

REPORT

on the

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

**BUILTH WELLS HIGH SCHOOL
COLLEGE ROAD
BUILTH WELLS
POWYS
LD2 3BW**

School Number: 666/4020

Date of Inspection: 4th – 7th May 2004

By

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Registered Inspector W098/3292

Under Estyn contract number: T/26/03

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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:

{PRI VAT E }	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.

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1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

Builth Wells High School is a well established 11-18 comprehensive school situated in the small town of Builth Wells and serves a very large catchment area of mid-Powys. About a quarter of pupils come from the town itself and the remaining three quarters from the extensive rural community and outlying small villages and includes a number of pupils who have expressed a preference for the school. A majority of pupils travel to school by bus, having long return journeys. The school is oversubscribed. Ninety six per cent of pupils come from homes where English is the dominant language. About 10% of pupils speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard. Increasing opportunities are provided for pupils previously educated in Welsh medium primary schools, to be taught in Welsh in seven subjects. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. The 654 pupils on roll, with roughly equal numbers of boys and girls in each year, has risen by 30 since the last inspection in May 1998, and includes a sixth form of 133, some of whom chose to transfer at age 16 from other schools. The proportion of pupils choosing to remain in full-time education beyond the age of 16, over two thirds, compares very favourably with other schools, as does the 100% retention rate for students completing sixth form courses.

Pupils are drawn from the full range of economic and social backgrounds. Most parents are in employment. Almost all pupils are from neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged homes, although there is not a uniform pattern across the catchment. Approximately 7% of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, compared with the Welsh average of about 20%.

Pupils come from the full range of ability. The intake is fully comprehensive, although it contains a relatively high proportion of pupils of around average ability and above. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is also relatively high. Forty one pupils (31 boys and 10 girls) have statements of SEN, over a third for specific learning difficulties. A further 135 pupils are on the school's SEN register.

The school is situated on a well presented site, close to the town centre and shares the amenities of the adjacent community sports centre. The original buildings were attractively extended and remodelled in 1989, with some small subsequent additions. Space is tight. The official accommodation figure of 562 is greatly exceeded.

The achievement of the philosophy of the school's mission statement is to enable all pupils 'to achieve their full potential through self-direction and independence of thought leading to organisation and imagination of judgement and deed' is extended by five linked comprehensive aims, including in partnership and with the local community and business and is underpinned by the priorities and targets for continuing improvement identified in the current and rolling, school development plans.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the report

- Builth Wells High School is a thriving, successful school that promotes high standards of achievement in academic, pastoral and extra-curricular activities. Pupils are happy and secure in the school, which has significant strengths. The school serves its community, whose confidence it rightly enjoys, very well.
- Even and consistent progress is a feature for all pupils across the school. Boys and girls of all abilities make good progress in all subjects, across the school, with the best standards of achievement being found in KS4. Pupils with a range of SEN make good progress in response to the levels of support they receive.
- The standards achieved by pupils are at least satisfactory in all lessons and good or better in over 80%. Very good standards are achieved in a quarter of classes and these occur in both key stages. The figures exceed the targets set by the National Assembly for the year 2002 (the standards of achievement in 95% of classes should be at least satisfactory and 50% good or better). The proportions of very good achievement are considerably higher in KS4 than in KS3 in almost all subjects.

Subject	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Sixth form
English	Good	Very good	Very good
Mathematics	Good	Good	Good
Science	Good	Very good	Good
Welsh (first language)	Good	Good	Good
Welsh (second language)	Good	Good	Good
Design & technology (DT)	Good	Very good	Very good
Information technology (IT)	Satisfactory	-	Very good
History	Good	Very good	Very good
Geography	Good	Good	Very good
Modern foreign languages	Good	Good	Good
Art	Good	Good	Good
Music	Good	Very good	Very good
Physical education (PE)	Good	Very good	Good
Religious education (RE)	Good	Very good	-
Religious studies (RS)	-	Very good	Good
Personal & social education (PSE)	Good	Good	Good
Drama	Good	Good	Very good
Media studies	-	Good	-
Applied business	-	Good	-
Catering	-	Very good	
AVCE Business studies	-	-	Good
Health & social care	-	Very good	Good
Travel & tourism	-	-	Very good
Leisure & recreation	-	-	Satisfactory
Environmental science	-	-	Very good
Economics	-	-	Good
Communication studies	-	-	Very good
Electronics	-	-	Good

- In the end of KS3 tests, the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or above in English, mathematics and science have consistently been above local and national figures and have improved in most years. The percentage gaining level 5 or above in Welsh is generally below the local average and above national figures, but fluctuates annually. The percentage of pupils gaining level 5 and above in 3 subjects, the core subject indicator (CSI), 62%, is also higher than local and national averages.
- GCSE results have improved greatly from the levels at the last inspection. The school enters a relatively high proportion of pupils for five or more subjects. The proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more equivalent A*-C grades, 77%, is now consistently well above UA and national figures of 63% and 51% respectively and by a widening annual margin. A third of awards are at the higher A*/A grades. The CSI, the percentage gaining grades A*-C in all three subjects, English/Welsh, mathematics and science, of 64% is well above local and national figures of 47% and 37% respectively. Successful strategies have reduced the gaps between boys and girls' achievements in a range of subjects, to below national figures.
- The standards achieved by sixth formers are good or better in virtually all classes. Very good standards are achieved in well over a third. Sixth form students of all abilities are making progress that is at least good in all subjects.
- In the GCE A level examinations in 2003, 95% of candidates who were entered for two or more subjects were awarded at least an E grade in all subjects. Two thirds of grades were at the higher A-C classification. Both figures match local and national averages. The average points score of 20.6 per candidate, matches UA and exceeds national figures.
- Standards in speaking, reading and writing are good. Listening skills are very good and contribute directly to pupils' progress. Pupils experience a wide variety of texts in their reading and develop good analytical skills. They communicate effectively and contribute well in various oral situations. There is much good written work in a variety of forms for a range of audiences and purposes.
- Standards in numeracy across the curriculum are good overall. Pupils develop a good range of numeracy skills and use them accurately and confidently.
- Standards in ICT across the curriculum are satisfactory.
- Pupils' skills in working with others are very good. In problem solving and improving own learning, they are good.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

- The school is very successful in promoting self discipline, respect for others and very good relationships. Pupils' spiritual development is good and their moral, social and cultural development very good.
- Pupils develop insights into their own beliefs and the beliefs of others and have good opportunities to reflect. They understand there are some situations for which there is no one answer and learn to discover answers for themselves. The quality of whole school and year group collective worship is satisfactory. Time is used to celebrate pupils' achievements and reinforce a sense of belonging.
- Moral issues are raised regularly. Pupils respond very well. They have a sense of right and wrong. They show maturity and sensitivity in their understanding of issues to do with prejudice, honesty, choice and responsibility. Pupils with SEN are very well integrated. Pupils of all abilities display a concern and sense of responsibility through their discussions of a wide range of contemporary issues and their support for a wide variety of charities. Co-operation and social interaction within school are very good.

Pupils are pleasant, confident and self-disciplined. Year and school councils provide opportunities for the voicing of opinions and to participate in decision-making. They show initiative in many ways. The curriculum successfully develops understanding of society through work experience and extensive community and industrial links.

- Cultural development is very well fostered through the curriculum by many visits. Instrumental groups, choirs and concerts play an important part. Multi-culture, different traditions and cultures are very well developed. Valuable European and world dimensions are experienced first hand in exchanges, visits and trips. An understanding of Welsh heritage and culture is very effectively developed through the curriculum and an enterprising range of extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful to one another and to adults. Their good behaviour makes an important contribution to the very good learning environment and the quality of life enjoyed by the pupils, and is a significant factor in their overall standards of achievement. Effective complementary education successfully aids social inclusion.
- Attendance is satisfactory. Unauthorised absence is restricted to a small number of pupils. Pupils' punctuality is good.

Quality of Education

- The quality of teaching has continued to improve overall since the last inspection. It is a major strength of the school and makes a significant contribution to standards. It is consistently good quality across all subjects and each key stage contributes greatly to building pupils' achievements.
- It is at least satisfactory in all classes. It is good or better in 86%. In well over a quarter of classes, there is teaching of very good quality and this occurs in each key stage, but with a considerably greater proportion in KS4 than in KS3. Virtually all sixth form teaching is good or better, over two fifths is very good.
- Effective characteristics of teaching include very good planning and organisational strategies which match lesson objectives, usually shared with pupils.
- Realistically high mutual expectations and levels of challenge motivate pupils, who persevere and aim high.
- Resources and activities are well adapted to extend pupils of all abilities. All teachers play an active part in meeting the needs of pupils with SEN. Classroom support is valued and used well.
- Classrooms are calm, maintaining a positive environment for teaching and learning. Teachers manage pupils carefully, with patience and good humour.
- Procedures for assessment, recording and reporting are good. The whole-school policy gives guidelines to departments to develop their own individual detailed policies. This is successful, with clear examples of good practice. The good quality and implementation of procedures make a positive contribution to pupils' achievement and progress.
- The marking of pupils' work including homework is efficient and accurate. There is consistent use of additional comments by departments. Very good use is made on occasion of oral feedback.
- There is good use of reviews to identify underachievers. There is some good use of self-assessment, but this is an area for development to ensure consistency across departments. Arrangements for recording achievement and progress are good. Complete and accurate records are kept, including central records, which are being computerised and linked to the production of reports.
- Pupils receive two full reports per year. There is some very good practice, but the quality of teachers' comments varies within and between departments.

- Good use is made of a wide variety of data and information to monitor pupils' progress.
- The quality, breadth and balance of the curriculum are good in KS3 and KS4. All statutory requirements are met. Provision is effective and all pupils have equal access and opportunity. Pupils with SEN enjoy good support for full access and integration.
- KS3 pupils study all NC subjects, RE, drama and PSE. Classes are arranged in mixed ability or setted groups. In Y8, pupils can add a second modern language. Throughout the key stage, there is opportunity for Welsh medium study in eight subjects. ICT is taught across the curriculum. The communicating information strand is mainly integrated into DT, but the handling and modelling of information is less well structured at present, resulting in gaps in pupils' skills.
- KS4 curriculum organisations ensures all pupils follow English, mathematics, science, Welsh, PE, RE and PSE. In addition pupils can choose from four options that include subjects followed in KS3, media studies and a range of vocational courses. Provision for Welsh medium study continues in four subjects. The school goes to considerable lengths to meet pupils' needs and wishes. In each option column there is provision for complementary education for pupils to develop their key skills to support other subjects.
- The quality of the sixth form curriculum is very good. The school offers an extensive range of 24 A/AS courses, including three through the medium of Welsh. The school is piloting the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ). There are good opportunities for students to pursue studies in a range of vocational courses. PSE and the development of key skills are well planned.
- Arrangements for PSE are good overall. The programme follows ACCAC guidelines. The school has gained national recognition for its work experience and work related activities.
- Planning for the development of Y Cwricwlwm Cymreig and for multi-cultural education is good in the majority of subjects, with many good features. Planning for the development of key skills is satisfactory overall.
- Curricular links with primary schools are very well established in the majority of subjects. Suitable homework is regularly set in the majority of subjects. All pupils have a homework planner, which is used effectively by most pupils.
- Extra-curricular opportunities within and beyond the school day, on and off-site are very good. In addition to representing the school in sporting, drama and musical activities with considerable success, many pupils visit abroad for a range of valuable social and curricular purposes. Pupils benefit greatly from the range of activities, which broadens their experiences and promotes their personal and social development.
- The quality of support and guidance and the procedures for developing pupils' welfare are very good. The school's pastoral system is very effective, playing an important role in maintaining the school as a community and as a secure environment where hard work, mutual respect and support are valued. All pupils are well integrated. Academic and personal progress is well monitored. Pupils appreciate the support they receive.
- The school has good procedures to record achievement, school service and peer support.
- From Y7 there are good arrangements for mentoring pupils identified as those in need. Staff, sixth formers and mentors from outside agencies all provide valuable support.
- Tutor periods are used to check attendance, monitor homework diaries and complete progress files, together with routine administration. In most, but not all instances, this time is used effectively. Relationships between tutors and their pupils are very good.
- Staff give of their own time generously with individuals and groups, including in well structured homework clubs and in holiday periods, for those who need more teaching or time for completion of coursework. Pupils express appreciation for the help they receive.

- The PSE programme, which has recently been redeveloped, is good. Careers education which is well integrated into the PSE programme is very good and is a significant strength of the school.
- Partnerships with external agencies are very good. The school's arrangements for child protection fully meet statutory requirements.
- Procedures to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff are effective.
- Provision for pupils and the school's implementation of the Code of Practice are good.
- In mainstream classes, subject teachers are responsible for preparing and presenting work. The SENCO provides good guidance and support. Information is effectively used to differentiate oral and written tasks and teaching strategies.
- Standards of achievement of pupils with SEN are good across the curriculum. The vast majority leave school with qualifications relevant to their ability.
- There are good examples of pupils being supported in class by learning support assistants, rather than through withdrawal to the learning support centre.
- All pupils on the school's SEN register have very good educational programmes, which reflect the targets set in the statements or identified by the school. Forty one pupils have a statement of SEN. All statements are reviewed effectively.
- The learning support centre is very well organised. The headteacher and governors are very supportive of the work and ensure good quality support and integration.
- Since the last inspection, very good progress has been made to address Code of Practice requirements and to integrate SEN pupils into mainstream.
- Partnerships with parents and the community, schools and other institutions are very good and make a valuable contribution to the life of the school, its ethos and values and pupils' personal, social and academic development.
- The quality, nature and range of information provided about the work of the school is very good. The school has a firm commitment to sustain and improve effective communication.
- The very good links with primary schools are a particular strength. Liaison with other secondary schools and the college of further education is effective. Very good links and compact arrangements with an increasing number of higher education facilitate students' progression. There is a well-established, mutually beneficial, partnership programme with teacher training institutions.
- The extensive links with schools beyond the UK, help to raise awareness of global issues.
- The school receives many visitors from the local community, from Wales and from further afield.
- There are active after school clubs, supported by a NOF grant and the school is open for community use during the holidays.
- Partnerships with industry, commerce and the world of work are now well established and very good. They make a very valuable contribution to pupils' knowledge, understanding and awareness.
- All pupils from Y9 to 13 spend time on work experience, which extends to Australia and for 35 pupils this year, to the USA. The school had the highest number of teacher placements in industry in Wales, which extends their knowledge, insights and experiences.
- The school is closely involved in projects such as Young Enterprise and has active links with the BUILT EBP. The destinations of 2003 Y11 and 13 students show a wide variety of academic and national interests being pursued, that are in no small way due to the school's support in extensive work related experiences.

Management

- The quality of self-evaluation and planning for continuous improvement is good and is improving further.
- In 2002, the governing body discussed areas for development over the next five years. Seven broad areas were identified as areas for longer term development, together with shorter term projects in each. Governors are closely involved in establishing priorities and targets.
- Each faculty prepares a self-evaluation report in which it identifies its contribution to the seven areas.
- Realistic, but challenging targets are provided for pupils in all year groups.
- Careful tracking is helping the progress of current and important initiatives and projects.
- This is a very well led, forward looking, busy and happy school. The school has a pervasive culture of high expectations and distinct positive ethos.
- The headteacher has provided enthusiasm, drive, sense of purpose and direction of very high quality and has introduced an extensive, wide-ranging raft of enterprising projects and initiatives.
- She is very well supported, in particular by members of the leadership team, who have clearly defined responsibilities, and by teaching and non-teaching staff at all levels in the school, who work well together with a sense of common concern and with children clearly the first priority.
- The quality of management of those with whole school responsibilities is good. Departmental leadership is at least good.
- Planning at all levels is very effective. The concepts of monitoring and review and lesson observation are more recent and are less well embedded.
- Internal and external communication is very good. Information is readily available. Daily routines and organisation are sensible and well understood. There is a good understanding of roles and responsibilities.
- The school is well staffed. The pupils to teacher ratio is more favourable than the national average. Teachers are well deployed for pupils' benefit. Their expertise matches the school's curricular requirements very well. Non-teaching support staff throughout the school fulfil their varied responsibilities very well, to maintain the overall sense of community. There are well developed systems and a strong commitment to careful induction and continuous professional development of all staff.
- With the exception of the demountable canteen provision, which is in very poor condition, the accommodation is attractive, well-maintained, litter and graffiti free and in good condition. Displays in classrooms and corridors celebrate pupils' achievements and activities. However, there is no hall, the library and book stock are too small and the sports hall is a poor venue for full school assemblies. Many teachers have to share rooms.
- Available accommodation is managed very well, but is insufficient. The official accommodation figure is exceeded. Numbers on roll are steadily increasing, including Welsh medium pupils and an increasing proportion of each Y11 cohort who join the sixth form.
- The quality and use of resources is good overall and the quality is good in most subjects. Resources including ICT facilities, support the curriculum very well. The provision of ICT facilities, compares very favourably with the national average, with two thirds of machines under five years old.
- Financial planning and management are very good. Available funds and grants mirror the school's priorities. The budget increasingly allows little room for manoeuvre. The school gives very good value for money.

Progress since the last inspection

The previous report identified seven key issues. Very good progress has been accomplished in one key issue. In four issues, progress has been good and it has been satisfactory in two.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

3.1 Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

Even, consistent progress is a feature for all pupils across the school. Boys and girls of all abilities make good progress in all subjects, across the school, with the best standards of achievement being found in KS4. Pupils with a range of SEN make good progress in response to the levels of support they receive.

The standards achieved by pupils are at least satisfactory in all lessons and good or better in over 80%. Very good standards are achieved in a quarter of classes and these occur in both key stages. The figures exceed the targets set by the National Assembly for the year 2002 (the standards of achievement in 95% of classes should be at least satisfactory and 50% good or better). The proportions of very good achievement are considerably higher in KS4 than in KS3 in almost all subjects.

Subject	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4
English	Good	Very good
Mathematics	Good	Good
Science	Good	Very good
Welsh (first language)	Good	Good
Welsh (second language)	Good	Good
Design & technology (DT)	Good	Very good
Information technology (IT)	Satisfactory	-
History	Good	Very good
Geography	Good	Good
Modern foreign languages	Good	Good
Art	Good	Good
Music	Good	Very good
Physical education (PE)	Good	Very good
Religious education (RE)	Good	Very good
Religious studies (RS)	-	Very good
Personal & social education (PSE)	Good	Good
Drama	Good	Good
Media studies	-	Good
Applied business	-	Good
Health & social care	-	Very good
Catering	-	Very good

In the end of KS3 tests, the proportions of pupils achieving level 5 or above in English, mathematics and science have consistently been above local and national figures and have improved in most years. The percentage gaining level 5 or above in Welsh (1st language) is

generally below the local average and above national figures, but fluctuates annually. The percentage of pupils gaining level 5 and above in 3 subjects, the core subject indicator (CSI), 62%, is also higher than local and national averages.

GCSE results have improved greatly from the levels at the last inspection. The school enters a relatively high proportion of pupils for five or more subjects. The proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more equivalent A*-C grades, 77%, is now consistently well above UA and national figures of 63% and 51% respectively and by a widening annual margin,. A third of awards are at the higher A*/A grades. The CSI, the percentage gaining grades A*-C in all three subjects, English/Welsh, mathematics and science, of 64% is well above local and national figures of 47% and 37% respectively. Successful strategies have reduced the gaps between boys and girls' achievements in a range of subjects, to below national figures.

The standards achieved by sixth formers are good or better in virtually all classes. Very good standards are achieved in well over a third. Sixth form students of all abilities are making progress that is at least good in all subjects.

In the GCE A level examinations in 2003, 95% of candidates who were entered for two or more subjects were awarded at least an E grade in all subjects. Two thirds of grades were at the higher A-C classification. Both figures match local and national averages. The average points score of 20.6 per candidate, matches UA and exceeds national figures.

3.2 Standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum

Literacy

Speaking skills are good throughout the school. Listening skills in particular are very well developed and contribute directly to pupils' attainment in all subjects. Pupils carry out instructions effectively and contribute well in various oral situations including making their own presentations to their peers. They communicate effectively in pair and group work to negotiate, to collaborate and to evaluate their own and each other's contributions.

Pupils read aloud fluently and with expression. They read a variety of texts in their studies within different subject areas and are familiar with the key words and technical vocabulary relevant to their fields of study. They develop good analytical skills and are able to extract relevant information efficiently from a range of source material, both primary and secondary.

Pupils write well for a wide range of purposes and audiences, adjusting their approach and vocabulary effectively to the demands of the particular task. They describe, analyse and interpret in relevant and well-ordered written work, using the drafting process and ICT to perfect their work. They regularly undertake extended writing tasks and in KS4 and the sixth form they produce coursework of a high, sometimes exceptionally high, standard.

Numeracy

Standards of achievement in numeracy across the curriculum are good overall at both KS3 and KS4.

Pupils develop a good range of skills in numeracy in their mathematics lessons. Most pupils have a thorough understanding of number and can complete calculations confidently and successfully. In many subjects they can measure and weigh accurately using a range of units.

They can gather, record and analyse data successfully in a number of contexts and make good use of a range of graphs.

Although the school has a numeracy policy, there is not a coordinator for numeracy in subjects across the curriculum. As a result, there is a considerable variation in the quality of planning in each subject and in some cases, there has been no planning at all. There is no consistency or systematic approach to methods of teaching, practice and terminology used.

ICT

Standards across the curriculum at both KS3 and KS4 are satisfactory.

Applications of ICT are good in both KS3 and KS4 in design and technology, history and geography. In design and technology they are well used for design, research and presentation. In history and geography they are well used for handling and communicating information and for research using the internet. In KS4 standards are good in music for composing and in GNVQ subjects for a variety of appropriate applications. Standards are unsatisfactory in science and drama. In all other subjects they are satisfactory.

Across the school, planning for the use of ICT varies between good and unsatisfactory but in most subjects it is good. In most instances, teachers' skills are at least satisfactory. A minority of subjects has problems of access to IT equipment or insufficient specialist IT equipment, as is the case in design and technology for CAD/CAM.

4. ETHOS OF THE SCHOOL

4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The school is very successful in promoting self-discipline, respect for others and very good relationships. Pupils' spiritual development is good and their moral, social and cultural development very good.

Pupils' spiritual development is developed through work in religious education and in National Curriculum subjects such as English, Welsh, art, science and music. Pupils develop insights into their own beliefs and the beliefs of others and in many lessons good opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect. They are developing a good sense of wonder and curiosity about life and understand that there are some situations in life which do not have one clear answer and learn to discover answers for themselves.

The quality of the whole school and year group collective worship is satisfactory. They have a weekly theme, some include participation by pupils and appropriate time to reflect is provided at the end. Pupils are attentive and respectful and staff use the occasion to celebrate pupils' achievements and reinforce a sense of belonging. Good themes are prepared and links with local churches and Christian groups help to enrich some services. On other occasions the services make very little contribution to pupils' spiritual development, there is no opportunity for pupils to reflect or time for a prayer. The accommodation also detracts from the worship and the marking of registers during the service distracts from the ethos of the occasion. On the days when pupils remain in their tutor groups there is a thought for the day

planned. Appropriate themes and guidance are provided. However, in many tutor groups these are not used; this fails to meet statutory requirements.

Moral issues are raised regularly in collective worship and during lessons in religious education, PSE and many other subjects of the National Curriculum. Pupils respond very well, they have a clear sense of right and wrong and have a good understanding of issues such as racism and human rights. They understand the need to respect others whatever their background or race. They show maturity and sensitivity in their understanding of issues to do with prejudice, honesty, choice and responsibility. Pupils with SEN are very well integrated into school life. Pupils of all abilities display a concern and sense of responsibility for others through their support for a wide variety of charities, local, national and international. The Amnesty International Club gives the pupils the opportunity to discuss a wide range of contemporary moral issues.

The standard of co-operation and social interaction between pupils is very good. Pupils are pleasant, confident and self-disciplined. They work effectively in lessons in pairs and groups. Those who take part in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, such as sport, drama and music, mix very well socially and work productively together across the age range. Relationships throughout the school are very good. They develop their sense of responsibility and the ability to show initiative in many ways. Year Councils and the School Student Council provide very good opportunities for pupils to voice their opinions and to participate in decision-making. The curriculum successfully develops pupils' understanding of their place in society through work experience and extensive community and industrial links.

Pupils' cultural development is fostered through a number of valuable activities, such as visits to theatres, museums and concerts. The school instrumental groups, choirs and concerts make an important contribution to the cultural life of the school. A good number of pupils are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. An awareness of issues relating to living in a multi-cultural society is well developed in subjects such as religious education, English and history. The school is very successful in promoting racial equality. In English, art, design and technology and geography, pupils are given the opportunity to appreciate the creativity of people with different traditions and cultures. The European and world dimension is very well developed through a number of subjects including modern foreign languages. Educational trips, visits and exchanges all make a valuable contribution towards pupils gaining a good understanding of different cultures. An understanding of the culture and heritage of Wales is effectively developed through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. There is a very successful school eisteddfod, a strong involvement with the Urdd and visits to Welsh medium productions throughout Wales.

4.2 Behaviour and attitudes

Pupils' standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good throughout the school. A range of policies has been established and the school has a clear vision, aim and strategies for establishing high standards of behaviour and discipline as a platform for pupils' educational and personal development. The responsibilities of all concerned with the school are clear, well understood and implemented consistently.

Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful to one another and to adults. They move around the school in a sensible and orderly manner. Their good behaviour makes an important contribution to the very good learning environment and quality of life enjoyed by the pupils

and their overall standards of achievement. The school has a uniform policy, with the 6th form allowed to dress “smart/casual”. The vast majority of pupils adhere to the policy. The school is in the final stages of implementing a revised behaviour policy following consultation with staff and the School Student Council.

The Learning Support Unit has been rehoused in detached accommodation on the school site. Should pupils become disaffected, they receive support from Learning Support assistants and they may be temporarily removed from mainstream classes. The school is considering the establishment of a Behaviour Support Unit.

Provision for gifted and talented children is at present met by appropriate differentiation extension and work in lessons. The school recognises the need for a policy in this area in its self-evaluation report and is looking to extend the provision via its Learning Support documentation.

Pastoral care at the school is very good. Form tutors meet regularly with heads of year to decide on any action in relation to individual pupils, including contacting parents.

The school operates a successful rewards policy. This is currently under review to ensure that pupils receive rewards which are tangible to their needs.

The school has established a very effective complementary education programme for those pupils who, mainly for emotional reasons, find difficulty in coping with education. The programme is designed to ensure that all pupils leave the school with accreditation and the programme also encourages them to attend school by making the curriculum more relevant to their needs.

There have been no permanent exclusions for at least two years and during the last twelve months there have been only five temporary exclusions (one boy and four girls). The governing body is appropriately kept informed via the headteacher’s report to the Pupil Discipline Committee.

The topic of bullying is addressed regularly in assemblies and PSE lessons and posters are placed in corridors. Pupils are encouraged to discuss any incidence of bullying with a trusted person. The incidence of bullying in the school is very low and pupils are confident that should a situation arise, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.

4.3 Attendance

Attendance at over 91%, is satisfactory.

The registration system, lesson registers and procedures for follow-up of absenteeism are good although the school has experienced some problems with the introduction of an e-mail signing in registration system for sixth form students. The school is aware of the situation and is taking steps to reinforce the need for registration.

Monitoring and follow up of absences is good with emphasis on early identification of any potential problems, with administrative staff following up any non-attendance during the early part of the day. Form tutors receive a weekly attendance print out and heads of year identify patterns of irregular attendance, contacting parents where necessary. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) attends the school on a weekly basis, and as required. Following

consultation with the school, he investigates the reasons for a pupil's non-attendance. Liaison with other agencies ensures appropriate support and, by working closely with the school, pastoral support is reinforced to re-establish regular attendance.

The rate of unauthorised attendance is minimal when the small number of pupils being monitored by the EWO is excluded. Attendance was an aspect of the headteacher's performance management last year. The governing body looked closely at the school's attendance figures and the proposals to improve attendance, but attendance targets were not set.

Pupils arrive punctually at the start of the school day and at the start of lessons

5. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5.1 Teaching

The quality of teaching has continued to improve overall since the last inspection. It is a major strength of the school and makes a significant contribution to standards. Its consistently good quality across all subjects and each key stage contributes greatly to building pupils' achievements. Its evenness is a strength which exposes pupils to a consistent experience of good and very good teaching.

It is at least satisfactory in all classes. It is good or better in 86% of classes. These figures exceed the targets set by the National Assembly for the year 2002, for there to be satisfactory or better teaching in 95% of classes, and good or better in 50%. In well over a quarter of classes, there is teaching of very good quality and this occurs in each key stage, but with a considerably greater proportion in KS4 than in KS3. Consistently good or better teaching 11-16 was observed in each subject. Virtually all sixth form teaching is good or better, over 40% is very good.

A high proportion of the good or very good teaching occurs in every subject across the whole school. The consistency of teaching which is good or better contains many common elements of good practice which can be shared, discussed and replicated, through increased mutual lesson observation.

Teachers are well qualified and experienced and have a secure command of the subjects they teach. Effective characteristics of teaching include very good planning and organisational strategies which match lesson objectives, usually shared with pupils. A wide range of teaching styles provides opportunities for discussion, role-play, questions and answers and well focused activities for most in flexible small groups and pairs as well as in full class. Realistically high mutual expectations and levels of challenge motivate pupils, who persevere and aim high. Strategies to use and develop key skills are well thought out. Resources and activities are well adapted to extend pupils of all abilities. All teachers play an active part in meeting the needs of pupils with SEN. Classroom support is valued and is used well.

The match of planned activities to pupils' prior attainment ensures healthy continuity and progression. Targets are used well to plan future work. Pupils' work is regularly marked, often with helpful comments for pupils to improve standards.

Teachers are enthusiastic and know their pupils and their preferred learning styles very well. Relationships and rapport are overwhelmingly positive and promote enjoyment. Classrooms are calm, maintaining a positive environment for learning and allowing teacher intervention for support and encouragement. Pupils are valued. Teachers manage them carefully with patience and good humour. Class and corridor displays relevant to current topics and themes, celebrate pupils' work, reinforcing the working environment. Regular homework extends and reinforces the work done in class.

Questioning is skilfully used to check, probe and explore understanding and to help pupils to make further progress, thereby often assisting the development of their thinking and problem-solving skills. Pupils are able to develop their team skills and understanding well through discussion as they explore and clarify ideas, through analysis and evaluation.

5.2 Assessment, recording and reporting

Procedures for assessment, recording and reporting are good. The whole school assessment policy gives guidelines for departments to develop their own individual detailed policies. Implementation of the policy is successful with clear examples of good practice especially in history and RE. The good quality and implementation of assessment procedures make a positive contribution to pupils' achievement and progress.

The marking of pupils' work, including homework, is efficient and accurate in subjects across the curriculum. The grading system for effort and attainment varies between departments but is fully understood by pupils. There is inconsistent use of additional comments across departments. These comments should indicate pupils' strengths, weaknesses and how to make further progress. When present, the quality of these comments is inconsistent, although there is some very good practice. There is also some good use of very good oral feedback which includes praise and encouragement. The merit system is well used to encourage pupils in their work. At times during the year there are reviews of pupils' attainment. There is good use of the reviews to identify underachievers and pupils who have performed well. In a minority of subject areas there is good, regular use of pupil self-assessment at the end of topics or modules. This is an area for further development to ensure it is consistently used across all departments.

Arrangements for recording pupils' achievement and progress are good. Individual teachers and departments keep complete and accurate records of pupils, work and progress. Good central records are kept by heads of year. These records include KS2, CAT, and KS3 data, and attainment from reports for all subjects. At present, this data is held manually and is checked to identify pupils making good progress and those who are underachieving. Underachieving pupils are identified generally and in particular subjects. These pupils receive effective support and mentoring. A computerised system is being developed and this is linked to the production of reports.

Pupils with SEN have individual educational plans in line with the Code of Practice and teachers are well aware of pupils with special needs.

A record of each pupil's academic, social and personal progress starts in Y7 as part of the PSE programme. In Y8 to 11 this work is done during morning registration with form tutors. The final RoA documents contain appropriate sections on the pupils' work experience, career action plans and academic and personal achievements. A final personal statement is usually

word processed by each pupil. The completed documents are presented to the pupils during a special assembly on the last day of school.

Parents receive two full reports each year. At KS3, the reports contain levels for subjects and graded information on current attainment, effort, punctuality and behaviour in each of the subjects being studied. There is an overall form tutor comment which includes progress, subject strengths, weaknesses, how further progress can be made, and suggested targets for improvement. Each pupil completes a self-assessment. At KS4, the reports contain expected and potential GCSE grades and numerical grades for effort, behaviour and homework for each subject studied. The accompanying subject comments by teachers are on progress, subject strengths, weaknesses, how further progress can be made, and suggested targets for improvement. The quality of the teacher comments varies across and within departments. There is some very good practice. Parents have the opportunity to acknowledge and respond to the reports and there is a programme of consultative evenings for each year group.

Good use is made of NC assessments, external examination results and a wide variety of other data to monitor pupils' progress. Departments make detailed analyses of pupils' achievements across subjects and ability groups. The performances of boys and girls, and SEN pupils are appropriately monitored in line with equal opportunities. Identified underachievement is discussed by year and departmental heads and followed up with pupils. The school has appropriate examination targets and pupils are aware of their target levels and grades. Annual reviews and analysis of examination results, including interviews between subject leaders and line managers, are used to good effect to evaluate attainment.

5.3 Curriculum

The quality, breadth and balance of the curriculum for pupils of all abilities are good in KS3 and KS4. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements for the NC and religious education. The curricular provision is effective and pupils of all abilities have equal access and opportunity. Pupils with SEN have access to the full curriculum, and enjoy good support for integration into the life of the school. Twenty one pupils are disapplied from the NC in either Welsh or French, or both, to provide extra support for the rest of the curriculum. The school curriculum meets the recommended 25-hour teaching week.

In KS3, pupils follow a curriculum that includes all subjects of the NC, religious education and PSE. Classes are arranged in either mixed ability or setted groups, with the majority of subjects allocated an appropriate number of lessons. In Y7, three registration groups study French, while the other two groups study German as their modern foreign language. In Y8 and 9, pupils can continue with the language studied in Y7 or study both. Throughout the key stage, pupils are able to study French, history, geography, religious education, music, drama, science and PSE through the medium of Welsh. Drama is taught as a discrete subject throughout the key stage. Information technology is taught across the curriculum with design and technology taking a major responsibility for teaching the communicating information strand, integrated into design and make activities. The cross curricular planning of the handling and modelling of information is less well structured, resulting in gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills.

In KS4, the organisation of the common core curriculum ensures that all pupils have access to English, mathematics, science, Welsh, physical education, PSE and religious education. In addition, pupils can choose from four option columns that include subjects studied in KS3, media studies and vocational courses in applied business and health and social care. Provision

for Welsh medium subjects is continued with courses in geography, history, RE, music and science. The school goes to considerable lengths to meet the needs and wishes of pupils by initially offering an open choice for the combination of subjects in the option structure. The majority of subjects are studied as full courses to GCSE, accreditation through a half course GCSE is also available in religious education and Welsh. In each option column there is provision for complementary education for pupils to develop their key skills to support other subjects in the curriculum.

The PSE programme has recently been re-developed and arrangements are good overall. Y7 pupils receive a weekly time-tabled discrete lesson which is taught by the head of year, form tutors and outside speakers. The PSE programme for Y8-11 is mapped and delivered by teachers in almost all subjects across the curriculum. The awareness of drug abuse, including tobacco and alcohol, is taught by a similar approach by outside speakers. The overall programme has a detailed structure, is comprehensive and follows the ACCAC guidelines. A one-week programme of work experience is provided for all pupils in Y9, with a further two week placement in Y10. The school has gained national recognition for its work experience and work-related activities.

Planning for the development of key skills is satisfactory, overall. Significant progress has been made in literacy in recent years, and this is reflected in schemes of work. Some progress has been made in planning information technology across the curriculum, however the key skills map showed that only science, mathematics, geography, catering, design and vocational subjects had identified numeracy in their planning documents. Planning for the development of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig is good in the majority of subjects, and there are good features of multi-cultural education in many curriculum areas.

In all subjects, schemes of work are suitably detailed, cover the requirements of the NC and provide good guidance for teaching and learning and continuity between key stages. Curricular links with primary schools are very well established in the majority of subjects. Homework of suitable quality and quantity is set regularly in the majority of subjects. All pupils have a homework planner; this is used effectively by most pupils, especially in KS3.

Extra-curricular provision is very good in many subjects. In addition to a wide range of activities that take place during the lunch-hour and after school, there are many visits off-site to places of interest, and to venues such as theatres and galleries. A considerable number of pupils represent the school in musical and sporting activities, with considerable success. Many visits abroad take place for a range of valuable curricular and social purposes. Pupils benefit from the range of activities available, which broaden their experiences and promote their personal and social development.

5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

The quality of support and guidance and the procedures for promoting pupils' welfare are very good and are a strength of the school. The school's pastoral system is very effective, playing an important role in maintaining the school as a community and as a secure environment where hard work, mutual respect and support are valued. All pupils are well integrated into the life of the school. Academic and personal progress is well monitored and pupils are helped to achieve their full potential. Pupils express appreciation of the support they receive.

All members of the leadership team, together with heads of year, effectively lead the pastoral organisation. They manage year teams of form tutors well. Communication between members of the pastoral teams is good. A house system is used as an incentive for all pupils across year groups to collaborate and compete in sporting and cultural events.

On entry to the school, pupils are placed in mixed ability tutor groups and usually remain with the same form tutor until the end of KS3. Very good liaison arrangements exist to support the transition from Y6 to 7. Induction to the school is thorough and pupils are quickly integrated into a fully inclusive community. Form tutors meet their forms for an extended tutor period three mornings each week. Tutor periods are used to check attendance, monitor homework diaries and compile progress files and RoA, along with routine administration. In most, but not all, instances this time is used effectively. Relationships between form tutors and their pupils are very good. The use made of homework diaries is effective in KS3 but less so in KS4.

Pupils in Y9 and 10 compile progress files which are replacing the RoA files being used in Y11. Most pupils keep effective records of their progress and achievements. The school has good procedures to reward achievement, school service and peer support. KS3 pupils particularly appreciate the rewards. The recently reviewed system of sanctions for unacceptable behaviour is understood by pupils and provides an appropriate vehicle for maintaining existing high standards of behaviour.

From Y7 there are good arrangements for mentoring pupils identified as those in need. Members of staff, sixth formers and mentors from outside agencies all provide valuable support. The school has a strong focus on social inclusion and clearly addresses the special educational needs of its pupils.

Staff give their own time very generously, often working with individual and groups of pupils before school, during lunch breaks and after school in well structured homework clubs. Staff also work during holiday periods to support those who need additional subject teaching or more time to complete coursework. Pupils use the opportunities well and express appreciation of the help they receive.

The PSE programme, which has recently been redeveloped, is good. Year 7 pupils receive a timetabled lesson each week taught by the head of year, form tutors and outside providers. Throughout the remainder of KS3 and KS4, the PSE programme is integrated into almost all subjects across the curriculum, with drama being the main vehicle for delivery in KS3 and RE in KS4. The sex education programme APAUSE (Added Power and Understanding in Sex Education) is effectively taught in Y9 and Y10 by two members of the SMT with contributions from the school nurse and trained Y12 students. This programme is delivered in a series of lessons when the timetable is suspended. The awareness of drug abuse, including alcohol and tobacco, is taught similarly by outside speakers. The overall programme has a detailed structure, is comprehensive and meets ACCAC guidelines.

There is a very effective School Student Council, comprising pupils from each year group, which actively addresses issues important to the pupils. Requests and suggestions are communicated to the governing body. Pupils say that they value the contribution made by the council and the leadership team regards it as the pupils' voice.

Careers education and guidance is very good and a significant strength of the school. The programme is well planned to develop pupils' skills and understanding and to provide

relevant information and objective advice. Careers advice, which starts during transition from primary school, continues in Y7 and 8 and includes very well planned work experience in Y9 and 10. The programme is effectively integrated into PSE. It is well managed by the careers teacher, who is fully supported by the school's careers adviser. The programme includes activities that enhance self-awareness and personal development and increase knowledge of career planning and opportunities. Pupils and parents value the programme, which has received national recognition.

Partnerships with external agencies are very good. They include Careers Wales, Dyfed Powys Police, EWO, social services and many others who effectively contribute to the PSE programme. Pupils looked after by the local authority have comprehensive care plans and the school's arrangements for child protection fully meet statutory requirements.

The school has well established and documented systems to maintain the health and safety of both pupils and staff. First-aid is effectively organised and administered by qualified support and teaching staff. A small number of health and safety concerns were drawn to the headteacher's attention during the inspection.

5.5 Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)

The provision for pupils with SEN and the implementation of the Code of Practice are good.

In mainstream classes, subject teachers are responsible for preparing and presenting work. The SEN Co-ordinator (SENCO) provides good guidance and support, mainly through regular meetings with SEN subject co-ordinators, individual educational plans (IEPs) and other relevant information. This information is effectively used in the vast majority of subjects to differentiate oral and written tasks and teaching strategies. The standards of achievement of pupils with SEN are good across the curriculum. They are well integrated into the life of the school and have full access at the end of KS4 to relevant accreditation courses, including vocational qualifications. The vast majority leave school with qualifications relevant to their ability.

There are good examples of pupils being supported by learning support assistants (LSAs) in mainstream classes rather than through withdrawal to the learning support centre. There are good examples of close co-operation with subject teachers that leads to the support for a number of pupils in the class being effective. However, best use is not always made by the class teacher of the support provided for the lesson. LSAs keep a note of any issues raised in the lesson and these are shared regularly with the SENCO, which is good practice to ensure development of the support provided.

The 52 pupils withdrawn from mainstream lessons to receive additional support are achieving well and making good progress. All the pupils, including the pupils identified with specific learning difficulties, have good educational programmes that reflect the targets set in their statements or identified by the school. Good use is made of commercial programmes to support the good individual programmes prepared by the learning support department. For some KS4 pupils very good cross-curricular support is provided. The department provides very good educational support and guidance for all the pupils. Records show that the vast majority of pupils have gained very good external accreditation and many have moved on to the sixth form or further education college.

Very good links with outside specialist teachers ensures very good integration for pupils with visual or hearing impairment. Close co-operation with subject teachers and very good in-class support leads to the pupils making good progress across the subjects of the curriculum.

Forty-one pupils have a statement of SEN. Twenty-one statements include a disapplication from Welsh or modern foreign languages or both subjects to enable them to receive additional support. One pupil has had his curriculum appropriately modified in response to his specific educational needs. All statements are reviewed effectively, with very good involvement of parents. External agencies and the UA are consulted according to need. Sixty-seven pupils have been appropriately placed on stages School Action and School Action Plus of the SEN register. There are good strategies for identifying pupils to be placed on the register which is reviewed regularly.

Every pupil on the SEN register has a good IEP. Pupils are involved in setting realistic targets for themselves and these are shared by parents, which is very good practice. The IEPs also include good strategies to help subject teachers to plan their lessons to meet the educational needs of the pupils.

The learning support area is very well organised, with SENCO setting clear guidance to school staff. She is well supported in the work by the assistant teacher and the LSAs. The headteacher and the governors are very supportive of the work and ensure good quality integration and support for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs. Most of the school building has been suitably adapted to meet the needs of pupils with physical handicaps. Since the last inspection very good progress has been made to address the requirements of the Code of Practice and to integrate SEN pupils into mainstream.

5.6 Partnership with parents and community, schools and other institutions

Partnerships with parents and community, schools and other institutions are very good. The extensive range of links and partnerships make a valuable contribution to the quality of life in school, its ethos and values and pupils' personal, social and academic achievement. A broad range of strategies has been introduced which are well established and reflect an understanding of the role and responsibilities of a medium size secondary school serving a small town in a large rural area.

The quality and range of information for parents about the work of the school is comprehensive and very good. The prospectus is issued to parents of all new pupils on entry into school, together with regular newsletters to which the pupils contribute. Other information, such as the governing body's annual report to parents, home/school agreement, sixth form prospectus and the school website are of very good quality in content, style and presentation. Parents consider that they are generally well informed although earlier notice of forthcoming events or activities would be appreciated. There is a firm commitment by the school to maintain and further improve the effective links of communication within and outside school and it works hard to sustain effective communication networks.

The very good links with contributory primary schools are a particular strength of the school's provision. Arrangements for receiving Y6 pupils commence in the autumn term.

A number of successful strategies have been introduced to ensure a smooth transition for pupils and to bridge the transfer from primary schools to the high school. Teachers from the

school work together with colleagues in the primary schools on projects, which start in the primary school and are completed in the high school. These links include ICT, music, literacy, numeracy, drama and science. Pupils settle down well, feel they are well prepared and are familiar with teachers in the lower school before they arrive at the start of the autumn term.

Liaison with other high schools and the local college of further education are regular and effective. There are good compact arrangements with an ever increasing number of universities to facilitate students' progression. Visits and speakers are arranged for KS4 pupils in relation to further education courses. Pupils from the school attend Coleg Powys as part of Complementary Education and some are enrolled on CITB courses.

There is a well-established, mutually beneficial, partnership programme with a large number of initial teacher training institutions and trainee teachers regularly practise at the school. A number, on completion of training, have taken up posts at the school.

There are extensive links with schools outside the UK, which play an important part in raising awareness of wider global issues.

The school has an effective PTA. Their main fundraising event is litter picking at the annual Royal Welsh Show, which invariably raises in excess of £9,000 to support the school. The PTA and other parents, also assist at the school, when requested, for occasions such as drama productions, Eisteddfodau, PE, prize giving and listening to pupils read, etc. Parents also organise and support events at the school.

Very good active links have been established with the local community and a wide range of visitors are received. These include the local AM and speakers from Welsh Assembly Government, Ysgol Feithrin, the police, fire brigade, Medical Services, Health Promotion Unit, St Johns Ambulance Brigade, the Road Safety Service, Theatre Powys, Powys Youth Theatre, Powys Dance, Coleg Powys Theatre Group, the Rotary Club and many local businesses.

There are productive exchanges of pupils and staff with schools in Australia and USA. Participants benefit greatly from these experiences.

The school's recent successful NOF bid has enabled it to run a number of after school clubs and provide late transport daily. The school strongly regards itself as a learning environment and is open in the school holidays for community use.

5.7 Partnership with industry

Partnerships with industry, commerce and the world of work are now well established and are very good. These partnerships make a very valuable contribution to pupils' knowledge, understanding and awareness of the world at work.

As part of the Education in Industry programme, all pupils from Y9 to 13 undergo work experience. This work experience is local, national and international, in a school exchange programme. This year 35 pupils went to the USA to undertake work experience. Links with the USA and Australia were first fostered in 1996 and have strengthened over time. Teachers have also benefited from these links and have enjoyed work-related experience in the USA and Australia. The school uses teacher placements in industry extensively in order that

members of staff can extend their knowledge and experience. In 2001, the school had the highest number of teacher placements in industry in Wales. This extends teachers knowledge and insights.

An increasing number of pupils are involved with teachers' project DYNAMO. Last year four entrepreneurs visited the school to talk to the pupils. The school has hosted a number of role model business speakers and is actively involved in Young Enterprise. It also has active links with the Builth Education Business Partnership. The destinations of Y11 and Y13 students in 2003 show a wide variety of academic and vocational interests being pursued that are, in no small way, due to the school's support for the extensive work related experiences.

6. MANAGEMENT

6.1 Quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement

The quality of self-evaluation and planning for continuous improvement is good and is improving further. Leadership has a clear vision and overview for the school's direction. Governors understand well their important strategic role in reviewing and determining the school's progress and in evaluating targets. In 2002, the governing body discussed areas for development for the next five years, based on a wide range of data, sources and criteria. Seven broad areas were identified as longer term areas for development, together with shorter term projects within each. Each faculty also prepares a self-evaluation report and annual development plan in which it identifies its contribution to the seven areas. Many of the subject self-evaluations are of very high quality.

Members of the leadership team have clear line management responsibilities for monitoring and achieving a range of whole-school auditing cross-curricular provision such as key skills and personal and social education. Progress is consistently evaluated and reviewed according to outline guidance from a range of available published internal and external information and comparisons and the contribution of views from interest groups, to provide an indication of strengths and areas for development. The system is working well and has highlighted several important areas for further emphasis, including staff development, performance management and, the continuous monitoring and the observation of teaching and learning. Success criteria are realistic. Responsibilities are clear. Overall school self-evaluation for each of the seven areas is collected and published on a five point scale. The size and open philosophy of the school readily encourage sharing of opinions.

Careful detail has been kept of the progress of the key issues identified in the last report.

An extensive range of externally validated national and benchmark awards serves as indicators to recognise high levels of performance and improvement.

Realistic, but challenging numerical whole school and subject, end of KS3 and KS4 achievement targets, are provided for pupils in all year groups, based on analysis of the increasingly sophisticated range of data available in the school. Pupils are involved in elements of self-assessment and have good knowledge of examination marking processes. Parents' views are sought. Careful tracking is kept of the progress of current and important initiatives and projects, such as the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ). The school

and year councils operate well and provide well-judged feedback. Discussions to extend their consultative and evaluative role are taking place.

The self-evaluation process, has been developed well to fit into the school's formal planning cycle and is becoming increasingly embedded into practice as a planning tool.

6.2 Leadership and efficiency

This is a very well led, forward-looking, busy and happy school. The philosophy of the school's mission statement is extended by five linked comprehensive aims and is coherently underpinned by the priorities and targets for continuing improvement in areas for development, identified in the annual and rolling five year school development plans. The statement, which is endorsed by pupils and parents, is fulfilled well. The school has a pervasive culture of high expectations and a distinct, positive ethos, which are reflected in a consistent range of well thought out policies. Members of the governing body bring a wide and enduring range of knowledge and expertise to bear for the benefit of the school. The governing body discharges its responsibilities well, and sets high standards and targets. Together with the school, as a full body and through its committees, it has been instrumental in bringing about continuous improvement.

The headteacher, who has been in post for three years, has provided enthusiasm, drive, sense of purpose and direction of very high quality and has introduced an extensive, wide-ranging raft of enterprising projects and initiatives, which have raised the profile of the school and are being implemented. She is very well supported, in particular by the three members of the leadership team, each of whom has clearly identified responsibilities for the progress of specific initiatives and a range of whole-school responsibilities and aspects of management and by teaching and non-teaching staff at all levels in the school, who work very well together, with a sense of shared values and common concern and with children clearly the first priority.

Members of the leadership team meet daily. They have great knowledge across the school, through the effective division and sharing of their responsibilities into all areas and aspects of management and their individual line management role for a cluster of subjects. Together, they provide very good insights and overview and maintain a continuous presence across the school. The quality of management of those with whole school responsibilities is good. Departmental leadership is at least good.

Planning at all levels in the school is very effective and consolidates the school's coherence. The concepts of monitoring and review of the progress and success of whole-school initiatives, monitoring within departments and lesson observation, are more recent, and at present, are less well embedded.

Internal and external communication is very good. Full daily staff briefings reinforce the sense of common purpose, and ensure that information is readily available and shared. E-mail facilities present further opportunities. Daily routines and organisation are sensible and well understood. Duties are conscientiously carried out.

Financial planning and management of the school are very good. There is a good understanding of roles and responsibilities. The school has had success in gaining additional grants, for instance for after-school clubs. Available funds and grants mirror the school's priorities and are used to very good effect. Financial procedures are clear. The most recent

audit report was positive and made very few recommendations for consideration. The budget, which increasingly leaves very little room for manoeuvre, is processed with the clear involvement of governors. Day-to-day monitoring is very effectively managed by the finance secretary. The school gives very good value for money.

6.3 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

Staffing

The school is well staffed with the equivalent of 47.2 teachers, allowing it to benefit from a pupil : teacher ratio of 14 : 1, which is considerably more favourable than the 16.7 : 1 national average. The contact ratio of 84.3%, is significantly above national averages. There is a good balance of age and experience within the staff, and teachers' expertise matches the requirements of the national and wider curricula very well. Overall, deployment of staff ensures that individual teachers' knowledge and skills are used effectively, to pupils' benefit.

Technical support is good throughout the school with the staff concerned helping teachers to provide positive learning opportunities for pupils to make progress and achieve well. The provision, activities and knowledge of support staff for pupils with SEN are good.

In the areas of administration, catering and site maintenance, the school is well staffed and a sense of community is maintained. The site maintenance and cleaning staff work very well to ensure that the building is kept in good repair, clean and as safe as possible for pupils. Administrative staff similarly carry out their duties well to provide the school with an effective and efficient support and reception system.

The school has a well-established induction programme for newly appointed staff and newly qualified teachers (NQTs). The programme equips colleagues to fit into school life as quickly as possible. It ensures that they are ready to join an effective team, and to contribute to their own and the school's development. Induction is a detailed and comprehensive course of training that involves a series of meetings covering all aspects of school life. These include, school routines, pupil behaviour, special educational needs, parents' meetings and classroom management. Senior staff contribute to the programme, but there is also input from pastoral and support staff and staff involved in health and safety issues. Subject departments complement this training with subject specific topics, lesson observations and meetings. A productive, well thought of programme is also in place for trainee teachers whom the school hosts from a number of universities and the Marches Consortium.

The school is committed to the continuous professional development of all staff, recognising the importance of progression and positive career development, not only for the individual but also as an integral part of the school's overall development. Through various activities, teachers keep in touch with current educational thinking, maintain and develop good practice, and promote necessary change. Extensive use is made of external providers and examination board courses. However, valuable developments have also been promoted in-house.

Accommodation

Although the school's accommodation is insufficient for the ever increasing number of pupils on roll, at present this has only a limited impact on teaching because the learning environment is very well managed. However, the proportion of Y11 who choose to continue

into the sixth form and the numbers in Welsh medium groups are steadily increasing. Both these factors affect the future type of accommodation required.

The school's main building is attractive, very well maintained and is in good condition. Although all subjects are in suited accommodation, because of shortage of space, numbers of teachers across the curriculum have to teach outside specialist rooms. Classrooms in all departments, provide a stimulating learning environment and subject identity with good displays of pupils' work, posters and records of an extensive range of activities. In the corridors very good displays celebrate achievement in subjects and extra-curricular activities.

The school has no hall to focus its whole school activities and the demountable that houses the canteen is in very poor condition. During examinations the school loses its use of the sports hall, thus disrupting physical education lessons and whole school activities. There is poor sound insulation between the music and religious education teaching rooms. The school library is too small for the number of pupils using it, as are many of the teaching rooms for the size of some classes.

There is no litter or graffiti in the school buildings or on surrounding areas. Pupils respect the school and its environment. The school buildings and facilities are well used by the community.

Fire drills are held once a term and fire-fighting equipment and portable electrical equipment are inspected annually. A small number of health and safety issues were reported to the school during the inspection.

Learning resources

The quantity of resources is good overall, and the quality is good in most subjects. The school has significantly increased its expenditure on resources for learning this year and is spending an average proportion of its budget on teaching and learning materials. Capitation is distributed equitably using appropriate formulae. Departments can also bid for additional funding in line with their development plans.

Resources support the curriculum well, and many subjects make good use of the ICT facilities when they are available. The pupil to computer ratio is better than the average for the principality. The increasing number of interactive whiteboards and digital projectors is making a significant contribution to teaching and learning in many parts of the school.

Good supplies of up-to-date textbooks are available for most pupils and students, often supplemented by well-prepared worksheets and other materials to enhance learning. Generally, textbooks are insufficient for pupils to take home.

The library functions well as a learning resource centre, but there are deficiencies. While the quality of books is good, the total is considerably lower than that recommended by the Schools' Library Association.

There are some shortages of bilingual resources in Welsh, and of specialist equipment in design and technology for both CAD/CAM and control.

7. SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by pupils

English

Standards at KS3 are good. Standards are very good at KS4. They are above local and national averages.

Good features

KS3

- Standards of speaking and listening are good. Listening skills are particularly well developed and have a positive effect on achievement on the other attainment targets for English.
- Pupils speak with confidence in whole class situations and in pair and group work where they communicate effectively with each other in order to improve learning, to share ideas and to solve problems.
- Standards of reading are good. Most pupils read aloud fluently and with expression. They show understanding of their reading and a developing ability to explain and comment on that understanding.
- Pupils show interest in and enjoyment of their own reading for pleasure and respond well to the texts they read in class, following plot, the development of character and recognising the effects of some stylistic devices.
- Writing standards are good overall. Pupils are comfortable with written tasks. They write at length, in a variety of styles and for different purposes.
- Pupils begin to be able to adapt language for particular audiences and to use a developing vocabulary effectively.
- Less able pupils and those with SEN make good progress in all three attainment targets.

KS4

- Standards in speaking and listening are very good. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and to each other and their responses in question and answer sessions reflect the extent to which this is an active aspect of their learning.
- They speak confidently when making unprepared responses in class, and in more formal situations such as role play and when acting as spokespersons in feedback from group work.
- Pupils show an increasing familiarity with subject specific vocabulary in their oral responses, the most able speaking with sophistication and at length.
- Less able pupils and those with SEN make good progress in all three attainment targets.
- Standards of reading are very good. Pupils read widely and adapt well developed reading skills to a variety of texts and genres. They apply previous experiences of reading effectively in their exploration and analysis of texts, both individually and in groups.
- Pupils respond perceptively to non-fiction and literary texts, showing an increasing ability to recognise inference and implication and to understand the effect of stylistic choices and writing techniques.
- Standards of writing are more varied but all pupils write confidently and are able to express themselves clearly in narrative and informative tasks.

- They become skilled in writing in a variety of forms and for different purposes and audiences. Analytic essays on set texts, and coursework tasks are of a consistently good standard. The written work of some pupils is exceptionally perceptive and sophisticated in content and expression.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Pupils' oral contributions are not always well expressed, in Standard English.
- A minority of pupils is hesitant when reading aloud and a few are too hasty in their reading to reach full understanding.
- Much written work, particularly first drafts, is sprinkled with spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.

KS4

- There is a significant gap in performance between girls and boys.
- The written work of a number of pupils is technically faulty and expression is often confused when pupils are trying to explain their understanding.

Good progress has been maintained since the last inspection.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement are good in both KS3 and KS4. In 2003, the percentage of pupils gaining at least a level 5 in the National Curriculum tests in KS3 was 78%. This is above the UA average and well above the national average. In the GCSE examinations in the calendar year 2003, 66% of pupils gained grades A*-C grades and 90% gained A* -G. There was little difference between the attainment of the boys and the girls. These results are well above both the UA and national averages.

Good features

KS3

- Most pupils across the age and ability ranges answer questions orally with clarity, understanding and accuracy.
- Pupils have a good understanding of number, vulgar fractions, decimal fractions and percentages and the relationship between them.
- They have spatial awareness, understand the significance of pi and can calculate the area and circumference of a circle using appropriate units.
- They can perform calculations with angles on straight lines, with parallel lines and in polygons.
- They have an understanding of Pythagoras' Theorem and can calculate the lengths of missing sides in a right angled triangle.
- The less able pupils can draw lines of symmetry of plane figures and can complete figures so that they are symmetrical about a line.
- The more able pupils have a sound knowledge of probability and can use practical experimental trials to produce cumulative frequencies to give general trends using graphs.
- Pupils with SEN have high levels of support and make good progress.

- Pupils use calculators appropriately.

KS4

- Pupils have spatial awareness and can calculate areas of compound figures and use appropriate units.
- Pupils have an understanding of basic algebra and can simplify and solve various types of quadratic equations.
- They understand the basic concepts of collecting data, drawing frequency distributions and the appropriate graphs, and calculating the averages of the data.
- Higher ability pupils have a good knowledge of standard form and indices. They can use this knowledge to carry out calculations.
- They have a sound knowledge of the trigonometry of triangles.
- Pupils with SEN have good support and make good progress.
- Pupils use calculators appropriately.

Shortcomings

- The more able pupils, who finish their work early, do not always enhance their learning by doing further examples or extension work
- The presentation of work by a small minority of pupils is illogical with incorrect use of mathematical symbols.
- A small number of pupils do not always complete their work.
- Pupils do not enhance their learning by using ICT regularly.

Since the last inspection there has been good progress in KS4 and satisfactory progress in KS3.

Science

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and very good in KS4

Good features

KS3

- In the 2002 and 2003 tests, the percentage of pupils gaining level 5 and above was well above national averages.
- More able pupils have a very good understanding of a wide range of topics covering all aspects of the NC.
- Average ability and a minority of lower ability pupils achieve good standards and are also able to recall key concepts and ideas and apply them to questions in end of module tests and examinations.
- The majority are able to apply their scientific knowledge and understanding to many applications of science in everyday life.
- The majority of pupils with SEN make good progress relative to their abilities. They frequently use scientific terminology well to explain basic principles.
- Pupils develop good practical skills in the majority of tasks set, follow instructions and carry out experiments effectively.

KS4

- A significant strength of the faculty is the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations. Results for 2002 and 2003 were well above UA and national averages and represent a high level of achievement across the three attainment targets.
- More able pupils have a very good understanding of the more complex principles developed in the key stage in life processes and living things, materials and their properties and physical processes.
- Average ability and a significant minority of lower ability pupils can recall many scientific principles and apply them to revision tests, past questions and end of module tests.
- A significant majority of pupils have a good understanding of the everyday applications of science, many related to health issues, the environment and industrial processes.
- Pupils with SEN make very good progress relative to their abilities.
- The quality of investigations is good overall. In a majority of investigations all skill areas are developed to a good standard. Extended writing is well developed in a number of investigations.

KS3 and KS4

- Pupils work safely and collaborate well during practical work.
- In both key stages, especially in KS4, the majority of pupils make good use of mathematical skills in a range of problem solving applications in scientific contexts.

Shortcomings

KS3

- A small majority of lower ability pupils has a less secure understanding of current and previous work, and has difficulty in applying scientific principles to a range of tasks and applications related to everyday life.
- The development of investigative skills is satisfactory across the key stage.

KS4

- The achievement of a minority of pupils in classwork tasks, homework and end of module tests is not compatible with their performance in examinations.

Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in standards overall.

Welsh

First language

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and KS4. Welsh language GCSE results are above national averages.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils are able to communicate confidently and clearly in oral sessions and their ability to discuss topics is developing well.
- They work well together in groups asking and answering questions.

- Pupils read a good variety of books with appropriate understanding. They discuss characters, plot and story line well. They use technical terms associated with appreciation of literature well.
- Pupils write for a variety of purposes using different styles to produce, mainly interesting work.
- Writing standards are satisfactory, but there are examples of tasks written to a good standard by more able pupils in each year group.

KS4

- There is clear progression in all language skills.
- Oral work develops well. Pupils are able to discuss in groups, a variety of topics, to a good level. They report their findings back to the class effectively.
- Pupils respond intelligently to literary topics and complete GCSE literature folio tasks well.
- There is a marked improvement in writing skills and pupils express opinions effectively. The creative tasks of the more able pupils are mature in terms of style and linguistic content.

Shortcomings

KS3

- The work of average and below average ability pupils contains basic grammatical errors. Pupils are unsure of their spelling and mutations.

KS4

- Average and below average ability pupils do not confidently expand on points made in oral group work.

Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The enhanced provision for first language pupils is reflected in the improved standards.

Second Language

Standards of achievement in listening, speaking, reading and writing in KS3 and KS4 are good. The vast majority of pupils in KS4 follow the Full Course, with better than national average examination results.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils understand the use of Welsh spoken by the teachers and follow the contents of audio cassettes well.
- Pupils gain confidence in their oral work. In paired and group tasks, they listen well to each other and answer questions and other points confidently.
- They use basic patterns correctly and confidently in oral work. When giving explanations they use patterns like 'achos' well.
- More able pupils expand on their opinions and link sentences together effectively. They mainly speak accurately and fluently.
- Pupils read aloud clearly with relatively good pronunciation. They understand passages on familiar topics and respond well orally and in writing.

- The better readers convey meaning well.
- The vast majority write structured tasks well, using basic constructions correctly.
- More able pupils, in the top sets, compose passages of extended writing to a good standard, varying the use of language patterns and verbs effectively.

KS4

- Pupils are enthusiastic learners, they co-operate well in group tasks and generally make good progress.
- Most understand spoken Welsh used in a range of situations and respond well by completing realistic oral and written tasks meaningfully.
- Pupils ask and answer a good range of questions with accuracy in group work and vary the tenses of the verb as demanded by the situation.
- The more able pupils in the option sets, use clauses well when expanding on points.
- Pupils read passages well and respond to GCSE reading tasks to a good standard, showing good comprehension of most passages.
- More able Higher Tier pupils read difficult passages from a variety of sources well, showing good understanding of difficult concepts.
- Most pupils use a range of basic constructions and tenses correctly when writing extended tasks for their GCSE folio work. The more able respond to the more challenging topics well and write accurately, structuring their work well.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Most pupils do not read independently from a sufficiently wide range of material. They do not respond to stories by expressing opinions or discussing characters and content.
- Average and below average ability pupils make basic errors when writing extended tasks, when the focus is not on grammar.

KS4

- Pupils in the non-option classes are unable to expand basic answers, linking sentences to produce extended oral responses.

Good progress has been made since the last inspection

Design and technology

Standards of achievement are good at KS3 and very good at KS4.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils apply a design process in their work and understand its function.
- Design presentation skills vary across groups but are good overall.
- Making skills are good and sometimes very good. Pupils plan well for making, usually work with accuracy and finish their work well.
- Pupils have a developing understanding of electronic and mechanical control principles and embed them in design and make projects.

- Pupils understand structural principles such as triangulation, and are able to apply them when conducting basic load-related calculations.
- The analysis of product designers' work is good. Pupils are able to identify important design criteria and present their findings clearly in class.
- Knowledge and understanding of materials, their properties and applications are good.
- Very good use is made of ICT for design and presentation and to a lesser extent for CAD/CAM.

KS4

- At GCSE, standards in resistant materials, graphic products and textiles technology are very good. Examination results in 2003 were above national averages and displayed positive progress.
- Pupils' use of a design process to guide their project work is very good.
- The link between design specifications and product evaluation is understood and applied in design work.
- Making skills are very good. Pupils work with a wide range of materials. They plan well for making, work accurately and produce a good finish.
- Project work is often innovative.
- Understanding of materials and components, their properties and working characteristics is good.
- ICT is used well for research, design and presentation.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Design specifications sometimes lack depth. Pupils do not distinguish between primary and secondary criteria and the link between design specification and evaluation is not firmly established in most design work.
- In some modules, particularly those in Y9, work booklets restrict opportunities for the creative development of design drawings.

KS4

There are no significant shortcomings.

Standards have improved at both key stages.

Information technology

Standards of achievement in KS3 are satisfactory. IT is taught across the curriculum in KS3.

Good features

KS3

- Y7 to Y9 pupils make good progress in their development of IT competencies in communicating information.
- Y7 pupils manage computers effectively. They confidently conduct fundamental computer operations such as logging on, calling up and saving their work, and accessing appropriate applications and the Internet.
- Pupils in Y7 are nearing the completion of key skills level 1 accreditation.

- Standards of communicating information skills developed in DT lessons are good and sometimes very good. Pupils confidently combine text and images, and change and arrange fonts and layouts in appropriate combinations according to their designs.
- Design work is good, resulting from the use of a wide range of research and communicating information techniques.

Shortcomings

- Pupils' handling and modelling information skills are significantly underdeveloped in appropriate subjects across the curriculum.
- Pupils insufficiently consider social, economic, ethical and moral issues related to the use of ICT in society.

Satisfactory progress has been maintained.

History

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and very good in KS4. In 2003, 86% of the sizeable number of pupils who opted to study history at GCSE gained grades A*-C, which is above national and local averages.

Good features

KS3

- KS3 pupils have good levels of background knowledge and understanding; their recall of previous learning is secure.
- Pupils have very good listening skills across the school; they are keen to achieve good standards in attaining the learning objectives and the key skills identified for them in every lesson.
- Pupils have well developed oral skills. Their responses to rigorous and challenging questioning during lessons are articulate and confident. They work well together in groups and pairs, discussing their ideas and evaluating sources of evidence effectively. Pupils provide extended answers and use subject-specific vocabulary accurately in both Welsh and English medium groups.
- They have a good awareness of chronology and they have a good ability to read and evaluate a wide variety of sources of historical evidence. They are increasingly successful in making meaningful links between the sources and in applying their own background knowledge of a topic or an historical problem.
- They are developing good investigative approaches when examining historical problems. They use the sources of evidence confidently to compare and contrast differing interpretations of historical change and they provide good reasons to explain the changes that take place over time. Pupils achieve good standards in historical enquiry.
- By Y9, pupils can successfully distinguish between long-term and short-term causes of change and they are skilled in tracing the consequences of those changes.
- Most KS3 pupils produce good quality written work; pieces of extended writing are well planned, logically argued and neatly presented. Pupils record their learning in a variety of styles and formats, such as diaries, reports, letters and essays. They select relevant material thoughtfully and organise their arguments persuasively. They make good use of ICT tools to enhance the presentation of their project work.

KS4

- Pupils successfully build upon the wide range of skills acquired in KS3. Their oral and written work shows a growing maturity in the depth of their response and they display considerable insight when they consider the motivation and attitudes of people in the past.
- They develop very good skills in testing their sources of evidence for bias, reliability and utility. They successfully detect propaganda in the sources of evidence.
- Writing skills develop very well. Pupils take detailed notes from a variety of texts and other sources, and they use these effectively in their extended writing and source analysis. They select and organise their material carefully, producing well expressed and convincing arguments.
- Pupils develop very well as independent learners, seeking information from a range of sources, including the internet.
- They successfully apply the knowledge and understanding gained from other curricular areas, such as literacy, numeracy and ICT to extend their historical skills.
- All pupils are enabled to raise their standards of achievement through the very good assessment and marking procedures conducted by the department. Pupils are fully aware of what they need to do next in order to raise their standards. Targets set by teachers and by pupils themselves are challenging and achievable.

Shortcomings

- The written work of a small minority of below average ability pupils in KS3 contains insufficient detail to provide convincing evidence of the security of their learning. The quality of presentation of the work of these pupils is inconsistent.
- A minority of pupils in KS3 do not play a sufficiently active part in class discussions and debates. Their responses are limited to brief statements.

The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

Geography

Standards of achievement are good in both KS3 and in KS4.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils possess a secure knowledge and understanding of introductory topics in physical and human geography.
- They have an increasing knowledge of places and make good use of fieldwork in the local area to extend their understanding of places further afield.
- They improve their knowledge of fragile environments such as tropical rain forests.
- They demonstrate their understanding of traditional and newer sources of energy and show initiative in suggesting how the development of renewable sources can lead to conflict between interested parties.
- They are keenly aware of inequalities in the economic development of countries and of the effect on the lives of local populations.
- Throughout the key stage, pupils acquire a wide range of skills and techniques and build a vocabulary of geographical terms which they use with increasing precision.

KS4

- Recent examination results at GCSE level have been significantly above national figures at the higher A*-C grades.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the nature of places and how settlements have changed over time.
- They competently discuss more complex issues such as sustainable development and draw on their knowledge and understanding of the connections between different aspects of the subject.
- They are increasingly aware of the relevance of the subject to current social and economic issues on a global scale when investigating multinational companies and the migration of peoples across national boundaries.

Shortcomings

- In both key stages, lower achieving pupils are more confident orally than in writing and are sometimes reluctant to volunteer answers.
- Their progress, both in class and over time, is restricted by a lack of understanding, recall or incorrect use of key words and occasionally by a lack of concentration or inattention.

The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards have been raised in both key stages and the main issues identified in the last report have been addressed.

Modern foreign languages

Standards of achievement in KS3 and KS4 are good in French and in German.

Good features

KS3

- Most pupils listen attentively to their teacher and each other.
- They understand their teacher speaking the foreign language and identify main points heard in recorded language.
- They respond with enthusiasm and are keen to answer questions.
- They work well together to practise the foreign language and take part in role play exercises.
- Pupils understand a range of written material from the course book and select texts to read independently.
- By Y9 they use past, present and future tenses effectively.
- More able pupils write accurately on topics such as home, family and their town.
- They use ICT well to create imaginative posters and brochures for colourful classroom displays.
- Pupils who study both French and German make good progress in both languages.
- Pupils with SEN make progress appropriate to their abilities throughout KS3.

KS4

- In 2003 French and German GCSE results at grades A*-C were above national averages.
- Most pupils listen well, understand their teacher speaking at a near normal pace and identify detail in recorded language.

- They speak confidently on topics prepared for GCSE examinations.
- Reading comprehension continues to be good; pupils identify main points and details in the foreign language.
- Most pupils write letters, articles and conversations with increasing grammatical accuracy.
- There are examples of written course-work of a very high standard.

Shortcomings

- Most pupils do not use the foreign language in normal classroom exchanges with the teacher.
- A small number of pupils do not concentrate fully and hinder their own progress and that of others.
- Some written work, mainly that of pupils of lower ability, contains repeated grammatical errors.

Since the last inspection the department has made good progress. Standards have improved in both KS3 and KS4.

Art

Standards are good, both in KS3 and KS4. They have improved substantially in the last four years, with GCSE examination results higher than the average for Wales and for Powys. There has also been an increase in the number of pupils, especially boys, opting for art.

Good features

In KS3, pupils demonstrate:

- the effective use of investigation to inspire ideas and images for their own art work;
- an appropriate appreciation of how a study of the work of others enriches their own work; for instance, in Y7 large-scale colour studies based on the work of Georgia O’Keeffe and also in colourful Y8 work developed from a study of Patrick Caulfield, showing good understanding of colour, pattern and shape;
- an increasing technical facility with media, especially in two dimensions;
- good observational skills for their various stages of development.

In KS4, pupils demonstrate:

- good progress as they build on their earlier experiences in the previous key stage;
- fuller investigations which draw on a wider range of visual and written resources, including ICT ;
- a growing critical vocabulary and greater understanding of the creative process as they annotate their work to explain how their ideas develop;
- a wider knowledge of other artists, craft-workers and designers, inspiring personal outcomes which are individual and highly expressive.

In both key stages:

- sketchbooks are well established as repositories for ideas, experiments and exploration, and grow progressively more exciting and functional;
- pupils use ICT effectively for research purposes and also to create images.

Shortcomings

- Although there are some good examples of the use of a range of three-dimensional media, standards overall are not as strong as in two-dimensional work mainly due to a shortage of space; this has been identified in the departmental development plan as an area for development.

Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection; in particular, standards in KS3 have been raised from unsatisfactory to good.

Music

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and very good in KS4.

Good features**KS3**

Pupils:-

- recognise their levels of achievement in performing, composing and appraising activities, and understand what they need to do to improve their standards;
- demonstrate fluency in singing and playing a broad repertoire; they maintain a part as a member of a group in a part song of up to three voices and maintain an individual instrumental part in a group piece;
- select and combine sounds from a wide variety of vocal, instrumental and electronic sources to produce pieces which are musically interesting;
- improvise with confidence in response to a variety of stimuli;
- listen attentively to a broad range of music in order to appraise effectively by recognising and describing the musical elements and evaluating the effectiveness of their use;
- make consistent progress across the key stage through regular practice in composing, performing and appraising activities.

KS4

Pupils:-

- are able to build on previous experiences, further developing their skills, knowledge and understanding;
- can increasingly take responsibility for their own learning;
- show further control in performance and achieve very good standards;
- create and develop musical ideas in relation to given briefs, with much success. Completed compositions show effective use of instruments and voices;
- can appraise and compare music of widely varying styles and cultures with perception. A small number of the pupils are able to make critical judgements supported by valid evidence.

Shortcomings

KS3

- A small minority of lower ability Y8 pupils find it difficult to concentrate fully on practical tasks and as a result make limited progress.
- A minority of pupils are unable to make valid judgements and evaluations when appraising live and recorded music as they do not focus on the musical elements.

KS4

There are no shortcomings.

Standards of achievement have improved dramatically since the last inspection particularly in KS3. The department has worked hard to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which appeals to pupils of all ages and abilities and meets the statutory requirements.

Physical education

Standards of achievement are good at KS3. It was not possible to observe any lessons in core physical education at KS4. GCSE standards are very good. In 2003, 90% of entries gained A*-C grades, with 50% A* /A. This is significantly higher than nationally.

Good features

KS3

- Most pupils are confident and competent across a range of different activities.
- Pupils understand the need to warm-up correctly and they recognise the positive effects of exercise on the body.
- Pupils are able to evaluate the work of others and with guidance, they can offer constructive feedback where necessary.
- Pupils are very attentive and they work together very co-operatively in all lessons.
- Most pupils are able to adapt and apply their skills in new situations, as in Y7 where they were introduced to the triple jump for the first time.
- Pupils are very familiar with the concept of key skills and many use the correct terminology when talking about aspects of their work.
- Pupils with SEN, including a small number who receive in-class support, are making good progress.
- A significant number of pupils achieve very good standards in netball, rugby, football, hockey, gymnastics, cross-country and swimming

KS4 (GCSE)

- Pupils studying for the examination in Y10 and 11 produce practical work of high quality.
- In gymnastics, they perform a variety of movements on the floor and on apparatus, showing good fluency, style and tension.
- Pupils can analyse the performance of others and where appropriate can suggest helpful ways of improvement.
- Y11 have a good recall of their theoretical work, as in areas such as the effects of different types of exercise on performance.
- In swimming, pupils display good technical proficiency in a range of strokes, and competence in water safety and life saving skills.

- Pupils work extremely well as individuals and in co-operation with others.
- Most are confident in using the correct technical terms, orally and in written work.
- Levels of participation are high and all pupils work with enthusiasm and commitment.

Shortcomings

KS3

- A small number of pupils find control and co-ordination difficult.

KS4

There are no significant shortcomings

Teachers give generously of their own time to provide a very good range of clubs and fixtures outside normal lessons. The number of pupils who participate in these activities is high.

The department has continued to make good progress.

Religious education

Standards of achievement are good in KS3 and very good in KS4. Very good results were achieved over the last two years in the short course.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils across the ability range have good factual knowledge and understanding of the units of work they study, which reflect the requirements of the local agreed syllabus.
- They know how believers of the main faiths in our country worship and celebrate their faith and know and understand the main symbols used on these occasions.
- They use a range of religious vocabulary appropriately when they discuss their own and others' responses to questions about life, the world around them and religion.
- Pupils show their understanding and interest in the subject by asking probing questions to extend their knowledge and understanding of the topic.
- Pupils with SEN achieve good standards. They are confident when they talk about how believers of different faiths worship and the meaning of the artefacts and symbols used.

KS4

- Pupils build successfully upon the KS3 knowledge acquired and apply a very good range of religious concepts to present argument for and against a variety of beliefs, teachings and practices.
- They know that people have different beliefs and values based on religious traditions and understand that religious teaching provides a basis for moral values.
- Class discussion shows very good awareness of how inherited personality traits and experiences can influence behaviour, beliefs and attitudes.
- They respond thoughtfully to other views on moral and social issues, ask perceptive questions and have confidence to express a personal opinion based on their knowledge.
- They have a very good understanding of belonging to a Christian community and evaluate the contribution the religion makes to personal and local life.

Shortcomings

KS3

- Good standards of oral achievement in knowledge and understanding are not always achieved in the written work and opportunities to explore and reflect on some of life's fundamental questions are limited.

KS4

No significant shortcomings were noted.

Very good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Religious studies GCSE

KS4

Standards of achievement are very good. GCSE results have been good over the last two years.

Good features

- Pupils have very good factual knowledge and understanding of the syllabus. They recognise the importance of religious beliefs in shaping the identity of both individuals and faith communities.
- They show very good skills when they analyse and give different perspective concerning the beliefs, values and traditions of religions studied.
- They consider the religious concepts studied, examining their own and other people's viewpoints, through reasoned arguments and evidence.
- By the end of KS4 they have acquired a range of skills that enables them to explore religion and human experiences for themselves and to express to a high standard their own responses to the questions and issues raised.

Shortcomings

No significant shortcomings were observed.

Very good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Personal and social development

Standards of achievement are good overall in KS3 and KS4.

During the inspection, only one lesson of PSE in Y7 was observed. Evidence was gathered from lessons observed in other subject areas across the curriculum, from documentation and scrutiny of work, and from interviews with pupils and staff.

Good features

- Pupils are courteous, confident, have respect for each other and are aware that there is a need to help others.
- The majority of pupils listen attentively, study resource material provided and respond appropriately.
- Pupils work well as individuals, in pairs and in groups, and show a high level of collaboration.
- Most pupils are confident and courteous when explaining their ideas to others and are able to frame their own questions.
- Most pupils are able to generate and participate in discussion
- They are able to explain their ideas to others in a positive manner and can frame their own questions.
- When the opportunity arises, pupils can use computers with confidence to research topics and most pupils use ICT to produce their own personal statements for their RoA.
- In Y7, pupils have a good understanding of personal development and personal safety including an effective knowledge of fire safety. They have a basic knowledge of the requirements of a balanced diet.
- Pupils can recognise bullying and know the school procedures to deal with the associated problems.
- They understand the influences in their lives and are aware of the consequences of the misuse of substances such as drugs, including tobacco and alcohol.
- Pupils know what is right and wrong, recognise moral issues, show good awareness of anti-social behaviour and understand the concept of equal opportunities.
- They are given good guidance and advice on work experience and careers.
- They show a good knowledge of citizenship and have care and consideration for others and their property.
Most pupils appreciate the school's pastoral guidance programme and find it useful.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

PSE was not a subject of the curriculum in the inspection.

Applied business GCSE

Standards of achievement are good overall

Good features

- In the 2003 examinations, all pupils gained A*-C grades.
- A majority of pupils achieve good standards relative to their abilities.
- A majority of pupils have a good understanding of business terminology and can apply a range of business principles to a cross-section of tasks.
- In Y10, a minority of pupils have a secure understanding of cash-flow diagrams. A minority of pupils have completed assignments of a good standard in the unit on investigating businesses.
- In Y11, a majority of pupils have a good understanding of the importance of health and safety in the workplace and the need to conform to legal requirements.

- The majority of pupils in Y11 have completed two assignment units to a good standard.
- ICT skills are well developed for the majority of pupils and used to enhance the presentation of their work.

Shortcomings

- A minority of pupils has a less secure recall of key concepts, and has difficulty applying them to a range of tasks.
- In both years, especially in Y10, there is a lack of depth in the planning, research and evaluation stages of coursework assignments for a minority of pupils.

There was no separate subject report in the last inspection.

Drama

Standards of achievement are good in both KS3 and KS4. In GCSE examinations in 2003, results were above national and UA averages for A* - C.

Good features

KS3

- Pupils listen attentively and respond rapidly to instructions with control and purpose.
- They collaborate well in small groups to devise, organise and rehearse scenes.
- Most adopt and sustain character with appropriate movement, facial expression and use of voices. The most able create mood and tension in character portrayal.
- There is good development of critical skills as pupils evaluate the work of others.
- There is good use and understanding of technical terms.

KS4

- Pupils collaborate very well in small groups and devise improvised scenes of a good standard.
- They adopt and sustain role and know how to communicate mood through gestures and body language.
- There is good understanding and knowledge of technical terms such as freeze frames and gestus.
- Pupils offer mature evaluations of their own practical work and that of others.
- There are good standards in self-evaluation of devised projects which include detailed technical knowledge and set designs.

Shortcomings

- A small number of pupils lack confidence in performance and have difficulty in sustaining role.

Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Media studies GCSE

Standards of achievement are good. The subject is currently offered for study to Y11 pupils only. In GCSE examinations in 2003, the one pupil entered achieved a grade A pass.

Good features

- Most pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of subject terminology.
- They understand the codes and conventions used in a range of media forms, for example, newspapers.
- Most pupils make perceptive comments in response to the analysis of televised news bulletins. They understand the use and effect of music, voice, camera angles, sets and editorial choices of style and coverage.
- There is clear understanding of how advertisements are made and the importance of target audiences. Most demonstrate good analytical skills in response to a range of advertisements.
- Project work usually demonstrates good research skills and includes mature evaluative comments.

Shortcomings

- In a few cases, project work is insufficiently targeted and aims are not always fulfilled.

Progress since the last inspection is good.

Health and social care (Double award GCSE)

Standards are very good with a small group of pupils on this new course, which replaces GNVQ in health and social care.

Good features

- Pupils can compare and contrast the work of two different care services very effectively.
- Independent learning skills are very well developed and utilised when completing units of work.
- Pupils work very well in pairs analysing an individual's lifestyle and recommending improvements.
- ICT is used confidently by all pupils for a range of purposes.
- Additional research is carried out by those pupils capable of achieving the highest grades, integrating and cross-referencing the work of experts.
- Pupils are willing to draft and re-draft their work, acting on feedback from teachers. They show skill in their ability to organise and combine information in various forms.

Shortcomings

No shortcomings were identified.

Catering GCSE

Standards are very good. Examination results in 2003 were above national and local averages.

Good features

- Pupils produce very high quality practical work, some of which is outstanding.
- When answering examination questions for revision, pupils display very good subject knowledge.
- Class discussions are lively, knowledgeable and include contributions from most pupils.
- Pupils can identify what they have learnt in lessons and where gaps exist in their knowledge of a topic.
- Technical vocabulary is used extensively and accurately when pupils carry out sensory analysis of food.

Shortcomings

No shortcomings were identified.

There has been a very good improvement since the previous inspection when examination results were disappointing.

8. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Progress since the last inspection

1. *Continue to develop practical measures to improve pupils' attainments, including:*
 - *the setting of numerical targets for individual pupils, subjects and the whole school, and*
 - *more vigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and of pupils' achievement in relation to targets.*Whole school and subject, end of KS3 and 4 achievement targets are published for pupils in each year group. Consistent monitoring of teaching and learning has been extended. Whole school self-evaluation is well embedded. Key skills are developed across the curriculum. Homework clubs take place during the extended day.
2. *Within this process, give special attention to improving the overall achievement of boys and standards in art and music in KS3.*

Boys' performances have improved, as have those of the girls. The gap between boys' achievements and those of the girls has lessened and is often below national figures in most subjects. It remains a continued focus. Standards in KS3 art and music are good.
3. *Define more clearly the responsibilities of senior staff, and of heads of faculty, subject and year.*

Staff have written job descriptions. Detailed responsibilities of senior staff are published.

4. *Develop more rigorous assessment policies at school and subject level and implement them consistently.*
A deputy headteacher oversees assessment. A common assessment policy linked to the reporting system has been developed. Parents receive two reports and one consultation evening each year. Reports have been changed.
5. *Develop information technology skills more effectively across the subject curriculum in KS3.*
ICT is well embedded within key skills across the subjects of the curriculum, although with uneven success.
6. *Improve the implementation of the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs.*
Requirements for special educational needs are met well.
7. *Meet statutory requirements for collective worship and the provision of religious education in KS4 and the sixth form.*
All pupils have two assemblies each week and a ‘thought for the day’ is provided on the other days. All KS4 pupils follow short course religious education. Sixth form religious education is not provided, although relevant aspects are followed through the WBQ provision.

8.2 Key issues for action

The school has a good record of self-development, has maintained high standards and has continued to improve. In order to enhance this picture of success, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- maintain the school’s positive features and ethos and the consistency of teaching and learning,
- raise standards in those subjects and aspects described as satisfactory in the report,
- extend planning to improve standards in numeracy and ICT across all subjects of the curriculum,
- by using the good practice observed, establish consistent monitoring and lesson observation procedures in all departments,
- develop further and use existing self-evaluation, monitoring and review procedures to assess and maximise the implementation and effectiveness of whole school initiatives,
- work closely with the UA to ensure an acceptable solution to the identified shortcomings of the accommodation, including for the increasing number of pupils on roll, in Welsh medium classes and an expanding sixth form, and
- ensure that all classes are provided with a daily act of collective worship

Acknowledgement

The registered inspector and team wish to thank the governors, headteacher, staff and pupils for their co-operation and courtesy before and during the inspection.

APPENDIX

A. Basic information about the school

Name of School	Builth Wells High School
School type	Comprehensive
Age range of pupils	11-18 years
Address of school	College Road Builth Wells Powys
Post-Code	LD2 3BW
Telephone Number	01982 553292

Headteacher	Mrs Shân E Davies
Date of appointment	1 May 2001
Chair of Governors	Mr Simon Fraser
Registered Inspector	Mr J Emlyn James
Dates of inspection	4-7 May 2004

B. School data and indicators

<i>Number of pupils in each year group</i>									
Year group	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Y14	Total
Number of pupils	125	91	91	105	108	69	64	-	653

<i>Total number of teachers</i>			
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time equivalent (fte)
Number of teachers	41	11	47.2

<i>Staffing information</i>	
Pupil:teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)	14 :1
Average teaching group size	16.4
Overall contact ratio	84.3%

<i>Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection</i>								
	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y12	Y13	Whole school
Spring 2004	93.3	92.9	92.4	91.8	91.1	94.2	81.1	91.0
Summer 2003	92.9	91.6	91.9	84.1	97.4	84.9	94.8	91.1
Autumn 2003	94.7	91.6	93.3	90.5	90.7	83.3	88.6	90.3

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	7
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection	5 temporary

C. Results of National Curriculum assessments and public examinations

National Curriculum Assessment KS3 results: 2003															
Total number of pupils in Y9: 105															
Percentage of pupils at each level															
			D	A	F	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	EP
EN	Teacher assessment	School	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	18	26	36	13	0	0
		National	0	1	1	0	0	2	9	22	34	21	8	0	0
	Test	School	1	0	0	0	0	0	8	20	27	31	12	0	0
		National	0	4	4	0	0	0	8	23	31	21	9	0	0
WE	Teacher assessment	School	10	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	60	0	0	0	0
		National	0	0	2	0	0	1	6	19	33	28	10	0	0
	test	School	10	0	0	0	0	0	10	10	50	0	0	0	0
		National	0	2	1	0	0	0	5	20	33	27	10	0	0
MA	Teacher assessment	School	2	0	0	0	0	0	8	12	17	23	37	0	0
		National	0	1	1	0	0	1	9	21	26	27	13	1	0
	Test	School	2	0	0	0	0	0	8	12	16	26	35	0	0
		National	0	6	2	0	0	0	8	22	23	27	12	0	0
SC	Teacher assessment	School	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	17	26	32	18	0	0
		National	0	1	1	0	0	1	9	22	32	24	10	0	0
	Test	School	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	19	24	34	17	0	0
		National	0	4	1	0	0	0	7	20	32	24	11	0	0

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:	64	In the school:	62
In Wales:	52	In Wales:	56

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

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

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

W - Pupils who are working towards level 1

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

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, CoE, GNVQ and NVQ			
Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2003: 92			
The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2003:			
	School	UA	Wales
were entered for 5 or more GCSEs	87	90	87
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-C	77	63	51
achieved 5 or more GCSE grades A*-G	87	89	85
achieved GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language)	64	47	38
entered at least one CoE, GCSE short course or GCSE	91	99	97
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-C	86	83	74
achieved one or more GCSE grades A*-G	91	96	93
achieved no graded GCSE	9	4	7
achieved one or more CoE only	0	2	3

For pupils aged 16, 17 and 18, results in A/AS, GNVQs and NVQs			
Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 in January 2003: 141			
Number of pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A level examinations or equivalent in 2003:54			
Number of pupils entered for fewer than 2 GCE A levels or equivalent in 2003: 2			
	School	UA	Wales
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-C	56	67	68
Percentage of pupils entered who achieved 2 or more grades A-E	96	96	94
Average points score per candidate	20.6	21	20
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Intermediate or NVQ at level 2	28		
Number of pupils who achieved a GNVQ Advanced or NVQ at level 3	0		

D. The evidence base of the inspection

The school was inspected by a team of 18 inspectors, who spent 54.5 inspection days in school collecting evidence and inspecting all subjects. Inspectors observed 218 lessons in full or in part. All teachers present were seen teaching, most on a number of occasions. Planned discussions were held with the majority of teachers, including members of the leadership team, and faculty and subject coordinators, heads of year, with non-teaching staff and a range of members of the local community, and professional and visiting agencies to the school. In a meeting with the registered inspector, members of the governing body discussed their role in action which had been taken since the previous inspection.

All the work of a representative sample of pupils from each year group was examined, and planned discussions were held subsequently with these pupils. Pupils' records, past work, work during lessons and displays around the school were scrutinised. Inspectors spoke informally with many more pupils, and examined their work during class visits. The inspectors visited many tutorial and registration periods and all assemblies, together with a range of out-of-school activities, homework clubs and meetings, including the School Student Council. Pupils were observed at lunchtimes, travelling to and from lessons, and coming to and from the school.

The school helpfully provided an extensive range of informative documentation which was analysed before and during the inspection. The inspection team carefully considered 60 responses made by parents to questionnaires distributed before the inspection and the comments by 47 parents at the pre-inspection meeting conducted by the registered inspector.

E. Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

{PRIVATE }Team member	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
JE James Registered Inspector	Support English	Context; main findings; standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning; standards achieved in key skills across the curriculum; quality of teaching; quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement; leadership and efficiency; progress since the last inspection; key issues for action
R Cawthorne Lay inspector		Behaviour & attitudes; attendance; partnership with parents & community, schools and other institutions; partnership with industry
SG Davies Core team	Science coordinator (chemistry), applied business, electronics	Curriculum; staffing; 6 th form coordination
A Edwards Core team	Mathematics, PSE coordinator	Assessment, recording and reporting
H Evans Core team	Religious education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social & cultural education; special educational needs; accommodation
SI Gale Core team	Design & technology coordination, information technology	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare; resources
DL Bithell	Drama, media studies	
E Bowyer	Geography, travel & tourism, environmental science	
Dr WDK Davies	Science (physics)	
G Figg	Art	
G Holland	Modern foreign languages	
CM Jones	Science (biology)	
T Lewis	Welsh	
B McCann	Physical education, leisure & recreation	
A Newman	History, economics	
P Swinnerton	Design & technology, health & social care, Catering GNVQ coordinator	
MMN Williams	English, communication studies	
SL Williams	Music	

Sixth Form Annexe

1. CONTEXT

The school and its priorities

Builth Wells High School is a well established 11-18 comprehensive school situated in the small town of Builth Wells and serves a very large catchment area of mid-Powys. About a quarter of pupils come from the town itself and the remaining three quarters from the extensive rural community and outlying small villages and includes a number of pupils who have expressed a preference for the school. A majority of pupils travel to school by bus, having long return journeys. The school is oversubscribed. Ninety six per cent of pupils come from homes where English is the dominant language. About 10% of pupils speak Welsh as a first language or to an equivalent standard. Increasing opportunities are provided for pupils previously educated in Welsh medium primary schools, to be taught in Welsh in seven subjects. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. The 654 pupils on roll, with roughly equal numbers of boys and girls in each year, has risen by 30 since the last inspection in May 1998, and includes a sixth form of 133, some of whom choose to transfer at age 16 from other schools. The proportion of pupils choosing to remain in full-time education beyond the age of 16, over two thirds, compares very favourably with other schools, as does the 100% retention rate for students completing sixth form courses.

Pupils are drawn from the full range of economic and social backgrounds. Most parents are in employment. Almost all pupils are from neither prosperous nor economically disadvantaged homes, although there is not a uniform pattern across the catchment. Approximately 7% of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, compared with the Welsh average of about 20%.

Pupils come from the full range of ability. The intake is fully comprehensive, although it contains a relatively high proportion of pupils of around average ability and above. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is also relatively high. Forty one pupils (31 boys and 10 girls) have statements of SEN, over a third for specific learning difficulties. A further 135 pupils are on the school's SEN register.

The school is situated on a well presented site, close to the town centre and shares the amenities of the adjacent community sports centre. The original buildings were attractively extended and remodelled in 1989, with some small subsequent additions. Space is tight. The official accommodation figure of 562 is greatly exceeded.

The achievement of the philosophy of the school's mission statement is to enable all pupils 'to achieve their full potential through self-direction and independence of thought leading to organisation and imagination of judgement and deed' is extended by five linked comprehensive aims, including in partnership and with the local community and business and is underpinned by the priorities and targets for continuing improvement identified in the current and rolling, school development plans.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

- The standards achieved by students are good or better in virtually all classes. Very good standards are achieved in a third of classes. Students of all abilities make progress that is at least good in all subjects.

Subject	Sixth Form
English	Very good
Mathematics	Good
Science	Good
Welsh (first language)	Good
Welsh (second language)	Good
Design & technology (DT)	Very good
Information technology (IT)	Very good
History	Very good
Geography	Very good
Modern foreign languages	Good
Art	Good
Music	Very good
Physical education (PE)	Good
Religious studies	Good
Personal, social and health education (PSE)	Good
Drama	Very good
AVCE Business studies	Good
Health & social care	Good
Travel & tourism	Very good
Leisure & recreation	Satisfactory
Economics	Good
Communication studies	Very good
Electronics	Good

- In the GCE A level examinations in 2003, 95% of candidates who were entered for two or more subjects, were awarded at least an E grade in all subjects. Two thirds of grades were at the higher A-C classification. Both figures match local and national averages. The average points score of 20.6, matches UA and exceeds national figures. About three quarters proceed to higher education.
- Standards in communication are very good. Examples of presentations, investigations and writing of very good quality were noted. Cross curricular skills in numeracy and ICT are good.
- Very good teaching occurs in almost all subjects. The quality of teaching is high and makes a significant contribution to students' progress. It is good or better in virtually all classes. In over 40% of lessons there is teaching of very good quality.
- Procedures for assessment, recording and reporting are good overall. Work is assessed regularly, accurately and consistently, with good and often very good oral feedback with suggested ways to proceed further. Students are very well monitored.
- The quality of the sixth form curriculum is very good. The school offers an extensive range of 24 subjects to A and AS level, including three through the medium of Welsh. The school is piloting the WBQ. There are good opportunities for students to pursue

studies in a range of vocational courses. PSE and the development of key skills are well planned. Students broaden their experience very well in preparation for citizenship and adult life, through a valuable range of community activities and industrial and business links.

- Students with SEN participate fully in school life.
- Relationships within the school are relaxed and friendly. Students are polite, courteous and helpful. They have a finely developed sense of culture and morality and respond very well to opportunities to exercise responsibility.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good overall. They are mature responsible young adults and role models for younger pupils and make a substantial contribution to the school's distinctive features.
- An extremely wide and enterprising range of out of school and extra-curricular activities is available. Numerous visits locally, in the UK, in Europe and worldwide take place.
- Students appreciate that they receive very good support, advice and regular one-to-one mentoring.
- The quality of careers education is very good. Extensive opportunities are provided for work related experience. Students are very well prepared for higher education and the world of work. The destinations of Y13 2003 leavers show a wide variety of vocational and academic interests being pursued.
- Resources for sixth form are overall of good quality and are chosen well.
- Specialist accommodation is good, students have access to all facilities but the demountable is now too small to serve the increasing proportion of students who choose to stay on into the sixth form.
- The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement, as with the main school, is good.
- The quality of leadership and management, as with main school, is very good. The head of sixth form provides very good leadership. She and the large group of tutors work very well together as a team and are a key factor in students' good academic progress. The school development plan includes amongst priorities and intentions for sixth form developments, a necessary focus on accommodation.

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

The standards achieved by students are good or better in virtually all classes. Very good standards are achieved in a third of classes. Students of all abilities make progress that is at least good in all subjects.

Subject	Sixth Form
English	Very good
Mathematics	Good
Science	Good
Welsh (first language)	Good
Welsh (second language)	Good
Design & technology (DT)	Very good
Information technology (IT)	Very good
History	Very good
Geography	Very good
Modern foreign languages	Good

Art	Good
Music	Very good
Physical education (PE)	Good
Religious studies	Good
Personal, social and health education (PSE)	Good
Drama	Very good
AVCE business studies	Good
Health & social care	Good
Travel & tourism	Very good
Leisure & recreation	Satisfactory
Environmental science	Very good
Economics	Good
Communication studies	Very good
Electronics	Good

In the GCE A level examinations in 2003, 95% of candidates who were entered for two or more subjects, were awarded at least an E grade in all subjects. Two thirds of grades were at the higher A-C classification. Both figures match local and national averages. The average points score of 20.6, matches UA and exceeds national figures. Almost three quarters proceed to higher education.

Communication

Standards of communication are very good. Lively, focussed discussions that develop in many classes reflect sophisticated speaking skills. The higher comprehension and analysis reading skills are consistently used and refined. Students' written work undertaken in the progress of their study, reflects their differing levels of achievement, ranging from competent presentation of discussion to subtle debate and includes examples of very good quality in investigative project work, analysis and creative writing.

Numeracy

Standards of achievement in numeracy are good. They are very good in geography and are good in almost all other subject areas. Students are able to interpret and analyse data in a wide range of contexts. They change formulae confidently and use mathematical skills to solve problems.

ICT

Standards are good. Students have good access to ICT and are autonomous in using a wide range of appropriate applications in the development of their key skills accreditation work, but these competencies are insufficiently utilised in mathematics, science, art, drama and RE. The applications of ICT are good in English, Welsh, design and technology, history, geography, modern foreign language, music and vocational A Levels.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is high and makes a significant contribution to students' progress. It is good or better in virtually all classes. In over 40% of lessons, there is teaching of very good quality. The very good teaching occurs in almost all subjects. The consistently high quality of teaching provides students with beneficial experiences, which help them to develop mutually high expectations and trust. Students are very well known individually. Particularly good attention is given to extending students' important key skills, leading to the development of mature, independent, self-motivated learners.

Procedures for assessment, recording and reporting are good overall. The school policy gives guidelines to subject departments. The assessment requirements of examination courses are fully met. Students' work is assessed accurately and consistently, with good and often very good oral and written feedback. Regular assessments indicate subject strengths, weaknesses and suggested ways to progress further.

Good records are kept by teachers, departments and centrally. Through the Welsh Baccalaureate requirements, there are regular peer group and one-to-one tutorials, which are very effective. From these tutorials, underachieving students are identified and are well supported by subject teachers and are closely monitored. The head of sixth form and the tutor team are key factors in the good academic progress of students. Two full reports are issued each year. The reports contain an overall tutor comment and targets are set. Each subject studied, reports on expected and potential A level grades together with numerical grades for effort, behaviour and homework. The accompanying subject comments by teachers are on progress, subject strengths, weaknesses, how further progress can be made, and suggested targets for improvement. The quality of the teacher comments varies across and within departments. There is some very good practice. Parents have the opportunity to acknowledge and respond to the reports and there is a programme of consultative evenings for each year group.

Learning experiences

The quality of the sixth form curriculum is very good.

The school offers an extensive range of twenty four AS and A2 courses to General Certificate of Education (GCE) level, including three through the medium of Welsh. Students are able to choose from the full range of subjects. Considerable effort is made to accommodate all combinations within the five option columns. There is good continuity of provision from KS4 together with enrichment from the introduction of new courses in electronics, environmental science, communication studies and economics. In addition AVCE courses are available in business, health and social care, information technology, travel and tourism and leisure and recreation.

All students in Y12 are this year studying for a Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification. To gain the qualification, students follow their optional courses and in addition complete a programme of core activities incorporating key skills, Wales, Europe and the World, work-related education and personal and social education.

The planning for the development of key skills in Y12 is very good. This is developed through the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification programme and includes communication, application of number, information technology, working with others, problem solving and improving own learning and performance. Students are expected to meet the requirements of all key skills at level 2, and in addition level 3 in three of the key skills. In addition in both Y12 and 13, key skills are embedded in the schemes of work for all subjects.

Students in Y12 follow part of the PSE programme through the Welsh Baccalaureate initiative which is based on ACCAC guidelines. In addition they are expected to be involved in a community project during the year. Y12 and 13 students also experience elements of PSE in group tutorials, their subjects, contributions by the careers service and input by many visiting speakers. All students in Y12 have a one-week work experience placement as part of the work related component of the Welsh Baccalaureate programme; some students also have additional placements linked to specialist vocational areas.

There is no provision at present for discrete religious education in the sixth form. There are no time-tabled lessons for physical recreation in the sixth form. However, a significant number of students make use of the facilities of the local sports centre.

Extra-curricular provision is very good in many subjects. There are many visits off-site to further studies and to venues such as theatres and galleries. Students also participate in a global exchange programme involving placements in the United Kingdom, Europe, America and Australia. Many students assist younger pupils within the school, help to organise events in school and in the community and raise considerable amounts for charity. Students benefit enormously from the range of activities available including the Duke of Edinburgh award, as part of which, students run the school tuck shop as a business, which broadens their experience and promotes their personal and educational development.

Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. They are mature and responsible young people, which has a positive impact on their standards of achievement. Relationships with staff, and amongst pupils themselves, are relaxed and friendly. Students are polite, courteous and helpful to visitors. Whilst attendance is generally very good, some students, although known to be on the school site do not attend registration. The school is aware of the situation and is taking steps to reinforce the need for registration.

Sixth form pupils enter into a study leave contract with the school, designed to record ongoing regular absences such as work experience/community participation etc. They are still required to be available for registration on days when they are not working away from school and they are expected to achieve at least 90% attendance.

Students benefit greatly from the range of activities available, which promote their personal and educational development, including valuable industry links across the world.

Support and guidance

Students receive very good induction for transition to Y12. Over two thirds of Builth pupils move into the sixth form. All complete their courses.

Support for sixth form students is very good. Regular monitoring of students' academic progress by the head of sixth form, personal tutors and subject teachers, leads to the setting of effective individual improvement targets and the monitoring of underachievement. The one-

to-one tutorial is a very good feature of the personal tutor's role. Teachers provide very good support in individual subjects and students make effective use of the study and leisure facilities available. Students are responding well to the opportunity to gain accreditation for a wide range of key skills.

The school encourages students to assume responsibilities by mentoring and 'buddying' younger pupils and participating in the organisation and monitoring of homework clubs, which take place every day of the week. Students are also involved in charity fundraising and taking part in a range of community services. A substantial number of students undertake voluntary training in child protection, bullying and sex education training. Y12 students take on further responsibilities and work closely with staff at breaks and lunch times in the supervision of younger pupils. Sixth form students carry out these roles with enthusiasm and commitment, providing a role model for younger pupils whilst developing social skills, self-confidence and increasing independence.

They are well prepared for life in the wider world and receive effective counselling for entry into higher education. Very good compact links with an ever extending list of universities facilitates HE progress. Appropriate careers guidance is on hand and students have work experience in line with their career aspirations, often abroad and in other parts of the country. The destinations of 2003 Y13 show a wide variety of vocational and academic interests being pursued. The sixth form makes a substantial contribution to the school community and is a significant strength.

6. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of self-evaluation and planning for improvement, as with the main school, is good. Currently there is a strong focus on reviewing the WBQ pilot and monitoring aspects of key skills provision. The head of sixth form provides very good leadership and very effective management. She and her large group of tutors work very well together as a team and are key factors in the good academic progress of students. The school development plan clearly identifies priorities and intentions for sixth form developments, importantly including accommodation.

Overall, there is a good balance of age and experience amongst those who teach in Y12 and Y13. Their expertise matches the requirements of the sixth form curriculum well. Teachers give generously of their time at lunch-times, after school and in the holidays to prepare revision material and run extra sessions to consolidate and extend learning. They attend appropriate INSET courses to update their knowledge of the subject and receive details and feedback from examination boards. Technical support is good throughout the school and colleagues concerned help teaching staff provide meaningful learning opportunities for sixth form students to make progress and achieve well.

Lessons are taught in designated specialist subject areas. Students have good access to ICT facilities. All departments welcome students into subject areas outside timetabled lessons. Students have a demountable study area/common room although this is now too small to serve the interests of ever increasing numbers of students. The school is exploring neighbouring alternative provision, but this is a major problem. Resources for sixth form use are overall of good quality and are chosen well.

SUBJECTS AND AREAS OF LEARNING

Standards achieved by students

English and communication studies

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- Students exhibit well developed speaking and listening skills in lively exchanges in class. They are skilled in discussion and use subject specific terminology comfortably and appropriately
- Their responses in question and answer sessions and their own questions and oral presentations reflect an appreciation of the power of communication. In group work they share ideas and build on each others' contributions very effectively.
- In language work and in their study of communications students exercise sophisticated reading skills in analysing texts of various kinds from different standpoints.
- The skills they develop in language study enrich and refine students' approach to literary texts, enabling them to explore their reading with precision and sophistication.
- Students have good research skills. They readily access crucial information from notes stored in their personal files and undertake their own research from a variety of sources and with discrimination.
- In regular essay writing, students demonstrate confidence in expression and a developing coherence in the structuring of their ideas, opinions and arguments.
- They use language effectively in their writing on fiction and non-fiction texts, adjusting their approach and vocabulary to the nature of the task and the particular line of their enquiry.
- They show an awareness of critical opinion and present a lively personal response in their critical writing, which is always firmly based on a good understanding of the texts studied.
- Students write perceptively about the characteristics of different forms of communication and evaluate their own performance in planning and producing sophisticated communication artefacts.
- They use the drafting process well to perfect their written work and use ICT efficiently to enhance its presentation.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Mathematics

Standards of achievement in the sixth form are good. In the 2003 A level examination four students gained grade A passes.

Good features

- Year 13 students have a very good understanding of a range of concepts in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics, and can adapt this knowledge to solve associated questions.
- Year 12 students are making very good progress in understanding the basic concepts of pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics.
- Students' learning is enhanced by readily available extra support.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Since the last inspection progress has been satisfactory.

Science

Standards of achievement are good in physics, chemistry and biology

Good features

- In the 2002 and 2003 A-level examinations, the vast majority of students gained grades in the A-E category, with a majority in the A-C category.
- The majority of students have a good understanding of key concepts in the three subjects.
- They can apply more complex principles and theory to a wide range of problems and applications.
- In practical work seen, students achieve good standards, and a minority very good standards.
- They are able to apply their theoretical understanding to explain outcomes in practical work, and develop their understanding of hypotheses considered in theory lessons.
- A small majority of students demonstrate confidence when asked to explain their answers to problems, analyse results and evaluate their findings in practical work.

Shortcomings

- A minority of students has difficulty with some of the more complex principles considered in the three disciplines.
- Students receive insufficient opportunities to develop independent learning strategies.

There has been good progress since the last inspection.

Welsh

Standards in Welsh and Welsh second language are good.

Good features

- Y12 second language students are making good progress and coping well with the demands of the literature aspect of the AS course.
- They discuss the plot and characters of the course film well and produce interesting written work of a good standard for their folios.
- Y13 second language students are gaining in confidence. They discuss their set poems and other course literature well, using appropriate vocabulary, phrases and literary terms.
- Writing standards are developing relatively well. Students produce interesting, mature accurately written tasks.
- First language students in Year 13 make mature contributions in group and class discussions. Their written work is developing well. They structure their work well and write accurately, in response to tasks on set books.

Shortcomings

- When discussing ideas and other people's views, some are hesitant to respond at length without referring to notes.

Good progress made since the last inspection.

Design and technology

Standards are very good in A level product design.

Good features

- Students' design work is very good. Students research, analyse and produce effective design specifications to guide their product development.
- Students' evaluations are good, both of commercial products and of those that they design and make.
- Design work is very well presented.
- Project work is often innovative.
- Students' project work displays very good making skills in an appropriate range of materials.
- Effective use is made of ICT for research, computer aided design and presentation.
- Theoretical understanding is good.
- Analytical and well-presented industrial case studies display a very good insight into commercial and industrial technological practice.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Standards have improved since the last inspection and numbers following the course have significantly increased.

Information technology (AVCE)

Standards are very good

Good features

- Standards in students' completed units fully meet course requirements and are generally of a high order.
- Effective action planning, research, implementation and evaluation is clearly evident in students' assignments.
- Students apply a wide range of appropriate communicating and handling information packages in the resolution of project assignments.
- Modelling of number is good.
- Underpinning knowledge and understanding of IT applications and systems installation and configuration is very good.
- The key skills of communication, application of number, problem solving and improving own learning and performance are well integrated into assignments.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

This subject was not inspected previously.

History

Standards of achievement are very good. In the A level examinations held in 2003, 92% of entries gained grades A-C.

Good features

- Y12 and 13 students have very good levels of knowledge and understanding of the historical debates relating to Disraeli's political principles and his career as prime minister. Their oral presentations on aspects of political and electoral reform in the 19th century are of high quality; students are very well informed and a significant number have the confidence to extend their arguments and to think on their feet.
- Students make very good progress in synthesising the views of the major professional historians with expertise in the period they are studying. Students use their analytical skills effectively to explain the differences in interpretations. They organise their material very successfully to produce satisfying and convincing arguments.
- Y12 and 13 successfully use their knowledge and the evidence from the sources to construct opposing and balanced arguments when considering historical problems.
- Written work is often of very good quality. Essays and other written presentations are the result of careful research and thoughtful planning; students adopt an increasingly analytical and self-critical approach to the quality of the work they produce.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

Geography

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- Results at A level in recent years have been very good, with a 100% pass rate.
- Students manage a wide range of geographical information in different forms and from various sources, including ICT. They possess a secure grasp of relevant specialist knowledge and its application.
- They understand the role that values and attitudes have in decision making and effectively evaluate the limitations of lines of enquiry.
- They respond positively to opportunities to be responsible for their own learning and conduct effective independent research.
- They make very good use of contrasting case studies to exemplify their theoretical knowledge of natural hazards such as volcanoes and of the imbalance between population and food supplies in certain part of the world.

Shortcomings

No significant shortcomings were noted.

The department has made very good progress since the last inspection. Standards have been significantly improved and the issues identified at the time have been overcome.

Environmental science

This subject will be examined at A2 level for the first time this year. Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

- Students make very good use of previously acquired information from other related curricular areas such as geography and science and can apply their knowledge effectively to unfamiliar contexts.
- They exhibit well developed learning skills; both in their oral and written work, communication is lucid and coherent and their use of subject specific vocabulary is precise.

- They have a secure understanding of biodiversity and how human activity endangers fauna and flora by over exploitation of certain species or by the destruction of a natural habitat.
- They show a secure insight into problems such as acid rain and ozone depletion and use knowledge and understanding from their units of study to assess the extent to which they are the result of human-made or natural causes.
- Individuals identify appropriate techniques to be used in fieldwork investigations having evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of different sampling methods.

Shortcomings

No significant shortcomings were noted in these classes.

Travel and tourism

Standards of achievement in this small Y13 group are very good.

Good features

- Students display a thorough understanding of the reasons for the rapid growth of this industry.
- They enumerate factors that will affect its growth in the future.
- They competently investigate employment opportunities within the industry and produce well structured curriculum vitae.
- They possess the skills to critically evaluate information and data to draw valid conclusions in investigating long-haul destinations.
- They access a wide range of sources and carry out sustained research to obtain accurate and reliable information to support their investigations.

Shortcomings

No significant shortcomings were noted.

Modern foreign languages

Standards of achievement in French and in German are good.

Good features

- The small numbers of students entered for A level examinations in 2003 all gained a pass grade.
- Students in Y12 have made a good transition from GCSE to AS level work.
- By Y13, students understand their teacher speaking the foreign language at a natural pace.
- They speak at length on topics they have studied, ask questions and sustain discussions.
- They access the Internet for up to date information and understand a range of authentic written material.

- Most write more complex language with increasing accuracy; they show a good grasp of the relevant grammar.
- Students who are learning Spanish or Italian for the language modules of the Welsh Baccalaureate have made good progress this year.

Shortcomings

- A number of students lack confidence when speaking in unrehearsed situations.
- The written language of some students is marred by grammatical errors.

The department has maintained the good standards identified in the last inspection.

Art

Standards are good. Examination results have improved considerably in the last four years, and there has been an increase in the number of students opting for art.

Good features

Students in the sixth form demonstrate:

- a willingness to work independently, pursuing their own interests and obsessions;
- considerable maturity in technical skills with a range of media, particularly in two-dimensions;
- advanced observational skills;
- a mature understanding of the function of sketchbooks: these are often of a high quality, containing thorough investigations, evidence of creative thinking and an exploration of relevant personal and current issues;
- the influence on their own work of an appropriate knowledge and understanding of the work of other artists, craftworkers and designers;
- effective use of ICT, both for research and also to create images;
- outcomes which are often expressive and powerful, revealing strong feelings and emotions.

Shortcomings

- Although there are some good examples of the use of a range of three-dimensional media, standards overall are not as strong as in two-dimensional work due to lack of space; this has been identified in the departmental development plan as an area for development.

Good progress has been made: standards have been raised from satisfactory to good.

Music

Standards of achievement are very good.

Good features

Students

- can take responsibility for their own learning with great success;

- are able to express their ideas confidently both orally and in written form;
- can produce essays and analyses of a consistently high standard, showing clear evidence of meticulous research and extensive listening;
- are able to perform convincingly to a high standard. Several performances are outstanding, demonstrating a high degree of skill in execution and interpretation;
- are able to compose pieces that are musically interesting and satisfying and some are of an exceptionally high standard. Musical ideas are well developed within a balanced structure. The selection of instruments, voices and synthesised sounds demonstrates a sensitivity towards timbre and texture;
- are able to listen and appraise music from a broad range of styles and cultures, making critical and valid judgements based on the knowledge and understanding gained throughout the course.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Standards have improved since the last inspection.

Physical education

Standards of achievement in Y12, where 6 students are following the AS course, are good.

Good features

- Students display a sensible and mature attitude towards their work and they make good progress across all areas of the syllabus.
- Most respond well in discussions and they contribute constructively when issues related to sport and physical education are considered.
- Students show a good understanding of contemporary issues in sport. They are beginning to use research tools effectively to further their understanding.
- Students are achieving well in their chosen practical activities.
- Students are able to relate their theoretical work to practical situations, for example in aspects such as the transfer of learning.
- The quality of some independently researched assignments is good

Shortcomings

- A minority tends to remain passive during class discussions unless spoken to directly by the teacher.
- There is no formal timetabled provision for students in the sixth form other than for the examination group.

Religious studies

Standards of achievement are good.

Good features

- Students have good knowledge and understanding of the aspects of the New Testament they are studying.
- They produce well written essays which provide good evidence of appropriate background reading, thorough research and careful planning.
- They discuss complex ethical issues at an appropriate level and show good note taking skills during in-class discussions.

Shortcomings

- A minority of students produce work that is satisfactory; there is good knowledge of topics but there is a lack of evaluation and analysis in some of the work.

Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Economics

Standards of achievement in Y12 are good. In the 2003 A level examinations, 60% of students gained grades A-C. No Y13 students are currently studying Economics.

Good features

- Students have good levels of knowledge and understanding of economic laws and principles, such as those governing supply and demand. They can apply these principles successfully to current economic problems.
- Students compile data effectively and use the information gained to address problems and to present their ideas. They develop good problem-solving skills and adopt a more self-critical approach in reviewing the quality of their work.
- Most students are successful in adopting an analytical approach to their work; they become more critical in their consideration of data and its relationship to economic problems.
- Students have generally good calculation skills and record their learning effectively. Careful and well presented graphs and diagrams are well used to illustrate the points made in written explanations.
- Students read complex texts and statistical data accurately and confidently. They extract relevant information from these sources and use it well to produce well organised essays and surveys.
- Students make good use of subject-specific vocabulary to convey their ideas. Their independent research work ensures that they keep abreast of current economic developments and debates.

Shortcomings

- Some students are reluctant to provide extended oral responses during class discussions.

- The written work of a minority of students is insufficiently detailed to explain all the points which they make.

Good standards have been maintained.

Drama

Standards of achievement are very good. In 2003 examinations, all students achieved a B grade.

Good features

- Students collaborate very well in groups to discuss practical work, for example, the presentation of character and mood through still images.
- There is a good sense of production. Students know how to action scripts and have a clear understanding of the role of the director.
- In improvised and rehearsed scenes, there is very effective adoption of character with appropriate gesture, movement, facial expression and use of voice.
- There is clear understanding of symbolism in set design, movement, positioning, lighting and costume.
- Students evaluate their own practical work and that of others effectively.
- In both written and practical work, students demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding of differing practitioners such as Stanislavski and Brecht.
- Students have a very good knowledge and understanding of the cultural and historical backgrounds of plays seen and read.
- Written work is usually detailed, well-structured and includes good standards of self-evaluation and critical analysis.

Shortcomings

There are no significant shortcomings.

Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Leisure and recreation

Thirteen students initially began this AVCE course. Six students have continued with the course in Y13. Standards of achievement are satisfactory.

Good features

- Standards are very variable, but are average overall.
- Students are achieving at levels in accordance with their ability.
- Students have a good understanding about the development of the leisure and recreation industry.
- They work well in class on their independent assignments, when under the guidance of their teacher.

Shortcomings

- The work in most portfolios lacks the necessary detailed evaluation and analysis.
- Some students experience difficulty with literacy.

The subject was not reported on previously.

AS Electronics

Standards of achievement are good overall. In the 2002 and 2003 examinations, all students gained A-E, with the majority in the A/B category.

Good features

- Students are developing a good understanding of some of the more complex principles and applications in the programme of study.
- The majority of students can calculate the voltage gains for a number of different operational amplifiers, and appreciate the need to consider the saturation level for output voltages.
- Good progress in the coursework element was seen for half the students in the group.

Shortcomings

- A minority of students find certain aspects of the course difficult and have difficulty applying certain principles to some past questions.

There was no report on the subject in the last inspection.

Business studies (AVCE)

Standards of achievement are good

Good features

- The majority of students are able to apply more complex principles to a range of tasks and applications.
- The majority of Y12 students can identify key features for their presentation in their marketing assignment.
- The majority of students in the business at work assignment have a good understanding of the role of different functional areas in an organisation, and the importance of effective internal and external communication.
- A majority of Y13 students have a good understanding of a range of business principles in their optional module.
- ICT skills are well developed in the preparation for the presentation task and assignments for moderation.

Shortcomings

- A minority of students have a less secure understanding of some business principles when applying them to a range of more demanding tasks.

There was no separate report on the subject in the last inspection.

Health and social care (AVCE)

Standards of achievement are good. Examination results in 2003 for AVCE and A/S level represent good achievement for small groups of students.

Good features

- Students acquire good subject knowledge by working in a variety of situations both in and out of school.
- ICT is used confidently for a range of purposes including research, word processing and e-mailing work between home and school.
- Y12 students have well developed problem solving skills and are able to work very well both independently and in groups.
- Work is well presented and students act on feedback from teachers to improve the content of their work and to make progress.
- Students make very good use of community placements and visits to increase their knowledge and understanding of health care and associated structures and legislation.
- Students can make a thorough analysis of a case study in a hospital, putting forward hypotheses on the likely outcome of a particular course of action in a unit of work on body systems.

Shortcomings

- Y13 do not show the well developed independent or group learning skills observed in Y12 and are over-reliant on the teacher to direct their work.
- Statistical data such as norm reference graphs are not used to assess physical development when carrying out the study of an individual child.

This subject was not reported on previously.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- maintain the school's positive features and ethos and the consistency of teaching and learning,
- develop further and use existing self-evaluation, monitoring and review procedures to assess and maximise the implementation and effectiveness of whole school initiatives,
- work closely with the UA to ensure an acceptable solution to the identified shortcomings of the accommodation, including for the increasing number of pupils on roll, in Welsh medium classes and an expanding sixth form.