

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

**YNYSAWDRE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL
HEOL YR YSGOL
TONDU
BRIDGEND
CF32 9EL**

SCHOOL NUMBER: 672/4074

DATE OF INSPECTION: 30TH SEPTEMBER - 4TH OCTOBER 2002

BY

REGISTERED INSPECTOR: MR R GRAHAM

DATE: 18TH NOVEMBER 2002

UNDER ESTYN CONTRACT NUMBER: C/T/1/02

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CURRICULUM NOMENCLATURE AND KEY STAGES

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

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

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

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

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

LIST OF ACRONYMNS USED IN THE REPORT IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

ACCAC	-	Awdurdod Cymwysterau Cwricwlwm ac Aseu Cymru (The Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales)
AS	-	Advanced Subsidiary
CAD	-	Computer Aided Design
CAT	-	Cognitive Assessment Test
CAM	-	Computer Aided Manufacture
CoEA	-	Certificate of Educational Achievement
CoP	-	Code of Practice
DARA	-	Defence Astronaut Research Agency
DASH	-	Drugs and Alcohol Self Help
EBP	-	Education Business Partnership
GB	-	Governing Body
GCE	-	General Certificate of Education
GCSE	-	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	-	General National Vocational Qualification
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
IEP	-	Individual Education Plan
INSET	-	In-Service Education and Training
NFER	-	National Foundation for Education and Research
NVQ	-	National Vocational Qualification
PSE	-	Personal, Social Education
RoA	-	Record of Achievement
SAT	-	Standard Assessment Tests
SDP	-	School Development Plan
SEN	-	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	-	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SMT	-	Senior Management Team
UA	-	Unitary Authority

CONTENTS

1. CONTEXT	1
2. MAIN FINDINGS	1
3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	6
3.1 STANDARDS ACHIEVED IN SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING.....	6
3.2 STANDARDS ACHIEVED IN KEY SKILLS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM.....	8
4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL	10
4.1 PUPILS' SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT.....	10
4.2 BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES.....	11
4.3 ATTENDANCE.....	12
5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION	12
5.1 TEACHING.....	12
5.2 ASSESSMENT, RECORDING AND REPORTING.....	14
5.3 CURRICULUM.....	15
5.4 SUPPORT, GUIDANCE AND PUPILS' WELFARE.....	17
5.5 PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH SEN.....	18
5.6 PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND COMMUNITY, SCHOOLS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS.....	19
5.7 PARTNERSHIP WITH INDUSTRY.....	20
6. MANAGEMENT	21
6.1 QUALITY OF SELF-EVALUATION AND PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT.....	21
6.2 LEADERSHIP AND EFFICIENCY.....	23
6.3 STAFFING, ACCOMMODATION AND LEARNING RESOURCES.....	24
7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING	25
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS.....	25
ENGLISH.....	25
MATHEMATICS.....	27
SCIENCE.....	28
WELSH SECOND LANGUAGE.....	29
DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY.....	30
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.....	31
HISTORY.....	32
GEOGRAPHY.....	33
MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES.....	34
ART.....	35
MUSIC.....	36
PHYSICAL EDUCATION.....	37
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.....	38
PERSONAL AND SOCIAL EDUCATION.....	38
BUSINESS STUDIES.....	39
CHILD DEVELOPMENT.....	40
DRAMA.....	40
ELECTRONICS.....	41
HOME ECONOMICS.....	41
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION.....	42
OTHER(S).....	43
8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT	45
8.1 PROGRESS SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION.....	45
8.2 KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION.....	46
APPENDIX	47
A. BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	47

B.	SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	47
C.	RESULTS OF NATIONAL CURRICULUM ASSESSMENTS AND PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS	48
D.	THE EVIDENCE BASE OF THE INSPECTION	50
E.	COMPOSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INSPECTION TEAM	51

PART 2: THE INSPECTION SCHEDULE

1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

Ynysawdre Comprehensive School is situated on the outskirts of Bridgend and shares a campus with a Roman Catholic secondary school. There are 929 pupils on roll in the age range 11 to 18.

Approximately half of the pupils come from an area where there are features of economic and social disadvantage, the remainder from areas that are neither particularly prosperous nor disadvantaged. The catchment area is recognised as one of the most deprived in socio-economic terms in the Borough of Bridgend. About 30% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Few pupils come from ethnic minority families.

The full range of ability is represented in the school but there is a high proportion of pupils with lower levels of ability. About 40% of pupils have a reading age more than two years behind their chronological age on entry to the school. Sixteen pupils have a statement of special educational need and a further 113 are on the school's SEN register.

Despite substantial progress made since the last inspection in April 1997, the main aim of the school remains to continue to improve pupils' performance in external examinations.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

Ynysawdre Comprehensive School is a good school, continuously seeking to improve. It values the development of staff and pupils alike. The head and deputy head, provide very good leadership and strongly control the direction and focus of the school. They are supported well by senior and middle managers, teaching and support staff, and the GB. The school provides a caring, supportive and increasingly challenging environment in which pupils and teachers work together with determination to achieve high personal and academic standards. Good teaching is a strong feature of the school.

The school has made some good progress overall in addressing the key issues identified at the last inspection. In particular progress in terms of planning school strategies for improving teaching and pupils' learning has been good.

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in national test and external examination results.

The proportion of pupils attaining level 5 or better in the KS3 tests in English, mathematics and science has increased. The proportion achieving level 6 or better has increased more

markedly, indicating that the most able pupils are achieving well at this stage. Nevertheless when the 2001 KS3 test results are compared with those achieved by schools with similar socio-economic backgrounds, results in English and mathematics are below, and in science well below, average. The degree of improvement at KS3 is small and very variable.

The proportion of pupils gaining at least five passes at grades A* to C in the GCSE rose from 22% (well below UA and national averages) in 1997 to 32% (still below local and national averages) in 2001. This figure is below average for schools with similar intakes in Wales. In addition, the percentage of pupils with five or more passes at A* to G increased from 61% in 1997 to 78% in 2001, although this figure is still below local and national averages. Figures for pupils achieving at least one A* to G are much nearer national averages. The number of pupils achieving grade C or above in English, mathematics and science is low, although results in 2002 indicate the beginnings of an improvement after several years of similar performances.

In 2001, in an open-access sixth form, the proportion of students (85%) who achieved two or more grades A to E in the GCE at Advanced (A) level was below UA and national levels. The performance of girls at A level is approaching UA and national averages, particularly in A to E passes and average points score per candidate. Boys' attainment, however, in 2001 is well below local and national averages, and particularly low in the proportions of passes at higher grades (A to C). Many students achieved success in their GNVQ courses.

Standards in subjects

Subject	KS3	KS4	Y12 / Y13
English	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Mathematics	Good	Satisfactory	Good
Science	Good	Good	Good
Welsh second language	Good	Satisfactory	Good
Design & Technology	Satisfactory		Good
Design & Technology (Resistant materials) (Graphic products)		Satisfactory Good	
Information Technology	Good	Good	Good
History	Good	Satisfactory	Good
Geography	Good	Good	Good
French	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	
Art	Good	Good	Good
Music	Good	Good	Satisfactory
Physical Education	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Drama		Satisfactory	
Religious Education	Good	Good	Poor
Religious Studies			Very Good
Electronics		Very Good	Good
Home Economics - Food (Catering) (Child development)		Good Good Good	
Politics and Government			Good
Business Studies		Good	Good

GNVQ Engineering		Satisfactory	
NVQ Building		Satisfactory	
GNVQ Health & Social Care			Good
GNVQ Information Technology		Good	Good
Personal & Social Education	Good	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Standards in Key Skills

Listening	Good
Speaking	Good
Reading	Satisfactory
Writing	Satisfactory
Numeracy	Satisfactory
Information and Communications Technology	Satisfactory

Good features

- Standards are at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of classes and good or better in 56 per cent of these. The largest proportion of good work is in Y12 and Y13.
- The most able pupils are academically challenged in many lessons and achieve good examination grades.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress and achieve well in most subjects.
- Standards in science, information technology, geography, art, electronics and business studies are good throughout the school.
- Pupils take advantage of the school's good ICT facilities to help improve their own learning.
- Good teaching, good behaviour in class and a supportive environment in the school as a whole, have a marked positive effect on pupils' standards.

Shortcomings

- Standards are unsatisfactory in four per cent of classes, mostly in French and physical education.
- The percentage of pupils attaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C is below school expectations and the national average. There is scope to raise expectations and challenge the pupils to a greater extent, particularly those of average ability and just below.
- Pupils' written work is not always well presented and frequently it contains spelling mistakes.
- Standards are poor in religious education in Y12 and Y13 since the school does not provide courses for it. It does not meet statutory requirements.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

The quality of teaching is a major strength of the school. Teachers develop good relationships with pupils and generate an atmosphere conducive to learning and support. They often give freely of their own time to provide extra help for pupils and offer a good range of extra-

curricular activities to enhance their education. Teaching styles in recent years have been greatly enriched by carefully devised programmes of staff development.

Good features

- Teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of classes observed, good in 48 per cent and very good in a further 19 per cent. These figures are in excess of national expectations for 2002, which are 95 per cent satisfactory or better and 50 per cent good or better.
- Teaching in Y12 and Y13 is good in 45 per cent and very good in a further 28 per cent, a very high percentage.
- The marking of assessments and examinations gives pupils good feedback on their progress.
- The provision made for pupils with SEN makes a significant and positive impact on their progress and attainment. In many classes pupils receive appropriate and sensitive support and achieve well.
- The school's curriculum offers a wide and appropriate range of academic and vocational courses, ensuring pupils have good opportunities to achieve well.
- Pupil support systems are particularly good, offering good personal, educational and careers advice.

Shortcomings

- In many subjects, even though teaching is satisfactory, expectations are not high enough and pupils are not sufficiently challenged to realise their full academic potential.
- Reports to parents do not provide adequate information on pupils' strengths and shortcomings in each subject area or set focused targets for improvement. The growing range of data available for tracking pupils' progress is not used to maximum effect.

THE SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF PUPILS

The school has a strong sense of community based upon good relationships between staff and pupils. The school is a friendly and purposeful place which invests heavily in providing good support for all members of its community. Behaviour in and out of classrooms is good and there is a good range of support mechanisms for all pupils. Pupils are friendly, confident and approachable.

Good features

- The school provides a secure and caring environment.
- A positive ethos in which each individual is valued and supported, pervades the school.
- Relationships are based on mutual respect and pupils behave well.
- Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and a developing moral awareness.
- All members of staff know their pupils well.
- Pupils receive good support from senior managers, year heads, form tutors and subject teachers.
- The school is welcoming and inclusive. Pupils with SEN and newcomers to the school are well integrated.
- Y12 and Y13 students are encouraged to mentor and help Y7 pupils and provide reassuring support.

- Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory.
- Pupils have opportunities to contribute to school life by serving on the school council, thereby helping their understanding of the responsibilities of citizenship.

Shortcomings

- The school does not meet statutory requirements for collective worship.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

The school has a strong sense of purpose and corporate ethos. Governors, senior and middle managers have worked hard with all staff on teaching and learning strategies, to improve standards and pupils' attendance, and developing the school's ethos. They have a common vision and a growing understanding of how higher standards can be achieved.

Good features

- Systems in place ensure effective management of the school.
- There is a culture of review and development of teaching and learning in place.
- The head, ably assisted by his deputy and senior managers, set clear values for the school.
- The quality of departmental leadership is predominantly good.
- Staff are well qualified with a good range of experience.
- Routine administration of the school is efficient and effective.
- The school manages its budget well.
- Financial decisions made are in keeping with priorities and objectives as identified in the SDP.
- ICT facilities have improved since the last inspection and the school has a higher ratio of computers to pupils than nationally.
- Governors play a supportive role in the school. They are well-informed of the school's work, its strengths and weaknesses.

Shortcomings

- There are shortcomings in the leadership and management of French, physical education and drama.
- Although the school has made great strides in the overall effectiveness of assessing pupils' performance, there are inconsistencies across departments.
- Reports on pupils' strengths and shortcomings sometimes lack clear and consistent information or focused, supportive targets for improvement.

Progress since the last inspection

There has been good progress on most key issues raised in the last inspection report, resulting in an improvement in standards of achievement and quality of teaching. Attendance levels have improved, but remain barely satisfactory.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards Achieved in Subjects and Areas of Learning

The school's intake has a full range of ability, although the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels in NC tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of KS2 is well below the national average. In addition the school has a high proportion of pupils with SEN and accepts high numbers of pupils excluded from other schools. Consequently, the school has a higher than normal share of less able pupils in each year group.

Standards are at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of classes. They are good in 47 per cent and very good in a further 9 per cent of classes. These figures represent an improvement on the last inspection, moving from 90 per cent to 94 for satisfactory or better standards and 40 per cent to 56 in the percentage of standards that are good or very good.

Standards in KS3 and KS4 are almost identical for classes satisfactory or better, although there is a higher proportion of good or better in KS3 (59 per cent compared to 46). Standards in Y12 and Y13 are better than in KS3 and KS4. Ninety eight per cent of standards in Y12 and Y13 are at least satisfactory, and 66 per cent are good or better. These are high figures.

In KS3 standards of achievement are good in mathematics, science, Welsh second language, information technology, history, geography, art, religious education, music and personal and social education. They are satisfactory in English, physical education and design and technology, and unsatisfactory in French.

In the NC tests at the end of KS3 in 2001, 30 per cent of pupils gained at least level 5 in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science, compared with the all Wales figure of 50 per cent. Scores have been low for the last two years, dropping from 40 per cent in 1999. The current scores place the school well below average in comparison with similar schools in Wales. Performance in science is lower than in English and mathematics.

Significant changes of staff in major departmental positions has had a significant influence, particularly in science, on examination results at all key stages.

In KS4 standards are very good in electronics and good in English, science, information technology, history, art, music, religious education, business studies, design and technology (graphic products) and home economics (food, catering and child care). Standards are satisfactory in mathematics, Welsh second language, history, French, drama, physical education, design and technology (resistant materials), GNVQ engineering, NVQ building and personal and social education.

GCSE examination results at the end of KS4 show a good improvement since the last inspection, although they remain below local and national average levels. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more passes between grades A* and C has risen from 22 per cent in 1997 to 32 per cent in 2001. The performance has been fairly static around 32 per cent for three to four years, and places the school below average in comparison with similar schools. Thirty-five per cent of pupils attained 5 or more A* to C grades in 2002, representing a significant increase in performance. Examination results in English show a significant improvement in 2001, almost approaching local and Wales averages. This represents a very good measure of progress in English from KS2 and KS3 to the end of KS4. Scores for pupils

gaining 5 or more A* to G grades are low at 78 per cent. Results for pupils gaining at least 1 GCSE A* to G are somewhat better, although still below average.

In Y12 and Y13 standards are very good in religious studies and good in English, mathematics, sciences, Welsh second language, design and technology, information technology, history, geography, art, electronics, business studies, politics and GNVQ health and social care. They are satisfactory in music, physical education and personal and social education. Students make good progress in Y12 and Y13. The school offers a good range of AS, advanced and vocational courses. The average points scored by pupils entering two or more A level examinations is 12, a figure below local and national levels. The performance of girls at A level is approaching UA and Wales averages, particularly in grade A to E passes and the average points score per candidate. In contrast, the performance of boys at A level is well below the local and national average, and was particularly weak in the percentage of passes at the higher grades, A to C. In recent years good A level results have been recorded in business studies, art, geography, history, religious studies and English literature, and at AS level in physics, mathematics, information technology and politics. A good range of successful vocational courses are offered with particularly good results in GNVQ information technology. Standards are poor in religious education as the school does not meet statutory regulations in providing courses.

The school provides well for the most able pupils, especially in KS4. They generally make good progress and achieve well in most subjects. In many subjects pupils can recall a wide range of previous work and use it to good effect in coursework and problem solving. Pupils are supported well in class and through extra-curricular activities. They are articulate and give of their views freely in class. The majority of pupils read fluently and with understanding, although their writing is of variable quality and spelling is weak. Standards in English are affected by weaknesses in the use of language, particularly in KS3, but these problems are largely resolved by teachers in the English department by the end of KS4 where examination results show a considerable improvement in standards of attainment. Able pupils do not reach satisfactory standards in French in KS3. Pupils make use of extensive ICT facilities in the school and there is a growing involvement in resource retrieval and research. Overall, able pupils do well in class and achieve good grades in examinations.

Pupils of average ability generally make satisfactory progress. It is good in science, information technology, Welsh second language, history, art and religious education and unsatisfactory in French in KS3. Progress diminishes in KS4 except in information technology, art and religious education. The standard in English improves to good in KS4; the only subject to reverse a trend. Pupils co-operate with their teachers and produce work of a satisfactory standard but, in many areas, they are not sufficiently challenged and remain passive learners. The school is addressing this problem and producing active learning experiences which are more varied and interesting. There is a substantial minority of pupils, particularly at KS4, who have sporadic attendance. This results in incomplete work in their books and often underachievement.

Pupils of lower ability make satisfactory progress. Work is generally adapted effectively to their needs and capabilities, although there is a lack of pace and challenge for some pupils. As with pupils of average ability, standards are generally lower in KS4 except for English. They become unsatisfactory in part of design and technology. This group of pupils also exhibits shortcomings in attendance levels. The school accepts relatively large numbers of pupils excluded from other schools and makes considerable efforts to integrate them into the whole

of school life. Many of these pupils have experienced long breaks in their learning habits and routines and, for many, disaffection is well established before arriving at the school. In general, these factors produce low expectations in pupils and result in a low pass rate of five or more A* to G grades at GCSE.

Pupils with SEN make good progress in most subjects; it is very good in geography in KS3 and in religious education. Good emphasis is placed on developing their skills so that they can access the wider curriculum with confidence. Pupils with SEN receive good support from specialist teachers and other staff, who work effectively in many areas of the curriculum. The school houses UA units for supporting pupils with hearing impairments and physically handicapped pupils. Support for these pupils is very good, both from staff and their fellow pupils. All pupils with SEN are integrated well into whole school life.

The school is committed to improving standards and has invested a great deal of time and resources in making improvements in teaching and learning processes. Examination results, in recent years, have been adversely affected by major staffing changes, particularly in core subjects, causing the overall progress to be limited. Departments have overcome these difficulties and are now in a better position to tackle the pockets of underachievement, low expectations and passive attitudes to learning that remain.

3.2 Standards Achieved in Key Skills across the Curriculum

Standards achieved in each key stage in reading, writing and numeracy are satisfactory and in listening they are good. Speaking skills are good in KS3 and in Y12 and Y13, and satisfactory in KS4. Skills in ICT are satisfactory in KS3 and KS4 and good in Y12 and Y13.

There is a language co-ordinator and plans for co-ordinators for numeracy and information and communications technology. Specific lessons in literacy, and later in the term, numeracy are time tabled in order to support pupils in Y7. A good quality 'Language for Learning' booklet is used in these sessions and, although work is not yet sufficiently well organised to address all the needs of individual pupils, most make noticeable progress. Pupils with SEN are supported well and there are various systems in place such as the Bridgend Key Skills Initiative and Toe by Toe, to help them make progress. They generally speak and read well in relation to their ability and reach good standards. Their standards are very good in information and communication technology and satisfactory in listening, writing and numeracy.

Pupils are given several opportunities to enhance their **listening** skills and the vast majority of them listen well. In assemblies, for example, they generally listen quietly and with courtesy to teachers and, in PSE lessons, to their peers. In almost all classes pupils listen attentively to instruction and this has a positive affect on standards. On occasion however, for example in science, they accept what is said too readily and without full understanding. Students in Y12 and Y13, particularly in mathematics, history and religious studies demonstrate very good skills of listening often evidenced by some perceptive questions and comment. In French, while pupils listen with due attention, their skill in listening for key words in order to make easier the comprehension of, for example, the rest of a sentence is underdeveloped. In physical education in Y8 a small number of girls has difficulty in listening and responding to instruction.

In several subjects pupils display good skills in **speaking** and respond politely to questions

asked of them. Standards in KS3 and in Y12 and Y13 tend to be better than those in KS4. In English, Welsh second language and in some PSE classes, for example, pupils contribute well to discussion and present their opinions coherently. Many pupils, across nearly all subjects, explain current work with understanding, and use subject-specific terms correctly. In some instances pupils' replies to questions are thoughtful, reasoned and demonstrate good understanding. Where dialogue is extended, for example in some English, mathematics, geography, music, business studies and science lessons, standards in those subjects are often raised. In physical education and French, pupils' responses tend to be very brief and with little expectation of them to give extended replies. While most pupils show a willingness to speak in front of their peers, in most subjects, opportunity to practise skills of speaking to an audience are sometimes missed. On occasion, pupils' oral responses in formal contexts are marred by their use of non-standard English and weakness in projecting themselves with confidence.

Pupils have good opportunity for extended **writing** in, for example, English, history, art, religious studies and business studies. More usually, however, pupils are not often required to write at length or to form their own sentences about a topic after class discussion; they sometimes copy from books or write down dictated notes. In these situations understanding of the subject content is not always tested sufficiently well. In general, pupils write coherently. In very few subjects, however, do teachers require them to draft and edit their work in order to improve it or to check it sufficiently well for spelling and grammatical errors. In several subjects errors remain uncorrected. Poor spelling detracts from the otherwise satisfactory or good calibre work of a large proportion of pupils. Several boys, particularly of average and low ability, tend to show less care in their written work than girls. Their books are often untidy and work incomplete.

Reading skills are developed satisfactorily overall in each key stage. In English, history, Welsh second language, science, religious studies and PSE pupils are encouraged to read aloud and a few, generally the more able pupils, do so with clarity and conviction using good intonation to convey meaning. On the whole, however, reading aloud is not a main feature of lessons and few opportunities are offered for this in other subjects. Nevertheless in art, for example, books are used well to inform practical work and in business studies and drama to encourage independent study and research. Use of the Internet is beginning to become popular with pupils and students and, where it is used sensibly, it is proving to be a useful tool to support their reading and to extend their subject knowledge base. Overall, pupils are not encouraged sufficiently in some subjects to read widely for pleasure or for school-work and, since these skills are not always extended sufficiently by the work they encounter in class, their progress in reading and independent research and study is sometimes slow.

Most pupils use basic mathematical skills satisfactorily in dealing with simple problems. For the most part pupils are capable of transferring these skills from mathematics lessons in order to enhance their work in other subjects. Few departments, however, plan and implement ways to help pupils improve their **numeracy** skills or to use them in purposeful situations; opportunities are often missed or not exploited fully. Nevertheless, in design and technology, for example, pupils weigh, measure, and cost various items and show satisfactory understanding of proportion; although in Y7 some have difficulty measuring in millimetres. In science, information technology, geography and history, realistic data is analysed and appropriate tables and charts drawn to depict results. In KS4 and in Y12 and Y13 these skills often enhance the quality of course work in those subjects noted. In Welsh second language and French, pupils count in the target language and explore the topics of time, money and

simple measurement. The mathematics department is very supportive of all pupils and hold lunch time sessions for revision and extra tuition. There is no whole school policy on numeracy although plans are in the making.

The use of **ICT** is generally developing satisfactorily across the curriculum. Interactive white boards, for example, are used to good effect by teachers in English, French, science, electronics, information technology and for groups of pupils with SEN. Audio and video materials are used well, on occasion, in French and Welsh second language to improve pupils' skills in speaking. In these and other classes pupils' quality of education is usually enhanced by the use of these resources. Pupils' standards in using computers to support their work in subjects is satisfactory overall although generally rather better in Y12 and Y13 than in other key stages. For example, in art students carry out good quality independent research on various artists and in religious studies and business studies good use of Internet and CD ROMs is made. In design and technology they use ICT skills to enhance their folio work and for CAD/CAM. Computer rooms are generally available at lunch time and attended well by pupils. While some departments do not have easy access to computers in their teaching area there are five computer rooms in the school and most of these can be booked at short notice for use with classes. Not all subjects, however, take advantage of the facilities. This is particularly so in physical education across KS3 and KS4 and to some extent in art and history in KS3, and in mathematics and history in KS4. Whilst in these and most other subjects pupils' word processing skills are generally satisfactory, opportunities to enhance their understanding of subject specific topics and skills by using related computer software are missed.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is satisfactory.

The aims of the school are to provide a secure caring environment for all pupils and full commitment to their development and well being. A positive ethos pervades the school in which each individual is valued and supported. Pupils are happy and secure within an atmosphere of mutual co-operation and respect for each other and the environment. Good relationships exist, pupils behave well and have a clear sense of right and wrong and developing moral awareness. Successes are shared and celebrated and pupils of all abilities including those with SEN are valued and contribute to all aspects of school life. Pupils are encouraged to be actively involved in supporting their community and engage in charitable fundraising or providing entertainment and support for the elderly.

Pupils exercise responsibility and initiative helping one and other in 'Toe by Toe' and 'Go for it' schemes. An effective school council ensures that the views and ideas of pupils are fully exploited in enhancing the work and life of the school. The school reinforces effectively its key values through images, posters and displays, highlighting themes such as self esteem and diligence. Some subject schemes of work, such as art and design and technology, identify key opportunities for promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Pupils who study French have the opportunity to broaden their cultural understanding by taking part in a trip to France. In English, history and music, multi cultural issues are discussed arising from texts studied and in religious education the study of other religions provides opportunities to explore diversity and social equality. The Welsh culture and

heritage is celebrated in a range of contexts across the curriculum.

A whole school assembly takes place once a week and regular year assemblies on particular days of the week. Assemblies are well planned, often include pupil participation, pursue a particular moral theme and are effective in enhancing the spiritual and moral understanding of pupils. Suitable prayers, bible readings and hymns are shared. Some assemblies also incorporate an opportunity for silence and reflection. However statutory requirements are not fully met, as pastoral periods do not all contain an element of collective worship. This is also the case in Y12 and Y13. A range of topics is discussed in religious education and in the PSE programme which extends pupils' understanding and, in addition, there is a range of extra curricular activities for all interests, including a homework club.

4.2 Behaviour and Attitudes

Pupils' behaviour is good overall. In classes, most display good attitudes to learning and teachers respond effectively to any minor instances of misbehaviour. During assemblies, at break times and in their movement around the school, pupils behave in an orderly manner. There is little evidence of litter or graffiti around the school. Pupils' relationships with staff and with each other are good. They are helpful and courteous when talking to visitors.

The school has developed very good procedures for handling any misbehaviour by pupils. These consist of various stages to address increasing indiscipline. At each stage, staff take appropriate actions, often involving much pastoral support, in order to correct any behavioural problems. Nevertheless, there has been an apparently high number (184) of exclusions during the past twelve months. However, these actually involved only 77 pupils and all have been temporary exclusions with an average time away from school of two and a half days. These exclusions result from the school's strictly applied procedures which have been made clear and are fully understood by pupils and their parents. It is noted that the school annually takes about 30 pupils from other nearby schools.

The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities. Pupils in each form select one boy and one girl to represent them on a year council from which delegates are selected to form the school council. This group meets regularly to discuss matters of interest. Senior staff have a watching brief at these meetings which enables good communication of ideas back to the head teacher and early action to result if important issues are raised.

All Y12 students are invited to take part in the buddy system, Toe by Toe. Those accepting the offer attend several sessions of training to enable them to help Y7 pupils and others needing additional support on a one-to-one basis, particularly with reading. All Y12 and Y13 students can choose to undertake a wide range of responsibilities such as supervision of doors and passageways, running the careers library, helping staff at assemblies and at parents' evenings. The head boy and girl and their deputies are elected by their peers and by staff. They represent the school on the local crime prevention panel and at other events in the local community. All these arrangements enable the older pupils to increase their self-esteem, personal and social skills and good citizenship through helping others. The younger pupils benefit by having someone well known to them who can support and advise them should the need arise.

As part of the school's merit award scheme, staff sign in the pupils' journals to record good

work, improved behaviour, helpfulness and good citizenship. Those accumulating a range of targets receive certificates and monetary vouchers. Both pupils and their parents value this scheme.

The school's documentation details clearly the measures necessary to prevent any instances of bullying or racial harassment, none of which was witnessed during the inspection. Both pupils and their parents are confident that the school takes speedy and effective action to correct any such situation should it occur. The school has recently issued a good quality booklet entitled 'Let's Beat the Bullies' which was developed by pupils, teachers, parents and outside agencies.

4.3 Attendance

Attendance is slightly below accepted satisfactory levels, having averaged 89.3% during the previous school year and in the first four weeks of the current term. These figures show a small improvement on those at the time of the previous inspection but remain lower than the levels achieved in some of the intervening years and fall short of the school's own target of 92%. The taking of annual holidays during term time accounts for one tenth of the authorised absence. Unauthorised absence is similar to the Wales average.

The above figures are particularly disappointing in view of the school's considerable efforts over recent years to improve pupils' attendance. These include:

- i) the installation and efficient use of a computerised monitoring system
- ii) the quick supply of the previous week's attendance statistics to senior staff with pastoral responsibilities
- iii) the rapid follow up with parents in the event of their child's unexplained absence
- iv) valuable assistance from and very good cooperation with the EWO resident at the school
- v) operation of a widespread 'good attendance' incentive scheme with appropriate rewards for pupils with attendance greater than 95%
- vi) use of the Compact scheme to encourage older pupils to be responsible for their own regular attendance
- vii) a neighbourhood watch scheme in which the community policeman and local residents contact the school if they see pupils outside school during school hours

Punctuality of pupils at the start of the school day and between lessons is satisfactory.

Registration procedures comply with NAFW Circular 3/99.

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

The quality of teaching is a major strength of the school. Teaching is at least satisfactory in 96 per cent of the classes observed, good in 48 per cent and very good in a further 19 per cent. These are good figures and are well in excess of national expectations for 2002, which

are 95 per cent at least satisfactory and 50 per cent good or better. The proportion of very good teaching, in one fifth of all classes seen, is very high. This aspect of school work has improved significantly since the last inspection.

In KS3 teaching is at least satisfactory in 93 per cent of classes, good in 53 per cent and very good in a further 16 per cent. There has been an improvement in good and very good teaching at this key stage but also an increase in unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is very good in art, and examples of very good teaching were seen in mathematics, science, Welsh second language, information technology, history, music, religious education, design and technology and personal and social education. Teaching was good overall in English, mathematics, science, information technology, history, geography, music, physical education, religious education and personal and social education. Satisfactory teaching was recorded overall in design and technology. Examples of unsatisfactory teaching were seen in French, information technology and physical education.

In KS4 teaching is at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of classes seen, good in 43 per cent and very good in a further 18 per cent. There has been a considerable improvement in this area since the last inspection. Teaching is very good in information technology, electronics and music. Examples of very good teaching were also seen in English, science, Welsh second language, geography, art and religious education. Teaching was good overall in English, science, Welsh second language, history, geography, religious education, design and technology, home economics and business studies. Satisfactory teaching overall was recorded in mathematics, French, drama, physical education and personal and social education. Unsatisfactory teaching was observed in a small number of classes in mathematics and physical education at this key stage.

The proportion of good or better teaching is greatest in Y12 and Y13. It is good in 45 per cent and very good in a further 28 per cent of classes. The quality of teaching has made an impact on standards since the last inspection. Teaching is very good in music and religious studies in Y12 and Y13. Examples of very good teaching were also observed in English, science, electronics, Welsh second language, information technology, geography and art. In addition, teaching was good in mathematics, history, business studies, politics, design and technology and GNVQ health and social care. Teaching was satisfactory in personal and social education and physical education overall, with some unsatisfactory teaching in physical education.

Teaching of pupils with SEN is very good in all key stages.

Teachers are well qualified, hard working and committed to the welfare and progress of their pupils. They have a good knowledge of their subject and often show genuine enthusiasm which impacts on their pupils. Staff have invested heavily in recent years in altering and improving teaching and learning strategies. They now use a variety of styles and tasks to encourage and support all pupils. Lessons are well planned with clear aims which are regularly shared with the pupils and revisited at the end of the lesson. Where teaching is not so successful, lessons lack pace and challenge and often have unstimulating or inappropriate activities which generate a degree of disaffection in some pupils. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good, sometimes very good. Teachers know their pupils well and are able to provide the necessary support when required. Good standards of pupil behaviour are achieved within this atmosphere of mutual respect. Teachers have high expectations of pupil behaviour and use sanction procedures appropriately and rarely.

Generally, teachers adapt their styles to cater for pupils with differing abilities. The most able are challenged, and the least able have work specially adapted to their needs and capabilities. Teaching resources are generally good, although there is a variety in the use of ICT between departments. Teaching strategies impact least on average and below average pupils, mainly in KS4, where limited expectation affects their enthusiasm and output. There is a developing use of formative assessment which is most evident in half termly modular and end of topic testing. There are some inconsistencies in the quantity of homework set and the quality of day-to-day marking. Generally, teachers are developing a useful data base of pupil performance in their subjects. Strategies to use this effectively and share the information with parents are developing.

In many subjects, even though teaching is satisfactory, expectations are not high enough and, consequently, pupils are not sufficiently challenged to realise their full academic potential.

5.2 Assessment, Recording and Reporting

The standard of assessment and recording is good, reporting is satisfactory.

A coherent whole-school policy on assessment, recording and reporting provides useful guidance in key aspects of practice. An assessment co-ordinator and staff team meets regularly, monitors implementation of the policy and assists subject departments in its operation. Important progress has been made since the last inspection and, overall, there is much satisfactory and good practice but also some shortcomings concerning target setting and reporting.

Assessment is carried out accurately and consistently across much of the curriculum. The best practice occurs in religious education and information technology at all stages and in history in KS4. In many subjects accuracy and consistency is at least satisfactory and good in English, science, design and technology, art, geography and Welsh second language. Good practice is characterised by the use of an appropriate range of strategies including peer and self-assessment, systematic monitoring and an awareness of clear criteria. Where assessment is unsatisfactory, in French and physical education, it is conducted and used with insufficient rigour to inform strategies for improving teaching and learning.

In most subjects satisfactory or good use is made of assessment to promote higher standards with much of the best practice occurring in Y12 and Y13 and the greatest incidence of shortcomings occurring in KS4. In many subjects, particularly English, science, art, history, religious education, Welsh second language and information technology, pupils are provided with useful feedback through oral and written comments on their performance and teachers use their assessment records diagnostically to inform future planning. There is, however, some variability in the quality of marking. Some comments do not denote high expectations of pupils and spelling mistakes are frequently not corrected.

Good arrangements are in place and in use for the systematic assessment and recording of pupils' performance. Formative assessment is carried out routinely with attainment formally recorded each half term. Focused assessment tasks are planned in many schemes of work, notably in English, mathematics, science and history. The use of portfolios of pupils' work is developing. Detailed records are kept and used to inform pupils of the standard of their performance. These records are collated across the curriculum using a common grading

system and circulated to staff through subject departments. This enables the progress of pupils to be tracked and strengths and weaknesses in particular areas to be identified. The assessment of pupils with SEN is good and arrangements facilitate the recognition of individual needs and progress. Records are used to inform targets in IEPs in line with the requirements of the SEN CoP. Records of Achievement are compiled by pupils in KS4, Y12 and Y13.

The school complies with requirements for NC assessment and recording in all core and foundation subjects with the exception of physical education where compliance is unsatisfactory. Teacher assessments and standardised tests are used appropriately and attainment, in relation to NC levels is reported to parents. There are, however, some inconsistencies between subjects in the linking of routine assessments to NC levels.

Reports to parents are issued annually. The format of the report forms is satisfactory and completed reports contain sound general information about behaviour, effort and attendance and an overview of academic performance. There is variability, however, in the quality and clarity of information for parents. Shortcomings in reports relate to a general lack of focus in teachers' comments and guidance, which can be bland and superficial. Where reports are unsatisfactory, for example in physical education, French, information technology at KS3, PSE and drama, pupils are not set clear targets and there is inadequate advice about how performance can be improved.

The school has amassed a considerable amount of assessment data from a variety of sources. Sources include SATs, external examination results and internal compilations. CAT scores were taken for all KS3 pupils last year for the first time. Good use is made of analyses of this data in some subjects to help set targets for pupils. This practice is inconsistent across the curriculum and, as a consequence, information about improving performance is variable in quality and usefulness, particularly in respect of the setting of clear targets for improvement.

5.3 Curriculum

Overall the curriculum is of good quality and meets school aims.

A curriculum manager plans and organises it and a curriculum group meets every half term to discuss all aspects concerning it. Further discussion takes place at GB meetings. The curriculum ensures very good provision for social inclusion and the vast majority of pupils have equality of access to all areas. Pupils with SEN are supported very well and integrated fully into the life of the school; they generally progress very well. Provision for pupils for whom the NC is disapplied or modified is very good. The curriculum takes good account of specialist staffing and accommodation and is sufficiently broad and balanced to meet the needs of almost all pupils in each key stage. Most departmental schemes of work are planned well although those in French and drama are unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection the curriculum has developed well to address the needs of more of its pupils and students. A few shortcomings, nevertheless, remain.

In KS3 all pupils follow a common curriculum which includes all NC subjects and religious education. Arrangements for the planning and delivery of PSE are good and take due account of ACCAC guidelines. In an effort to boost pupils' key skills, two periods a week in literacy and numeracy are offered to pupils in Y7. The planning and organisation of classes into sets or mixed ability groups is mostly effective and helpful to pupils' needs. In some mixed ability

classes, however, most noticeably in French, teachers do not plan sufficiently well to enable pupils of high or low ability to reach their potential. The allocation of time to all subjects is sufficient to carry out the requirements of the NC though, in Y9, physical education has a bare minimum. However, in French throughout KS3 and physical education in Y9, time is barely adequate. The long double periods in most subjects, and the bunching of lessons into two consecutive days for one or two subjects, is unhelpful for some pupils, particularly those of low ability. In design and technology in Y8 and Y9 there is inequality of access to pupils to all areas of study.

In KS4 all pupils study the core subjects, physical education, religious education and PSE. In addition to this pupils choose further subjects, including vocational courses, from option columns. Courses lead to external examination in GCSE, GNVQ, NVQ and CoEA. These arrangements generally work well and the needs of the vast majority of pupils are satisfied. There are, however, some shortcomings in a few subject areas. There is no opportunity to continue a course in textiles started in KS3, or to study a second modern foreign language. Time allocations are generally adequate. Pupils follow a full GCSE course in Welsh second language but in the time most usually allotted for a short course. Take-up in French is very low and Welsh second language is, for most pupils, the only language they study. In Y11 a small number of pupils take part in a good quality Youth Focus programme that involves them in work with a training provider for three days and school for the other two. Arrangements for PSE and work related education, are good.

In Y12 students receive a well-planned induction and good support from tutors throughout their time in Y12 and Y13. A good range of AS and A2 level subjects is offered together with a few vocational courses at intermediate and higher level, such as information technology, engineering, and health and social care. For the majority of students there are appropriate progression opportunities and equality of access. Most teaching groups, except English, are small and French is not being offered. Resit examinations at GCSE are offered in Y12. There is some, though limited, provision for PSE at registration sessions. Nevertheless, students broaden their general education and social awareness through, for example, involvement in various community ventures, school council duties and in supporting younger pupils within the school. There is no provision for statutory religious education. Very few if any students participate in physical education in curriculum time unless following a course leading to examination. A key-skills qualification is not offered at present but several teachers include aspects of key skills in the courses they teach and encourage students to improve them. A 'key skills for employment' project is run in conjunction with the EBP and participants are involved in working co-operatively and in giving presentations; they receive certificates on completion.

Students can elect to study a range of academic or vocational subjects or a combination of both. The curriculum is enhanced by a partnership between the school, Bridgend College and all other schools in Bridgend CBC whereby students in Y12 can study psychology, sociology, law or film studies at Bridgend College. This project also involves the school, Ogmore Comprehensive and Archbishop McGrath RC Comprehensive in making available drama and theatre studies to students of each school and run at Ynysawdre Comprehensive. Student take-up is relatively small but these are useful partnerships offering courses that would not otherwise be run and are helping to sustain and improve stay on rates at the school. Of the seventy students who started a course in Y12 in 2001 fifteen intended to pursue a one-year course and all were successful and forty-nine others are now in Y13. Only six left school to gain employment before completing a course in Y12.

Whole-school planning for the development of key skills is satisfactory, although its impact on standards at subject level is highly variable. There is a language co-ordinator and the school is putting a great effort into improving pupils' literacy and oracy skills. Less concerted effort at the present time is being paid to planning and coordinating strategies for improving pupils' numeracy and ICT skills. Planning for the development of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig is satisfactory overall and particularly good in geography and music.

The school has a homework policy and homework is generally effective in enhancing pupils' understanding and learning; it impacts satisfactorily on their standards of achievement. Nevertheless, homework set in several subjects does not develop adequately skills of problem solving, independent learning or research techniques.

There is a good range of extra-curricular activities including various clubs and team games and music ensembles. Several pupils take the opportunity to become involved in one or more activity although far fewer girls than boys take part in any physical education.

Most pupils show some awareness and understanding of education for sustainable development, although it is not a major feature of the PSE programme. In the late 1990s some pupils were involved with Groundwork Bridgend in producing published guidelines for environmental improvements in the Garw Valley. The school supports the 'Tommy Campaign', a national baby charity, by sending its used inkjet cartridges to their recycling centre. Most pupils show some, though limited, awareness of, for example, the need for recycling materials wherever possible.

The school does not comply with statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

5.4 Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare

The school provides good support, advice and guidance to its pupils and this is valued highly by them and their parents.

Staff know their pupils individually and demonstrate genuine concern for their welfare. The implementation of a pastoral policy is overseen effectively by the deputy head and the pastoral team. The policy underpins the consistent promotion of a caring and supportive ethos, encouraging relationships of trust and understanding between pupils and teachers. Effective working relationships contribute to positive attitudes to learning and the creation of an environment where pupils can work safely and happily within the school. All pupils are issued with a journal to record their homework. The role of the year tutor is particularly important in monitoring the pastoral needs of pupils. Year tutors oversee the attendance and behaviour of pupils and deal with issues referred by form tutors or other subject staff. They meet with form tutors, heads of schools and the deputy head to discuss welfare and academic progress, plan and lead year assemblies and contribute to the effective running and staffing of the homework club. Pastoral periods are used effectively by tutors to deliver the PSE programme, which is well co-ordinated and deals with important messages in relation to health and sex education, drug abuse and environmental issues. Pupils' awareness of citizenship, and their personal development planning are enhanced. Provision for careers advice and guidance is good and forms an important element of PSE throughout KS3. In Y10 pupils undertake a one week work placement in a broad range of locations and businesses. Mock career interviews take place in Y11 and, in Y12 and Y13, students undertake a two day

programme to further refine their individual career plans. Every two years a careers convention takes place in school and EBP continuously organise a wide range of activities to improve pupils' self esteem and prepare them for the world of work. Pupils can also explore a range of resources in the careers library and have one to one interviews with the careers advisor.

The school has well understood procedures for child protection and demonstrates high concern for the health and safety of its pupils. Safety is reinforced in subjects such as science, physical education, geography and design and technology via risk assessment. A school nurse is resident on-site. She monitors pupils' general health and helps to promote the school's sex education policy forming part of the PSE programme. In addition, she runs a 'drop-in' centre at which anyone in the school can receive more personal health advice. Recent initiatives such as a free supply of chilled and filtered water and a cash-less catering system are valued by pupils. A range of strategies is in place to deal with incidents of bullying. CCTV is now in place on school buses. Prospective pupils in Y6 receive a booklet "Lets beat the Bullies" and the pastoral team of staff, supported by a Y11 peer mentoring group rapidly and effectively deal with any incidents which occur. The school has an appropriate anti racism policy and is planning the further promotion of racial diversity and awareness across the curriculum.

Many initiatives exist to engage pupils' commitment and motivation, confidence and self awareness, for example, Youth Focus. Teamwork is fostered through schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.

All staff play a significant role in providing support, guidance and welfare of a high standard.

5.5 Provision for Pupils with SEN

The school's provision for pupils with SEN is very good.

The school has implemented fully the CoP introduced in April 2002 and there is a very good, well implemented inclusion policy. There are 113 pupils on the school's SEN register at School Action and School Action Plus and 16 with Statements. This is a low number as a result of the UA's policy on Statementing. There are 33 pupils appropriately disapplied from a range of subjects who receive additional help to enable them to access the mainstream curriculum. The school implements thorough procedures for disapplications, involving parents and pupils fully.

All pupils with SEN are fully integrated into the life of the school and have full access to the NC, GCSE and ELQ courses. Standards achieved by most mainstream SEN pupils are good and results in SATs improved last year. They receive good support particularly in KS3. There is a minority of pupils however, who continue to have difficulty accessing the curriculum because of poor literacy skills and insufficient classroom support.

The Resource Centre currently used by 32 pupils, is a very well managed UA provision. Pupils with hearing, motor and medical difficulties, make very good progress in relation to their ability in most subjects across both Key Stages. Detailed information recorded by support workers in mainstream lessons, good lesson planning and effective use of teaching strategies has a direct impact on the high standards achieved by many pupils. Pupils with hearing difficulties are particularly well supported by specialist teachers and highly qualified communicators. The Resource Centre, which provides a secure, caring environment,

contributes greatly to pupils' self confidence and developing independence and is highly valued by pupils. There are good, well implemented policies for health and safety.

The SENCO provides very good leadership and is well supported by the SMT, the SEN governor, the Resource Centre Coordinator and departmental link teachers. Regular meetings are held to evaluate pupils' progress, effective, good teaching and learning strategies and to ensure resources are deployed well. The SENCO has developed a wide range of strategies to improve provision including Primary Cluster meetings, 'Go For It' a programme to develop motivation, Bridgend's Key Skills Initiative and the Toe by Toe literacy programme. She is presently developing strategies to enhance numeracy provision, an area which is currently underdeveloped. Last year a large number of pupils increased their reading ages significantly as a result of the literacy interventions.

Parents' and pupils' views are sought at twice yearly reviews and pupils are involved in setting precise targets for their IEPs. In some subjects, IEP targets are kept in the front of pupils workbooks. This good practice is not disseminated across all subject areas.

There has been very good progress made in all aspects of SEN provision since the last inspection. There is now access to all but one classroom. The school continues to actively re-evaluate and develop its provision. SEN is strength of the school.

5.6 Partnership with Parents and Community, Schools and Other Institutions

The school has a good partnership with parents and with a wide range of organisations in the local community.

Although less than 5% of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and only a few attended the meeting, the majority of these expressed support for the school. Information provided by the school through the prospectus, a termly newsletter, meetings and letters is of good quality but the governors' annual report to parents does not contain all the information statutorily required. Nearly all parents have responded to the home/school agreement. The Friends of Ynysawdre run social events which raise significant funds to help the school. A particularly good example of this is the annual horticultural show which is attended by many local residents. Adult classes held at the school on three evenings each week are well supported and the twenty-nine courses offered provide local residents with good opportunities for lifelong learning. These further enhance the partnership between the school and its local community.

The school has effective relationships with local agencies including the UA, EWS, social and medical services.

The community policeman supports the PSE programme by talking to pupil groups about matters concerning their personal safety as well as participating in the neighbourhood watch scheme. The deputy head and head boy and girl attend crime prevention and police liaison meetings. There are few links with local churches but pupils entertain the residents of local homes at the times of the church festivals.

There are good links with the six feeder primary schools. The Head of Lower School, head of

Y7, subject co-ordinators and the SENCO regularly visit to talk to Y6 pupils and their parents. These pupils attend taster days at Ynysawdre and visit the school to share specific equipment and subject expertise in a range of subjects. The transfer of good quality information, both curricular and personal, enables the Y6 pupils to make as smooth a transfer as possible to the secondary school. Some Y10 pupils take part in work experience placements at the primary schools. Ynysawdre has very good links with Bridgend College and with the University of Glamorgan at Pontypridd. The former provides some students in Y12 and Y13 with practical and work-related courses which the school cannot provide. Talks and visits to university departments enable students to obtain useful information about university life and the courses available.

The school is a leading participant in the recently formed Bridgend 'Youth Focus' partnership which is an amalgamation of many local community organisations aiming to support the pastoral and academic needs of young people in the area.

5.7 Partnership with Industry

The school has a good partnership with local companies which enables pupils to learn about the world of work around them.

About a hundred local businesses and other concerns provide industrial placements to enable all Y10 and some Y12 students to undertake at least one week's work experience, the programme being fully supported by the local Careers Wales office. These pupils not only obtain practical experience of the workings of business, but also increase their sense of responsibility, self-esteem, personal and social skills.

The adviser from Careers Wales attends the school on two and a half days each week and gives good quality support. She introduces KS3 pupils to the careers library and advises them and their parents on options choices and future career possibilities. Pupils in KS4 and the sixth form receive individual help with the development of a career plan and have mock interviews. Every other year, the school holds a Careers Convention at which about thirty representatives from local and national employers are present.

Industrial mentors, drawn from local agencies and businesses, visit the school to talk to small groups of Y10 and Y11 pupils about the world of work. They also support individual pupils in achieving their goals of good attendance, development of personal skills and responsibility as part of the Compact scheme.

The school receives substantial support from over fifty local companies. The nearby designer outlet has part-sponsored the provision of a new car park for the school. A nearby cinema has sponsored the good attendance scheme and provides facilities and workshops in support of the curriculum. Additionally, help is provided by a local bank which assists pupils in running their own banking facilities, and a printing company which supplies stationery and other associated equipment. Pupils visit the local newspaper office to increase their knowledge of publishing techniques and of how to produce their own newspaper. A local television rental company sponsors the provision of an Easter revision scheme for pupils. Four Y10 pupils attend Saturday workshops at RAF St Athan and others take part in the DARA engineering challenge there. Another local company annually runs engineering challenges for forty Y9 pupils to improve their practical skills as well as annually sponsoring a Small Business Challenge and Young Enterprise scheme which help Y12 students to improve their personal

and business skills.

Several teachers have attended industry-related courses in the past year to enhance their teaching and management techniques.

The local office of the EBP provides good quality support in many of the above activities. They also arrange visits by pupils to local companies, run the Enterprise in Focus programme for Y10 and Y11 pupils to improve their business and presentation skills and organise a Key Skills day focusing on the numeracy and ICT skills of sixth form students.

The school offers The Young Enterprise Scheme and takes part in Understanding Industry. Both are successful and provide students with good knowledge and understanding of business principles and mechanisms which enable them to have a clear perception of the world in which they live. Particularly, students are developing the skills necessary to collect, organise and present information on Welsh industry and commerce.

The Understanding Industry course is well organised and delivered, when it is in operation. Welsh and other industrialists impart their insights into the nature of modern economics.

Students, through The Young Enterprise Scheme, run a company on the lines of a real business. They gain worthwhile practical experience of testing their business ideas, skills and coping with challenging, real-world situations. The scheme is well run with a structured format. Students enter a regional competition and sit a Young Enterprise European examination. Both have brought good levels of attainment for students.

Although the school has no published policy for industry, all these different relationships with local companies not only give valuable support to the curriculum but also give pupils many good opportunities to develop their personal and communication skills enabling them to make an informed career choice. The school meets the ACCAC recommendations for Work-Related Education.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of Self-Evaluation and Planning for Improvement

The quality of self-evaluation and planning is generally good across the school. There are unsatisfactory features in some departments.

After the last inspection, the school drew up an action plan to address the identified key issues. Good progress has been made in many of the issues, although some remain on-going, in particular expectation and challenge for all pupils, refinement of a developing assessment programme and the need for constant vigilance over pupils' attendance.

The head, senior staff and governors have a good all-round awareness of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. There is an annual cycle of review, evaluation and action planning which is constantly being refined. Documentation for self-evaluation, impacting on the SDP, is in place. Costings and timings are included in the planning documents, which assist with the evaluation process.

The SMT and departmental heads review processes of teaching and learning each year. Each department reviews its examination performance in September of each year with the head and deputy head teachers. Targets for the following year are set following this meeting. The SMT formally reviews the performance of all teachers in departments, along with departmental practices and needs, on a regular basis, two departments each term. The reviews are rigorous involving lesson observations, feed-back and staff development analysis, and result in professional development programmes being initiated. A comprehensive report is prepared by the deputy head at the end of each review along with targets for improvement. In addition, each department undertakes a self-review which is led by the head of department. Each teacher has a lesson observed, feedback and a series of targets for improvement on an annual basis. The whole process is conducted in a professional manner with due regard for confidentiality. The process is in its early stages and ideas for achieving equality of entitlement for all teachers are being explored as part of the quality assurance process. Opportunities to engage with each teacher as a 'critical friend', to outline their strengths and shortcomings, and plan for positive development linked to INSET needs are being realised to a greater extent.

Self-evaluation, developmental planning and targets for improvement are well established and satisfactory to good in most departments. They are, however, unsatisfactory in French, physical education and drama.

A major need for in-house development in improving and sharing teaching and learning strategies was tackled recently, resulting in an increased awareness and use of a greater variety of teaching methods. This has coincided with an extension in the use of ICT as a teaching tool in more departments. This development has been led by a group of teachers and has resulted in an increase in the number of interesting lessons, a reduction in the number of teacher-dominated activities, a greater involvement of pupils in lessons, developments in self-assessment by pupils and a considerable reduction in the number of passive learners in classes. The teacher group has held some very focused INSET and has produced a good working booklet for all staff. Principles of sharing good practice are well established.

The school has made progress in generating and analysing data on pupils' performance. The results of KS2 tests, taken prior to entry, are used by departments in allocating pupils to teaching groups in some subjects. The school has developed a common system of grading pupils' performance in each subject every half term. These results are used to place pupils into teaching groups, according to their perceived ability and performance, and to inform the use of appropriate teaching styles and resources. In addition, there is a growing awareness of the need to analyse scores to identify performance changes and intervene at an early stage where necessary. Developments have been in-house until last year, when the school tested all KS3 pupils to determine their NFER CAT scores. These scores are helping the school predict individual pupil performances in external examinations in KS4 and, consequently, a greater accuracy in target-setting for all pupils. The school is developing new initiatives in providing pupil-performance overviews to key members of staff so that personal interviews may be arranged. The school is prepared to invest in teacher time in an attempt to maximise pupil performance. Arrangements for sharing the growing richness of pupil data with parents are being reviewed.

The analysis of attendance is good and has led to initiatives to improve attendance and targets. Attendance has improved since the last inspection, where it was a key issue, although it is currently barely satisfactory and is constantly in need of vigilance.

The head, staff and governors know the school well and are developing good routines for evaluating its performance, and are now in a position to plan carefully for further improvement. The SDP is a good working document, clearly based upon the school's aims, with appropriate annual priorities, although it does not indicate which developments have the greatest urgency.

6.2 Leadership and Efficiency

Overall, leadership in the school is good. Efficiency is also good.

The school has a strong sense of community and a corporate ethos in which every individual is valued. The school is a community based upon shared values, in which pupils learn responsibility, collaboration and self-discipline. Governors, senior and middle managers have worked hard with all staff on analysing and developing teaching and learning strategies designed to overcome difficulties identified in the previous report and those resulting from extensive internal reviews. The school has a common vision and a growing understanding of how higher standards can be achieved. The head, staff and governors give a clear direction to the work of the school and have created a very caring and supportive environment in which all pupils are valued and thrive. The school provides a good quality of all-round education, giving equality of opportunity to pupils of all abilities. The head gives a clear lead in determining the school values and ethos. The previous report referred to 'strong leadership' and this is still the case. His leadership is very good. His focus has clearly been on raising standards and expectations and providing a good quality of education. In this he leads from the front with an acute awareness of modern educational processes and an earnest desire to provide the best opportunities for each pupil and teacher. He is well supported by a very good deputy head with complementary talents. Together they make a strong team. He is also supported by three assistant headteachers who know the school and its pupils well and have a strong commitment to the ethos of the school as a whole. The SMT form a strong group who establish and maintain policy and practice in the school. Opportunities are developing in using the growing bank of assessment data to create strategies for enhancing and encouraging pupils' academic improvement, taking advantage of existing considerable expertise in pastoral matters.

Governors are positive in their support of the school and carry out their responsibilities efficiently. They are well informed about the work of the school and pay due attention to detailed reports and reviews presented by the headteacher and professional staff. They decide policy, particularly relating to the annual budget, staff remuneration and workloads. The GB ensures that statutory requirements of the NC are met, although it does not provide for an act of collective worship each day or for religious education in Y12 and Y13.

The quality of leadership in departments is good overall. It is very good in English, mathematics, information technology, art, music, religious education and SEN and good in science, Welsh second language, design and technology, history, geography, business studies and politics. It is satisfactory in personal and social education and unsatisfactory in French, physical education and drama. Where leadership is good the departments are well organised and appropriate systems are in place to monitor the work of teachers and pupils. Programmes of study are consistently well delivered and meetings are effective in team building and developing departmental standards. Several departments including mathematics, chemistry, biology and design and technology have had recent appointments in leadership positions.

There is evidence to suggest that problems previously experienced in those subject areas are quickly being resolved. Heads of year provide sound leadership and make an effective contribution to the personal and social development of all their pupils.

Financial management of the school is good. Governors work closely with the head and deputy in monitoring the regular expenditure in the school. The school budget is carefully prepared by a dedicated committee of governors and co-opted helpers. They link priorities to the SDP and oversee clear procedures for financial control. Governors constantly strive to get the best value for money in the provision of staff and resources.

The school makes good use of available resources. Staff are used effectively across the whole ability range of pupils. Budgeting has been restricted in recent years by the cost of covering for teachers absent due to sickness or for other reasons. Most, but not all, of the associated problems have been resolved and the school continues to carry a financial burden.

Routine organisation and administration are very good and reflect the caring ethos of the school. Support staff make a very positive contribution to the smooth running of the school.

6.3 Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources

The teaching staff is well qualified and has an appropriate range of experience. Most teachers are suitably deployed within subject departments although in a small minority of cases, for example in some classes in geography and drama, standards of pupils' achievement are constrained by the unavailability of specialist teachers. The SEN department is understaffed, nevertheless a well qualified team of teachers and support staff have a significant and positive impact on the standards and progress achieved by pupils with special needs. In most other areas technical, administrative and other non-teaching staff contribute effectively to the efficient running of the school. Newly qualified teachers are provided with appropriate support through an induction programme.

The needs of in-service training are identified through a combination of departmental and whole-school development planning and annual individual staff development interviews. In most cases a good balance is achieved between the needs of the school and those of individual members of staff. Some teachers undertake significant in-service training which is beneficial to the school and their own professional aspirations. Appropriate in-service training is also available to and accessed by non-teaching staff. Seventeen staff are currently undertaking an European Computer Driving Licence qualification.

The quality and condition of accommodation are good overall. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection in the reconfiguration of many subject teaching rooms into departmental suites. The relocation of the library to a more central position on the ground floor has contributed to increased use, notably at lunchtimes and after school. Relocating laboratories has been more problematic and expensive. Slow progress has caused some difficulty, for example in accessing ICT facilities in some science lessons. Although there have been some refurbishment's to design and technology accommodation there is still scope for further integration to encourage a more holistic approach to the subject.

Most lessons are taught in specialist rooms. Exceptions include drama lessons, where accommodation is unsatisfactory, and some lessons in geography. Accessibility for pupils with motor impairment is good. Stimulating and attractive learning environments have been

created in many subject areas through the display of learning resources and pupils' work, notably in English, mathematics, Welsh second language, religious education, information technology and art. Many corridors and other public spaces are also enhanced by good quality displays. The condition of the accommodation is generally good except in physical education where some maintenance is required.

The quality, quantity and condition of resources for learning is mostly good. Provision is particularly good in French, Welsh, history, religious education, information technology and art, and for pupils with SEN who benefit from using a multigym. There are shortages of textbooks and other learning resources in mathematics, design and technology and drama.

The provision of resources for ICT is good in many respects with a good pupil to computer ratio of approximately 4:1. The majority of the school's computers are quite new having been acquired in the last five years. Good use is made of a set of lap-top computers which can be easily transported to different locations for use in different subjects and also of interactive whiteboards, particularly in English, science, information technology and with some pupils with SEN. The library is well equipped with computers which pupils can use for internet research. In some areas, however, there are shortcomings in the provision and use of ICT resources, particularly in mathematics, history, design and technology and art where their use is not fully integrated into lessons.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

English

Standards of achievement are satisfactory in KS3, and good in KS4, Y12 and Y13.

All pupils in KS3 are provided with a broad range of oral activities, including role playing and hot seating which enable them to become attentive listeners and lively speakers. The majority of pupils adjust their language to suit particular circumstances and audiences. Pupils of all abilities make relevant and varied contributions to discussion, using their talk for a range of purposes. They structure and take forward their ideas, receiving and acknowledging contributions of others and modifying their response. They often collaborate in pairs or small groups. Pupils are not always encouraged to review and consider their choice of words or effectiveness of their expression and do not always apply their growing awareness of the role of standard English in formal public communication. They employ colloquial expression, do not elaborate and extend their answers or articulate them with clarity and confidence. This is often the case with boys.

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to reading in KS3 and engage with an appropriate range of texts both literary and non-literary, from a range of genres and including ICT based sources. They select essential information and are able to portray their understanding and engagement with ideas, themes, linguistic and stylistic features. They begin to employ technical vocabulary in relation to articulating informed personal opinions and responses. They have some appreciation of literature from other cultures and traditions including the Welsh literary heritage. Although the majority of pupils show confidence in reading aloud to the class, some pupils are hesitant and lack fluency. Pupils of lower ability receive well

structured support in an effectively designed range of activities, which promote and improve their basic skills. Initiatives such as Toe by Toe, a reading recovery programme, supported by Y12 pupils is particularly successful in enabling these pupils to make satisfactory progress, at least commensurate with their age and ability. Although all pupils are encouraged to read widely and independently, there is insufficient structured support to review and discuss this and actively promote it. Pupils in KS3 achieve satisfactory standards in their writing and encounter a varied and stimulating range of tasks, carefully designed with clear learning outcomes and timescales.

They are able to organise structure and draft their work in a range of ways, often employing mindmaps, word pools, writing frames or ICT. Overall a satisfactory standard is achieved in handwriting but a substantial number of pupils mis-spell words frequently, do not employ dictionaries or spell checks or recognise regular patterns of spelling and utilise inaccurate paragraphing and punctuation. Although grammar and knowledge about language is taught and inbuilt into many modules of work, there is a lack of consistent progression in terms of pupils' skills and understanding and variation in competence in the technical aspects of language use. Non-standard forms mar written work of some pupils. The percentage of pupils gaining level 5 or above at the end of KS3 in NC tests is slightly below local and national averages, although in line with scores for similar schools.

In KS4 standards of achievement are good. Pupils build upon their knowledge and understanding and contribute substantially to discussion. They show due regard to the views of others as they read and develop and sustain personal responses to progressively more challenging texts with interest and enthusiasm. They attend to detail, explore levels of meaning, research, retrieve and synthesise information, employing sustained concentration to style, techniques and structural devices. In their varied writing, they are able to consider apt and appropriate choices of vocabulary and organise their work effectively, often assessing their own and others' efforts to amend and enhance meaning and clarity. Course work folders are well-presented, containing a broad range of style and form including extended and creative pieces of writing and word-processing. Although there is a clear concern to reach high standards, some pupils still include inaccurate spelling, punctuation and informal expression, whilst the most able have clearly developed an engaging personal style of writing revealing control of a range of stylistic devices. Results in GCSE examinations at the end of KS4 have improved and are in line with those in similar schools. Results in English literature are above national averages.

In Y12 and Y13 students display a detailed grasp and enjoyment of challenging texts and reveal, in discussion and writing, a suitable framework and context of cultural background, social and artistic understanding, often engaging in relevant research and wider reading to underpin discussion and thorough analysis of texts. They progress significantly in their ability to present and debate ideas both orally and in writing and gain a broader appreciation of genres, cultures and traditions reaching a good standard in their oral and written work. Performance in AS examinations has demonstrated a 100 per cent pass rate in the last two years with a significant number (over 70 per cent) gaining higher grades, A to C. The subject is extremely popular in Y12 and Y13 and many continue their studies into Y13 with good levels of success.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement are good in KS3, satisfactory in KS4, and good in Y12 and Y13. Standards of pupils with SEN are generally good. Pupils in middle to low sets tend to achieve less well than other pupils. Overall, girls' work is of a higher quality than boys.

In KS3 standards range from very good to satisfactory. Most pupils make good progress in all aspects of the programme of study. In the main, pupils show interest in their work, organise it well and present it neatly although girls' work is invariably neater and more complete than boys. Several pupils show understanding of the most recent work and, in the best instances, give speedy and correct responses to questions that require use of the four rules of number. In one or two classes timed oral responses involving all the pupils in mental agility enhance their basic skills significantly. In the classes where standards are very good pupils use and apply their mathematical skills well in practical contexts and are willing to think problems through; they can explain the current work well. In one or two classes outstanding teaching has a very positive impact on pupils' standards of achievement. For example, highly interactive discussion with pupils and skilful questioning of them probes for their understanding of underlying concepts. It supports them in making decisions about their choice of strategy to solve a problem, in making generalisations and in challenging each pupil at their own level. In a few classes, however, pupils are not challenged sufficiently well to give extended or reasoned replies to questions. Information and communications technology is rarely used to enhance pupils' experiences in, and understanding of, mathematics. In 2001, around 48% of pupils attained NC level 5 or higher in the end of KS3 tests. This percentage is below both the LEA (62%) and Wales (61%) figures. Good achievement has yet to be reflected fully in attainment at the end of the key stage.

In KS4 most pupils continue to build on their work from KS3 and achieve satisfactory standards. Some work is good and the very ablest of pupils continue to make good or very good progress overall. Several pupils in middle ability sets, however, are not as well motivated as in KS3. Their recall of important knowledge, required to make good progress, is sometimes weak. In a few instances recall of earlier work, including some basic number skills, is very slow and work in class and at home remains out of context; pupils do not always see a purpose for the work they are doing, lose interest and confidence in the subject and underachieve. There is a lack of regular consolidation of earlier work in a significant minority of classes. Most pupils estimate and approximate sensibly and handle data well. The majority use calculators effectively, although in several classes a significant minority of pupils use them inappropriately to, for example, find 10% or 15% of £40 or to multiply or divide a number by ten. Their skills in mental agility are not so well honed as in KS3. In 2001 around 20% of pupils attained one of the higher grades in the GCSE compared to 44% for all schools in Wales. The percentage has been higher than this in previous years and has improved substantially this year. Results reflect to some extent the lack of consolidation of work outlined above and the low self-esteem of some pupils in middle sets. A few pupils who study for the CoEA examination generally achieve success in accordance with their ability.

In Y12 a small number of students study for AS level examinations and most continue into Y13 to complete full A level examinations. During their studies most of them achieve good standards and show determination in coming to grips with the material and a good understanding of it. They generally work hard and show keen interest in their chosen

topics. Files of work in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics show an appropriate level and amount of work in class and at home. In Y12 students tend to rely a little too heavily on teachers to direct them in their work and show some hesitance and lack of confidence in their replies to questions. A few of the more able students are capable of working at a faster pace and are sometimes not challenged sufficiently by the work. By the time students reach Y13 they show more maturity in their approach to independent study, offer reasoned contributions to discussion in class and generally respond with confidence when questioned about the mathematics they are doing. External examination results mostly reflect appropriately the ability of the students.

There has been significant progress since the last inspection in improving standards in KS3. Schemes of work are improved and take better account of using and applying mathematics as a significant part of pupils' work. Further work has still to be done, particularly in KS4 and in improving the performance of pupils in external examinations overall.

Science

Standards of achievement are good in KS3, KS4, Y12 and Y13.

In KS3, all pupils follow an appropriate course of scientific study which includes a good blend of theory and practical work. Most pupils have good levels of knowledge and understanding, are confident and keen on their work, and willing to display their skills when questioned. They communicate clearly using a good range of scientific terms and show a good level of recall of recent work. There is a good development of practical skills from entry in Y7. They show good understanding of practical procedures including health and safety procedures and a growing appreciation of the need for fair testing. They work well in small groups, including those not of their own choosing. They handle complex instructions with competence and display their results in a suitable format. All pupils maintain a good record of suitable work in their exercise books which gives a good coverage of NC requirements. Standards are even throughout the key stage, although slightly better in Y9. Pupils are confident with the use of computers for research purposes and capably make presentations to fellow pupils in class. Where standards are less than satisfactory their understanding and background knowledge is weak and they tend to be passive learners. Extended writing skills are under-developed at this key stage. In the NC tests at the end of Y9, the percentage of pupils gaining at least level 5 is well below national averages, particularly in the last two years.

In KS4, pupils prepare for triple sciences, the double award examinations of the GCSE or CoEA. The triple award groups contain pupils of wide ability. The majority of pupils make good progress in most aspects of the courses, have a good recall of recent work and developing practical skills. They perform practical investigations with accuracy and competence and with an awareness of how to handle errors in measurement. The more able pupils predict potential outcomes and access higher grade marks in practical tests. They have a growing ability in collective research and presentation methodology. Where standards are less than satisfactory there is a significant minority of average ability pupils who appear to be attentive but are complacent and make little effort. Standards are affected by intermittent absence resulting in a lack of understanding of basic principles and a poor record of work. Some unsatisfactory work is due to a lack of pace and challenge during lessons. GCSE results for triple award sciences are below national averages, probably due to the wide ability range accepted into the group. Results for Double Award are about the national average.

In Y12 and Y13, students can choose physics, chemistry and biology at both AS and A2 levels. Standards are good in all subjects. Students make good progress, maintain accurate records and give good answers to searching questions. They have a good appreciation of scientific concepts and planning for investigations. They have a good measure of practical and investigative skills and are able to use computers to display their results in tabular and graphical form. They are developing personal research techniques and an ability to report their findings to fellow students in written and verbal form. Where standards are barely satisfactory there is an absence of urgency in students' work due to a lack of pace and challenge. Results at A level are very variable due to low numbers studying the subjects. In 2000, all students gained A to E passes in all three sciences, although in 2001 the results were below national averages.

Pupils with SEN make good progress in science and gain good results in the CoEA examinations.

The department has largely rectified problems in practical work and a lack of variety in lessons as reported in the last inspection. External examination results are not at present a good yardstick to judge standards by, due to considerable staff absences and changes during the last two years. Good structures are in place for improvements to be seen.

Welsh second language

Standards of achievement are good in KS3, satisfactory in KS4, and good in Y12 and Y13.

In KS3, pupils make good progress in all language skills. They are attentive in class and respond well to a good range of activities. All classes study specific themes and in their oral work the majority of pupils answer structured questions correctly with the more able giving extended responses. Pupils demonstrate a good grasp of vocabulary. For instance in Y7, pupils use newly acquired vocabulary to convey information about families. In Y8, they discuss their choice of holidays and use the appropriate sentence patterns to ask and answer questions. Pupils understand the content of a holiday video and answer questions based on its detail. Y9 pupils plan their weekend activities using the correct form of the future tense. Pair work activities are a feature in all classes and pupils interact well. Lessons are structured clearly with stated targets and the content is understood by pupils. Standards achieved in reading are good overall. Pupils read appropriate texts, keep a record of books read and express an opinion on the stories. They read extracts in a meaningful manner and pronunciation is good. Pupils complete a range of written tasks including project work and standards achieved overall are good. High ability pupils vary their sentence structures and the tenses of the verb to good effect. Pupils with SEN receive good support and are wholehearted in their efforts. They make good progress.

In KS4, pupils respond in a positive manner and make satisfactory progress overall. They use specific language patterns in set situations in oral and written tasks and they understand the use of the target language. On the whole, however, a good number lacks confidence in making extended oral responses in particular when giving extended answers. They are uncertain in their knowledge of sentence patterns. Top set pupils in Y10 and Y11 however, are more confident in their responses. They participate well in language games and in role play activities and interact well in pair work tasks asking appropriate questions and displaying good knowledge of sentence structures. These pupils achieve good standards in their written work. Pupils follow the full GCSE course in study time allotted for the short course. External

examination results are good.

Students studying the A level course achieve good standards in oral and written work. They understand the content of the film, poems and play studied and comment on particular aspects. They express an opinion on related themes and gain confidence in their oral work when discussing and analysing content.

The department works well as a team and, under the positive and supportive guidance of the head of department, is working towards common goals. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in developing pupils' language skills and in particular in reading for pleasure. A reading scheme has been developed with the use of specific texts at the appropriate levels.

Design and technology

In KS3, standards of achievement are satisfactory overall.

Pupils gain experience of working with an appropriate range of materials, but due to the inconsistent allocation of time and variation in provision, there is lack of continuity and progression within, and across the key stages. In all material areas, pupils consistently use design and make processes and related terminology; focused tasks successfully support the development of skills and knowledge. During the design process, initial design ideas are not always sufficiently developed prior to the identification of the final solution, and the influence of commercially produced designs frequently inhibit the emergence of original, creative design ideas. Overall, pupils develop basic skills and outcomes satisfactorily, with some good examples, particularly in textiles and the novelty electronic products. Investigative skills are used consistently, but frequently tasks are not sufficiently challenging to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. The presentation of folio work is satisfactory overall, but frequently unnecessary spelling errors and unsatisfactory graphic skills mar the final outcome. The best folios contain clear specifications and evaluations; appropriate ICT skills are confidently used to further enhance presentation and appearance. The most able pupils successfully justify their design choice, produce considered evaluations which relate well to their specification and suggest improvements or developments. Pupils participate satisfactorily in paired and group activities, but a significant number hesitate to answer questions and express opinions in a class situation. Numeracy skills are consistently reinforced when measuring, weighing, costing items, and calculating dietary requirements, for example. Pupils with statements of SEN make satisfactory, and in some instances good progress, particularly when they receive appropriate adult support and tasks are suitably modified. The recent successful introduction of a pupil self assessment system encourages pupils to focus on standards of achievement and set specific targets.

In KS4, standards in the GCSE design and technology resistant materials course are satisfactory and good in the newly introduced graphics products course.

In the graphics products course, pupil folios contain evidence of comprehensive research into various types of logos appropriate for business documentation. Information, including a montage of evidence, is well presented. Evaluation of existing graphic styles is thorough and associated typography appropriate.

Overall, in the resistant materials course, pupils gain experience of design and make activities in an appropriate range of materials. Folios reveal that the initial design brief is clear and

identifies specific parameters. Research is undertaken consistently, but more relevant details are necessary to move the standard to a higher level. An understanding of the principles of ergonomics enhance the designing and making of some products. Presentation techniques range from satisfactory to unsatisfactory; the least successful display under-developed graphical skills and insufficient annotations. Generally, completed evaluations available for scrutiny are well considered and design improvements identified. At present, there is little evidence of the good use of colour or ICT skills to communicate information and enhance presentation. Practical outcomes reveal that pupils give insufficient attention to the production of good quality items. The percentage of candidates gaining grades A*-C in last year's external examination was lower than the UA and national averages.

In the recently introduced AS level course, students are making good progress and standards at the time of the inspection are good. A range of ICT skills are used appropriately; CAD and CAM, together with ProDesktop are used well to design and make electronic door hangings. The designing and making of wooden puzzles enhance the development of skills and knowledge.

The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Two new members of staff (including a head of department) have been appointed. A departmental handbook has been written, schemes of work re-written and key stage portfolios developed. A self evaluation system for pupils and teachers is successfully implemented. The new corporate image projected throughout the department is supported by up-graded specialist areas and the display of good quality resource material.

Information technology

Standards of achievement are good in KS3, KS4, post-16 A-level and AS classes and in classes studying GNVQ courses.

In KS3 standards are always at least satisfactory, mostly good and in a small minority of classes are very good. The significant majority of pupils work independently and co-operatively in lessons and are confident and competent in using both equipment and software. They work with interest through the duration of lessons and make good progress on tasks selected for them. Pupils are encouraged to plan their ideas before working on the computers and most do this well. Furthermore, pupils annotate their work to highlight skills demonstrated in their tasks and most do this effectively. In Y7 pupils undertake word processing tasks proficiently to present information in various forms. They have good keyboarding skills, explore changes of font and import clip art images to enhance their presentations. Y8 pupils use spreadsheets in relevant contexts to undertake simple exercises in modelling. In these exercises pupils plan and input their own data into a spreadsheet and show a basic understanding of simple formulae to make appropriate calculations relevant to the selected task. In Y9 pupils show creativity in making effective use of publishing software to produce thoughtful and imaginative documents of good quality. Pupils with SEN show confidence in basic skills and produce work of a good standard in simple and relevant applications. Occasionally pupils follow instructions given by the teacher without sufficient understanding. This is more evident in classes of lower attaining pupils where a minority of them lose concentration and progress is more limited as a result. Furthermore, a significant number of pupils of all abilities make fundamental spelling errors that detract from the overall quality of their work.

In KS4 standards are consistently good. Pupils display an enthusiastic interest in the subject

and work confidently and competently with minimal support. The majority of pupils are aware of the impact of information technology on society and have a good knowledge and understanding of issues relating to this. Pupils in Y10 select software appropriate to the nature of the task and most give sensible reasons to justify their choice. They show good standards in using information technology in a range of appropriate applications and generally annotate work effectively to indicate skills shown. Pupils in Y11 undertake thoughtful and meaningful projects and their progress in them is generally good. As in KS3, however, frequent spelling errors often detract from the quality of pupils' work. Furthermore, a significant minority of pupils find difficulty in making perceptive judgements relating to the quality of their work and several Y11 pupils do not pay sufficient attention to this in their projects. The proportion of pupils awarded graded C or above in GCSE examinations vary quite considerably and attainment in these examinations does not always reflect the pupils' standards of achievement. For example, in 2000 this proportion was well above both local and national norms but fell below them in 2001.

In post 16 A-level classes and AS-level classes standards in ICT are consistently good. The significant majority of students is highly motivated and confident to tackle current work independently. Most Y12 students are able to reflect critically on the social impact of ICT in various contexts and make effective use of prepared software presentations to articulate their ideas with clarity and understanding. Y13 students make good progress in their projects and display good knowledge and understanding of appropriate software in undertaking problem solving tasks. A significant minority of students, however, show weaknesses in evaluating and testing their work and this is particularly evident in lower attaining students. Moreover, although the proportion of students who attain grades A-E in external examinations compares favourably with national and local norms the proportion who achieve grades A-B is disappointing.

Standards are consistently good for students studying the range of GNVQ courses in both KS4 and post-16. The significant majority of students show a willingness to explore their own ideas and are competent using a range of appropriate ICT applications. Y11 foundation pupils undertake simple modelling exercises using spreadsheets confidently; they are able to plan their ideas, input their own data and show creativity by enhancing the presentation of their work. Y12 intermediate students use graphics and publishing software effectively in appropriate contexts and Y13 advanced VCE students produce good quality projects. Occasionally students do not pay sufficient attention to planning before making use of relevant applications and this has a detrimental effect on the quality of their work.

The department has made significant progress since the last inspection. Standards of achievement have been improved and teaching is generally of a good and often very good standard. Pupils' progress is monitored effectively in classes and this impacts significantly on their standards of achievement.

History

Standards of achievement are good in KS3, satisfactory in KS4 and good in Y12 and Y13.

In KS3, pupils describe well features of various periods in history, give reasons for events and changes and recognise consequences. They extract information from sources and are making progress in the skills of analysis, deduction and interpretation. They organise their work effectively and write structured essays on the Black Death, Witchcraft and the Industrial

Revolution. The writing of higher ability pupils is the most sustained, but many mid and lower ability pupils also attain well. Some pupils with SEN in Y8 make very good progress. Shortcomings include insufficiently detailed written and oral responses and the mis-spelling of key words. Lower and mid ability pupils in Y7 and Y8 experience difficulty in explaining differences in the form of a paragraph and in selecting key points from text.

In KS4, pupils describe and analyse a range of historical sources well and are able to evaluate the reliability and usefulness of a World War I poem. Higher ability pupils in Y11 quote from sources to illustrate points and many display an in-depth understanding of context, as in their well structured written work on Chepstow Castle. Shortcomings, which are more evident in this key stage than in KS3, include incorrect or undeveloped responses, mis-spelling of key words, inadequate revision for tests and some unfinished or poorly presented work. All pupils entered for the GCSE examination attain a pass. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher grades has improved following variable results in recent years; it remains below the average for the UA and Wales.

In Y13 students explain historical terms and concepts and are able to discuss links between political, religious and military aspects of the life of Oliver Cromwell. They research independently and present their findings effectively to their peers. The most able compare interpretations and are beginning to synthesise historians' views. Shortcomings, mainly in Y12, include insufficiently developed answers and lack of sustained concentration in class.

The Welsh dimension is addressed well in a local context, but opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of Wales within the wider history of Britain and the world are sometimes missed. Some progress has been made in the use of ICT since the last inspection but it remains insufficiently utilised as a tool for learning in history.

Geography

Standards achieved in KS3, KS4 and post 16 are good. No unsatisfactory standards were observed and in both KS3 and KS4, some very good standards were recorded. Standards of achievement are enhanced by good teaching across the age ranges.

In KS3 pupils' knowledge and understanding of place and of patterns and processes at different scales and in different contexts are developed satisfactorily. The geography of the local area and Wales given due attention within the departmental scheme of work and pupils relate well to examples drawn from both, with interest and confidence. Pupils show fewer signs, however, of being able to make substantial comparisons between the local area and more distant locations. In the majority of classes pupils show good knowledge of processes in physical and human geography and relate their knowledge well in drawing together the interrelationships that exist between people and their environments. Pupils' acquisition of geographical skills and their application to enquiry situations is of a good standard. Lessons are usually planned effectively and draw together the threads of developing knowledge, understanding and skills. Resources, chosen for use with different classes, are carefully selected. Appropriate pace and challenge is a feature of many lessons.

These practices are also employed with equally good results in KS4 and in Y12 and Y13. In KS4, classes display good knowledge and understanding of people and places at different scales from the local, right through regional to global contexts. Pupils display impressive geographical skills and at their best the application of these skills in coursework and

fieldwork situations is of a very good standard. In both KS3 and KS4, pupils display an empathy with peoples from different cultures and geographical regions experiencing hazards and socio-economic difficulties.

In Y12 and Y13, students show great interest in their geographical studies and display the capacity to use independent research effectively. Classes cope well with very detailed analyses of processes in physical and human geographical contexts. The use of the internet and information technology facilities as research tools for analysing atmospheric conditions and natural hazards is particularly effective and students display the capacity for determining the most appropriate resources for undertaking their work. Pupils enter freely into complex debates and show, at best, the capacity to synthesize data and make substantial evaluations of geographical phenomena.

Within each age range classes are given good opportunities for discussing geographical issues and to undertake fieldwork and develop the appropriate skills associated with that activity. The department works hard to ensure that pupils use the correct subject specific vocabulary and terminology. Able pupils and pupils with SEN achieve at least good standards in their work, although the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Pupils with average ability make satisfactory progress. Some students in Y12 and Y13 are passive learners, showing limited involvement in the learning process.

The department has made good progress in providing good opportunities for pupils to develop the key skills of numeracy and ICT at each phase. The quality of written and oral work varies between satisfactory and good across the age ranges. Pupils show every respect for the points of view of others.

Modern foreign languages

French

Standards of achievement in French are unsatisfactory in KS3 and satisfactory in KS4.

In KS3, the range of ability in the majority of classes is very wide. Pupils of higher and average ability do not achieve their full potential because, for the most part, work is not differentiated to suit their needs. Pupils of lower ability achieve satisfactory standards. Pupils with SEN who are taught with other classes achieve satisfactory standards because they receive good additional support. When they are taught separately, they make satisfactory progress also because their work is well tailored to suit their special needs.

The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in reading and listening to French. Most pupils recognise the written word and are able to understand satisfactorily short passages of French in their course book. Their reading skills remain modest because they have limited access to any additional reading material and are not encouraged to develop the habit of deducing meaning from cognates nor of using dictionaries and glossaries to look up words they do not know. Pupils understand some of the French their teachers use around the classroom. This ability is not developed as fully as it might be because some teachers tend to use French indiscriminately rather than matching their speech to the limited ability of the learner and by translating what they have said into English.

Little progress has been made since the time of the previous inspection to develop pupils' ability to speak and write French satisfactorily. Most pupils, even those of higher ability, are unable to respond at any length orally from memory to questions on simple, well-known topics. They have limited recall of simple vocabulary and basic structures. They can sustain a short, prepared presentation about themselves but, because they rely heavily on written prompts, they are hesitant and have anglicised pronunciation. Higher ability pupils attempt to respond to questions from their teachers or each other when practising simple routine drills on familiar topics. However, they lack confidence and fluency.

Pupils continue to have insufficient experience of extended writing. In Y7 they are all encouraged to label single objects and write short sentences. They can combine this information into a simple and, for some, accurate paragraph about themselves. However, they do not progress beyond this level in Y8 and Y9. They have limited opportunity to write full paragraphs. When they do, no demands are made on them to extend the quality or quantity of their work. Their sentences remain simple and the range of vocabulary and grasp of basic structures limited, even for higher ability pupils. They are beginning to use ICT to redraft their work. They enjoy this and take great pride in the presentation of their finished projects. However, the actual linguistic content remains very simple.

In KS4, pupils' expertise in all four skill areas improves rapidly in comparison to their earlier progress and pupils achieve satisfactory standards. Higher ability pupils acquire greater confidence to speak on familiar topics. They cope well with the unexpected and can make themselves understood in simple, unprepared conversation. Pupils are given greater opportunity to write. However, their range of vocabulary and idiom remains limited and most work within rigid parameters. Their work can be careless showing an insecure grasp of basic grammar. They understand spoken and written French in line with examination requirements.

Few pupils choose to continue with French after the age of fourteen. The results of those who do are below the national average for higher grade passes at GCSE level. In recent years no pupil has chosen to continue with French post 16.

Art

Overall the standard of pupils' achievement in art is good.

In KS3, standards are good and pupils make good progress through the key stage to achieve very good standards in Y9. Pupils develop good knowledge of art, craft and design from a wide range of cultures and use their understanding to inform their practical work. Following a well balanced programme of 2-D and 3-D processes they demonstrate skills working individually and collaboratively and on a variety of scales. They draw to record from direct experience and their imaginations and produce expressive and creative work. Pupils are familiar with the visual elements of art. These are emphasised in units of art work and pupils can refer to them confidently and accurately when explaining their intentions. Sketchbooks are used successfully by many pupils to explore and develop ideas and designs. Some pupils use their ICT skills to research topics but in general the use of ICT for generating and manipulating images is underdeveloped.

In KS4, standards achieved by pupils following the GCSE and GNVQ Foundation courses are good overall but with more variability than in KS3. Much of the best work occurs in Y10 where units of art work successfully integrate a broad range of processes including drawing,

printmaking, collage and textiles using a mixture of traditional and less orthodox materials. Pupils use the internet to research aspects of visual and material culture, as demonstrated in a current project about African masks. They show interest and enthusiasm and exercise good levels of skill and control in practical processes. Much similarly good work also occurs in Y11 but a small minority of pupils show insufficient initiative and commitment to success. Standards of achievement are reflected in recent GCSE examinations where results are close to but slightly below national averages.

In Y12 and Y13 standards are good and in many cases very good. Pupils in Y12 are engaged in a project which links the development of film processing skills with experimental and exciting approaches to the treatment of images. Their understanding of the potential of this medium is extended and with it, their creativity. They relate their work to artist-photographers such as Man Ray and Hockney. In Y13 pupils pursue their personal interests and develop individual styles and specialisms. They show enjoyment and commitment in art lessons and their work is influenced by their knowledge of art, much of which has been gained at first-hand through a rich programme of visits to galleries and exhibitions.

In general very satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection except in relation to computer aided art and design. In particular, better and more regular use is made of sketchbooks.

Music

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and KS4. Standards in Y12 and Y13 are good and satisfactory respectively.

Standards of performing in KS3 are good overall. Supported by very good teaching there are examples of very good singing practice in Y7. In Y8, pupils sing Tutti Frutti and Love me Tender with unforced tone and good diction. In these classes pupils sing confidently and show good posture and breathing. Good practice is continued in Y9, where both boys and girls sing enthusiastically. Standards of instrumental performance are satisfactory overall. Good features include Y7 keyboard performances of Hymn to Joy, and accurate chord and ostinato work in Y8. In Y9 classes, pupils perform canons effectively. Recently introduced practice is impacting favourably on improvements in pupils' keyboard finger and percussion technique.

Generally, pupils in KS3 achieve good standards in composing. Pupils in Y7 and Y8 improvise competently and Y9 Gamelan group compositions are impressive, showing good progression of skills. Directed by good to very good teaching pupils are encouraged to develop appropriate appraising language related to the elements of music. The introduction of unit work books has reinforced pupils' knowledge and understanding and improved their progressive use of more sophisticated appraising language across the key stage. Restrictions on the number of available computers limits pupil achievement in KS3. Less able pupils achieve good standards.

Whilst GCSE results are below the national average, abler musicians gain appropriate A* to C grades. There is open access to GCSE classes and in 2002, less able pupils, including some with SEN, gained better grades in music than in other subjects. Large numbers of KS4 pupils take music. Standards in Y10 are good, teachers providing excellent support for less musically able musicians who have not acquired important keyboard and reading skills in

KS3. In Y11, abler pupils achieve good standards of vocal and instrumental performance. Pupils achieve good standards in composing work, the most capable developing advanced computer skills.

Since the last inspection, good standards of class singing have been maintained and there have been significant gains in standards of composing and appraising. Pupils' quality of education is enhanced by a very high degree of staff commitment and expertise. Opportunities for supporting abler musicians have been extended in terms of the range of peripatetic music support. Good to very good standards are achieved in extra – curricular activities.

Physical education

Standards of achievement in KS3, KS4 and in Y12 and Y13 are satisfactory.

In KS3, pupils make good progress in gymnastics. The most able demonstrate good body tension and clarity of shape. Most pupils are able to accurately observe and correct each other's technique in order to enhance performance. In games, boys achieve higher standards than girls. Most Y7 boys demonstrate good ball handling skills. They accurately distribute the ball and are capable of demonstrating a satisfactory understanding of the principles of attack and defence. Standards achieved by girls in games are unsatisfactory. Their skills are underdeveloped and they have difficulty performing and understanding correct technique.

In KS4, the majority of boys work diligently to produce set moves that demonstrate good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. They use good vision when distributing the ball and support one another well when defending. Girls are unable to consistently work at pace. Very few understand the key principles of exercise. In aerobics, they are unable to refine technique and their ability to monitor and evaluate progress is weak. They rarely take the lead in exercise to music sessions and have unsatisfactory levels of knowledge and understanding. In both key stages, most pupils with SEN achieve good standards. The effective support they receive in lessons enhances their performance.

GCSE pupils achieve good standards in gymnastics. The most able maintain good body tension and fluency when performing quite difficult skills. Boys achieve satisfactory standards in football. Their understanding and application of the analysis of the physical characteristics of players in different positions is good. Most girls are less confident and have difficulty performing basic skills with any level of accuracy, control or pace.

In Y12 and Y13, very few pupils opt to study the subject at advanced level. The majority of those that do achieve only modest standards. The most able use their theoretical knowledge effectively to enhance practical performance.

Although improving, examination results are below UA and national averages. A small number of pupils at GCSE and advanced level fail to achieve grades commensurate with their level of ability. Many have difficulty providing extended answers orally or in writing. Very few pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve the quality of their written work. Pupils' analytical skills are underdeveloped.

Standards have not improved since the last inspection. Overall, there is too little evidence of good work and the amount of unsatisfactory work has increased.

Religious education

Standards are good across both key stages and the full range of ability. In Y12 and Y13, religious studies examination classes standards are very good. Schemes of work are appropriately linked to the UA agreed syllabus for religious education. The school fails to comply with the statutory requirement to provide religious education for post 16 pupils.

Standards of achievement in KS3 are good and in some instances very good. Pupils exhibit a good knowledge and understanding of the key beliefs and practices of Christianity and the other religions they study. They use technical religious terms correctly and in context, both orally and in writing. They are able to define and illustrate concepts by regularly drawing on their own experiences. They are aware of how symbols are used in religion, and life, as a means of expressing beliefs and conveying information. Pupils relate their studies to local and global events. They show an understanding of how beliefs contribute to a person's identity and the formation of communities. Mind-maps are effectively used to explore religion and how it impacts on life. Simulated religious rituals are treated with respect and sensitivity. Pupils engage in small-scale research activities and successfully evaluate their work and progress in the subject.

In KS4 standards of achievement are good and never less than satisfactory. All pupils follow the GCSE religious education short course with a small number opting for the full course. Examination results of those entered for the examination are good. Pupils use a range of resources to investigate the relationship between contemporary issues and religion. They look at the variety of religious experiences and are able to see how beliefs influence actions. The content of their study usefully influences their own views in matters such as racism and prejudice and they articulate these in a thoughtful and reflective manner. Pupils acquire and use a good range of technical vocabulary. Where there are shortcomings some questions lack challenge and pupils' responses are insufficiently developed.

Standards of achievement in AS and A2 examination classes are very good and never less than good. Students intelligently reflect on beliefs and lifestyles. They employ research skills and mind-maps to good effect, analysing data and selecting relevant information. Oral and written answers to questions are carefully argued using appropriate religious and philosophical terms. Critical self-evaluation is used to identify areas for improvement along with well-developed peer support.

Pupils respond to challenging, yet achievable, work in a well-resourced supportive environment. Since the last inspection the department has maintained its good standards and made progress in examination classes.

Personal and social education

Standards of achievement in PSE are good in KS3 and satisfactory in KS4.

There is an appropriate and wide-ranging PSE programme that is delivered during form tutor periods three times a week. Units of work are cross-referenced to the aspects found in the ACCAC PSE Framework. Both sex education and careers education are effectively incorporated into the PSE programme and links with the University of Glamorgan provide external accreditation for parts of the programme. Aspects of sustainable development are

covered at KS3 and KS4. The PSE programme is further supplemented and enhanced with visits from the health authority, police and other outside organisations. The school also works with other schools in the authority as part of the DASH project.

In KS3 standards of achievement are good and never less than satisfactory. Pupils show a keen interest in their work and display a good grasp of the moral and social issues raised in lessons. They readily share their ideas and listen to their peers respectfully. They work cooperatively with others and address sensitive issues in a mature fashion. Most are enthusiastic and appreciate the relevance of their study. Where there are shortcomings some pupils are passive in lessons and there is undue focus on the completion of worksheets.

In KS4 standards are satisfactory. Most apply themselves to the challenge of the work set and respond to tasks in a thoughtful manner. They display empathy and consideration for the plight and feelings of those suffering misfortune. Most pupils find the topics covered both valuable and interesting. They are generally articulate in expressing feelings and opinions orally. Where there are shortcomings pupils listen to the teacher unreceptively rather than initiate their own learning. Occasionally pupils drift off task and lose interest. In some classes pupils are not sufficiently stimulated or challenged by the lesson content.

In Y12 and Y13, careers guidance forms part of the PSE programme. Students apply themselves to tasks in an open and conscientious way.

Business studies

Standards are good in KS4 and very good in Y12 and Y13.

In KS4 pupils are very enthusiastic and listen carefully to their teachers' instructions. They are able to work independently. They respond well to coherent activities which challenge the abilities of most of them. Examination results are good and the number of higher grades attained is above the national average. Basic skills are developed in a range of tasks and assignments. Frequent use is made of ICT to word process or to gather information from the CD Roms and Internet. In discussion, in pairs and in groups, pupils are open and, on the basis of the information they have, they generalise and form opinions. Pupils in Y10 closely investigate the main features of the different types of business organisation. They demonstrate critical understanding of partnerships and sole traders. Most display maturity when expressing an opinion. They extend their awareness of the economic issues and questions related to business in Wales and particularly to that in the Bridgend area. Standards are good in most lessons and pupils are given a range of opportunities to develop their commercial awareness. Able pupils display the greatest confidence in their oral work in group activities. Pupils with SEN are integrated into business studies and are advantaged by having full access to the subject.

In Y12 and Y13 very good standards are achieved when students apply their skills of analysis and compilation to report business reports based on a wide range of research material. Subject results are very good and above expectations. Students gather and analyse information well. In a few cases reports lack detail and analysis and they tend to employ a descriptive style of writing. Nevertheless some good work in study skills enriches students' ability to work independently and collaborate well in groups. Y13 students present good, clear reports on economic growth. Students follow instructions well and display initiative and independence when required as they follow their original ideas. Effective use is made of information

technology resources to store and perfect their reports. Students enjoy measuring business and finance activities in Wales and the contribution they make to the Welsh economy. Students have the ability to be inventive when using their research skills. The use of relevant information is effective. They work productively as individual students and in groups to solve problems.

The department has succeeded in maintaining the standards displayed in the last inspection. Most of the issues identified in the inspection report have been addressed. However, access to quality resources remains a problem. While the ablest students perform very well in examinations, the average ability student is under-performing.

Child development

Pupils' standards in this GCSE course are good.

This is a popular course and recent examination results are improving. Whilst results for A*-C grades are below national average they are above the school average with pupils achieving well in relation to their ability.

Pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of the development of babies and young children in a multicultural society. They are particularly co-operative in group tasks where they competently investigate and problem solve situations relating to families and make informed judgements about the range of services available to them. They readily discuss their work and express their view clearly though a minority of Y11 have weak recall of statistical norms of development. Class notes are well organised and the quality of extended writing is good in many coursework projects. Here perceptive observations of individual children's development are recorded and analysed. ICT is used effectively for a variety of purposes. Learning experiences are enhanced by visits from a local midwife and doctor.

This subject was not reported on separately in the last inspection.

Drama

Drama is offered in KS4 and pupils achieve satisfactory standards.

The majority of pupils respond sensitively to the work and are competent in creating and participating in the development of dramatic ideas. They collaborate well in groups on a range of practical activities such as devising a piece for performance or improvisation. They share ideas creatively and imaginatively to progress towards a planned and polished piece of performance both individually and as a group. They research and explore learning resources in order to underpin their preparations, engage in drafting scripts and progressively develop their knowledge and understanding of dramatic genres, periods and movements. They employ techniques such as 'hot seating' and 'freeze frame' in order to develop their insight and awareness of character and role and can rationalise and discuss varied interpretations. Pupils demonstrate varied levels of confidence, concentration, conviction and commitment to their performance. A few pupils drift off task, out of role, losing sight of the major learning outcomes. All pupils employ a range of strategies for developing character profiles. Vocal quality, clarity, fluency and projection is varied with some pupils revealing limited skills. Self evaluation and reflection is evident and ongoing and supports individual and group development and improvement; written work demonstrates enjoyment with the subject matter

but is often marred by poor expression, spelling and grammar. The lack of suitably private accommodation and range of learning resources limits pupils full achievement in the subject.

Electronics

Standards are very good in KS4 and good in Y12 and Y13.

In KS4, pupils have a very good attitude to the work. They are keen and enthusiastic and arrive at every lesson well prepared and willing to use all the lesson time effectively and purposefully. They maintain a good record of work together with a very good understanding and working knowledge of previous work and systems. They show a very good understanding of simple circuitry. They draw and test circuit diagrams using 'crocodile clip' technology on laptop computers and then build and test real circuits in the laboratory. They work well on their own, competently and with confidence. They make few mistakes in the laboratory or computer room and gain proficiency in electronics very quickly. Pupils benefit from a clear understanding of what is required each lesson and for modules of work. They take advantage of opportunities to visit the department at lunchtime and after school. Results in the GCSE examinations are satisfactory to good.

In Y12 and Y13, students pursue AS and A2 courses in electronics. They build upon good groundwork in practical skills developed at KS4 and quickly become familiar with a wide range of equipment and tools. They understand, construct and test simple and complex electronic circuitry. They make good use of computers, both as a means to test theoretical circuits for faults and to display their results in tabular and graphical form. They work well on their own and ask and answer relevant questions. They have limited opportunity to use their own initiative as most of the practical work is recipe-driven. Students are less confident with theory work and many struggle with the more mathematical aspects of the course. They develop an increasing awareness of the practical applications of the work and are able to predict and test potential outcomes. Examination results at A level are comparable with national averages.

Home economics

Food Studies

Standards of achievement, in relation to the ability of the pupils, are good. A small number of pupils follow this course to CoEA level and display considerable interest and focus well on the varied tasks set them. During the course they develop a good understanding of basic nutrition, dietary guidelines and factors affecting food choice and food preparation.

Pupils work co-operatively in groups where they investigate, taste and decide healthier solutions to traditional food products. They use appropriate sensory terminology to discuss and evaluate their results. They choose relevant food items for practical assignments, record and justify their choices and prepare a work plan. Whilst they carry out costing and evaluation exercises, not all are sufficiently accurate and detailed at this stage. However,

written work is good overall, with evidence of ICT skills for word processing and graphical presentations. Pupils benefit from modified work sheets, sensitive support and make good progress. Examination results are good.

Catering

Standards of achievement are good overall. Recent GCSE examination results are just below national averages. Grades achieved, however, often exceed expectation.

Pupils work with interest and commitment. They develop good practical and written skills. They acquire a sound understanding of catering establishments and Health and Safety regulations. They display appropriate knowledge of food commodities and food preparation and make sensible, healthy choices when they plan food items for class and coursework activities. They evaluate outcomes, cost and calculate profit. Practical food items are usually well finished. Whilst many pupils are able to follow recipe plans and use equipment independently, a minority of Y10 pupils is less sure of procedures at this stage and are more reliant upon their teacher. Work placements at the end of Y10, in local catering businesses, provide a valuable insight into catering systems and organisations. This opportunity is well documented in pupil's coursework projects. Currently these vary from satisfactory to very good with the better folios displaying good evidence of investigational skills used effectively to gather relevant detailed information. The quality and presentation of most folders is enhanced by the use of photographic evidence and ICT.

The above two subjects were not reported on separately in the last inspection.

Vocational education

GNVQ Engineering - foundation level

In this newly introduced course, standards are satisfactory overall.

Pupils satisfactorily analyse the design brief and outline specifications necessary to complete the task. The majority describe the main stages of production of an engineered product satisfactorily and a few produce flow charts of a good standard. Well produced teacher resources support learning. Appropriate numeracy skills are used to accurately measure and calculate cost and Pro Desktop is introduced to good effect during the production of a metal desk tidy. Pupils work in a range of materials and produce items such as a cantilever desk light, a hand held game and metal bottle opener. Standards of practical outcomes are generally satisfactory, with some good examples. In a few instances, greater pupil commitment would ensure outcomes of a good standard. Industrial links are limited at present, but CD-ROMs are used well to convey manufacturing systems. With the exception of key skills, a good tracking system has not yet been developed. At present, insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to become responsible for their own learning and involved in target setting and evaluating progress.

Building Craft Occupations

Standards are satisfactory overall.

This two year course provides pupils with the opportunity to experience three crafts - Carpentry, Bricklaying, Painting and Decorating. Pupils attend Bridgend College for approximately one third of the time, where the main practical sessions and related assessments take place. With consistent teacher support and guidance, pupils' practical skills are, on the whole, developing satisfactorily. Pupils benefit from relevant booklets and worksheets which support learning; unit booklets reveal that various units of work are completed and marked regularly. Numeracy skills, such as costing, measuring and percentages, which relate to the occupations are integrated in the course. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to ability. On successfully completing the course pupils are awarded a College and a CITB certificate.

Health and Social Care

Standards of achievement in Y12 and Y13 are good.

Students in the intermediate group are developing a sound knowledge and understanding of factors relating to the health and well being of different client groups. They demonstrate an awareness of physical, intellectual, emotional and social development at various life stages. They research independently and provide good feedback to the whole class. Competent ICT skills are used to input data on dietary intake, though a minority are less sure at present of how to compare their calculations against daily recommended values.

In the advanced group, numbers opting for this course are increasing. Students in the first year demonstrate a good understanding of communication skills and their importance to the client and carer. They participate well in group role-play activities. Here they discuss relevant issues confidently and develop health and social care terminology.

Students in the second year analyse the provision of services, the role of carers and make reasoned judgements as to how these affect the individual and the community. They carry out purposeful observations of young children at a local primary school and are able to assess cognitive development against recognised theories. Folio work is well organised; presentation skills are good with effective use made of ICT throughout.

Complete assignments relate well to examination criteria and vary from satisfactory to very good. Students investigate and research a range of topics from a variety of sources. Students at both levels display independent learning skills. Rigorous assessment strategies, good reading and a range of speakers and placement opportunities enhance the vocational understanding and contribute towards good standards.

This subject was not reported on during the last inspection.

Other(s)

Politics and Government

Overall, standards are good.

Standards of work seen in politics and government in the sixth form are good although this is

not reflected in the recent AS examination results, which were below average. However, past results have been well above average. Students' knowledge of politics and government is good they demonstrate a critical understanding of the diversity and application of political concepts, theories and methods. The ablest students apply politics to an analysis of contemporary societies. As a result students' achievements, in relation to standards when they began in Y12 and Y13, are good. There is progress in both knowledge and skills including those associated with information technology. Students are provided with up-to-date knowledge. Positive attitudes to investigative work produce accurate and well finished writing. Students plan and organise their work in an orderly manner, often using an acceptable range of computer techniques.

Students, at the start of Y12, have to learn to interpret political material presented in a variety of forms, evaluate theories and methods, evidence and argument. These interpretations become more sophisticated in Y13. Quickly students learn to present explanations, ideas and arguments in a coherent and logical form. Wider understanding of the subject in all its forms is aided by good resources and teaching. Students rapidly overcome the disadvantage of a lack of prior subject knowledge. Able students make some very perceptive observations and draw pertinent examples of politics from quality newspapers and journals. Students work hard to develop their oral skills. Information technology is used extensively in assignments and students demonstrate considerable competence in using the equipment creatively. Politics develops the concept of citizenship by improving students' knowledge of rights and responsibilities, legal and democratic institutions and processes, and issues of diversity. Students' skills of enquiry and communication of topical, political policies are enhanced by discussions and debates.

A limited amount of assessment has been undertaken to date so early in the new academic year but indications are that students are performing better than anticipated. Students make good progress from their studies in Y12 to the more challenging work in Y13.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress Since the Last Inspection

Key Issue 1 : Develop the role of the senior management team in leading initiatives in relation to curriculum and assessment.

Considerable advances have been made in developing a wide and appropriate academic and vocational curriculum. Progress has been made in assessment, particularly in half-termly and end of year tests. The school is becoming 'data rich' and becoming aware of national standards.

Key Issue 2 : Use the information gained from assessments to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress.

Attempts have been made to standardise test scores in the school. Departments make good use of assessments to place pupils into teaching groups and inform teachers of appropriate teaching methods and styles. Systems of pupil performance interviews based upon assessment information are developing well.

Key Issue 3 : Raise teachers' expectations of pupils of average ability and thereby their aspirations and standards of achievement.

Some progress has been made by making a considerable investment in teaching and learning styles. Results for these pupils have improved since the last inspection, but have not changed significantly in recent years.

Key Issue 4 : Increase resources, including the quality of the school library, and promote their use for independent learning.

Good progress has been made in the library and in the provision of ICT equipment. The incidence of 'passive learning' has greatly reduced.

Key Issue 5 : Meet statutory requirements for design and technology in KS3.

This has been done.

Key Issue 6 : Continue efforts to improve attendance.

The school continues to be vigilant in this area and has marginally raised attendance levels. The attendance level is barely satisfactory.

8.2 Key Issues for Action

In order to build upon improvements since the last inspection the school should address the following items in its action plan :

1. continue to raise expectations and challenge fully all pupils in order to improve further their performance in external examinations;
2. improve standards in aspects of
 - a. French in KS3,
 - b. Physical education,
 - c. Design and technology provision in Y8 and Y9;
3. devise and implement a whole school strategy and policy for improving standards in pupils' spelling;
4. ensure that reports to parents give clear and consistent information on pupils' strengths and targets for improvement;
5. share existing good practice to develop a consistent pupil assessment programme with a clear focus on individual target setting;
6. comply with statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and the provision of religious education in Y12 and Y13.

The inspectors wish to express their thanks to the head, governors, staff, parents and pupils of Ynysawdre Comprehensive School for their co-operation during the inspection.

APPENDIX

A. Basic Information About the School

Name of School	Ynysawdre Comprehensive
School type	County
Age -range of pupils	11 - 19 years
Address of school	Heol yr Ysgol Tondu Bridgend
Post-Code	CF32 9EL
Telephone Number	01656 720643

Headteacher	Mr T J Woodward
Date of appointment	1 st April 1995
Chair of Governors/ Appropriate Authority	Councillor W Burt Bridgend County Borough Council
Registered Inspector	Mr R Graham
Dates of inspection	30 th September - 4 th October 2002

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	175	157	165	154	62	37	917

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	55	4	56.25

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	16.25:1
Pupil:adult (fte) ratio in special classes	3 :1
Average teaching group size	22.1
Overall contact ratio	73.4 %

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Term 1	90.2	87.3	84.6	83.8	95.8	94.9	84.9	88.6
Term 2	91.5	89.7	88.1	87.1	85.3	93.7	80.4	88.5
Term 3	93.7	92.7	90.6	88.8	87.9	89.4	85.0	90.5

<i>Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection.</i>	77
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C. Results of National Curriculum Assessments and Public Examinations

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2001																
Total number of pupils in Y9: 165																
Percentage of pupils at each level																
			D	A	N	B	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
EN	Teacher assessment	School	0	2	0	0	0	0	5	9	23	36	14	11	0	
		National	0	1	1	n/a	0	0	3	10	22	34	21	8	0	
	Test	School	0	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	14	29	27	13	8	0
		National	0	3	2	2	n	n	n	9	22	33	19	10	n	
MA	Teacher assessment	School	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	17	29	24	18	7	0	
		National	0	1	0	n/a	0	0	1	10	23	25	26	13	1	
	Test	School	0	3	6	0	0	0	0	13	31	22	20	6	0	
		National	0	6	1	1	n	n	n	8	22	22	27	13	n	
SC	Teacher assessment	School	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	19	41	25	12	2	0	
		National	0	1	1	n/a	0	0	1	10	24	31	23	9	0	
	Test	School	0	2	4	0	0	0	0	23	35	22	11	2	0	
		National	0	4	1	1	n	n	n	9	22	29	24	10	n	

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:	34	In the school:	30
In Wales:	51	In Wales:	50

D – Pupils who have been disapplied under section 364 and 365 of the Education Act 1996

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

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

B – Pupils not entered for tests because they are working outside the levels of the tests.

W- Pupils who are “working towards” level 1, but have not yet achieved the standards needed for level 1

n – tests do not cover these levels

n/a – not applicable

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, CoE, GNVQ and NVQ			
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2001: 149			
The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2001:			
	School	UA	Wales
were entered for 5 or more GCSEs	78	85	86
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C	32	49	50
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-G	78	83	85
achieved GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language)	17	36	37
entered at least one CoE, GCSE short course or GCSE	96	96	96
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-C	58	72	73
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-G	89	91	92
achieved no graded GCSE	11	9	8
achieved one or more CoE only	5	3	3
achieved a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1	7		
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	32		
achieved at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both	38		

For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs			
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2001: 99			
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2001: 33			
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2001: 16			
	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	36	57	62
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	85	91	93
Average points score per candidate	12	16	18
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	13		
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	3		

GNVQ 2001

Year	Subject	Level	Distinction	Merit	Pass
11	IT	Foundation	2	5	4
13	H&SC	Intermediate	-	3	1
13	H&SC	Advanced	-	3	-
13	Hospitality & Catering	Intermediate		1	
13	IT	Intermediate	2	5	1

D. The Evidence Base of the Inspection

The inspection took place over five days, 19 inspectors were involved and 250 sessions were observed. During this time all teachers were visited, most classes seen and all subjects of the NC inspected.

Discussion with pupils to ascertain their knowledge of curriculum areas and their attitude to learning took place on a regular basis. Pupils' work across the age and ability range was examined systematically and the school provided the inspection team with a comprehensive record of pupils' work and other school activities.

Discussion also took place with the head and staff, including non teaching staff, to establish their specific responsibilities and professional perspectives. School documentation was examined and a detailed discussion took place with the head and support staff concerning financial matters.

The views of parents and governors were received and analysed. Thirty nine parents' questionnaires were returned.

E. Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team

Inspector	Type	No. Days	Subjects	Aspects
Mr R Graham	RgI	5	Science	1. The school and its priorities 2. Main findings 3.1 Standards achieved 5.1 Teaching 6.1 Self-evaluation 6.2 Leadership and efficiency 8.1 Progress since last inspection 8.2 Key issues for action
Mrs J Hare	Core	4.5	English, Drama	4.1 SMSC 5.4 Support, guidance & welfare
Dr A Cooke	Core	4.5	Mathematics	3.2 Key skills 5.3 Curriculum
Mr P Carter	Core	4	Art	5.2 ARR 6.3 Resources
Mr S Page	Lay	2.5		4.2 Behaviour 4.3 Attendance 5.6 Links with parents, etc. 5.7 Links with industry
Mrs L Wilson	Team	3		5.5 SEN
Dr G Briwnant-Jones	Team	3.5	Design & Technology, GNVQ Engineering, Building	
Mr J Hanney	Team	1.5	Science	
Mrs M Herbert	Team	3	Design & Technology, Health & Social Care	
Mr J Jenkins	Team	2	Music	
Mrs J Longville	Team	2	Physical Education	
Dr S R Williams	Team	2	History	
Mr M Picken	Team	1.5	Science	
Mr A Pritchard	Team	2	Geography	
Mr M Rawle	Team	3	Religious Education, Personal Social Education	
Mrs S Richardson	Team	3	Modern Foreign Language	
Mr C Rowlands	Team	3	Welsh second language	
Mr D Williams	Team	3	Information Technology & GNVQ Information Technology	

Dr N Carr	Team	2	Business Studies, Politics	
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