of the students themselves through the sixth form council. They have a coffee shop environment which is much appreciated and respected by the students. The arrangement assists in producing a mature attitude in the sixth form and individuals who are a credit to the school.

The sixth form students make a significant contribution to the life of the school through setting an excellent example on behaviour and standard of dress, as prefects at break and lunchtime, as organisers of the school Eisteddfod and through participating in competitions. The recently

introduced tracking system affords a very effective method of ensuring that students' progress is followed carefully and intervention, where necessary, can take place at an early stage.

Arrangements for the health and safety of pupils are good. The school has a range of policies relating to inclusion, equal opportunities, substance use and misuse and others relevant to the general safety and well being of pupils at school. The school has a Child Protection policy with a deputy headteacher named as the contact person. The Child Protection policy is supported and understood by staff.

Health and safety procedures regarding risk assessment for field visits and sports fixtures have been highlighted as examples of good practice within the authority. The school also has effective arrangements for home/school transport.

A list of a few minor health and safety issues raised during the inspection has been submitted to the school.

5.5 Provision for Pupils with SEN

The school's provision for SEN is very good and allows pupils with SEN to gain access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils with SEN are making good progress throughout the two key stages with examples of outstanding achievement in some curriculum areas.

There are currently 146 pupils with SEN including 50 who have statements. These statemented pupils have disapplications from NC requirements; they do not study Welsh or French but are provided with effective additional support in language. There is total compliance with the procedures for supporting those with medical needs as defined in National Assembly for Wales circular 34/97.

Funding provided for SEN is wisely used and there is a high level of good quality support for pupils from the 14 well-motivated learning support assistants who are employed. The time of some learning support assistants is taken up almost entirely in caring for and supporting pupils with statements whereas others offer good small group support for SEN pupils in mainstream classes. There is very strong co-operation between the teaching staff and learning support assistants, several of whom work on modifying work sheets to ensure they are appropriate.

Pupils with SEN in KS3 are taught in small groups of no more than 15 and subject departments have ensured that there is appropriate differentiated work available. Currently, there is no comparable provision for Welsh-medium pupils but there are plans to address the issue in the next academic year.

A number of pupils with SEN pursue GCSE and CoEA courses and the achievement of some pupils has been very good in art where they have high involvement in craft activities. Pupils with severe learning difficulties have literacy, numeracy and science provided within the SEN department but, in line with the policy of inclusion, they are integrated into mainstream classes for 50 per cent of their timetable.

There are good policies for SEN which ensure that the school meets the requirements of the new Code of Practice introduced in 2002. All the staff are familiar with the terminology and the defined stages in the new system such as School Action and School Action Plus. There is a very strong link between the SEN department and other subject departments and there is full co-operation on producing both group (School Action) and individual (School Action plus) educational plans.

The implementation of IEP targets is carefully monitored by the SENCO; they are reviewed termly. In addition to the documentation prepared by the SENCO, subject departments produce their own subject specific IEPs to ensure that pupils' needs are fully met. Pupils with SEN feel

that they are valued. They receive good support and their work is consistently displayed alongside the efforts of mainstream pupils.

Mainstream pupils in KS3 who are identified as needing additional support in reading in English are given a short intensive course of 15 lessons which has been very successful as is indicated by the careful monitoring which has been undertaken.

There is good quality accommodation and equipment provided for pupils with SEN especially those pupils who have severe learning difficulties. This will be expanded further next year to provide more space for art, crafts and food technology.

The school co-operates with other schools to prepare SEN packs. There is good liaison between the school and its associated primary schools. There are good links with the county's educational psychologist and with health personnel such as clinical psychologists, physiotherapists, clinical and occupational therapists. One of the county's specialist teachers runs a successful signing course weekly at the school which is well attended by staff and pupils.

Parents' views as expressed in the pre-inspection meeting indicate strong support for the high quality of the school's SEN provision.

There is good provision for the five pupils who are looked after by a local authority. Links with the social services department are good when the attached social workers are locally based. These pupils also have SEN and have high level of care and appropriate educational provision. There are positive links between the school and foster parents.

Provision for more able pupils is good with extension tasks available in the majority of subjects. There is an opportunity for a small number of pupils to take some GCSE design and technology courses a year early. Some additional subjects taught after school hours are offered.

5.6 Partnership with Parents and Community, Schools and Other Institutions

Partnership with parents, local community, partner primary schools and other external agencies and institutions is good and often very good. The commitment to developing and nurturing close partnerships with all agencies is central to the work of the school. The school is steeped in community life and this was recognised in the achievement of the School Curriculum Award in 2000.

The school provides regular and good information for parents including a well-designed school brochure with a wide range of information to new parents, Helping Your Child for Y7, Y8 and Y9 parents, curriculum booklets on subject content and an informative Sixth Form Handbook. A range of other, more regular correspondence on school activities is provided including a twice-termly school newsletter.

The formal home/school agreement with parents and pupils contributes to the development of close links. Good use is made of the pupils' contact book to provide information about the school and its procedures to parents. The homework diaries are regularly monitored by school staff and parents are asked to scrutinise and sign their child's work programme.

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

There is a very active Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) in the school and it makes a significant contribution to the life of the school by arranging fund-raising and social events each year. The annual financial contribution the PTA makes towards the school's resources is considerable.

A school document entitled Achievements 1997-2002 fully outlines the extent of the school and pupils' participation in the life of the community and the notable contribution to events in the town and at civic functions and ceremonies. The school has a thriving choir, choir parties, orchestra and wind band and they regularly participate in a wide range of community and inter-school county and Urdd Eisteddfod events. Pupils' participation in musical, cultural and sporting competitions is extensive and they bring acclaim to the school. A wide range of events is organised to support local and national charities and the annual school walk raises considerable sums of money.

Pastoral and other links with the partner primary schools are good and further strengthen the continuity and progression from KS2 to KS3 remains a target of the school. The good liaison and transition programme with the partner primary schools ensures the smooth transition of pupils to the next stage of education. Links between the headteachers and other staff of the secondary and primary schools are well developed. Staff actively participate in curriculum-based links including the development of classroom resources for the teaching of physical education and design and technology in primary schools. Art and drama teachers visit the primary schools and primary pupils make use of the school's design and technology and recreational facilities. Joint staff training days are held in the core subjects. There is a range of sporting and cultural links with the partner primary schools.

Good links exist with Swansea University, Swansea Institute, local colleges and various external agencies. Partnership arrangements with initial teacher training are very good.

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

5.7 Partnership with Industry

The school has established very good partnerships with the world of work, particularly within curriculum areas such as science, design technology, business studies, art, geography and within the PSE programme.

There is a well-explained Work-Related Education policy in place with clear aims and objectives. There is a planned programme of activities and an overall strategy from KS3 to post-16, which is implemented effectively, ensuring that pupils receive wide and varied experiences of the world of work through many subject areas, the PSE programme, career guidance arrangements and the work experience programme.

Pupils in every year group have varied opportunities to visit a range of businesses locally and across South Wales. These visits enable pupils to apply skills and deepen their knowledge and understanding of world of work concepts and processes learnt in the classroom.

Close links exist with a range of industrial and commercial concerns in the area as well as organisations such as the Rotary which support the school in many ways including visiting the school to talk with the pupils, conducting mock interviews, sponsoring events and providing classroom and sporting equipment for school use. Effective links also exist with a number of local shops and businesses in Llandeilo and the surrounding area.

A notable feature of work experience provided for pupils is the business studies department's involvement with Enterprise Education. The experiences and world of work knowledge opportunities provided over many years for many Y9 pupils and Y12/Y13 students by participation in the Celtic Experience Project and the Youth Enterprise scheme are impressive. Both enterprise schemes have brought credit to the school and the participating pupils, with notable achievements in Youth Enterprise competitions at UK and European levels. Year 11 pupils' involvement with a national competition to design and build an electric car won the best-presented team award and two Y13 girls have won the Young Business Woman of the Year award.

The Y10 and Y12 work experience programme is effectively organised and implemented.

Although 19 members of staff have had experience of working in industry, regular placements in industry do not form part of any professional development programme for staff.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of Self-Evaluation and Planning for Improvement

The clear vision and purposeful sense of direction provided by the headteacher and the SMT ensure that the quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement is good. The consistent application of self-evaluation procedures has enabled the school to make very good progress since its previous inspection in a number of important areas of school life, including standards achieved and the quality of teaching and learning. All departments have to a varying degree adopted a self-critical attitude.

Issues raised in the last inspection report have been included in subsequent SDPs and are regularly reviewed; improvement in literacy has received attention appropriate to its overall influence on improving standards across the curriculum. The SDP, influenced by the self-evaluation processes has grown to be a substantial and valuable tool to guide whole-school developments.

The school's work on analysis of examination and assessment data is very good and influences the monitoring process, mentoring process and target setting, all of which are strong features of the school. The school collects data on all external and internal examinations. There is an extensive analysis of the data collected and it is distributed to all members of staff. The departments also produce analysis of their results which is closely scrutinised and changes are made to the teaching programmes where appropriate. The schemes of work and teaching materials are checked for their effectiveness to impact on the following year's results. This work has been rewarded, particularly at GCSE level, where the results have improved over a number of years. The information gained from the analysis and the monitoring of teaching, learning and standards is used effectively to inform development planning. This is a feature of the school's work which has developed since the last inspection.

There are programmed meetings of headteacher, deputies and assistant headteachers every two weeks with a wide ranging agenda including self-evaluation issues and planning. The direct link between the departments and the senior staff ensures good communications are maintained between the school's steering group, namely the heads of faculty/department, and the SMT. The school has also a school improvement group whose membership includes a cross-section of the school staff to ensure that as wide a range of staff as possible can contribute to the improvement of the school. The whole management structure provides good managerial and leadership roles to a large number of staff. It also ensures that developmental work runs alongside the maintenance of standards and quality.

There is a plan to establish a school council soon. This will be based on the same principles as the sixth form council, which has been in existence for some time and has had a good influence on the development of the school particularly in the sixth form area. The sixth form council played a crucial role in the refurbishment of the accommodation in the sixth form and the students feel that they have been listened to throughout the processes of planning, construction work and purchase of furniture. This is another development in the school's management since the last inspection.

The governing body reviews progress in the school through examination of external assessment results along with UA agreed targets. Governors have a suitable awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have a developing role in the process of whole-school self-evaluation.

6.2 Leadership and Efficiency

Under the very good and enthusiastic leadership of the headteacher, who works closely and cooperatively with the school's SMT and with the governing body, the school provides a strong and supportive environment in which pupils have every opportunity to learn well and achieve high standards. There is a very good ethos and a clear and purposeful direction to the school's work with a shared commitment to succeed.

The governing body is a supportive and committed group. Governors show an interest in all aspects of the school's work and participate in curricular as well as financial and planning matters. There is an appropriate structure of committees and meetings of the full governing body to make decisions. The minutes of the governors' meetings show that members carefully consider the reports and presentations of the professional staff.

The headteacher knows the school very well and has very clear ideas of how the school can continue to develop and improve its standards. She receives strong support from the two deputy headteachers who contribute substantially to the school's life and work and ensure that there is effective integration between the pastoral and academic work. Three assistant headteachers undertake their responsibilities conscientiously and effectively and they together with the headteacher and the deputies form an effective SMT. This team successfully implements, monitors and evaluates policies for continued improvement in standards in teaching and learning.

At middle management, the quality of leadership is at least good and in the majority of curricular areas it is very good. The school's effective self-evaluation activities and its arrangements for analysing pupils' progress and achievement support and strengthen the role of heads of departments/faculties. Development planning is well established and heads of department provide good documentation and support for teachers and pupils. Teamwork ensures cooperative working and sharing of ideas and practices. Procedures for monitoring the work of teachers and pupils are routine. Systems for target setting operate effectively.

The recently established school improvement group provides a wider spectrum of staff with the opportunity to contribute to whole-school development. The group has been wholly responsible for the reward system at KS3, the reviewed anti-bullying policy and teaching materials, and the sixth form tracking system.

The head of the sixth form, year tutors and heads of year make a valuable contribution to the pastoral and academic development of pupils. Parents and pupils greatly appreciate the support, guidance, time and effort, which are provided at this level. Currently, the school has a sixth form council and there are plans to form a school council with elected representatives from each year group.

The school manages its budget of around £2.7 million prudently and efficiently and takes appropriate steps to ensure value for money. There is very little carry-over of the budget from one year to the next. Financial management is very good as recognised in the UA auditor's most recent report. The administrative officer is making a positive contribution to the financial procedures within the school.

Expenditure is closely linked with the priorities in the SDP and the governing body exercises careful control of the school's finances, staffing provision and appointments.

Overall, the school makes very good use of its available resources for learning but there is limited access of ICT facilities for pupils in some subjects and the library is under-utilised as a resource base for learning.

Day-to-day organisation and administration are effective and efficient. Communication with parents is highly effective and contributes to the overall success of the school. The contact books are a regular means of communication which pupils, parents and teachers use to good effect. Responses to the questionnaires from 172 parents reflect strong support for the school. Ninety-six per cent of the respondents indicate that they were satisfied with the standard of work achieved by their children and 95 per cent thought the school achieves high standards of behaviour.

6.3 Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources

Staffing

The provision of teaching and support staff is sufficient to meet the school's needs and is of good quality. There are 58 full-time and four part-time teachers, giving a pupil to teacher ratio of 15.75 to 1, lower than the Welsh average of 16.5 to 1. The teacher contact ratio is 82.4 per cent, and is higher than the national average.

Teachers are well qualified, 82 per cent being graduates; there is a good distribution of experienced teachers and those newer to the profession, with one in three having industrial experience. Staff are deployed effectively to cover the curricular and pastoral roles identified in their job descriptions, and 67 per cent receive incentive allowances for extra responsibilities. The school management team effectively combines experience and expertise. Teachers are well supported by a good number of learning support assistants in the lessons.

The non-teaching staff, both clerical and technical, provide effective support across a wide range of duties and responsibilities. They are very helpful, and make a valuable contribution to the smooth running of the school.

The programme of professional development for staff is generally well related to individual and departmental needs, and to the requirements of the SDP. A deputy headteacher manages the INSET very effectively, keeps records of staff development, and provides teaching and non-teaching staff with opportunities to extend their expertise through a good range of in-house and externally provided programmes.

Newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school are provided with a good, well-structured induction programme, and they are well supported within their departments.

Since the last inspection, there has been a reduction in the number of staff who teach in areas not directly linked to their specialism, or who teach in two or more subjects areas. However, it is still the practice in the deployment of a small minority of staff.

Accommodation

The school is set on a particularly pleasant site, surrounded by trees and large grassed areas. As well as the main building, there are two recently built blocks of classrooms, together with a number of demountable classrooms, the condition of which ranges from good to satisfactory. Some classrooms are on the small side and corridors are narrow, resulting in congestion at times. Since the last inspection, significant improvements have been made to the buildings, and all five design and technology rooms have been refurbished. External painting has been carried out, and the school intends to start a rolling programme of internal decorating next year. Classrooms are generally tidy and well kept, with good and some very good displays on the walls, including a great deal of pupils' work. The entrance to the school, which has only recently been erected, is impressive, and contains an exhibition of photographs and Young Enterprise materials.

Since the last inspection, the school has been able to arrange more departmental suites of rooms, and this makes it more convenient for teachers within the same department to share resources and for those resources to be centrally located. The situation has not been resolved entirely however, and there is still the need to ensure that the teaching rooms in some departments are closer together.

The inside of the school is kept very clean and tidy. The toilet facilities are in need of refurbishment and the UA has confirmed that this work will commence in the near future. The site managers and the cleaning staff work hard to ensure a high level of cleanliness in all areas of the school. Although there is some litter after the morning and lunch breaks, the site managers respond promptly and work hard to maintain the site to a high level of cleanliness and tidiness.

During the week of the inspection, a few minor health and safety issues were reported to the school.

Resources

Departmental resources for learning are generally good, and the use of those resources is good in all subjects. A system for distributing departmental allowances is in place, along with the opportunity to bid for additional funding.

A full-time library assistant effectively manages the use of the library. Although it is reasonably stocked with books and other reading material, and is well used by the pupils, it has not yet developed into a multi-media resource centre for use by the whole school.

The school has invested heavily in ICT equipment producing a very good ratio of pupils to computers of 4.4: 1. However, there are insufficient ICT resources in some department bases and, in a number of subject areas, the available resources are not well-utilised. The number of discrete, timetabled information technology lessons makes access to designated information technology areas difficult and this limits the development of the subject across the curriculum.

Sports facilities are good. The school has the use of a large sports hall, and has numerous outside playing areas including tennis courts. The school's swimming pool was closed in October 2001 but finance has been secured for the building of a new swimming pool later this year.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

Welsh

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and very good in KS4 and in the sixth form. In KS3, the percentage of pupils obtaining level 5 and above in the NC tests in Welsh in 2002 was above the national average; the girls perform significantly better than the boys in these tests in recent years. In KS4, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C in Welsh was above the national average in 2001 and slightly below in 2002; in Welsh literature and in Welsh second language, results in recent years are consistently above national averages. Girls do better than boys in Welsh mother tongue at GCSE. A level results in Welsh mother tongue and second language in 2002 were above UA and national averages with all candidates gaining A-C grades.

Good features

KS3

- The standard of oral work of Welsh mother tongue and second language pupils in a range of oral activities including pair work and group work is good, and in the higher ability sets, standards are very good.
- Mother tongue pupils express opinions well on a range of topics and second language pupils have a good command of the spoken language to discuss various topics confidently.
- Mother tongue and second language pupils read aloud correctly and meaningfully. Mother tongue pupils gather information from a variety of sources and use it effectively to extend their knowledge and understanding. Second language pupils respond well to challenging reading tasks and by Y9 they are able to give extended responses to a range of reading material.
- The written work of the more able pupils that follow the mother tongue and second language courses has a number of very good features. Pupils write in a variety of forms, which include stories, scripts, letters and poems.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress and achieve good standards.

KS4

- Pupils across the language spectrum show very good collaborative skills and are aware of the importance of oracy in a wide range of language activities. They discuss issues in a mature way and express opinions confidently.
- In their study of literature, mother tongue and second language pupils show high levels of textual knowledge. They can express opinions about what they have read clearly and with understanding.
- Pupils prepare well for their written tasks. Effective planning and the use of writing frameworks, drafting and revising result in work of very high quality in both mother tongue and second language.

Sixth form

- Mother tongue and second language students achieve very good standards in all aspects of their studies. Essays are of a very good quality showing detailed reference to texts as well as referring to critics' views.
- They display a mature understanding of the prescribed texts. They skilfully analyse characters in plays and novels and offer perceptive comments on the poems they are studying.
- Knowledge of grammar is secure and other language skills are well-developed.

Shortcomings

- Inaccuracies in spelling and syntax hinder the progression of a minority of pupils of average ability in KS3.
- Information and communications technology is not used on a regular basis to improve pupils' knowledge and linguistic skills.

Progress since the last inspection

- Good progress has been made. Standards and examination results have improved in KS4 and in the sixth form. Standards are good in KS3 as in the last inspection, but inaccuracies in spelling and syntax amongst a minority of pupils remain as issues to be addressed.

English

Standards are consistently good in KS3, KS4 and in the sixth form across all three attainment targets. Standard assessment test results have steadily improved since the last inspection. In 2002, the achievement rate for level 5 and higher was well above local and national averages at 67 per cent. This success included a marked decrease in the difference in performance of boys and girls. The gap was impressively reduced from 20 per cent in 2001 to 12 per cent. GCSE results have also improved significantly. The results in 2002 were higher than local and national averages in both English and English literature. In the former, 67 per cent achieved A*-C and in the latter, 79.1 per cent. A level results for 2002 were exceptionally good, with 71 per cent of the large entry gaining grades A or B.

Good features

Speaking and Listening

- Standards are good across the range of age and ability. Listening skills are a particular strength and contribute very positively to the achievement of pupils in all areas of their schoolwork.
- Confidence in speaking is a little less consistent but most pupils of all abilities are able and willing to express themselves freely in the varied oral situations that they experience in the classroom.
- Pupils respond effectively in the question and answer sessions that play a significant part in their learning situation at all levels. They proffer ideas and opinions individually and as groups, collaborating well in problem-solving and discussion.

Reading

- Standards in reading are good in KS3 and KS4, great improvements having been made by the end of KS3. Pupils show confidence in reading aloud with meaning and expression. They read for pleasure, to deepen their understanding of writers' techniques and for the purpose of research.
- In the sixth form, reading has reached a sophisticated level. Students in the sixth form are able to probe their texts with sensitivity and perception and to support their views and interpretations by close reference to complex written material.

Writing

- Standards in writing are generally good in KS3, good and sometimes very good in KS4 and ranging from competent to exceptional amongst those in the sizeable sixth form groups.
- Pupils from Y7 onwards enjoy writing in a variety of forms and for different purposes and audiences, using ICT extensively when appropriate in leaflet, poster and brochure writing, for example.
- Pupils write their own poetry and play scripts and extended writing is a notable feature of English work at all levels and amongst all ability ranges, including those with SEN.
- Re-drafting is a normal part of writing activity and is particularly effectively used at GCSE to produce coursework of a consistently high standard.

- The regular critical writing undertaken by sixth form students reflects their developing sophistication of expression and appropriate use of relevant, specialised vocabulary.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Progress since the last inspection

- Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection, particularly in reading and writing in KS3 and in the performance of boys in the same key stage but the gender gap remains high in KS4.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement are very good in KS3, and good in KS4, and in the sixth form.

The results in the NC tests at the end of KS3 in 2002 showed that the percentage of pupils that achieved level 5 or better was 73 per cent, compared to the all-Wales figure of 62 per cent. At GCSE, the 2002 results showed that 58 per cent of the Y11 cohort had gained a grade A*-C, compared to the all-Wales figure of 45 per cent. Results at A level were good, six candidates achieving two A grades, one B grade, two C grades and one D grade respectively.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils make good progress from Y7 to Y9. This can be seen clearly in the good quality work in their exercise books. Most work is well organised and complete.
- Pupils' basic numerical skills are good. Their mental mathematical skills are well developed during regular practice sessions.
- The principles of algebra are developing well, particularly amongst the more able pupils. All pupils learn to draw and investigate the properties of geometric shapes at an appropriate level.
- Pupils learn how to collect, represent and interpret statistical data.
- In most classes, pupils can explain clearly what they are doing, and show that they understand the mathematical concepts involved.
- Most pupils make appropriate and accurate use of electronic calculators, in line with the department's policy.
- Pupils with SEN make very good progress and achieve very good standards.

KS4

- In KS4, most pupils use electronic calculators well and appropriately.
- Pupils consolidate their ability to do basic arithmetical operations. The work with number is good across the ability range.
- The principles of algebra are developing well amongst the more able pupils.
- Pupils' knowledge of the properties of shapes is good, and pupils of average ability and above can solve problems involving angles, as well as measure angles correctly; they can also calculate the area and perimeter of various shapes.

- Pupils can make appropriate use of Pythagoras' Theorem, and trigonometric techniques are developing well amongst the abler pupils.
- Pupils' ability to collect and represent data in various graphs is good; their understanding of probability is also good.

Sixth form

- All the students have a very good work ethic. They organise themselves and their work effectively.
- Students recall a good range of previous work, and they use it well in new situations.

Shortcomings

- In KS3 and KS4, pupils make insufficient use of ICT to enhance their mathematical knowledge.
- In KS4, pupils' expectations are not high enough, particularly those in the middle and lower ability groups.
- In the sixth form, some students rely too heavily upon their teachers for guidance; they show little initiative and are reluctant to engage in open discussions.

Progress since the last inspection

- Since the last inspection, the department's test and examination results have improved steadily. Standards of achievement are at least satisfactory across the age and ability range, and are good or very good in the vast majority of classes.

Science

Standards of achievement in KS3 and KS4 are good, and in the sixth form, very good in chemistry and physics and good in biology. In KS3 in 2001, the results in the NC tests were good with 63 per cent achieving level 5 or above. In 2002, the results were very good with the proportion achieving level 5 or above rising to 76 per cent, well above the national average. In KS4 in 2002, 69 per cent achieved grades A*-C in GCSE science, again, well above the UA and national average. The results at A level were good in 2001 and 2002 with the chemistry results being very good in both years. The standards in the key skills in all key stages are good except in improving own learning and performance, where it is satisfactory.

Good features**KS3 and KS4**

- The school produced booklets which cover in detail all modules of all the science courses in KS3 and KS4, are well used and are of considerable support to the pupils and the staff, ensuring that the schemes of work are followed meticulously. These booklets give pupils a complete and excellent set of notes at the end of the course even if they have been absent for a period. The booklets in which the work is always appropriate and challenging are an outstanding feature of the science department and ensure that the standards are high.
- The pupils have acquired good practical and investigative skills and some practical work is done in most lessons.
- Pupils have a good understanding of health and safety issues.

- Pupils are given, through the use of the booklets, a clear set of aims and objectives for each lesson, they know the work of the previous lesson and what they will be studying in the next lesson. Pupils have a complete view of each module.
- Pupils' use of time within lessons is efficient through the work undertaken in the booklets.
- Pupils work well in groups and pairs and contributes to the pupils' understanding of the subject.
- Pupils' understanding of key concepts is good. It is checked during the course of the lessons and is assessed regularly in both key stages.
- Pupils respond well to the very good relationships between staff and pupils. The behaviour of the pupils in lessons is very good and this also contributes to the high standards they achieve.

Sixth form

- Students have acquired well-developed practical skills which are extended in chemistry by involving students in experiments that make use of spectrographic instruments obtained through close contact with industry.
- Students have a good understanding of health and safety issues.
- Standards in classwork are always good and very good at times with students' understanding being extended through searching questioning and the detailed explanations required.
- Written work is challenging and of a high standard. The presentation of the students' work in the files is good.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- At times, the marking of the booklets is superficial and insufficient guidance is given to pupils on how to improve their work.
- The skills of labelling and diagram work of a minority of pupils are underdeveloped.
- The register of language used in some of the booklets is too difficult and hinders the progress of some lower ability pupils.

Progress since the last inspection

- Good progress has been made since the last inspection to improve standards and in the ICT facilities available to pupils.

Design and technology

Standards of achievement are good in KS3, KS4, and in the sixth form. In KS3, pupils gain experience of working with an appropriate range of materials and in a good selection of courses; resistant materials, system and control, textiles and food technology, are offered in KS4. In the significant majority of courses, results in the GCSE examinations are above the national averages. The small group of pupils who study for the Entry Level examinations achieve success which relates well to ability. Although AS and A level examination results are below the national average, they have improved. Students frequently achieve grades above expectation.

Good features

KS3 and KS4

- In all material areas, pupils consistently apply designing and making processes, use related technical terms and appropriate health and safety and hygiene procedures.
- Pupils use a good range of equipment, tools and machines and handle a variety of materials confidently. Standards of practical outcomes are generally good.
- The most able pupils successfully justify their design choices, suggest modifications and produce considered evaluations which relate well to their specification.
- Pupils with SEN achieve good standards in relation to their ability.
- Isometric and orthographic drawings, process and flow charts, graphs and star diagrams are a successful feature of the work in all key stages.
- Pupils research information from a variety of sources, including the Internet; numerical skills are consistently used and reinforced when measuring, weighing, costing items, and calculating dietary requirements, for example.
- Knowledge of industrial practice, batch and mass production, Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points and risk analysis are well considered and recorded in a range of contexts.
- Pupils successfully and competently apply ICT skills to communicate information, for CAD and CAM, and for graphical presentation.

Sixth form

- Based on their links with, and placement in industry students demonstrate good understanding of industrial and management systems, including quality assurance procedures.
- Case studies contain well-documented experiences and evaluations; ICT skills are appropriately and competently used to enhance presentation.
- Good use is made of ProDESKTOP to convey ideas; photographic and scanned images are also well presented.
- An understanding of the principles of ergonomics enhances the designing and making of some products.
- The most successful folios contain well-developed, original design ideas and considered evaluations.
- Students convey an understanding of environmental issues, of safe working practices and of risk assessment processes.

Shortcomings

KS3 and KS4

- Although pupils of average ability produce work of a satisfactory standard overall, it does not consistently reflect the comprehensive application of investigative, analytical and presentation skills.
- During the design process, initial design ideas are not consistently developed prior to the identification of the final solution and design modifications do not feature regularly in the development of pupils' work.
- The least satisfactory folios contain unnecessary spelling errors and graphical and lettering skills are underdeveloped.

Sixth form

- Folios of a satisfactory standard reveal less detailed research and evaluations and presentation skills are underdeveloped.
- Some folios are insufficiently developed and inadequately presented to attain the higher grades.

Progress since the last inspection

- The department has made significant progress since the last inspection. Staff work well together and under the guidance of the head of department, they work towards common goals. ICT skills, including the use of CAD/CAM are well developed and applied. Schemes of work are revised and key skills incorporated. Targets are clearly identified, a tracking system introduced and opportunities provided to extend the more able pupils.

Information technology

Standards in KS3 are satisfactory; in KS4 standards are very good in the full GCSE course and good in the recently introduced GCSE short course. In the sixth form, standards in the examination courses are very good. Examination results in the full GCSE course are consistently higher than the UA and national figures. In A level computing in 2002, all candidates achieved grades in the range A-E.

KS3

The department has made a substantial investment in commercial, interactive software, together with the associated textbooks. These are used as the basis of teaching across the key stage, supplemented by in-house materials.

Good features

- Pupils work with interest and enthusiasm and are on-task for the greater part of lesson time.
- Teachers' knowledge of subject matter is good and lessons are well planned. This leads to satisfactory standards.
- Assessment is carried out regularly and by a variety of means, including on-screen tests and written exercises.

Shortcomings

- Large teaching groups requiring pupils to share computers hinder the progress of pupils.
- In mixed ability classes, lower ability pupils often have difficulty in interpreting on-screen instructions.

KS4

GCSE ICT is offered in three option groups in each of Y10 and Y11. Recently the GCSE ICT short course has been offered to those pupils, mainly of lower ability, who study single award science.

Good features

- Pupils work confidently with the hardware and software applications demonstrating a good knowledge and understanding of all aspects of their work.
- Rigorous monitoring of pupil progress, particularly in course work, ensures that pupils produce work of good and very good standard.

- Appropriate target setting leads to high standards of presentation.
- Pupils demonstrate a good standard of technical vocabulary and display interest, enthusiasm and capacity for work.

Shortcomings

- The progress of some low ability pupils is hindered because aspects of the short course are unsuitable.
- Lack of data projectors in three information technology teaching rooms restricts pupils' skill development.

Sixth form

Information technology is a popular option in the sixth form and courses are offered at A and AS level in computing and six and 12 unit courses in AVCE information technology.

Good features

- All students work individually to a very good standard on the set modular assignments.
- Students discuss their work with confidence and maturity and their responses show that they have a good understanding of concepts.

Progress since the last inspection

- Since the last inspection the facilities in the department have increased to include four information technology teaching rooms. Computers have been upgraded regularly on a rolling programme and the whole school is now networked allowing pupils to access their work and the Internet in all teaching areas. AVCE ICT has been introduced in the sixth form as both six and 12 unit courses, the information technology key skills course is open to all pupils and the GCSE short course has been introduced in Y10 and Y11.

History

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and very good in KS4 and in the sixth form. In 2002, 81 per cent of the pupils who opted to study history at GCSE gained grades A*-C, which is above the national and local averages. In the AS level examinations held in 2002, all the students gained grades A-C, and in the A level examinations of 2002, 64 per cent of students gained grades A and B.

Good features

- Pupils in KS3 have good levels of background knowledge and understanding and their recall skills are secure.
- Pupils have very good listening skills across the school; they are keen to achieve good standards in attaining the learning objectives and the key skills identified for them in every lesson. Pupils' oral skills are well-developed; their responses to rigorous questioning during lessons are informed and articulate. Pupils provide extended answers and use subject-specific vocabulary accurately and in the correct context.
- Key Stage 3 pupils have good levels of chronological awareness and they have a good and often very good ability to read and evaluate a variety of sources of historical evidence. They are successful in making meaningful links between the evidence and their own background knowledge of a topic or historical problem.

- Pupils in KS3 are developing good investigative approaches in examining historical problems; they use sources of evidence confidently to compare and contrast differing interpretations of historical problems and they provide good reasons to explain the changes that take place over time. Key Stage 3 pupils recognise that historical sources are often incomplete and that they can be used to produce different interpretations of a historical problems or issue.
- Key Stage 3 pupils become increasingly confident in identifying causation when seeking to explain changes occurring over time. By Y9, they can distinguish between long-term and short-term causes for change and they are skilled in tracing the consequences of those changes.
- Key Stage 3 and KS4 pupils produce good and often very good quality written work; pieces of extended writing are neatly presented, well-planned and logically argued. They record their learning in a range of styles and develop their literacy skills by writing in styles designed to appeal to different audiences, such as letters, reports and essays. They select relevant material thoughtfully and organise their arguments logically and persuasively.
- Pupils with SEN are well provided with work that is successfully matched to their needs and abilities. Challenging tasks and very good role-play activities promote pupils' progress in history.
- All pupils are enabled to raise their standards of achievement through the very good assessment and thorough marking practices conducted by the department. Pupils are fully aware of what they need to do next in order to raise their standards. Targets set by teachers and by pupils themselves are meaningful, challenging and achievable.
- In KS4, pupils successfully build upon the wide range of skills acquired in KS3; their oral and written work shows a growing maturity in the depth of their response and their insights into the motivation and attitudes of people in the past.
- Pupils develop very good skills in testing their sources of evidence for bias, reliability and usefulness. In KS4, they successfully detect propaganda in the sources and can evaluate the reliability and usefulness of information which they uncover from the Internet.
- Pupils successfully apply the knowledge and understanding gained from other curricular areas, such as literacy, numeracy and ICT to extend their historical and research skills and to enhance their learning in history.
- In Y12 and Y13, students have very good levels of knowledge and understanding of the historical debates related to the reform of Parliament in the 19th century and to the political developments and problems associated with the rise of Nazism in Germany. Very good quality debates and class discussions provide evidence of wide reading and of a critical approach to the evaluation of the sources of evidence.
- Students make very good progress in synthesising the views of the major professional historians of these periods and can use their analytical skills effectively to explain the differences in interpretation found in their ideas. Students organise their material very successfully to tackle the demands of the synoptic paper set in the A level examinations.
- Year 12 and Y13 students have a very good ability to use their knowledge and the evidence from the sources to construct opposing arguments when considering historical problems. Written work is often of very good quality. Essays and other written presentations are the result of careful research and thoughtful planning; students become increasingly analytical and self-critical in presenting their ideas and arguments.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Progress since the last inspection

- The department has continued to make significant progress in raising standards of achievement since the last inspection.

Geography

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and very good in KS4 and in the sixth form. GCSE examination results are well above the UA and national averages. A level results in 2002 were well above the Wales average grade.

Good features

KS3

- Mapping and graphical skills are of a good standard accompanied by accurate application of geographical terminology.
- Pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of the location of places which is well-illustrated by the work of Y8 pupils on the 'industrial triangle' in northern Italy.
- Year 9's study of plate tectonics, particularly the case study of the Mount St Helens eruption, contributes significantly to the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the impact that environmental factors have on the activities of mankind.
- Pupils are competent in the use of atlases, statistical data, textbooks and booklets to enable their acquisition of knowledge, understanding and subject specific skills.
- Pupils' key skills development is facilitated by the opportunity to complete extended written exercises, construct and interpret different types of graphs, map-reading and organized group-work. A lesson involving Y8 pupils working in groups drawing a sketch map of the north Italian 'industrial triangle' from memory brought together effectively the application of a number of key skills in one exercise.

KS4

- Pupils are confident in the interpretation of source material, whether it is written, diagrammatic, map or statistical data. Year 11 pupils are particularly adept at constructing a sketch map of the retail area of Carmarthen using published materials such as photographs and maps of varying scales.
- Pupils' grasp of geographical terminology is very good with the ability to apply key words with accuracy in a variety of geographical contexts.
- Pupils' command of the techniques of analysis and interpretation is very good with the ability to communicate their findings in a variety of formats, and where appropriate, with the support of ICT.
- Fieldwork, being an integral part of geographical activities, contributes to the pupils' understanding of process in physical and human geography. Coursework projects based on river studies demonstrate the pupils' thorough grasp of the processes involved in the formation of patterns and features associated with river work.

Sixth form

- Students demonstrate a diligent, mature and thoughtful approach to their work.
- Student files are systematically organized with neatly presented notes and diagrams, with maps and graphical work of a very good standard.
- A role-play exercise on the conflict in rural areas in terms of second home purchase demonstrates Y12 students' very good level of oral presentational skills and grasp of appropriate and relevant facts.
- Students are able with confidence to extract the relevant material from detailed published sources. This was well illustrated by Y12's study of the clay-humus complex and cation exchange in soil development.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Pupils do not make sufficient use of ICT within the classroom situation.

Progress since the last inspection

- Shortcomings identified in the last inspection have been satisfactorily addressed.

Modern foreign languages

Standards overall are good in KS3, very good in KS4 and good in the sixth form.

GCSE results have been consistently above the national average. In 2002, all candidates gained grades A*-C in German, and in French, 98 per cent achieved grades A*-C. In 2002, all students achieved grades in the A-E category in A-level examinations in both French and German. Take up for French and German in KS4 and sixth form is steadily increasing.

Good features

- In KS3, standards were very good in 25 per cent of lessons observed, good in 50 per cent of lessons and satisfactory in the remainder (25 per cent).
- Pupils are working at appropriate NC levels in all skills. In 2002, at the end of KS3, 59 per cent of pupils gained level 5, significantly higher than the national average.
- In KS4, standards were very good in 60 per cent of lessons and good in 40 per cent of lessons.
- Standards in the sixth form were good in 66 per cent of lessons and very good in 33 per cent of lessons.
- Listening and speaking skills are a particular strength in all key stages with pupils being exposed to a constant accurate model of language by teachers and able to deal with unpredictable, authentic spoken language.
- Pronunciation is good in all key stages.
- Most of pupils' written work is well organized and presented and characterized by an increasing understanding of grammar. Many pupils are able to manipulate grammar in extended writing in all key stages.
- Many pupils in all key stages have good communication skills and are able to use extended speech with accuracy and confidence.

Shortcomings

- Pupils make inadequate use of ICT and satellite television to support learning in all key stages.
- Insufficient evidence of differentiation in some of the classes taught, particularly in KS3 results in satisfactory standards rather than good.
- Gender imbalance in pupils gaining level 5 and above at the end of KS3 (80 per cent of girls and 55 per cent of boys gained level 5)
- There is some inconsistency in the amount of target language to which pupils are exposed in KS3.
- There was little evidence in some classes that pupils are able to take the initiative in speaking or speak spontaneously in the target language.

Progress since last inspection

- Standards in KS3 have improved from satisfactory to good and standards in KS4 have improved from good to very good.
- GCSE results have improved and the take-up for French and German has increased.

Art

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and KS4, and very good in the sixth form.

Results in tests at the end of KS3 indicate that the majority of pupils are working to the nationally expected level. In the GCSE examination, all pupils achieved grades A-G, results have improved and are now slightly better than the national average at grades A*-C. In the sixth form students follow either an art and design or vocational art programme and in both examinations they achieve grades in the range A-C.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils are developing a good understanding of art and demonstrate good making and investigation skills.
- Pupils learn how to be creative and develop good craft skills from working in the style of well-known artists.
- Pupils are acquiring and using an appropriate Welsh and English vocabulary for art.
- Pupils are developing an understanding of the art of other cultures.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress and achieve high standards, particularly in their three-dimensional work.
- Pupils know how to use the library and the Internet to find out about artists.
- Most pupils express their personal opinions clearly when looking at art.

KS4

- Pupils draw and paint from direct observation to a high standard.
- Pupils learn more complex painting techniques from working in the style of well-known artists.
- Sketchbooks are used well. Computers are used creatively.
- Printmaking and graphic design are done to a good standard.
- Pupils understand how to work correctly with clay and their creative ceramic work is developed with finesse.
- Pupils use art forms of other cultures to enrich their own work.
- Working in groups with an artist-in-residence, pupils acquire an understanding of how ceramics can be used in public sculpture.
- From visiting national art galleries, pupils acquire a broader knowledge of art.

Sixth form

- Students are developing as individual artists and designers, producing work that shows much creativity and individual flair.
- They understand how to use sketchbooks to record and develop imaginative ideas.
- They are able to draw and paint to a very high standard using traditional skills.
- They are able to use computers to create graphic artwork, animation and film to an exceptionally high standard.
- Screen-printing work is done to a very high standard.
- Students' critical judgement is developing well as a result of regular practice of self-review and group presentations.
- Working with an artist-in-residence, students acquire an understanding of contemporary ceramic craft practices.

- From visiting national and international art galleries, students are familiar with a wide range of art.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Pupils' ability to generate creative art and design is limited by lack of opportunities to use ICT.
- Pupils have limited knowledge of historical art due to the lack of opportunities to visit art galleries.
- Pupils have limited knowledge of contemporary art due to the lack of opportunities to work with artists-in-residence.

KS4

- Pupils' ability to develop and appreciate colour well is hindered by poor quality paints.
- Pupils' knowledge of designers and female artists is limited by the lack of suitable material in the library.

Sixth form

- Students are not as familiar with the work of graphic designers as they are with that of artists.

Progress since the last inspection

- Since the previous report there has been good progress; new courses have been introduced and examination results have improved. In all key stages, there is a good emphasis on promoting knowledge and understanding of the art of Wales. In the sixth form, students' real-life work-related vocational tasks make a positive contribution to supporting the local community. The achievements of pupils of all ability levels are celebrated in extensive displays of work around the school.

Music

Standards of achievement are good in KS3, KS4 and in Y12. There is no class in music in Y13. GCSE results in recent years have been above the national average, though the number of candidates has been small. In 2002, the six A2 candidates gained two A and four B grades.

KS3 and KS4

Good features

- Pupils in KS3 achieve good standards in performing and appraising music and satisfactory standards in composing.
- Pupils sing with enthusiasm, produce a pleasing tone and give suitable attention to diction and expression. They play a variety of pieces, including their own compositions, confidently and with a good degree of accuracy on classroom instruments and keyboards. Many display good beater technique and maintain secure ensemble when performing together.
- Much of the melodic work across the key stage, including some extended improvisations by several Y9 pupils, is well shaped and rhythmically interesting.
- Pupils are able to identify instruments and other features in recorded extracts of music and show good awareness when commenting on the use of musical elements.
- Pupils in KS4 make suitable progress in vocal and instrumental performing and achieve good standards overall for their differing abilities.

- Year 10 pupils explore timbres and textures effectively when working on their group “programme music” compositions. Many Y11 compositions demonstrate imaginative treatment of a range of ideas and a good understanding of style and structure.
- Most pupils are developing a good knowledge and understanding of technical terms and are able to discern technical and expressive features well when listening to extracts of music from different styles and periods.

Shortcomings

- Some melodies and improvisations by certain KS3 pupils lack a sense of direction and are limited in musical interest. In general, the ability and experience of pupils to explore sounds and combine them imaginatively are limited.
- The appraising skills of a few pupils in Y11 are not evenly developed across a range of musical contexts.

Sixth form

Good features

- Students in Y12 are able and experienced performers and achieve very good standards, overall.
- Most compositions by Y12 students are of a good standard and display good understanding and use of Baroque style composing techniques and devices.
- Draft essays, produced by most students, reflect personal research and good knowledge and understanding of the music being studied for their folio coursework.
- Aural skills are satisfactory, overall.

Shortcomings

- A few compositions and folio essays have yet to be developed and researched adequately. A few students lack confidence and their aural skills are not always secure.

Progress since the last inspection

- Standards have been consolidated since the previous inspection. The use of ICT, as an aid to enhance work in composing, has increased. Good quality vocal and instrumental tuition, provided for over 20 per cent of pupils on the school register, together with a busy programme of well-attended extra-curricular activities of often very good standard, enriches the work of the department. These make a substantial contribution to the life of the school and the community.

Physical education

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and very good in KS4 and in the sixth form. GCSE results are significantly higher than national averages with a substantial proportion gaining the higher A* and A grades. At A level in 2002, all students achieved grades in the A-E category.

Good features

- Pupils of all ages are sensitively challenged. They enjoy their physical education lessons, which are physically demanding, skill orientated, thought provoking and personally rewarding. They apply themselves to a variety of appropriately set tasks with great enthusiasm, concentration and commitment.

- The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Standards are very high for both individual performers and school teams. The school is justifiably proud of its continuing successes in county, regional and national representation, competitions and festivals.

KS3

- Pupils demonstrate good standards in planning, performing and evaluating their own work and the work of others. This is particularly evident in gymnastics, health related activities and dance. Pupils lift, carry and place equipment accurately and safely. In rugby and hockey, standards of performance are very good.
- Pupils are knowledgeable, skilful and reflective. They are sometimes given responsibilities such as leading their peers in warm-ups, team situations and cool-down periods. Pupils respond very well to these personal challenges.
- In gymnastic and dance activities, pupils demonstrate the capacity to be creative. They have the physical skills to execute movements effectively with precision and body tension. Individual skills are developed into challenging, fluid movement sequences that are original and physically demanding. The use of apparatus and the interpretation of music are good features.
- Pupils' understanding of, and interest in, physical fitness is good. Individuals participate enthusiastically in challenging fitness exercises, monitor the physiological changes and discuss the effect of activities on their personal fitness.

KS4

- Pupils demonstrate good standards in planning, performing and evaluating their own work and the work of others. This is particularly evident in badminton, step aerobics, health-related activities and dance.
- Pupils' participation in fitness activities that develop strength, endurance and flexibility is good. Individuals plan and undertake intensive fitness programmes, record improvements or regressions and are able to discuss the effect of activities on their personal fitness.
- Pupils following GCSE examination courses demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding of subject content, for example skill acquisition. They perform physical activities to a high standard and engage enthusiastically in a wide variety of appropriate tasks.
- In outdoor games matches, pupils display very good standards in the application of techniques, the implementation of tactics and the ability to discuss strategies for improvement. Pupils use space well, have good ball control, pass and shoot accurately and are effective in both defence and attack.

Sixth form

- Students following both AS and A level courses demonstrate high levels of expertise, knowledge and understanding.
- Students effectively use different forms of interactive communications technology. Specifically, students are able to use fitness testing equipment with younger pupils and are adept at using computer technology to assist their own learning. Presentations by older students include good use of varied interactive media to fully demonstrate their understanding and achievements.

- Students are able to articulate concepts and beliefs clearly and are confident in providing reasoned arguments in various aspects of the examination course. These include topics such as the organization of sport in both Wales and Great Britain, the origin of governing bodies of sport and the increasing participation of girls and women in sport. Knowledge and understanding in sports-related physiology are very good.
- Students who have a keen interest in physical education often work, under the direction of the teacher, with younger children. This has a positive effect on both their own academic and personal development, and on the skill acquisition of those with whom they work.

Shortcomings

- The fitness levels of a small minority of boys and girls in KS3 and KS4 are underdeveloped.

Progress since the last inspection.

- Progress since the last inspection has been good with improvements made in pupils' standards of achievement and in the quality of teaching. The good results in external examinations have been maintained. Sporting successes by the school are impressive.
- A few minor health and safety issues were reported to the school during the inspection.

Religious education

Standards in KS3 are good and satisfactory in KS4. The minimal provision in the sixth form does not facilitate an assessment of standards in oral or written work.

Good features

- Throughout both key stages, pupils who study the subject through both Welsh and English become familiar with aspects of major world religions.
- Pupils in both key stages have a mature attitude in class and the rapport between staff and pupils is very positive. They make sensible, sensitive and confident responses.
- Pupils of all abilities have a very positive attitude to the subject, which is helped by well-planned lessons and enthusiastic teaching strategies. Realistic targets set produce good standards in both the more able and average ability groups.
- Pupils listen well, work collaboratively and develop good literary and research skills. When given the opportunity, pupils read aloud from texts correctly and with good understanding. Role-play in some classes is of a high standard.
- Pupils with SEN who frequently have the help of support assistants and are taught in discrete classes, make very good progress in line with their ability. Good use is made of IEPs to identify and meet the needs of individuals.
- In KS3, the standards achieved are good and sometimes very good. Pupils in Y7 are familiar with the richness and diversity within Christianity and other main religions represented in Britain through the study of symbols, sacred books and religious leaders.
- Pupils in Y8 effectively link the Decalogue and the Golden Rule with Christian responsibilities in the modern world.
- Pupils in Y9 have a good knowledge of Muslim teaching and of the importance of the Hajj and other pillars of Islam.
- Pupils' grasp of key religious terms and concepts in several of the world's principal religions is good though spelling is not always accurate.

- Pupils benefit from the use of differentiated work sheets, a creative use of relevant overhead projector acetates and artefacts and the viewing of appropriate videos.
- In KS4, pupils have a mature understanding of religious stances. They contribute well orally when exploring spiritual and moral issues. They examine such concepts as fairness, prejudice and discrimination confidently

Shortcomings

- The use of ICT within religious education lessons is currently unsatisfactory though some pupils do word process some of their tasks and use clipart to make their projects more attractive. This underdevelopment is acknowledged in the departmental plan and is being addressed.
- Sometimes, pupils in KS3 do not discuss topics in sufficient detail and do not relate the subject studied to their own experiences.
- Pupils in KS3 lack sufficient opportunity for extended writing and tend to become over dependent on the well-planned departmental topic booklets.
- Although the KS4 programme is now well focused by pursuing a GCSE short course (which addresses Agreed Syllabus requirements) the allocated time is minimal and there is no assessing or reporting. This does not assist continuity and progress.
- In the sixth form, very relevant series of topics are delivered by outside speakers. However, the time allocation and the lack of assessment or progress reporting mean that the subject does not meet the Agreed Syllabus requirements.

Religious studies

Standards are good in both English and Welsh external examination groups in KS4 and in the sixth form. GCSE results are higher than national averages.

Good features

- Pupils pursuing the GCSE, religious studies course achieve good standards in their work on Jewish belief and lifestyle. Some work is very good. They understand the centrality of the Torah for believers and explore the challenge of the dietary laws (Kosher) in western society.
- They assess the role of the rabbi as an authority on Jewish rites. They benefit from handling and tasting Jewish foods and the dilemma of inadvertently breaching rules. They maintain a personal vocabulary of subject specific terms.
- Pupils have opportunity to read original texts which they interpret and summarise. They report back on their conclusions to the whole group.
- Pupils are very co-operative and the more able pupils willingly share their views and opinions with the group some of whom have SEN. Most read aloud confidently though some hesitate at times especially with subject specific terms.
- Pupils in Y11 grapple successfully with the complexity of the concept of the Trinity. They can correctly explain terms such as monotheism and omnipresent and can identify the monotheistic group of world religions.
- In the sixth form, although the number of students is low they achieved good standards in the AS course on Buddhism. Students respond well to questioning, use appropriate vocabulary and have good grasp of the main facts.

- Students listen intently to the exposition of the teacher and develop their own study skills by making their own personal notes. They revise details of the birth, childhood and the itinerant era in the life of Gautama and discuss aspects of the enlightenment and the centrality of the four noble truths.
- The course is delivered in Welsh and the students appreciate the support received on translating standard texts especially the technical terms. Students use the generous time allocation allowed for translation very well and benefit greatly from revisiting the set texts.
- As students pursue the course on ethics in English, they show that they were truly bilingual and have little problem in switching from one medium to another.
- In Y13, students following the A2 course explored the difference between holy war and just war which was appropriately and effectively linked to the contemporary dilemma regarding Iraq.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Progress since the last inspection

- Since the last inspection there has been a considerable improvement. Two subject specialists now teach the subject although there are still many non-specialists involved and the subject is delivered in many non-specialist classrooms.
- The scheme of work is of high quality and gives very good guidance and support to all staff who deliver the subject.
- Oral, pair and group work is invariably well-structured and focused and a good range of teaching techniques are successfully employed in lesson delivery.

Personal and social education

In KS3 and KS4, a PSE lesson is timetabled during registration/assembly time for 30 minutes every Wednesday morning. The sixth form students have an assembly taken by a guest speaker at this time. Overall, standards are good.

Good features

- Though the time is short it is sufficient and good use is made of it. Some staff use other opportunities during tutorial sessions to extend the time for PSE as they deem necessary.
- The scheme followed is based on the “Issues” books and this provides a good coverage of all the essential areas. There is staff and pupil support for this scheme with many staff and pupils alike expressing the opinion that the PSE programme is making a significant contribution to the development of the pupils’ social maturity.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the issues dealt with in the scheme and are happy to discuss the material presented to them with their peers in pairs and small groups. This also applied in the specific lesson on “health and hygiene” as part of the school’s programme on sex education.
- The discussion arising out of the question and answer sessions is sensible and contributes to the pupils’ increasing awareness of the issues raised by the topic under discussion.
- The PSE programme contributes to raising the standards in the key skills including problem-solving and collaborative work.

Shortcomings

- Pupils are not always sufficiently involved in collaborative work and discussion to be able to benefit fully from the lessons.

Progress since the last inspection

- Good progress has been made in standards since the last inspection and the teaching material is effectively used.

Business studies

Overall, standards of achievement in business are very good in KS4 and in the sixth form. In view of the fact that the GCSE programme attracts pupils from a wide range of initial abilities the standards achieved are commendable. The school has a strongly established record of success in business studies GNVQ vocational work, where previous results have surpassed UA and national averages. The recently introduced AVCE in business is available as single or double award. The standards achieved on this programme, as evidenced in recently assessed written work, work in student files and oral work in class indicate that outcomes this year will be further improved.

Good features

KS4

- Pupils' files are well organised with a good quantity of work completed using word processors and graphic illustration of a very good standard.
- Pupils participate well in discussion, expressing reasoned viewpoints backed by a range of appropriate evidence. For example, they can describe and analyse various methods of production, including Mass, Cell and JIT production.
- They have developed good business research skills and readily use appropriate evidence gathered from visits to commercial and government organisations.
- The school offers a wealth of opportunities to participate in schemes such as Young Enterprise and Celtic Challenge. This substantially enriches the curriculum in business, and as a direct result, pupils' standards in practical understanding of business communication are higher.
- A particularly notable strength is the teacher-provided resources, which summarise topics, pose short questions and give suggestions for extension work. These resources are very well-structured and laid out to commercial standards; they are a powerful example to students of the standards expected by the school and by the larger business community.
- Pupils react positively and with enthusiasm to the constant challenge and strong pace of the teaching in KS4. Through this process and through formal self-assessment they are consistently encouraged to review their own progress and to set higher, achievable standards and do so successfully.

Sixth form

- Students show a very good understanding of business. They use the strong and well-established links with the world of commerce and industry to generate research material for AVCE coursework, which is often of very good standard. Their work benefits substantially from participation in a range of real and simulated business activities and conferences within and outside school.

- In both oral and written work, students consistently and clearly use the ideas, concepts and vocabulary of the world of business. For example, in reference to human resource issues they relate back to previous work on legal structures and practice using a range of accurate terminology. In work on financial services, they accurately describe and analyse key elements of competition and diversification.
- Students benefit from the strength of the teacher-provided resources, which offer an outstanding example of good business practice in terms of presentation and analysis of issues. Students attain high standards of business presentation through the powerful series of exemplars, together with the stimulating nature of the teaching. A very good proportion of work is produced to a good standard using word processors, spreadsheets and graphic illustration.
- Students further benefit from the very good teaching. It is characterised by constant challenge and strong pace. Students review their own progress and set higher standards through a formal process of self-assessment.

Shortcomings

- A minority of written work by KS4 pupils is descriptive rather than analytic in nature, and some could benefit from greater use of ICT.

Progress since the last inspection

- Standards have further improved since the last inspection. The progress of those who would formerly have formed part of the CoEA cohort has been good.

Drama

Standards amongst the small number of pupils studying drama at KS4 are good. Results in 2002 were very good. The ten candidates entered all gained A*-C. Results at A level were good. Of the six candidates who were entered in 2002 four attained B grades and two C grades.

Currently there are no students following A level courses.

Good features

- In KS4, pupils undertake practical work with increasing independence.
- They show a developing ability to appreciate theatrical techniques and to use set and props in their own performance.
- They understand the importance of blocking and audience awareness and of the contribution of movement, gesture, facial expression and voice to the effectiveness of performance.
- In their study of set texts they show a developing ability to understand the presentation of character and situations and, with varying sophistication, to use terms appropriate to the study of theatre in their written work.

Progress since the last inspection

- The good standards in KS4 have been maintained.

Economics

The school has an established record of success with regard to economics. Given the context that those undertaking economics as a sixth form course have no prior experience of the subject

the standards attained are particularly commendable. Overall, standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- Students work with interest, enthusiasm and application within a well-structured course.
- Students' assignments, coursework and individual files are very well-presented and organised.
- Their knowledge and understanding in Y13 are well established and mature. They have an articulate understanding of micro and macro economic processes and are particularly proficient in creating illustrative formulae and models.
- Students in Y12 have made particularly good progress in several key areas. For example, their understanding of budget deficit and national debt, progressive, regressive and proportional taxation is clearly and fluently expressed. They regularly use verbal and graphic illustration to a degree which is beyond expectation for this stage of their studies.
- The very good teaching enhances standards of attainment. Students benefit from teaching which gives constant challenge and generates a lively pace. Teacher-provided resources are clear and well-structured and contribute significantly to students' understanding and to the quality of their written work.
- Students benefit from regular review and self-assessment of their progress.

Shortcomings

- There are no significant shortcomings.

Progress since the last inspection

- Standards have further improved since the last inspection.

Home Economics (Child Development)

Standards of achievement for GCSE home economics, child development, are satisfactory.

Good features

- The majority of pupils respond positively to every aspect of the course and have a good understanding of the development of babies and young children.
- They work productively as individuals and co-operatively as members of a group.
- They gain practical experience of caring for young children whilst visiting local primary schools and whilst supervising primary school pupils who attend the Welsh Language Centre which is based on the school site.
- Portfolios provide evidence of well-developed word processing skills.

Shortcomings

- Whilst pupils of both low and moderate ability make good progress, the more able do not undertake enough challenging work; when undertaking investigative work, for example, in their work with baby foods, they do not analyse results in sufficient detail nor do they collate their findings methodically.

Progress since the last inspection

- Standards have improved since the previous inspection resulting in a considerable increase in the number of pupils achieving A*-C grades.

Sociology

Sociology is available at GCSE and A level. Recent GCSE results have been particularly variable and, in response, the school has introduced changes in approach. From the evidence of current KS4 oral and written work these changes are having a positive effect. Given the wide range of initial abilities of students on the GCSE course, standards are now very good in KS4. Standards in the sixth form are good, with some very good aspects.

Good features

KS4

- All pupils have a good knowledge of key aspects of sociology. They can describe accurately the distinctive features of the main theories of individualism, structuralism and functionalism.
- Pupils work with enthusiasm and application, and usefully bring in their own social and cultural experiences to their programme of study. They have a good knowledge of current local and national issues relevant to their area of study.
- A very good feature is their ability to discuss moral questions in mature fashion. Year 10 pupils work well together to describe and analyse family structures and alternative ways of living together.
- Most pupils maintain well-ordered files and show a good or very good knowledge of key theories, and of practical sociological inquiry such as survey set-up and techniques.
- Pupils' very good oral skills of accurate description and clear analysis owe a great deal to the stimulating teaching and to the very good teacher-produced resources.

Sixth form

- Students have a good understanding of key theories, methods and models in sociology. They also have a well-articulated knowledge of a good range of authorities within individual fields. For example, they are able to compare the behavioural ideas of US psychologists of the 1970s with feminist ideas of the 1990s.
- They are able to use appropriately their own cultural and social experiences to develop illustration and to enhance debate.
- Their written work is well organised. Files are indexed and well maintained. The note-taking skills of the majority are very good.
- Students benefit from the challenging style of teaching, which encourages them to range widely in their thinking and to present their findings in a convincing manner.

Shortcomings

- A minority of pupils in KS4 do not sufficiently distinguish between description, opinion and analysis.
- Whilst the standard of their written work is good, a minority of sixth form students do not participate fully in discussions.

Health and Social Care AVCE

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Students adopt a mature attitude towards their studies and can be relied upon to work independently towards pre-determined targets.
- They can research effectively, analyse information logically and express ideas coherently.
- Whilst focusing on Unit 20, they demonstrate a sound appreciation of the functions and values of nutrients and also of the dietary needs of various client groups.

- Portfolios contain examples of written work, which are of a good standard in terms of both quality and quantity. They also contain evidence of well-developed computing skills.
- Students benefit greatly from the experiences gained whilst visiting and working at local nursery schools and homes for the aged.

Shortcomings

- Students seem somewhat reluctant to enter into whole-group discussions and to defend their point of view when challenged by others.

Progress since the last inspection

- The high standards that had been established prior to the previous inspection have been maintained.

Leisure and Tourism GNVQ and Travel and Tourism AVCE

Sixth form

Standards of achievement are good. In 2001 and 2002, the examination results were good.

Good features

- Students demonstrate a good level of understanding and knowledge of the travel and tourism industry whether applied locally, nationally or internationally.
- Students exhibit a good grasp of the structure of primary information gathering, such as questionnaires, surveys and websites.
- Assignments, coursework material and investigational tasks are well managed and neatly presented using ICT.
- The ability to evaluate their work and to action any amendments required is good.
- The majority of the students are able to discuss the objectives of the unit of work, the investigative methods and are able to incorporate their understanding of the assessment criteria into their coursework.

Shortcomings

- A minority of students are not committed to meeting deadlines and producing work of sufficient quality and detail.

Progress since the last inspection

- The good standards have been maintained.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress Since the Last Inspection

1. Maintain and build upon current strengths, including good standards of achievement, good quality of behaviour and communal life.

The school has continued to build on the strengths identified in the last inspection. Pupils' standards of achievement have improved steadily since the last inspection. The proportion of good and very good work is now substantial. The performance of boys has also improved.

Pupils' behaviour and attitude to work were judged to be very good in this inspection as was the quality of communal life in the school.

2. Consolidate and develop its bilingual teaching provision.

The school has made good progress in extending the provision for bilingual education in KS3. There is now a good range of courses available through the medium of Welsh. The number of pupils following courses through the medium of Welsh in Y7 to Y9 has increased significantly since the last inspection. However, little if any progress has been made in ensuring continuity from KS3 to KS4 and into the sixth form. Plans for increasing the number of pupils taught Welsh as a first language and achieving greater continuity from KS3 to KS4 in Welsh-medium provision are included in the current SDP.

3. Within the SDP, identify medium-term development aims and success criteria, including specific targets for pupil attainment.

The SDP is now a comprehensive working document containing plans up to and including 2004. Specific targets for pupil attainment are included and there are very effective procedures for tracking pupil progress across all age groups. Success criteria are specific and measurable.

4. Give greater prominence to NC attainment levels in curriculum planning and assessment in KS3 and in the monitoring and reporting of pupils' attainment.

Attainment levels were thoroughly reviewed after the last inspection and particular attention was given to the method of communicating those levels to pupils. Scrutiny of assessment procedures within departments and discussions with pupils during this inspection indicate that the arrangements for assessing, monitoring and reporting of pupils' attainment are very effective.

5. Reduce number of teachers teaching outside their subject specialism.

The school has made progress in reducing the number of teachers deployed to teach outside their subject specialism or to teach in two or more departments but it remains a feature of the deployment of a small minority of staff.

8.2 Key Issues for Action

In order to build on its current achievements, the school should:

- address shortcomings in pupils' achievements as indicated in subject reports;
- continue to improve the provision for Welsh language and Welsh-medium education as identified in the SDP to ensure continuity and progression within and across all key stages;
- achieve greater consistency in the use of ICT across the curriculum;
- meet statutory requirements with regard to the daily act of collective worship and Agreed Syllabus requirements in religious education in the sixth form.

APPENDIX

A. Basic Information About the School

Name of School	Ysgol Tre-Gib
School type	Secondary
Age-range of pupils	11-18
Address of school	Bethlehem Road Ffairfach Llandeilo Carmarthenshire
Post-Code	SA19 6TB
Telephone Number	01558 823477

Headteacher	Mrs Julie D Griffiths
Date of appointment	September 1997
Chair of Governors	Mr Martin Presdee Jones
Registered Inspector	Mr D Gwynfor Evans
Dates of inspection	10-14 February 2003

B. School Data and Indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>								
Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Total
Number of pupils	167	162	149	146	169	79	63	935

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	58	4	59.35

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	15.75 :1
Average teaching group size	20.4
Overall contact ratio	82.4%

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	90	90	89	87	88	87	87	88.3
Term 2	92	92	90	87	96	90	94	91.1
Term 3	95	93	91	90	88	89	86	90.9

<i>Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection</i>	37 (temporary) 2 (permanent)
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C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2002 (Wales 2001)															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 144															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
EN	Teacher Assessment	School		1				1	4	18	34	34	8		
		National		1				3	10	22	34	21	8		
	Test	School		3	5				4	21	42	21	4		
		National		3	4				9	22	33	19	10		
WE	Teacher Assessment	School							10	16	25	22	26		
		National			1			1	6	22	32	28	10		
	Test	School			4					23	35	32	10		
		National		2					4	21	32	28	11		
MA	Teacher Assessment	School		2				3	7	14	27	30	17		
		National		1				1	10	23	25	26	13	1	
	Test	School		6	1				8	12	27	33	13		
		National		6	2				8	22	22	27	13		
SC	Teacher Assessment	School		1					9	15	24	41	10		
		National		1	1			1	10	24	31	23	9		
	Test	School		3					8	14	36	27	12		
		National		4	2				9	22	29	24	10		

Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and either English or Welsh (first language)			
by Teacher Assessment		by Test	
In the school:	62.5	In the school:	61.8
In Wales:	51	In Wales:	50

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

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

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

W - Pupils who are working towards level 1

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

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, CoEA and GNVQ			
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2002: 131			
The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2002:			
	School	UA	Wales
Were entered for 5 or more GCSEs	93	88	86
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C	69	57	50
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-G	92	87	85
achieved GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language)	52	42	37
entered at least one CoEA, GCSE short course or GCSE	98	98	97
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-C	87	80	74
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-G	97	95	92
achieved no graded GCSE	3	2	3
achieved one or more CoE only			
achieved a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	0		
achieved a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2	0		
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	69		
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	92		

For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS and GNVQs			
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2002:72			
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2002: 62			
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2002: 7			
	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	66	68	66
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	95	92	94
Average points score per candidate	19	20	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	0		
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	6		

D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection

- Eighteen inspectors spent the equivalent of 55 days in school.
- Two hundred and thirty-three lessons, including full and part-time sessions were observed, covering all curricular areas and additionally, a sample of PSHE lessons were inspected.
- Inspectors attended assemblies, tutorial sessions, registrations, and observed a range of extra-curricular activities.
- Inspectors held discussions with the chairman of governors, headteacher, members of SMT, heads of department/faculties, heads of year, staff with whole-school responsibilities and support staff.
- Work across the curriculum, from representative pupils from each year group was examined. Pupils' work was also scrutinised during lesson observations.
- Comprehensive documentation provided by the school was scrutinised before and during the inspection.
- Inspectors held formal discussions with groups of pupils and students selected from Y7 to Y13. They also talked with many pupils informally.
- The registered inspector, accompanied by a member of the inspection team met the staff and governing body prior to the inspection.
- Fifty-four parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and 172 replies to the parents' questionnaire were analysed. Some parents also wrote to the registered inspector.
- Feedback was given to departments and the SMT during the week of the inspection, and to the SMT and governors after the inspection.

E. Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team

Inspector	Type	Aspect Responsibilities	Subject Responsibilities
Mr D G Evans	RgI	Context; Main findings; Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning; Teaching; Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement; Leadership and efficiency; School improvement	Welsh
Mr G G Jones	Lay	Behaviour and attitudes; Attendance; Partnerships with parents and community, schools and other institutions; Partnership with industry	
Mrs M M Williams	Core	Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum; Assessment, recording and reporting	English; drama
Dr J Hughes	Core	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare; Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement	science; PSHE
Dr E Price-Jones	Core	Curriculum; Staffing, accommodation and learning resources; Numeracy	mathematics
Mr D Treharne	Core	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; Provision for pupils with SEN	religious education; religious studies
Mrs A Williams	Team		science
Dr G Briwnant-Jones	Team		design and technology
Mrs E Jones	Team		design and technology; home economics; health and social care
Dr D Charles	Team	ICT across the curriculum	information technology
Mrs A Newman	Team		history
Mr H Llewelyn	Team		geography; leisure and tourism; travel and tourism
Mrs L Meiring	Team		modern foreign languages
Mr E Forster	Team		art
Mr A W Jones	Team		music
Dr S Lloyd	Team		physical education
Mr I Hume	Team		business education; economics; sociology
Mr C Rowlands	Team		Welsh

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