

**Inspection under Section 28 of the
Education Act 2005**

A Report on the Quality of Education in

**Maesgwyn Special School
Cwmdare Road
Cwmdare
Aberdare
CF44 8RE**

School Number: 6747006

Date of Inspection: 01/12/08

by

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

The inspection of Maesgwyn Special School took place between 01/12/08 and 04/12/08. An independent team of inspectors, led by Paul Donovan undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

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

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

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

There are three types of inspection.

For **all** inspections, there is a written report on seven key questions.

For **short** inspections, there are no subject reports.

For **standard** inspections, there are also reports on six subjects.

For **full** inspections, there are also reports on all subjects.

Estyn decides the kind of inspection that a school receives, mainly on the basis of its past performance. Most schools receive a standard inspection. All nursery schools, special schools, pupil referral units and any new or amalgamated schools receive a full inspection.

This school received a **full** inspection.

Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

Year	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Ages	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11

Secondary phase:

Year	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13
Ages	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18

The National Curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

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

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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Maesgwyn special school is a day, community special school situated on the outskirts of Aberdare. It provides for 102 pupils aged from 11 to 19 with statements of special educational needs (SEN) for moderate learning difficulties. Many of the pupils have additional needs. Many pupils are medicated for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and have associated behavioural difficulties.
2. Pupils come from the whole of the Rhondda Cynon Taff county borough, many from areas of social deprivation within the borough. There are 45% of pupils entitled to free school meals, which is considerably higher than local and national figures.
3. Ninety eight per cent of pupils are white with 1% mixed race and 1% black. All pupils come from homes where English is the main language spoken.
4. The school was relocated for two years from March 2006 until March 2008 whilst the original building had asbestos removed and was extensively refurbished. The school moved back onto the original site in March 2008 but building and decorating continued until recently. This has hindered the settling-in period.
5. There are 11 full-time teachers including the headteacher and 11 Learning Support assistants (LSAs) and a school liaison officer.
6. The last inspection was conducted between 11th and 14th November 2002. Since then, the school has appointed a new headteacher and deputy headteacher and has restructured the senior leadership team (SLT). There have also been other recent appointments to the staff.

The school's priorities and targets

7. The school has a vision statement which is prominently displayed around the school and has identified the following priorities for development in its school improvement plan:
 - To raise attendance to 90%+;
 - To develop the number of Entry Levels and GCSEs through new curriculum development opportunities;
 - To continue to improve the quality of teaching across the school to meet WAG target 98% grade 2 or better;
 - To develop a nurture group across Key stage 3;
 - To further develop the curriculum for specific pupils; and
 - To further develop the role of subject leaders.

Summary

8. Maesgwyn Special School is an improving school and has many good features in the way it provides for its learners. It is effectively staffed by well qualified practitioners who work well as a team to ensure the needs of its learners are met. It is well on the way to fulfilling its vision statement which includes:
- the belief that a high quality education is the right of every child;
 - pupils receiving respect, encouragement and opportunity to prepare them for adult lives; and
 - developing the highest possible standards in pupils so that they become effective members of society.
9. The school consistently implements well-considered procedures and practices in most aspects of provision resulting in good features being evident in all key questions. In key question 1, however, the inspection team identified shortcomings in learners' standards of achievement in some subjects.

Table of grades awarded

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

10. The grades awarded for key questions 1, 5 and 7 do not match as there were shortcomings in standards of achievement in some subjects. However, standards continue to improve over time, as judged by learners' attainments over the past three years, and strategies are now in place to monitor and evaluate standards in each subject.

Standards of achievement

11. Whilst the inspection team awarded key question 1 a grade lower than the school's judgement, the grades awarded for key questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 confirm the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.

Grades for standards in subjects inspected

12. The learners' standards of achievement were judged by the progress they make in relation to their previous achievement and the targets set for them.
13. Standards of achievement are variable between subjects and in some cases between key stages.

Inspection Area	Key stage 3	Key stage 4	Post-16
English	2	3	3
Welsh second language	2	2	3
Mathematics	2	2	3
Science	2	2	N/A
Information communication technology	1	2	N/A
Design technology	1	1	1
Modern foreign languages	3	N/A	N/A
History	3	N/A	N/A
Geography	2	N/A	N/A
Art	2	3	N/A
Music	3	N/A	N/A
Physical education	2	2	2
Religious education (including religious studies)	2	2	3

14. It is not appropriate to compare learners' attainment, at the end of key stage 3 or their examination results at the end of key stage 4 and at post-16, with local and national averages as the school caters for pupils whose special educational needs and ability are not easily comparable. However there has been a significant increase in the number of learners gaining accredited qualifications.
15. Learners' progress in developing key skills is variable. Whilst the majority of learners' listening and reading skills are well developed, a minority of learners lacks clarity and confidence in speaking and a few in reading out loud. Writing skills are also variable; there are good examples of extended writing and in some writing there are basic errors.
16. Bilingual skills are not well developed and there is little use of incidental Welsh to support their development.
17. The majority of learners make good progress in their learning as they move through the school. They also make good progress in developing personal and spiritual, moral social and cultural skills. However, a few are poorly behaved and this affects their and others' standards.
18. Whilst attendance rates are below national and school targets they are in line with those for special schools in Wales. However the rate of unauthorised absence is more than twice that for other special schools and is unacceptably high.
19. An outstanding aspect is learners' preparation for effective participation in the workplace.

The quality of education and training

20. Overall the quality of teaching and assessment is good. The positive and supportive relationship between staff and learners is a strength of the school.

Many members of staff have established a caring and supportive ethos, which helps most learners to contribute actively towards the lessons.

21. In the 45 lessons observed the quality of teaching was as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
16%	69%	11%	4%	0%

22. The quality of teaching is grade 2 or better in 85% of lessons. This percentage is higher than the national averages presented by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales in his latest report.
23. Teachers generally have a very sound knowledge of their subject area. This helps them to plan effectively and ensure that appropriate and relevant resources are available to enrich and support learning in their subjects. Effective use is made of LSAs.
24. The school uses an electronic assessment programme that effectively tracks learners' progress. Learners have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve, and recognise their strengths and areas they need to develop. Teachers mark learners' work regularly but the quality of marking is inconsistent. Parents are fully informed about their children's progress and receive well-written reports.
25. The overall quality and range of learning experiences made available to learners are good and meet their individual needs well by providing equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum which provides opportunity for learners to gain qualifications and develop vocational skills. The school is developing an effective curriculum to meet the Welsh Assembly Government's priorities for 14 – 19 Learning Pathways.
26. Provision for developing learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Assemblies, religious education and personal and social education (PSE) enhance learners' spiritual and moral development whilst the very good relationships between adults and learners significantly contribute to their social development. The school's involvement in the Comenius project together with its focus on 'Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig' enriches learners' cultural development. However the school's provision for promoting the development of bilingual skills is underdeveloped.
27. The school's provision for work-related education, developing entrepreneurial skills and for promoting the education for sustainable development has outstanding features.
28. The planning, management and co-ordination of care, support and guidance are outstanding and a strength of the school.
29. The school takes good account of the well-being of its learners and is in its third year of involvement with the 'Healthy Schools' initiative. This is strength of the school and an outstanding feature of provision.
30. Learning pathways 14 – 19 are being well developed with partner schools and option choices are available for all learners.

31. Overall, provision for learners' additional learning needs is good but there are shortcomings in the application of the school's behaviour policy by teaching staff. Despite the school's best efforts it has, as yet, been unable to secure adequate speech therapy for the learners that require it.
32. The provision for equal opportunity has several good features. However, although learners felt that staff dealt effectively when bullying was brought to their attention they also had some concerns with respect to the regularity of such incidents.

Leadership and management

33. The governors, headteacher and senior staff have set out a clear direction for the school which is embodied in the school's vision statement. The headteacher provides effective leadership and is well supported by the deputy headteacher and two senior members of staff.
34. Arrangements for appraising, managing and supporting the performance of all staff are secure and contribute significantly to the evaluative culture the school has developed over recent years.
35. The SLT is well supported by an active governing body which contributes significantly to strategic planning. Whilst the governing body meets all regulatory and legal requirements it has yet to clarify the school's admission criteria.
36. The headteacher and SLT have developed a comprehensive, self-evaluation process identifying strengths and areas for development. A strong feature is its inclusive nature involving all staff.
37. The school's planning for improvement has many good features and its rigour at all levels is becoming embedded. There are close links between self-review, evaluation and school development planning.
38. The school has effectively addressed most key issues raised at the last inspection. Attendance, however, continues to be an issue although it is improving.
39. The school employs a sufficient number of well-qualified teachers and support staff to meet the needs of learners. The highly effective use of the specialist knowledge of support staff in vocational areas of the curriculum is a strength of the school.
40. The quality of the accommodation is outstanding. The new purpose-built, specialist vocational educational facilities have enabled the school to provide a wide array of appropriate courses for learners.
41. The school has effective systems in place to monitor expenditure. The school budget is managed well and the headteacher monitors the financial expenditure on a daily basis. The governing body monitors and reviews provision regularly, and ensures that the school makes effective use of its resources to ensure good quality of teaching.
42. The school is effective in meeting the needs of the age and range of learners and overall provides good value for money.

Recommendations

In order to improve the quality of provision and standards the school needs to:

- R1 Raise standards in those subjects where shortcomings have been identified.
- R2 Reduce the level of unauthorised absence and strengthen the monitoring of absence for learners who attend between 80 and 90 percent. *
- R3 Improve the consistency of the application of the school's behaviour policy.
- R4 Enhance the provision of incidental Welsh across the school in order to improve standards of bilingualism.
- R5 Liaise with the appropriate agencies in order to secure speech therapy for those pupils who require it.
- R6 Clarify admission criteria.

* Denotes an issue which is included in the School Improvement Plan.

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

Standards

Key Question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

- 43. In its self-evaluation report the school graded this key question a grade 2. The findings of the inspection team do not match the judgement made by the school because shortcomings in learners' progress and achievement were identified in a number of lessons.
- 44. The pupils' standards of achievement were judged by the progress they make in relation to their previous achievement and the targets set for them.
- 45. Standards of achievement are variable between subjects and in some cases between key stage 3 and key stage 4. There are good standards with outstanding features in information communication technology (ICT) at key stage 3 and in design technology in both key stages and at post-16. Standards are good with no important shortcomings in English, art and geography at key stage 3 and in mathematics, science, Welsh second language, religious education and physical education at key stages 3 and 4, in ICT at key stage 4 and in physical education at post-16. There are shortcomings in modern foreign languages, history and

music at key stage 3, in English and art at key stage 4 and in English, mathematics, Welsh second language and religious education at post-16.

46. Standards of achievement in the 45 lessons observed are as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
7%	67%	24%	2%	0%

47. These figures are below the national percentages for grades 1 and 2 in special schools as reported by her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Wales in his annual report for 2006 – 2007.

48. It is not appropriate to compare learners' attainment, at the end of key stage 3 or their examination results at the end of key stage 4 and at post-16, with local and national averages as the school caters for pupils whose special educational needs and ability are not easily comparable.

49. Most learners achieve the targets outlined in their individual education plans. However targets often do not have realistic time-scales. Whilst individual subjects have targets for accredited qualifications at key stage 4 and post-16 there are no quantifiable whole-school targets for attainment.

50. Learners' progress in developing key skills is variable. Whilst a majority of learners is attentive and develops good listening skills a significant minority does not speak clearly or with good expression. Most learners when asked to read out loud, do so confidently and a few with good expression; a few, however, lack confidence. Standards of writing are variable with more able learners writing at length and with good basic punctuation. Less able learners do not write at length and writing often lacks correct punctuation. Most learners develop very good ICT skills, often with outstanding features at key stage 3. Most learners develop good numerical skills and are able to apply these across the subjects of the curriculum.

51. Most learners work well together, either in pairs or in small groups and accept others' points of view. Whilst good and often very good creative and problem-solving skills are evident in design technology and in art at key stage 3 learners do not always apply them in other subjects of the curriculum.

52. Bilingual skills are not well developed. Whilst learners answer the register in Welsh and a few more able learners ask to go to the toilet in Welsh, they do not make real progress as they move through the school.

53. There are no differences in achievement and attainment between different groups of learners. Boys' and girls' achievements are comparable as are those of looked-after children with the main body of learners.

54. Over the past three years there has been an increase in the number of learners attaining accredited qualifications. Last year, there was been a significant increase in the numbers of pupils gaining Entry Level certificates and one learner gained a GCSE qualification in art. This academic year there are plans for pupils to sit science and Information Communication Technology, as well as art, at GCSE level.

55. The majority of learners makes good progress in their learning as they move through the school; they develop new skills and increase their understanding in most subjects.

56. The very good pastoral sessions ensure that learners are involved in assessing their own work. They are aware of their relative strengths and weaknesses and know what they need to do to improve.
57. The majority of learners are well motivated and eager to learn. They listen attentively to teachers and support assistants and when working in pairs or small groups, to each other.
58. The development of personal, social and learning skills is good overall and learners make good progress in their personal and social education. This is a strong feature of the school and has a positive impact on learners' spiritual, cultural, moral and social development.
59. A minority of learners, however, are poorly behaved. This often takes the form of low level disruption and, on occasions, issues of non-compliance. This affects standards for the learners who misbehave and also for others in the class.
60. At 86% the average rate of attendance for the three complete terms prior to the inspection is below the national and local averages and below the school's own target. However, it is broadly in line with averages for special schools in Wales. The figure for unauthorised absences is, at 7.8%, more than twice the national average for special schools and is unacceptably high.
61. The attendance figures are adversely affected by a small number of persistent absentees. Over 40% of learners have 100% attendance rate and another 15% have levels around 95%. The figures are not helped by parents who take their children on holiday during term time. The school is aware of the shortcoming in the rate of attendance and is addressing it through its school improvement plan; it has done much to improve the overall attendance levels and the rate of unauthorised absence.
62. Most learners understand and respect the fact that many people have differing beliefs and values to themselves. They respond well to the school's emphasis on diversity and participate well in activities organised by the 'Valleys Race Equality Council'.
63. There are outstanding features in the way learners prepare for involvement in the workplace and in the local community. They participate well in the very good work-related and vocational education and also attain well at the end of key stage 4 and at post-16; no pupil left school in the summer of 2008 without an accredited qualification.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

64. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation.

65. The quality of teaching in the 45 lessons observed was judged as follows:

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
16%	69%	11%	4%	0%

66. Overall, the quality of teaching is grade 2 or better in 85% of lessons. This percentage is higher than the national averages presented by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Education and Training in Wales in his latest report.

67. The positive and supportive relationship between staff and learners is a strength of the school. Many members of staff have established a caring and supportive ethos, which helps most learners to contribute actively towards the lessons.

68. Lesson objectives are made clear in nearly all lessons and this helps the learners to understand the purpose of each lesson. An effective evaluation process at the end of lessons also helps the learners to understand how well they have succeeded in understanding these lessons.

69. Teachers generally have a very sound knowledge of their subject area. This helps them to plan effectively and ensure that appropriate and relevant resources are available to enrich and support learning in their subjects.

70. Effective use is made of LSAs. They support staff are fully aware of the learners' needs and their ways of learning.

71. There are examples of outstanding teaching when:

- staff with particular expertise in specific aspects of vocational studies provide invaluable experiences in specialist activities for learners;
- teachers provide investigative activities which challenge learners to use their thinking skills in a highly effective manner; and
- teachers make highly effective use of support staff to support teaching and learning.

72. There are many good features apparent in teaching. These include:

- the effective use of a range of teaching strategies, support and encouragement which successfully promotes a positive attitude to learning;
- clear explanations of lessons objectives, which are then revisited to evaluate learners' progress at the end of each lesson;
- effective classroom management skills which involve learners in active and enthusiastic participation in lessons;
- helping learners to evaluate their performance in lessons and identifying how much they have learnt;
- explaining important aspects of lessons to learners in a clear and simple manner so that they understand exactly what they have to do; and
- adapting tasks, and providing appropriate learning strategies, such as prompts, questions and extended tasks, which enhance learners' ability to focus on their tasks.

73. There are a few shortcomings where:

- staff do not apply the most effective strategies to address low-level disruptive behaviour of a few learners;
- the pace of lessons do not match the ability of the learners; and
- teaching is over-dependent on the use of worksheets.

74. Those learners who are capable of pursuing courses leading to public examinations are given every support. Equality of opportunity for all learners is promoted effectively.

75. Many teachers adapt their lessons well to meet the varying needs and styles of learning of the learners. Tasks are well adapted to meet the needs of learners. Appropriate resources are identified and used effectively to provide a range of strategies, which match learning styles. Well-planned lessons allow for independent as well as group learning activities. In the best examples these are linked effectively to activities, which ensure the active involvement of learners across all areas of the school.

76. Classroom routines established by teachers include the development of learners' key skills of communication. The effective use of information and communications technology to support learning is a teaching strategy used effectively in many classes to support learning.

77. There is insufficient use of incidental Welsh throughout the school. This is a shortcoming, which adversely affects standards of bilingualism in learners.

78. Learners' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) focus well on academic and social progress and these are measured against clear and specific targets. However, a few IEPs do not show enough flexibility in their structure to consider the most suitable time scale required for learners to achieve specific targets.

79. The school's assessment, recording and reporting procedures meet statutory requirements.

80. All learners are tested within six weeks of entry to identify their levels of attainment. The school makes effective use of an electronic recording system to track and identify specific areas of progress by pupils. This is particularly useful for individuals as well as identifying the needs of learners in groups such as classes, or on a gender basis, and to plan effectively to meet their needs.

81. The school assesses learners' progress in literacy and mathematics accurately by means of standardised tests as well as measuring progress against a series of achievable targets. The school uses the information gathered in these tests appropriately in order to establish support groups based on ability in reading skills.

82. For learners working at levels below the national curriculum (NC), the school uses a detailed assessment scale. For those learners within the NC, progress is tracked against detailed assessment criteria linked to the NC level descriptors for each piece of work.

83. Work is moderated to ensure consistency within each subject, and teachers use the results to compare achievement and attainment of learners across various subjects.

84. The school is beginning to develop portfolios of pupils' work within the school matching national curriculum levels, but these are at an early stage and yet to fully address all subject areas.
85. Teachers present learning targets in a clear manner to learners at the start of lessons. They also help learners to understand whether they have made progress towards these targets.
86. Learners have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve, and recognise their strengths. There are good examples of self-assessment. Many learners are aware of their academic and personal targets, which they record regularly in their personal progress file.
87. Teachers mark learners' work regularly but the quality of marking is inconsistent. In the best examples there are good suggestions on how learners could improve their work but this practice is not as evident across all subject areas.
88. Parents receive well-written reports on their children's progress. They are fully informed of their children's progress, and are invited to review their progress against targets and to review their children's annual statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN).

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

89. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
90. The overall quality and range of learning experiences made available to learners are good and meet their individual needs well by providing equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum. It offers an appropriate and increasing range of Entry Level and GCSE courses as well as a more vocationally-orientated curriculum. The school is developing an effective curriculum to meet the Welsh Assembly Government's priorities for 14 -19 learning pathways.
91. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects of the NC including religious education. There are appropriate policies for all subjects and schemes of work are comprehensive and have been revised and updated in line with new orders 2008. They provide learners with a coherent and well-structured programme of learning and learners report that they really enjoy the work that teachers plan for them. The school enjoys an ethos of respect and passion for the environment.
92. There is good provision to ensure that all learners are given the opportunity to acquire the relevant basic and key skills. Information Communication Technology is used well across the curriculum to enhance communication and understanding and learners are encouraged to make choices at every opportunity. The school has recently been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark.
93. Learners participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is based on the principle that learning is best stimulated through experience. The school provides these experiences through an extensive range of visits and

visitors to the school. This aspect is a great strength of the school particularly in the way it broadens learners' social and cultural experiences.

94. The school is very effective in lifting learners horizons through, for example, Comenius International visits, residential courses at the Urdd campus at Llangrannog, visits to other schools and sporting venues for matches and tournaments, theatre/concert trips and visits related to curricular subjects including fieldwork. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme is very well supported with many pupils achieving silver and bronze awards.
95. The school gives good attention to learners' personal and social education. Personal and social education is taught as a discrete subject and integrated effectively into work across the curriculum. The positive relationships between most learners and adults who work in the school contribute significantly to learners' social development. Class discussions about social and moral issues are very much a part of the life of the school. Learners' awareness of citizenship is well developed through the School Council whose members are provided with good opportunities to take responsibility in many areas of the school's work including some involvement in staff appointments.
96. School assemblies are reverent, meaningful occasions, fully involve learners and offer time for quiet reflection which enhances spiritual development. Whole-school assemblies foster a sense of belonging within the school, offer guidance on moral issues and promote a strong sense of community especially in the celebration of learners' achievements. Learners regularly raise funds to support those they consider less fortunate than themselves, for example through Children in Need, Pink Day, McMillan Coffee mornings, all of which provides learners with a good set of values.
97. A strength of the school is its wide range of excellent partnerships with various education, welfare, support and community providers. Parents support school activities such as horse riding and work experience and this along with the supportive contribution of the governing body has a positive impact on learners learning experiences.
98. Community links through curricular visits and activities are incorporated into many schemes of work. Community leaders visit the school regularly. The school also takes every opportunity to celebrate success through the media, all of which promotes learners' community awareness very well.
99. The school meets statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship while the broad and balanced curriculum complies with all statutory requirements.
100. Learners' bilingual development is not consistently planned for throughout the school day with insufficient use made of incidental Welsh. Learners' awareness of the culture of Wales is well promoted through their involvement in the Comenius project when learners develop their awareness of their own national identity by comparing it to partner countries such as Italy, Romania and Estonia.
101. Learners and staff have made European visits and hosted representatives of partner countries and have had good opportunities to compare cultures. Through visits to local places of historical and cultural significance, this aspect of 'Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig' is effectively delivered. Some bilingual signage is evident around the school and there are effective displays in Welsh in several areas.

102. The school promotes equality of entitlement for individual learners in its provision. The use of learning support staff, and alternative curricular and extra-curricular activities are successful in tackling social disadvantage.
103. An outstanding feature is the provision made for raising learners' awareness of sustainable development. This is demonstrated in the focus the school gives to the Eco Schools', Comenius and Healthy Schools' projects. These are whole-school, cross-curricular projects that are fully supported by all those working in the school.
104. The school gained Eco-Schools' Status in 2002 and has worked conscientiously towards reducing the school's carbon footprint. They were runners-up in the Eco-Schools' Award and have gained three IMPETUS awards. These were linked to the Comenius project which is called 'ACTION – All Citizens Together Improve Our Nations.' The project was about taking action to help the environment by planting trees, recycling, energy minimisation as well as caring for others through raising money for many worthy causes.
105. Raising learners' understanding of the world of work and the development of their entrepreneurial skills are outstanding features of the school's provision.
106. There is a clear strategy with a well-planned programme of activities in every year group ensuring progression and the broadening of learners' experiences and understanding of the world of work and entrepreneurship. A key feature is that all aspects relating to the world of work, entrepreneurship and careers involves close working partnerships with Careers Wales, Youth Gateway and Education Business Partnership. They provide an outstanding service to the school and to learners.
107. Every year group at the school has opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of work-related issues. There are very good examples of local businesses and organisations supporting school world-of-work activities on a planned and regular basis. Visits are also made to workplaces as part of curricular themes.
108. Very good use is made of the Compact programme for younger learners where a series of goals is set over the course of the school year. The programme is also effectively used with the leavers group linked to completing their Progress Files.
109. The work-experience programme is well planned and some of the experience is simulated in school to include catering and general administration work. The support of local colleges in providing vocational link courses and several outside agencies make a notable contribution to the learners' skills development, experiences and understanding of working life. World-of-work experience is also considerably enhanced for those learners who pursue Work and Life Skills Entry Level courses.
110. The opportunities for learners to develop their entrepreneurial skills occur in every year group and include experiences relating to the use of role models through the Dynamo project, mini-enterprise and marketing activities. The support of external agencies and individuals is of considerable benefit to the learners.
111. Overall the school has a planned curriculum that meets the needs of its learners and reflects the Welsh Assembly Government's priorities particularly in relation to equality of opportunity, diversity, sustainable development, healthy eating and

citizenship. The curriculum provides a broad range of experiences and a sound foundation for lifelong learning.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

112. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
113. The overall quality of the care, guidance and support given to learners is good. The planning, management and co-ordination of care and support are outstanding and a strength of the school. The school has a very positive ethos and every learner is valued. In discussion, learners confirm this and state that they feel safe and well supported by all adults who work in the school.
114. Established and effective links exist with a wide range of agencies and support services. They contribute significantly to the quality of care. Appropriate support programmes are in place to ensure that learners' specific needs are being met sensitively. This is particularly beneficial for learners in challenging or vulnerable circumstances.
115. The school works closely with parents and carers. It takes their view into account and values the contribution they make. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are satisfied with the care, support and guidance provided by the school. The school operates an 'open-door' approach and parents are invited to annual reviews and to parents' evenings and the annual open day.
116. The supportive and caring ethos of the school means that learners trust all those who work at the school and feel comfortable to approach them with problems or difficulties. The effective school council is a forum where learners can raise their opinions about issues that affect them. Learners feel very confident that their views are listened to and acted upon.
117. There are good arrangements for learners and their parents/carers to visit the school before they transfer to it from the feeder schools. The induction programme is praised both by learners and their parents/carers. The School Community Health Liaison Officer makes home visits and liaises with the feeder schools and this particularly good practice ensures a smooth transition.
118. Learners are encouraged to consider a range of courses available to them which include vocational and work-based learning and courses delivered by a local college. Learners are guided through PSE/Careers interviews and benefit from individual support from staff and in assemblies. Learning Pathways 14 – 19 are being well developed and option choices are available for all learners.
119. Personal and social education is timetabled for all classes and the content of the programme enables learners to consider a wide range of appropriate issues, as well as providing them with guidance about health, safety and personal and academic progress. Input from outside agencies enhances the quality of the PSE programme. The PSE programme is in line with national recommendations.
120. Registration periods are undertaken appropriately and procedures for monitoring pupils' punctuality and attendance have been strengthened. The first target in the

current School Improvement Plan (SIP) is to increase attendance and reduce unauthorised absence and in relation to these two priorities the action already taken is bearing fruit. Closer monitoring, more regular reviews, greater involvement with parents and carers and the introduction of first-day calling are proving effective. Unauthorised absence levels, although more than double the Welsh average, have reduced from 10% in 2006/7 to 7.8% currently.

121. The careers provision at the school is outstanding and there is a very good scheme of work and policy in relation to careers education and guidance. Learners are well informed of their entitlement and Careers Wales makes a notable contribution to the whole process. Learners in Y9 are introduced to careers issues as part of the PSE programme and participate in the termly Education Business Partnership (EBP) practical activities programme. Learners are also given the opportunity to engage in the Crucial Crew project.
122. All learners in Y10 and Y11 receive weekly careers lessons, group talks with the school's careers officer, attend conventions and benefit from all the work-related activities mentioned in KQ3.
123. The post-16 provision is also comprehensive involving all the agencies that support the school's work-related and careers provision. The leavers' group is also well supported and guided in a form appropriate to their needs and they receive a personal career plan.
124. The school is now in its third year of involvement with the Healthy Schools' initiative. It is an outstanding feature of the work of the learners and staff. Health related exercises and a personal hygiene campaign was developed for pupils, staff and the home. A notable element is the significant number of learners who have passed various Entry Level examinations in food studies, life skills and physical education. The school is also pursuing an allotment and garden project.
125. There is a health and safety policy in place and regular risk assessments are carried out relating to a range of areas and activities. The PSE programme and circle time are effectively used to promote a range of personal, health and welfare issues and the school receives good support from the nurse and the community police in delivering various aspects of this programme.
126. There is an appropriate child protection policy and procedures follow the area child protection guidelines. The headteacher and School Community Health Liaison Officer are the designated members of staff with responsibility for child protection. Staff have received training in child protection, annual updates occur as needed and new staff are provided with training on taking up their post. The school takes effective action to support children looked after by the local authority.
127. Learners with additional learning needs are identified via the feeder schools, statements of SEN and accompanying information. Teachers and support staff are an effective team providing continuity of support and assessment of need. Targets in IEPs and individual behavioural plans (IBPs) are stated in measurable terms and are reviewed regularly and appropriately but sometimes with unrealistic time-scales.
128. The good provision for learners with additional needs is very successfully supported by well-trained, efficient LSAs. The school rightly values the input of these dedicated staff. The newly-established additional support class for learners on the autistic spectrum and the Nurture Group, with two trained specialist staff,

are already making a positive impact in meeting the individual needs of those learners.

129. The school has developed a good range of strategies to deal with individual learners or small groups of learners whose behaviour has a detrimental effect on their progress and that of their peers. Learners who exhibit behavioural problems are placed on an IBP. The school works closely with the educational psychologist to develop programmes and training for staff and very good support for learners.
130. There are, however, two shortcomings in the provision for learners with additional needs. One is that, despite the school's best efforts, there is a significant lack of provision for pupils requiring speech and language therapy, which is of great concern to parents and carers. The second is that some teachers fail to apply the school's behaviour management policy consistently.
131. Learners who feel vulnerable and isolated or who are experiencing emotional problems are very well guided and supported by a School Counsellor and by the School Community Health Officer and all learners value this provision.
132. Learners' appreciation of racial and social equality issues is effectively promoted through personal, social and health education, religious education, links with outside agencies (VALREC) and assemblies.
133. The accessibility plan complies with statutory requirements. There is full access to all parts of the school for anyone with physical disabilities.
134. The school takes a proactive and effective approach to gender issues, particularly in ensuring that boys and girls are actively engaged in a wide range of school activities.
135. Learners show respect for diversity within society and good awareness and concern for others as evidenced by the raising of money for the less fortunate in society at local, national and international level.
136. Learners interviewed felt that everyone in the school is given equal opportunities to succeed. There are clear strategies in place to deal with anti-social behaviour and bullying. Learners interviewed felt that staff dealt effectively when bullying was brought to their attention but have some concerns with respect to the regularity of such incidents.
137. The diversity of the world is recognised and valued in a supportive environment.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

138. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
139. The grades awarded for key questions 1, 5 and 7 do not match as there were shortcomings in standards of achievement in some subjects. However, standards continue to improve over time, as judged by learners' attainments over the past

three years, and strategies are now in place to monitor and evaluate standards in each subject.

140. The governors, headteacher and senior staff have set out a clear direction for the school which is embodied in the school's vision statement. The headteacher provides effective leadership and is well supported by the deputy headteacher and two senior members of staff.
141. The senior leadership team fully involves all staff in decision-making and in planning for improvement; it ensures that its values, aims and sense of purpose are shared by all. This is reflected in the school's effective policies that ensure equal opportunity for all members of staff and pupils.
142. The school is doing much to embrace national priorities such as healthy schools' initiative, sustainable development and global citizenship. It has developed strong and effective partnerships with a range of bodies to help it ensure that these are given due prominence. It has developed links with other special schools in the borough to enhance provision of Learning Pathways 14 – 19 and is in the process of developing links with local high schools.
143. Arrangements for appraising, managing and supporting the performance of all staff are secure and contribute significantly to the evaluative culture the school has developed over recent years. Senior managers and teaching staff agree on targets which focus on raising standards of achievement and on the professional development of teachers. Non-teaching staff are also set targets as a result of their annual appraisal. The school has gained the Investors in People Award.
144. In addition to performance management the SLT undertakes in-depth reviews of subjects with the focus on raising standards. This has contributed to the raising of standards over the past two years and is an outstanding feature. The role of subject leaders is being developed in line with these reviews and has been identified as a priority in the school's improvement plan.
145. Pupils are set targets for improvement in their IEPs and whilst many are suitable a few have inappropriate time-scales.
146. The SLT is well supported by an active governing body which contributes significantly to strategic planning. They are kept well informed by the headteacher and also by subject leaders. Each governor is linked to a subject and is involved in monitoring provision through undertaking lesson observations.
147. Many governors have undertaken governor training and are fully aware of their responsibilities and their duties. They have created a number of sub-committees to ensure their duties are carried out purposefully. They act as critical friends to the school and ensure that initiatives are carefully managed within the school's budget.
148. Whilst the governing body meets all regulatory and legal requirements it has yet to clarify the school's admission criteria.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

149. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
150. Whilst the inspection team awarded key question 1 a grade lower than the school's judgement, the grades awarded for key questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 confirm the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
151. The headteacher and SLT have developed, over the last two years, a self-evaluation process that is comprehensive, well organised and planned.
152. The high quality self-evaluation report is detailed and comprehensive. It outlines the procedures followed throughout the annual cycle of monitoring and review and identifies the school's strengths and areas for development. Targets and priorities are regularly reviewed and refined.
153. An outstanding feature is the involvement of all stake-holders. All staff, governors, parents, learners and relevant external agencies make valuable contributions to the self-evaluation arrangements, often through extensive use of questionnaires.
154. There is a good understanding by staff of their responsibilities regarding self-evaluation and a developing self-critical culture where the SLT, subject staff, other staff members and governors have detailed knowledge of the school and thereby ensuring that decisions are based on first-hand evidence.
155. The approaches adopted are consistent, including subject self-evaluations, classroom observations and performance-management processes. There is developing rigour to the way the processes are carried out and an increasing use of performance data to set pupil, subject and other targets.
156. At all stages the evaluation and judgements made are closely related to measurable performance outcomes against priorities and targets set. However the school has correctly identified the need to further develop the role of subject leaders in analysing and interpreting performance data.
157. Identified priorities are backed up with a clear school improvement plan and subject plans with specific action noted. Outcomes are based on good processes of assessment and reporting.
158. The school's planning for improvement has many good features and its rigour at all levels is becoming embedded. There are close links between self-review, evaluation and school development planning.
159. The school's strategic planning processes are very well implemented, involving all staff and this ensures effective outcomes. The focus is always on improving performance, standards, providing a widely based curriculum and ensuring a high level of care.

160. Governors, senior managers and curriculum leaders have worked well together to ensure that the school is very well endowed with resources to ensure that priorities and objectives are met. A strong feature is the importance placed on staff training and development to ensure that outcomes and priorities are met as well as provision for vocational learning.
161. There is regular review of progress at all levels and revised targets are then established in line with the progress being made.
162. By establishing clear success criteria and regular review of targets progress is identifiable and there have been significant and measurable improvements since the last inspection. These include:
- measurable improvement in learners' achievement;
 - curricular provision which has led to enhanced accredited courses and the development of the vocational curriculum;
 - improving standards and ensuring greater concentration on developing pupils' life-skills; and
 - the emphasis on staff training resulting in more skilled staff experienced in delivering the expanding curriculum.
163. The SLT, governors and staff have contributed to ensuring that almost all the issues for action identified at the last inspection have been addressed with good, and at times outstanding, progress made.
164. Improving the quality of school planning has been a major priority for the school over the last three years and significant advances have been made with self-evaluation and strategic planning arrangements.
165. The accommodation shortcomings have been resolved, with the newly remodelled and upgraded building having several outstanding features that greatly enhance and broaden the provision for the learners.
166. Other issues for action have been well implemented including a new pay policy linked to appropriate job descriptions.
167. One source of disappointment to the school is that attendance levels remain at similar levels to the last inspection. There is, however, evidence that improved monitoring arrangements are beginning to bear fruit particularly in relation to unauthorised absence where the levels have perceptibly decreased.

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

Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

168. The findings of the inspection team match the judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report.
169. The school employs a sufficient number of well-qualified teachers and support staff to meet the needs of learners. The school makes the best use of their expertise and experience to enrich and extend its provision across many areas of the school's activities.
170. The school has a good range of learning resources, which are well used to address the varying developmental needs of the learners. These resources

enhance the quality of learners' work and the range of ICT resources enhances learners' opportunities for research and for presenting their work in an attractive manner.

171. Visits to the community and further afield support the school's curricular provision and enhance pupils' learning experiences well.
172. The quality of the accommodation is outstanding. The new purpose-built, specialist vocational educational facilities have enabled the school to provide a wide array of appropriate courses for learners. These greatly enhance the provision offered across many subjects.
173. The school has good performance management system for teachers. There are many appropriate opportunities for further training and staff development. These further enhance staff's knowledge of areas of learning and new developments.
174. All teachers have their full-allocated time for planning, preparation and assessment; this is used purposefully and effectively and supervised by the deputy headteacher.
175. The school has successfully addressed work-force remodelling with very good results which meet statutory requirements and ensures their effective and purposeful deployment. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks have been completed for all members of staff.
176. The school field provides suitable space for games and sport and the school yard, despite being small, is safe and well enclosed.
177. The two school secretaries provide valuable support for the headteacher in carrying out their administrative duties efficiently and the school caretaker ensures that the school is clean and safe.
178. The school has effective systems in place to monitor expenditure. The school budget is managed well and the headteacher monitors the financial expenditure on a daily basis.
179. The school's governing body is kept fully up to date with priorities and members are aware of the school's development plans and associated resources. They monitor and review provision regularly, and ensure that the school makes effective use of its resources to ensure good quality of teaching.
180. Overall, the school provide good value for money.

Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

English

Key Stage 3: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 3 – Good features outweigh shortcomings

Post-16: Grade 3 – Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features:

181. At key stage 3, most learners:
 - listen attentively;
 - develop good word-building skills;

- develop their literacy skills through competent use of ICT;
- have a good understanding of texts that they study;
- develop an understanding of character in texts;
- engage well in role-play demonstrating developing empathetic skills; and
- write accurately with support.

182. At key stage 4, most learners:

- listen attentively;
- have a good understanding of character in Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet';
- develop a good understanding of plot;
- demonstrate their understanding of text by creating storyboards and engaging in role play; and
- write appropriately about texts they study;

183. At post-16, most learners:

- listen attentively;
- have developed good reading skills;
- are able to accurately proofread a magazine cover;
- write for a variety of purposes; and
- understand parts of speech and know when to use proper nouns.

Shortcomings:

184. At key stage 4 and at post-16, a few learners:

- lack confidence when speaking and reading aloud;
- do not sustain arguments in their discussion; and
- make basic errors in spelling and punctuation.

185. At key stage 4, a few learners:

- do not speak clearly; and
- behave inappropriately and do not participate fully in their lessons.

186. At Post-16, a few learners:

- do not actively engage in class discussions; and
- do not sustain their writing.

Welsh second language

Key stage 3: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Key stage 4: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Post 16: Grade 3 – Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features:

187. At key stage 3, most learners:

- know basic colours and use these appropriately to describe specific items of clothing:
- can respond correctly to familiar questions such as 'Pwy wyt ti?' and know the correct phrases to ask for specific items:
- label foods and create a simple sentence to state which food they like or dislike;
- use basic weather expressions correctly stating the weather in their locality; and
- write a simple sentence to say how they travel to school.

188. At key stage 4, most learners:

- read a simple dialogue using clear and correct pronunciation:
- use Welsh names for specific places and locate these in their correct locations on a basic map of a locality:
- write brief and accurate descriptions of members of their families:
- create a simple map of a village and locate specific places naming them in Welsh:
- match pictures of people working matching them to sentences describing the work: and
- create a shopping list.

189. Learners at post 16:

- know the names of most subjects they study at school: and
- use a given sentence pattern to complete a sentence stating which teacher teaches certain subjects at school.

Shortcomings:

190. Many learners at post-16 lack confidence to express themselves orally without depending on support or prompting; and

191. A minority of learners is uncertain as to the names of subjects they study at school.

Mathematics

Key stage 3: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Key stage 4: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Post 16: Grade 3 - Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features:

192. At key stage 3, many learners:

- set out a series of images depicting someone's life in the correct time sequenced order;
- correctly identify 16 as an age when pupils may leave school;
- correctly locate a given number on a number line, and know that certain numbers such as 25 are located between 20 and 30;
- show good knowledge of abbreviated mathematical measurements such as mm, cms, and match these correctly to their full words; and
- decide correctly on the type of units needed to measure certain distances, such as kilometres between towns, and centimetres when measuring the length of a pencil;

193. At key stage 4, many learners:

- understand that the perimeter is the total distance around a rectangular shape;
- calculate accurately the perimeter of given rectangles;
- use coins of different values correctly when paying for items in a shop; and
- decide what to buy for lunch with a specific amount of money, and know how much change to expect.

194. At post-16, the majority of learners:

- correctly identifies half a given number, and apply this appropriately to situation involving money, such as half of £9;
- correctly adds together two identical amounts of money, such $£3.50 + £3.50$;
- correctly understands that a quarter is half of a half, and are able to tell the time correctly on an analogue clock using quarter to, quarter past and half past the hour;
- sets out a series of given instructions on how to paint a room in correct sequenced order; and
- identifies correctly statements which refer to events which are likely to happen and distinguish them from events which are unlikely to happen;

Shortcomings:

195. A minority of learners at Post-16 does not pay sufficient attention to tasks and do not complete a few written tasks. These factors adversely affect the standards of their work.
196. A few learners at post-16 are unable to undertake division tasks independently and rely on support to understand the concept.

Science

Key Stage 3: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features:

197. Across the key stages learners:
- achieve well in a range of practical and theoretical activities;
 - produce workbooks which are very well presented and organised;
 - make good use of ICT with their scientific studies;
 - handle equipment safely and give due regard to health and safety issues;
 - make very good scientific links in their work with other curricular areas;
 - develop very good investigative skills and experimental skills; and
 - conduct good scientific investigations with increasing accuracy.
198. At key stage 3 learners:
- are able to identify a solution as acidic or alkaline using indicators;
 - follow instructions to control risks in their investigation;
 - build effectively on their knowledge of the human body working on their unit studies of cells and organ systems; and
 - develop their understanding of drug misuse when Police visit their class.
199. At key stage 4 learners:
- develop sound observational skills and make careful records of their work in drawings and in tables;
 - understand the importance of working systematically and undertake investigations stating what the results show and identify relationships between the results;
 - effectively study the human body, reproduction and adolescence;
 - develop their understanding of the use of contraception and sexual health during a visit from the Community Nurse;
 - understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and taking care of the environment; and

- achieve a 75% pass rate at Level 3 Entry Level with 15% achieving Level 2 and 5% Level 1.

Shortcomings:

200. There are no significant shortcomings.

Information communication technology

Key Stage 3: Grade 1 – Good with outstanding features

Key Stage 4: Grade 2 – Good and no important shortcomings

Outstanding features:

201. At key stage 3, most learners:

- develop highly effective assessment skills when reviewing previous work;
- develop a high degree of competence in navigating through a range of menus to locate files; and
- produce finished work of exceptionally high quality.

Good features:

202. At key stage 3, most learners:

- use desktop publishing applications effectively;
- edit and change backgrounds, borders and text in documents;
- locate pictures and graphical images on the internet;
- insert and resize pictures and graphical images in documents;
- combine text and graphics;
- use clip-art effectively;
- accurately use a scanner;
- are competent users of spreadsheets;
- calculate profit and loss using an accounts spreadsheet; and
- represent data graphically using a spreadsheet.

203. At key stage 4, most learners

- are competent in demonstrating their skills using an interactive white board;
- use desktop publishing applications to edit and improve previous work;
- design a website;
- insert and edit pictures into a table competently;
- accurately use hyperlinks to link pictures to new pages on their website designs;
- understand how a database works;

- search a database using a filter;
- search a database using a query;
- refine searches;
- correctly locate and extract data; and
- print located data.

Shortcomings:

204. No significant shortcomings.

Design technology

Key stage 3: Grade 1 - Good with outstanding features

Key stage 4: Grade 1 - Good with outstanding features

Post 16: Grade 1- Good with outstanding features

Outstanding features:

205. Learners at KS 4 show good progress in vocational aspects of design technology when they:

- choose correct tools to prepare a wall for hanging lining paper;
- measure the length of a wall accurately to determine to amount of wallpaper needed to hang on the wall;
- build a wall, 4 bricks high, using a spirit level confidently to check it is upright and straight;
- identify parts of a spark plug and show how to change a spark plug on a car;
- use a turning lathe confidently to create different patterns on a table leg;
- make and cut a mortise and tenon joint using appropriate hand tools confidently; and
- show good control of a chisel to cut out wood when making a joint.

206. At key stage 3, most learners:

- prepare very effective simple snacks and progress to produce meals, developing a clear understanding of what constitutes healthy eating;
- use a variety of utensils confidently to chop, slice, cut, spread and peel ingredients;
- evaluate carefully and compare the three flavours of jam tarts and making specific and clear reference to its texture, taste and smell;
- plan, in detail, a meal for a person who is following a low-fat diet; and
- use a piping bag confidently to make Viennese biscuits;

Good features:

207. At key stage 3, learners:

- mark accurately, and cut carefully, specific lengths on a block of wood in order to make a pair of bookends;
- use a sanding machine confidently to smooth edges of cut wood;
- use a coping saw correctly to cut out a joint area on a block of wood;
- use a measuring bowl correctly to measure 300mls of milk, and mix this with the correct amount of powder as indicated on a packet to make a dessert;
- use a scale to weigh the correct amount of ingredients as required in a recipe;
- use a hand mixer confidently to mix powder and milk into the required density;
- show effective ways of making traditional meals more healthy;
- set out in correct order, instructions for cooking pasta; and
- follow a recipe to make specific food such as 'bara brith' or Welsh scones;

208. At post-16, learners:

- know the names of Welsh celebrity chefs;
- compare the costs of items for the home before purchasing them for the school house; and
- devise various recipes to create healthy food which use fruits and vegetables as ingredients;

Shortcomings:

209. There are no significant shortcomings.

Modern foreign languages

Key stage 3: Grade 3: Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features:

210. Many learners

- use a range of appropriate weather phrases to state the weather conditions in various parts of France;
- create a simple rap-music song in French;
- identify correctly the names of everyday food, and know how to ask for them in a correct manner;
- give direction on how to reach a specific place on a map by turning right, left or going straight on;
- correctly state the names of colours in French and use these as to describe specific items;
- correctly identify numbers between 1 and 10; and

- use basic everyday phrases such as 'Bonjour' to greet each other.

Shortcomings:

211. Many learners rely heavily on support when replying orally to a question.
212. A few learners do not pay sufficient attention in the lesson, which adversely affects their standards.

History

Key Stage 3: Grade 3- Good features outweigh shortcomings.

Good Features:

213. Across the key stage learners:
- have a good recall of knowledge and facts from current and previous work;
 - develop sound awareness of chronology through appropriate use of time lines;
 - make good progress in class;
 - develop their knowledge of the past; and
 - visit local places of historical interest to consolidate their knowledge.
214. More able learners:
- identify the main features of castles and have a reasonable understanding and knowledge of features of the Norman Conquest;
 - develop good research skills to enhance their understanding of Motte and Bailey castles.
 - demonstrate good understanding of how life was in Tudor times and how hard life was during the industrial revolution; and
 - develop their historical knowledge and understanding of other countries.

Shortcomings:

215. All learners' Historical knowledge and understanding of times past by handling artefacts and role play are limited.
216. Skills of independent historical enquiry are underdeveloped.

Geography

Key Stage 3: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Outstanding features:

217. Across the key stages many learners:
- develop awareness of the need for sustainable development and of the impact of pollution on the environment;
 - make the most of every situation through hands-on study of people, places, patterns and processes; and
 - effectively undertake recycling.

Good features:

218. All learners:

- benefit from fieldwork activities across the range and scale of study;
- investigate the local area by walking around villages, the town and Dare Valley Country Park;
- develop map reading skills and effectively use satellite images and atlases;
- assess their own work using assessment for learning methods;
- develop their understanding of the threats to coral reefs and use the Internet to research coral;
- measure sand dunes and accurately use a quadrant to identify species and numbers of plants; and
- learn about sand dune succession, how sand dunes are formed and how they are under threat.

Shortcomings:

219. There are no significant shortcomings.

Art

Key Stage 3: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 3 – Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features:

220. At key stage 3, most learners:

- create a range of two and three-dimensional compositions
- when making a collage, show good awareness of texture, colour and shape;
- develop good line drawing skills;
- effectively use shade in their drawings;
- accurately trace drawings and use templates;
- when making polystyrene prints, accurately draw and cut patterns, showing a good understanding of using different colours; and
- show good printing techniques.

221. At key stage 4, most learners:

- create well-designed collage work;
- show good awareness of line, shade, colour, tone, shape and texture;
- are aware of health and safety issues when undertaking batik work; and
- produce good examples of batik.

Shortcomings:

222. At key stage 4 a few pupils:

- produce very little work; and
- have underdeveloped skills in appreciating, designing and creating.

Music

Key Stage 3: Grade 3 – Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features:

223. At key stage 3, most learners:

- listen attentively to a range of music from different cultures;
- make good progress in developing performing skills on a range of tuned and untuned percussion;
- make good progress in developing performing skills on electronic keyboards;
- develop a good sense of rhythm and keep a steady pulse when clapping or playing untuned percussion instruments;
- appreciate ostinatos in native American music; and
- compose and perform their own ostinatos.

Shortcomings:

224. A few pupils do not:

- listen attentively to music
- compose or perform in class

Physical education

Key Stage 3: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Key Stage 4: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Post 16: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features:

225. Across the key stages learners:

- are enthusiastic performers and make good progress;
- engage well in a variety of physical activities;
- are aware of the need to participate in warming-up and cooling-down activities and correctly describe changes that occur to their bodies during physical activities;
- respond well to clear instruction, follow routines systematically and develop very good relaxation techniques;

- develop well their understanding of fitness levels and what contributes to health, fitness and well-being;
- effectively participate in several inter-school fixtures and tournaments for football and basketball; and
- effectively participate in alternative sports and health awareness sessions.

226. At key stage 3 learners:

- have made very good progress in football, basketball and cricket; and
- effectively engage in some aspect of adventurous activity.

227. At key stage 4 learners:

- are able to plan and evaluate their own performance and those of others; and
- effectively develop skills in outdoor education activities.

228. At post-16, most learners:

- perform well in most activities
- achieve a good standard in 'yoga' techniques

Shortcomings:

229. At Key Stage 3 learners do not sufficiently use evaluation of their own and their peers' performance to further improve and make progress.

Religious education

Key stage 3: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

key stage 4: Grade 2 – Good features and no important shortcomings

Post 16: Grade 3 – Good features outweigh shortcomings

Good features:

230. Many learners at KS3:

- set out a series of pictures in the correct order to relate the story of Moses; and
- know that the Israelites were led from captivity as slaves by Moses to a new promised land.

231. In KS4, nearly all learners:

- create a time line to identify correctly the important events in the life of Martin Luther King;
- identify actions which may be considered as violent and identify situations and circumstances where such action may be acceptable;
- understand the importance of marriage vows;
- recognise the various challenges that face people when they get married; and

- offer their opinions clearly on moral issues.

232. At post-16, many learners:

- set out the events of the creation in the correct order;
- correctly identify festivals relating to specific religions;
- know the way Muslim people pray and understand that the Mosque is a place of worship; and
- know that Muslims make patterns to decorate holy buildings and create similar patterns of their own to depict Islamic culture.

Shortcomings:

233. A few learners at post-16 do not make sufficient progress and are unable to sustain an argument within their discussions.

School's response to the inspection

I would like to express our thanks to the inspection team for their highly professional, thorough, fair and sensitive approach they showed during the inspection process. Their approach allowed pupils and staff to take a full part in the inspection process and this ensured that it was a positive experience for everyone.

The report highlights the very positive developments that are underway at the school as well as the progress that has been made over the last few years.

The report also highlights the outstanding contribution of a highly skilled and dedicated staff team who are supported well by the school's governors, and most importantly highlights the success of the young people of the school.

The school welcomes the findings of the inspection and sees this as a platform for where it can plan for the future.

Appendix 1

Basic information about the school

Name of school	Maesgwyn Special School
School type	Special
Age-range of pupils	11 - 19
Address of school	Cwmdare Road Cwmdare Aberdare
Postcode	CF44 8RE
Telephone number	01685 873933

Headteacher	Mr S. K. Morgan
Date of appointment	September 2005
Chair of governors/ Appropriate authority	Mr A Griffiths
Registered inspector	Paul Donovan
Dates of inspection	01/12/08 to 04/12/08

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

Number of pupils in each year group								
Year group	N (fte)	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Number of pupils	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Y 14	Total
Number of pupils	14	7	18	26	24	9	2	2	102

Total number of teachers			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	11	0	11

Staffing information	
Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery)	9:1
Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes	
Average class size, excluding nursery classes	13
Teacher (fte): class ratio	9:1

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection			
	N	R	Y1 – Y6
Term 1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Term 2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Term 3	N/A	N/A	N/A

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection									
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Y14	Whole School
Term 1	88.1	90.7	83.4	82.6	87.5	78.7	86.1	92.8	85.5
Term 2	89.6	87.7	83.9	80.4	95.4	84.2	98.3	86.5	86
Term 3	92.4	84.2	85.4	80.9	90.1	87.0	93.8	79.2	86.8

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	45
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	11

Appendix 3

National Curriculum Assessment Results

End of key stage 3:

It is not appropriate to compare end of key stage assessments with local and national data.

Public Examination Results:

It is not appropriate to compare public examination results with local and national data.

Type of Qualification or Award	Subject	No of Pupils
GCSE	Art	1
WJEC Entry Level	English	20
WJEC Entry Level	Mathematics	18
WJEC Entry Level	Science	20
WJEC Entry Level	ICT	18
WJEC Entry Level	Design Technology	15
WJEC Entry Level	Art	17
WJEC Entry Level	Childcare	5
WJEC Entry Level	Lifeskills	12
Duke of Edinburgh	Silver	6
Duke of Edinburgh	Bronze	7

Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Before the inspection the registered inspector held meetings and had discussions with:

- parents;
- governors; and
- the headteacher and nominee.

Four inspectors spent a total of 13 inspector days at the school.

45 lessons or part lessons were observed.

Learners' work and evidence of work was scrutinised.

School policies were examined and procedures checked to ensure effectiveness of policies.

Schemes of work and subject policies were scrutinised

Other school documentation was examined.

Meetings and discussions were held with:

- learners;
- teachers;
- support assistants; and
- ancillary staff

Appendix 5

Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

Team member	Responsibilities
Paul Donovan Registered Inspector	Context, Summary, Recommendations, Appendices, Key Question 1, Key Question 5, English, ICT, art and music
Gwynoro Jones Lay inspector	Key Question 6 and contributions to Key Question 3 and Key Question 4,
Glyn Griffiths Team Inspector	Key Question 2, Key Question 7, mathematics, Welsh second language, design technology, modern foreign languages and religious education
David Beaumont Morgan Team Inspector	Key question 3, Key Question 4, science, geography, history and physical education
Marie-Claire Hopkin Nominee	Providing evidence

Acknowledgement

The inspection team wish to express their thanks to the governing body, headteacher, staff, parents and pupils at the school for the co-operation and assistance both before and during the inspection.

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