Inspection under Section 10 of the Schools Inspections Act 1996

Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School
Afan Valley Road
Cimla
Neath
SA11 3TA

School Number: 671/4064

Date of Inspection:
15 - 18 November 2004

by

Mr Michael Tibbott: Inspector Number 16073

Under Estyn contract number: T/9/04
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Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents more information about their child’s school. A copy of this summary is sent to every family with a child at the school. The full report can be obtained from the school.

The inspection of Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School took place between 15 – 18 November, 2004. An independent team of inspectors, led by Mr Michael Tibbott undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

The team was required to report on the standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management and the contribution made by the school to its pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This summary report may be reproduced for non-commercial educational purposes but only as a whole and provided it is reproduced verbatim without adaptation and the source and date thereof are stated.

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

- **Grade 1** good with outstanding features
- **Grade 2** good features and no important shortcomings
- **Grade 3** good features outweigh shortcomings
- **Grade 4** some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
- **Grade 5** many important shortcomings
Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Y 1</th>
<th>Y 2</th>
<th>Y 3</th>
<th>Y 4</th>
<th>Y 5</th>
<th>Y 6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>10-11</td>
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Secondary phase:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Y 7</th>
<th>Y 8</th>
<th>Y 9</th>
<th>Y 10</th>
<th>Y 11</th>
<th>Y 12</th>
<th>Y 13</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages</td>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>15-16</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>17-18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The national curriculum covers four key stages as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key stage 1</th>
<th>Year 1 and Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key stage 2</td>
<td>Year 3 to Year 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key stage 3</td>
<td>Year 7 to Year 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key stage 4</td>
<td>Year 10 and Year 11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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Context

The nature of the provider

1. Cefn Saeson School is an 11-16 mixed comprehensive school serving Cimla, Tonmawr, Pontrhydyfen, Tonna and parts of Neath. There are 843 pupils on roll. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds, with just under 19% entitled to free school meals, which is above the national average, and just over 10% coming from areas suffering from social and economic disadvantage. English is the first language of nearly all pupils, although there is a small but growing number from ethnic backgrounds, for some of whom English is not the first language.

2. Pupils represent the full ability range and provision is made for a wide variety of special educational needs (SEN), including a Visually Impaired (VI) resource, which serves pupils from across the Neath Port Talbot County Borough. Some pupils from Swansea City and County Borough Council also attend the VI resource. There are 200 pupils on the SEN register of whom 21 have statements of SEN.

3. The school has developed educational links with its local primary schools and with the wider community. The school also works closely with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Neath and Afan College and various training providers to improve the range of learning opportunities available to pupils aged 14 and over.

4. The school serves the same community as during the last inspection in 1999 but has extended and improved its buildings and playing fields since that time.

The school’s priorities and targets

5. Teaching and non-teaching staff are determined that their pupils should be at the centre of everything that they do. The school expects pupils to succeed and celebrates their successes.

6. The management team produces an annual strategic plan following consultation within the school and with the governing body. A developing feature of the school development plan (SDP) is the link made between departmental, school and Local Education Authority (LEA) priorities.

7. Senior managers and the governing body work with the LEA to set targets for National Curriculum and external examination performance. In addition, the governing body has identified a range of strategic priorities in the SDP. These priorities include:
   - raising pupils’ academic standards;
   - improving support and guidance for pupils;
   - improving the quality of accommodation and resources;
   - providing staff development;
   - improving community involvement;
   - improving financial performance.
Summary

8. Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School has made progress in addressing some aspects of all the key issues in the last inspection report but some shortcomings remain.

Table of grades awarded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key question</th>
<th>Inspection grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How well do learners achieve?</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. How effective are teaching, training and assessment?</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. How well do learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. How effective are leadership and strategic management?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>7. How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?</td>
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Standards of achievement in the six chosen subjects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Key stage 3</th>
<th>Key stage 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home economics including:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• GCSE Food technology</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>• GCSE Child development</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern foreign languages</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious education including:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Religious education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• GCSE Religious studies</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standards of achievement

9. The standards achieved by pupils varied across the six subjects inspected with:
   • history (key stages 3 and 4), home economics (key stage 4) and information technology (key stage 4) having good standards with outstanding features;
   • modern foreign languages (key stages 3 and 4), art (key stage 3), religious education (key stage 3) and GCSE religious studies (key stage 4) having good standards with no important shortcomings;
   • art (key stage 4) having good features which outweigh shortcomings;
Report by Mr. Michael Tibbott  
Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School, November 2004

- information technology (key stage 3) and religious education (key stage 4) having some good features but shortcomings in important areas.

10 Overall the proportion of lessons where standards were grade 1 or grade 2 is very high and represents a significant improvement from the last inspection.

11 In recent years pupils have generally performed better than the Welsh average and better than pupils in similar schools.

12 Good features of GCSE performance include:
- pupils attaining a higher 5+ A*-C pass rate than in most similar schools across Wales;
- steady improvement in GCSE results for many years and a significant improvement in 2003 and 2004;
- good entry rates for girls and rapidly improving entry rates for boys.

13 Some features of GCSE performance are slow to improve, particularly the pupils’ average point score and attainment of the core subject indicator (CSI).

14 More able pupils and SEN pupils generally make very good progress and their achievements are good.

15 Pupils at key stages 3 and 4 communicate well. They are attentive listeners and effective speakers, and they use these skills effectively, particularly during group work. Reading and writing skills are also generally good. Most pupils retrieve information well and writing in extended prose communicates meaning clearly. Pupils make appropriate progress in Welsh, but the school currently has no plans to provide bilingual education across the curriculum. Pupils have good number skills and knowledge, being able to handle and interpret data and calculate in a range of contexts. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills are well developed by the end of year 7, but progress afterwards is uneven. The use of ICT as a learning tool varies considerably across departments, being good in some departments and very limited in others.

16 Pupils’ personal and social skills and their wider learning skills are generally well developed. Problem-solving, though well used occasionally, does not have a high profile in either key stage.

17 Attendance has improved greatly since the last inspection and is clearly good. Pupils arrive punctually for lessons and behaviour is very good. Pupils are co-operative, show respect for each other and value diversity. A very high proportion of pupils stay in full time education or training when they leave Cefn Saeson, in nearly all cases transferring to the local college. Permanent exclusion rates are a little higher, and fixed term exclusions lower than LEA averages.
The quality of education and training

18 The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall. The proportion of lessons where the quality of teaching was grade 1 or grade 2 is very high and represents a significant improvement from the last inspection. This applies to the six chosen subjects and to the range of other lessons that were seen.

19 A number of features contribute positively to effective teaching. In particular:
- relationships between pupils are very good, as are relationships between pupils and their teachers;
- lessons are generally well planned and learning objectives and tasks are clearly understood by pupils;
- teachers and learning support assistants work well together;
- teachers encourage pupils to ask and answer questions, to discuss their work and to use ICT, audio-visual and other resources to develop their knowledge and understanding.

20. The school’s pupil profile and monitoring systems are used effectively to motivate pupils and to set targets and review progress. Teachers provide effective oral feedback in classrooms and mark work regularly and accurately. In some cases, pupils set targets themselves and plan to improve. Reports provide appropriate information about achievements and general progress but not about the knowledge and skills being developed in subjects. In most respects, reporting procedures meet statutory requirements.

21. Where teaching has important shortcomings, then typically:
- learning objectives are not clear to pupils or are not clearly matched to the course requirements;
- assessment does not guide pupils sufficiently about how they can improve their work.

22. The range of subjects offered by the school provides pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum which is generally well organised. The school’s extra-curricular provision is outstanding. The provision made for pupils with visual impairment is good with outstanding features and provision for pupils with SEN is good. Provision for pupils’ moral, social and cultural development has many good features, but assemblies tend not to be spiritually uplifting occasions and often provide no spiritual message.

23. Although there are several outstanding features in the learning experiences which the school provides for pupils, some statutory parts of the curriculum are not provided, particularly a daily act of collective worship, and the provision of reports for parents for religious education and information technology in some years. Some shortcomings in curriculum organisation also contribute to depressed standards in religious education at key stage 4 and information technology in years 8 and 9.
24. The school provides good work-related education programmes for disaffected pupils and significant work experience for all year 10 pupils. The Curriculum Cymreig is evident in many aspects of the school's work and education for sustainable development has been promoted effectively across the school.

25. The quality of care, support and guidance provided by the school is outstanding. Relationships are generally very good and pupils are confident that they would find help and support if they had a problem in school.

26. The care and support team is effective, its members working together to identify pupils' problems and provide support. The VI Resource is of a very good quality.

27. Communication between parents and teachers is good, and pupils and parents benefit from clear and appropriate guidance about a number of curriculum issues such as pupils' option choices and progress. Form tutors are increasingly involved in improving pupils' work in subjects, and the rewards system in year 7-year 9 encourages good behaviour.

28. Pupils are supported effectively when they transfer to Cefn Saeson from primary schools. There is a good activity-based Personal and social education (PSE) programme. Systems are in place to assure pupils' well-being and health. Child protection systems are secure.

29. Pupils' attendance is effectively monitored and absences are followed up very effectively.

30. The SEN team and the VI resource have made a significant impact on the quality of provision for additional learning needs. The school caters well for a broad range of special needs and works effectively with external agencies.

31. Comprehensive assessment systems allow effective planning for support of pupils with additional learning needs. Learning assistants work well with special needs pupils in classes or in withdrawal groups. Individual education plans are of good quality and are regularly reviewed.

32. The school has effective measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour including bullying, sexism and racism and the diversity of pupils' backgrounds is recognised and valued by staff and pupils.

33. The school is aware of access issues under the Disability Discrimination Act and acts appropriately to ensure that the needs of disabled pupils can be met. The design of the building creates some difficulties for pupils with disabilities, but nearly all pupils manage well.
Leadership and management

34. The headteacher provides strong leadership and communicates a clear set of values to staff, pupils and parents. The senior managers ably support the headteacher in building effective communication, which is very good at a personal level. There are some inconsistencies in the way that information is shared by line managers.

35. Clear links exist between the priorities in LEA and school strategic planning.

36. The work of the two deputy headteachers contributes significantly to improvements in the support and guidance that pupils receive and to improvements in teaching and learning. The work of the two assistant headteachers contributes significantly to outstanding transition links between the school and its feeder primary schools, and to strong links between the school and the local college.

37. Senior managers work closely with department heads to set appropriate targets for pupils. Monitoring work carried out by year heads, form tutors and subject teachers contributed to the school’s good GCSE results in 2004.

38. The governing body effectively supports the headteacher and challenges the school, its members acting as critical friends. The governors are effectively led by an experienced chairperson who is aware of the statutory responsibilities of governors. The governing body discharges all its statutory duties, apart from ensuring the delivery of some statutory areas of the curriculum.

39. The school has made progress since the last inspection by improving aspects of school self-evaluation and development planning. The SDP addresses important issues, but the number of targets could be reduced and the plan streamlined.

40. Senior managers have a broad and generally accurate overview of performance and provision in school, but this overview is not sufficiently detailed to inform development planning effectively.

41. Self-evaluation is based on ESTYN criteria but is not always supported by robust evidence. However, the analysis of data and setting of targets are becoming increasingly refined and help the school to raise standards of pupil achievement.

42. The departmental review programme has rightly focused on teaching and learning, but the process has not been consistent, particularly the input of external consultants. Areas for development have not always been identified and the review findings are not drawn together by senior management to provide a whole-school perspective on issues such as assessment.

43. Although the school review system has focused on departmental performance, those subjects identified in this inspection as having shortcomings in important
areas were not identified by the school review and the school's self-evaluation judgements are often higher than those of the inspection team.

44. The school has enough teachers and support staff and their experiences and qualifications are generally well matched to the school's needs. Most departments have sufficient resources but there are shortages in religious education and information technology. Accommodation is generally good and is currently being improved, but some pupils' toilets are unsanitary by the end of the school day.

45. Outside resources are used effectively and the library is pupil friendly and well used. The headteacher ensures that the school provides good value for money, for example by comparing the costs of a variety of service providers.

46. Governors with relevant experience support the headteacher and senior administrator in managing the budget efficiently. The budget is currently in deficit but effective measures are in place to resolve the issue.

47. The headteacher is pro-active and very successful in securing additional funds, and uses these to enhance pupils' experiences of school. Spending decisions generally match SDP priorities, but the SDP lacks details of cost or fails to link costs to outcomes for monitoring. This is also the case with departmental development plans.

48. Departments are allocated funds using a formula, which barely provides for basic needs in most subjects. The match between learning resources and needs has been maintained by careful management and use of stock, a situation that is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. Some departments have acquired additional funds and the headteacher has matched their funding, allowing some good development work to take place. The Senior Management Team (SMT) is not sufficiently involved in the decision-making process and monitoring of the educational outcomes of spending is informal.

49. A staff development budget is used effectively, its priorities being well-matched to the school's training needs.
Recommendations

In order to improve further, the school needs to:

- address the shortcomings in provision and standards in information technology in key stage 3 and religious education in key stage 4;
- make self-evaluation more systematic, comprehensive and rigorous;
- focus on essential developmental priorities when planning for improvement, detailing a course of action and clear criteria by which progress can be judged;
- continue to build on the good work which is extending and improving approaches to learning and teaching;
- further improve the quality of teachers’ written comments in order to help pupils to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills in the different subject areas and to ensure consistency in reviewing pupils’ future progress.
- ensure that all statutory requirements of the school’s provision are fully met.

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

Key question 1: How well do learners achieve?

Grade 2: - good features and no important shortcomings
The judgement of the inspection team confirms the school’s own self-evaluation judgement.

Standards of achievement

50. The following table shows pupils standards of achievement in the subjects that ESTYN selected for inspection at Cefn Saeson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Key stage 3</th>
<th>Key stage 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>• GCSE Religious studies</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

51. The standards achieved by pupils varied across the six subjects inspected with:
- history (key stages 3 and 4), home economics (key stage 4) and information technology (key stage 4) having good standards with outstanding features;
- modern foreign languages (key stages 3 and 4), art (key stage 3), religious education (key stage 3) and GCSE religious studies (key stage 4) having good standards with no important shortcomings;
- art (key stage 4) having good features which outweigh shortcomings;
- information technology (key stage 3) and religious education (key stage 4) having some good features but shortcomings in important areas.

52. Overall, in the six subjects inspected, the proportion of lessons identified as grades 1 or 2 is considerably higher than Welsh Assembly targets and represents a significant improvement since the last inspection.

53. In recent years, in key stage 3 tests:
- pupils’ results have been consistently above LEA averages in English and mathematics and generally above LEA averages in science;
- pupils’ results have been consistently better than in most similar schools;
- girls have generally performed better than boys in the attainment of level five or above in all three core subjects (the Core Subject Indicator or CSI), having performed better than boys in English and having equalled boys performance in mathematics and science.
54. In recent years, in GCSE examinations:
   - the proportion of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C grades and 5+ A*-G grades have improved steadily and the proportion of pupils achieving 1+ A*-C grade and 1+ A*-G grade have improved significantly;
   - the average point score and the proportion of pupils achieving A*-C grades in English, mathematics and science (CSI) have not improved overall;
   - English results have been close to, mathematics results often well above, and science results are improving towards, LEA averages;
   - when compared to similar schools, GCSE results at Cefn Saeson have been at a higher level than those of most schools for 5+ A*-C grades but at a lower level than most schools for average points score and attainment of 5+ A*-G grades;
   - the proportion of boys entering examinations has improved significantly while the proportion of girls entering examinations has been consistently good;
   - girls significantly outperform boys for most GCSE indicators, but boys did close the gap on girls’ performance in 2004. In particular, in 2004 the proportions of boys who entered one or more GCSE, attained 1 or more A*-C grade or attained one or more A*-G grade were all higher than LEA and National averages for boys, and similar to girls’ performance.

55. In 2003 and 2004, pupils have achieved their best ever GCSE results, often obtaining higher grades than would be expected for their ability. For a number of years drama, information technology and home economics pupils have consistently obtained higher grades than would be expected for their ability.

56. Pupils with SEN achieve good standards with no important shortcomings and pupils with a visual impairment achieve very high standards.

57. Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 have good communication skills. They are attentive listeners who respect the opinions of others and can understand and use information effectively. They are confident speakers who respond well to a wide range of questions and who question others effectively. They collaborate effectively in pairs and small groups, and participate in role-play and formal presentations. Their use of subject-specific language is good and most pupils use Standard English where it is appropriate.

58. Pupils’ of all ages exhibit good reading skills. Most are confident readers who read aloud with fluency, expression and understanding. Pupils respond well to reading materials and are able to deduce and make inference with increasing sophistication. They can retrieve information from a variety of sources. Reading for pleasure is actively encouraged and book borrowing levels in the library are high.

59. Standards of writing are generally good in both key stage 3 and key stage 4. Pupils from across the age and ability range show a clear awareness of purpose and audience, and can write in a wide range of forms. They are able to select appropriate vocabulary to convey meaning effectively. Pupils make good use of supportive writing frames and there is evidence of good extended
writing in many subjects. Most pupils are prepared to redraft their work, and spelling and punctuation are generally accurate. Written work is neat and ICT is frequently used to enhance presentation. The majority of writing tasks motivate pupils, although there is some lack of challenge in the written work of middle ability pupils in key stage 3.

60. There is effective co-ordination of the efforts being made by many departments to systematically develop pupils’ communication skills, which is having a positive impact on standards of speaking, listening, reading and writing. All pupils study Welsh in key stage 3 and key stage 4, and make appropriate progress in that subject. However, very few pupils have the necessary communication skills to benefit from a bilingual approach to learning and the school has no current plans to provide such an experience.

61. Pupils develop good ICT skills in year 7, but progress slows during year 8 and year 9. This means that pupils make only satisfactory progress by the end of key stage 3. In key stage 4, those pupils who follow a GCSE course in information technology develop a wide range of effective ICT skills while those pupils who do not follow GCSE information technology courses continue to make uneven progress and achieve only satisfactory standards overall.

62. Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 use ICT to enhance learning in a wide range of subjects. They often use generic software simply and effectively to word process, desktop publish and present work. They research information confidently and purposefully using the internet and sometimes CD ROMs. In some subjects, pupils manipulate images using appropriate software to enable them to make original presentations. Although key stage 3 pupils occasionally use spreadsheets to solve problems and present information using graphs, they do not develop their abilities to use databases or data loggers sufficiently. In key stage 4, those pupils following GCSE information technology courses develop effective use of spreadsheets and databases but other pupils do not.

63. Pupils’ mathematical skills are good, allowing them to calculate, estimate and handle data in a range of subjects across the curriculum. The mathematics department effectively underpins standards in numeracy, developing pupils’ number skills and knowledge and their mathematical understanding. In geography, technology and science, pupils effectively develop their graph skills and data handling and apply a broad range of calculating skills. In most other subjects pupils apply their mathematical skills appropriately.

64. There is effective co-ordination of the efforts being made by many departments to systematically develop pupils’ mathematical skills, which is having a positive impact on pupils’ standards of data handling and calculation.
Pupils progress in learning

65. More able pupils and those with SEN generally make very good progress, while pupils across the ability range generally make good progress.

66. Pupils in ethnic minority groups make progress that is entirely appropriate for their age and ability.

67. The school has very effective pupil monitoring procedures which contribute significantly to maintaining pupil progress.

68. Pupils make insufficient progress in information technology at key stage 3 and in religious education at key stage 4.

69. Some middle ability pupils make insufficient progress with their writing at key stage 3.

The development of pupils’ personal, social and learning skills

70. Pupils show mature attitudes to schoolwork and can work effectively in a variety of learning situations. Behaviour is very good.

71. In nearly all classes pupils stay on task, sustain concentration and use time well. They work effectively as teams, helped by very good relationships between pupils. In some classes, pupils demonstrate good problem-solving skills but opportunities to use these skills are limited.

72. During the year prior to inspection, attendance was 93%, having improved significantly since the last inspection. Currently only 1/10 of Welsh secondary schools have higher attendance levels than Cefn Saeson. Punctuality in lessons and at the start of the school day is good. Permanent exclusion rates are a little higher, and fixed term exclusions are lower, than LEA averages.

73. New pupils become quickly integrated into all aspects of school life and all pupils clearly demonstrate that they value diversity, showing care and respect for each other in a variety of ways.

74. Pupils develop an effective understanding about the world of work through careers lessons and careers guidance. In key stage 4, pupils gain useful experience of the world of work during work experience, and, in some cases, by pursuing appropriate vocational courses. Generally, pupils develop a range of key skills that will be useful to them in work and in everyday life, although many pupils have insufficient opportunities to become competent in the use of ICT skills to handle data.
The quality of education and training

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

Grade 2: - good features and no important shortcomings
The judgement of the inspection team confirms the school’s own self-evaluation judgement.

How well teaching and training meet learners’ needs and the curricular or course requirements

75. In every lesson observed, the quality of the relationships within the classroom made a major contribution to the positive attitudes to learning demonstrated by pupils.

76. Lessons are generally well planned and tasks are clearly understood. In the majority of lessons, learning objectives are stated at the beginning of the lesson and, in the best examples, pupils are set different levels of challenge according to their abilities. In some instances, an appropriate time allocation is provided to enable pupils to review their progress at the end of the lesson.

77. In most cases, teachers plan learning and teaching activities effectively. The key skills and the common requirements of the National Curriculum are ‘signposted’ in schemes of work although the teaching approaches that support these developments are not always highlighted. In the majority of classes, pupils across the ability range, including those with SEN, are appropriately challenged. The pace of lessons is generally brisk, with pupils actively engaged in their learning. In many of the lessons observed, for example in home economics / textiles, history, key stage 3 art and key stage 4 information technology, teachers ensure that learning is well structured and interesting. In a minority of classes, learning objectives are not clearly understood, are not carefully matched to the course requirements or are too broad to address the needs of all pupils.

78. Teachers and learning support assistants work well together. Visually impaired pupils and pupils with English as an additional language and other pupils with SEN are well provided for.

79. In many classes, pupils are encouraged to use ICT, audio-visual and other resources to develop their subject knowledge, understanding and skills. With a small number of exceptions, teachers demonstrate good subject expertise and a broad understanding of how children learn. They apply this knowledge to promote a range of appropriate individual and collaborative learning activities.

80. Pupils are encouraged to respond orally to questions, sometimes offering extended responses. They are generally very confident to ask their own questions and to express their own opinions. A small number of pupils lack the
confidence to engage productively in classroom discussions and are sometimes allowed to remain passive receivers of information.

81. The setting and completion of homework are supportive of work completed in lessons.

The rigour of assessment and its use in planning and improving learning

82. On entry to the school, a pupil profile that includes a range of attainment and target setting information is established. The information in each pupil profile is regularly updated and is generally well used by teachers to plan their work and to motivate pupils across the age range. The establishment of the pupil ‘graduation’ system has also acted as a motivating force to promote achievement across the age range.

83. Teachers provide their pupils with good oral feedback in the classroom. They mark work regularly and accurately and provide pupils with supportive comments. In some cases, written comments are particularly helpful in providing pupils with guidance on how to improve their work. There are also examples of pupils themselves setting learning targets that are based upon an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses specific to the individual subject, for example in some art classes, in mathematics and in major geography, history and information technology assignments. Whilst there are several examples of good ‘next steps’ written assessment practice, the school has not yet established consistency in the setting and regular reviewing of subject specific targets.

84. Assessment and recording procedures generally meet statutory requirements and the requirements of the awarding bodies. However, there are no procedures for recording assessed outcomes for religious education at key stage 4 or for PSE at key stage 3 or at key stage 4.

85. Summary reports provide parents with an early profile of their child’s progress and these are complemented by end of year reports that provide appropriate information about the achievements and general progress made by pupils. The reporting of the improvements needed in the knowledge, understanding and skills in individual subjects is less well developed. Reporting procedures generally meet statutory requirements, although pupils’ achievements and progress in religious education at key stage 4 were not reported to parents in 2004.
**Key question 3:** How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community?

**Grade 3:** good features outweigh shortcomings

86. In its own self-evaluation report, the school judged this key question to be Grade 1: - good with outstanding features. Whilst the inspection team did identify much good work and a number of outstanding features, Grade 3 is judged to be appropriate due to:
   - important shortcomings in curriculum provision for information technology at key stage 3 and religious education at key stage 4;
   - failure to report pupils’ achievement and progress in religious education at key stage 4;
   - failure to provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

**The extent to which learning experiences meet learners’ needs and interests**

87. The school provides a curriculum that is broad and balanced. Pupils are grouped appropriately and effective arrangements are in place to move pupils between groups when necessary. A broad range of optional subjects is available to key stage 4 pupils including vocational provision.

88. Provision for pupils with SEN is good. Pupils are appropriately supported within mainstream classes and are withdrawn for additional help to further develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils in the VI Resource have equal access to the full range of curriculum choices and receive very good support.

89. The Sport, Recreation and Allied Occupations level 2 course represents appropriate and effective provision although it is not a qualification that has been approved for key stage 4 pupils under Section 99 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

90. Religious education provision at key stage 4 does not fulfil the statutory requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

91. Appropriate provision is made for developing pupils’ PSE needs and for Careers Education and Guidance.

92. There is a co-ordinated approach to the development of the key skills of literacy and numeracy. Whilst many teachers use ICT to enhance subject knowledge, there are important shortcomings in the development of pupils’ spreadsheet and database skills in year 8 and year 9, and this has a negative impact on the standards achieved. Whilst there are good examples of problem-solving, e.g. in history, geography and information technology, the absence of a co-ordinated whole school approach to problem-solving constrains progress. The support and guidance system provides a strategic framework for the key skill of pupils’
learning from their own experience. The school has recently been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

93. The rich variety of extra-curricular activities is an outstanding feature of the school. These include musical and other cultural activities as well as a variety of clubs that enhance curriculum provision. The out-of-hours activities organised by the art department and the performing arts provision are especially outstanding features. The value that pupils place on these activities is reflected in the high rates of participation. The extra-curricular provision of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is another exceptional feature, with large numbers of pupils achieving bronze and silver awards.

94. The school promotes pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a variety of classroom and extra-curricular settings. Provision for pupils’ moral, social, and cultural development is good overall. Year group and class assemblies play their part in portraying moral messages, although they tend not to be spiritually uplifting occasions. Assemblies are not strategically planned to ensure quality, balance and cohesion throughout the year. Pupils are only occasionally involved in the planning and delivery of assemblies. The school has established a framework to enable all pupils to participate in a daily act of collective worship. However, not all class assemblies make this provision and therefore statutory requirements are not met.

95. The school has established outstanding links with its partner primary schools and strong links with the community, the local tertiary college and with other training providers. Effective partnership with an Initial Teacher Training (ITT) institution has contributed to a high quality programme of development and support for ITT students within the school. The Graduate Teacher Programme is also effectively organised.

96. Links with parents are good. Parents are provided with a range of relevant information such as the organisation of the curriculum and the timing and nature of special events. They particularly value the information provided in pupil planners and are properly informed and consulted about their child’s key stage 4 option choices.

The extent to which learning experiences respond to the needs of employers and the wider community

97. The provision for Work Related Education is good. In addition to the programmes established for disaffected pupils, key stage 4 pupils have access to a range of work-based courses focusing upon hairdressing, care and construction. All year 10 pupils benefit from a 2-week work placement programme.

98. The Curriculum Cymreig is evident in many areas across the curriculum. For example, in art pupils study the work of Welsh artists, craftworkers and
designers and, in geography, pupils enhance their knowledge of the features and culture of Wales.

99. There is good full-time off-site provision for a small number of disaffected pupils. The main programme provides a range of appropriate activities, includes support for literacy and numeracy skills and gives pupils access to accreditation. Another programme enables pupils to develop their motor vehicle maintenance skills. Additionally, pupils at risk of disengaging from the mainstream curriculum are occasionally withdrawn to participate in various activities aimed at raising confidence and self-esteem.

100. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has been promoted in a variety of appropriate and effective ways across the school. A number of curriculum areas, particularly geography and art, have made significant contributions to ESD. Pupils in the Eco-club have driven various initiatives including the recycling of cans and paper and the development of various parts of the school grounds, leading to one pupil attending the Earth Summit in Johannesburg. The school has achieved the Eco-schools Bronze Award. The involvement of pupils in mock elections and in the mock United Nations General Assembly has made a very positive contribution to PSE and Global Citizenship education.
Key question 4: How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

Grade 1: good with outstanding features
The judgement of the inspection team confirms the school’s own self-evaluation judgement.

The quality of care, support and guidance to learners

101. The quality of care, support and guidance is outstanding. Relationships amongst pupils and between staff and pupils are both very good. All staff show a genuine concern for the best interests of pupils and give readily of their time to support extra-curricular activities. All pupils interviewed are confident that they would know where to seek help and support if they had a problem in school.

102. An efficient care and support team facilitates early identification of individual learners needs and interventions by members of the team are carefully considered and effective. The staff works well as a team, sharing information and involving other agencies where necessary.

103. The VI resource is of a very good quality. Pupils with visual impairment are actively involved in all aspects of the life and work of the school including extra-curricular activities such as school productions. They are given very good pastoral care and support to enable them to develop independence.

104. Parents are well informed of arrangements for care, support and guidance through the helpful home-school agreement, pupil planners and links with members of the pastoral team. Additional parent evenings for years 7 and 10 have been introduced to further improve communication about pupil progress to parents. Form tutors hold individual monitoring meetings with pupils to track progress and advise pupils about how they can improve their work. The quality of curricular guidance, provided to parents before option choices in year 9 and year 11, is good.

105. There is an effective programme of support for pupils to help them settle into the life and routines of a new school. Pupils demonstrate that they know what is required of them and all pupils feel safe and secure. There are outstanding transition links with feeder primary schools and strong links with the local tertiary college.

106. The PSE programme covers a good range of appropriate topics and is delivered by a specialist team of teachers, facilitating a lively, stimulating programme across the school. Sex and relationships education is particularly well delivered by the team who are confident enough to use a range of challenging activities and resources.

107. The school has comprehensive and effective means for monitoring attendance and following up on absences. These processes benefit from very good co-
operation between members of the care and support team, including the educational welfare officer and the school attendance officer. Truancy during the school day has not been a problem in the past but there has been a recent increase in incidents. While all class teachers keep records of attendance in lessons there is no systematic process which uses lesson registers to check attendance and identify truants.

108. Registration complies with the statutory requirements, except for the school’s allowance of 30 days study leave for pupils in year 11 in the summer term. This is contrary to recent Welsh Assembly Government guidance that recommends a maximum of 15 days authorised absence in such circumstances.

109. The school operates an effective formal reward system in years 7, 8 and 9 to encourage desirable behaviour, achievements and attitudes in pupils. Pupils demonstrate very good behaviour in classes and good behaviour throughout the school at all other times of the day.

110. Child protection procedures, and a range of related procedures designed to ensure the health, safety and well-being of children, are well documented, known to staff, and properly observed.

The quality of provision for additional learning needs

111. The SEN learning support team and the VI resource have made a significant impact on the quality of provision for additional learning needs. The school caters well for a range of SEN, both in mainstream or special classes, and offers access to the full curriculum unless disapplication is included in their statements. External agencies provide good quality advice and support.

112. A comprehensive range of assessments enables pupils with additional learning needs to be identified and those needs to be diagnosed, so allowing early intervention. Assessments are used to determine the type of support needed, to influence teaching and learning and to set targets for improvement.

113. Learning support assistants work very well to support SEN and VI pupils either in mainstream classes or in withdrawal groups. They adapt and develop resources to enable and support learners to achieve good standards across the curriculum. The use of learning support assistants is well organised, and their roles and responsibilities are well defined and understood. Because of effective support teaching and deployment of resources, pupils with visual impairments are able to be fully integrated into all aspects of school life.

114. All pupils on the school’s referral register have individual education plans which include carefully formulated targets to help pupils make the best possible progress. The quality and impact of the plans are regularly reviewed, including an annual review, with parents being fully involved. Pupils are increasingly becoming involved as partners in the assessment and planning process.
115. The school has systems in place through the “cause for concern” programme to identify and support pupils whose behaviour impedes their progress. Permanent exclusion rates are a little higher, and fixed term exclusions are lower, than LEA averages. The school works closely with the LEA behaviour support team and educational psychologist to ensure that pupils receive appropriate education while excluded and pupils are effectively re-integrated on return to school. The school makes an appropriate alternative provision for a small number of pupils in key stage 4 who become disengaged from the mainstream curriculum.

The quality of provision for equal opportunities

116. The school has effective measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour including bullying, sexism and racism. Senior pupils have been trained as peer mediators, and skills are developed in PSE lessons for dealing with and reporting acts of bullying.

117. The diversity of pupils’ backgrounds is recognised and valued in a supportive environment. Work in English classes includes writing about ethnicity, and poetry that reflects other cultures is used to explore issues.

118. The school is aware of access issues under the Disability Discrimination Act and acts appropriately to ensure that the needs of disabled pupils can be met. The design of the building creates some difficulties for pupils with disabilities, but nearly all pupils manage well.
Leadership and management

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

Grade 2: - good features and no important shortcomings

The judgement of the inspection team confirms the school’s own self-evaluation judgement.

Clarity of direction and promotion of high standards

119. The headteacher provides strong leadership, ensuring that the staff, parents and pupils understand what is expected of them and what they can expect from the school. The senior management team work well together and provide effective support for the headteacher. In particular:
   • all senior managers build effective working relationships with those that they manage. Communication between senior managers, teaching and support staff is very good at a personal level and policies are clearly understood by all. However there are some inconsistencies in the ways in which information is shared between various teams and line managers;
   • the two deputy headteachers provide excellent all-round support for the headteacher and each contributes positively to school improvement, in the areas of support and guidance for pupils and improvement of teaching and learning respectively;
   • the two assistant headteachers have developed outstanding links between the school and its primary partner schools and good links between the school and the local college.

120. Senior managers effectively promote a clear set of values which ensure that all pupils are treated equally and their achievements are equally valued, so helping to integrate pupils with a range of special needs into all aspects of school life. There are appropriate procedures to promote racial equality and the school meets statutory requirements in respect of disability and looked after children.

121. There are clear links between the priorities identified in the SDP and the LEA Educational Strategic Plan. Line managers encourage subject leaders to reflect LEA and national priorities in departmental development plans and this has led to significant improvements in teaching and learning in some departments.

122. Senior managers work closely with heads of department to set challenging and achievable target grades for all pupils. There is close liaison between subject teachers, form tutors and year heads to ensure that pupils meet their targets. This close monitoring of pupils’ work contributed significantly to the school’s best ever GCSE results in 2004, when pupils in most subjects achieved higher grades than would have been predicted from their previous achievements.
Performance management matches staff training to school priorities, and policies and procedures are clear and effective. The school is developing its departmental self-evaluation, but these new systems do not as yet produce sufficiently valid information to inform the planning of staff development programmes. Senior managers have used departmental monitoring to help them identify good practice and address areas of weakness, so improving the work of some departmental teams.

**The role of the Governing Body**

The Governing Body works hard and effectively supports the Headteacher in his management of the school. Governors play an active part in refining the school’s strategic plan and challenge the school’s thinking about development priorities and financial planning; they are not involved in the early stages of school development planning.

The Chair of Governors is experienced and knowledgeable, providing his fellow governors with clear guidance about their statutory responsibilities. The governors discharge their statutory responsibilities relating to appointments, grievance procedures, disciplinary procedures for staff and pupils and the setting of the school budget, but statutory requirements relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, and the provision of a report for parents on achievement and progress in religious education at key stage 4 are not being discharged.

Recent appointments made by the governors, against a background of staff cuts and financial savings, have been well-judged and have contributed to school improvement.
Key question 6: How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards?

Grade 3: - good features outweigh shortcomings.
The judgement of the inspection team is one grade lower than the school’s self-evaluation judgement.

127. The school has made progress since the last inspection by:
- planning a programme of faculty or departmental reviews;
- making better use of data;
- introducing the opportunity for teachers to observe lessons; and
- producing self-evaluation reports at subject and whole school levels in preparation for the inspection.
The school’s self-evaluation processes, though evolving, are not sufficiently developed to provide management information which is both comprehensive and systematic. The Estyn inspection criteria have been applied by the school in general terms when reaching judgements but these judgements are not always supported by a robust evidence base. Where criteria are more sharply applied, progress is evident. The analysis of performance data and subsequent setting of targets is an increasingly refined process which is helping to raise achievement. Performance management procedures also make a helpful contribution to the school’s view of its effectiveness.

128. The programme of subject reviews has rightly concentrated on learning and teaching and pupils’ achievements and has helped to provide some insight into the effectiveness of individual departments. External consultants have reviewed departments to good effect in some instances but the scope and quality has not been consistent and areas for development have not always been identified. The findings from the review processes are not drawn together at senior management level to provide a whole school perspective on various issues, such as assessment.

129. Overall, the views of various interested parties are not canvassed with sufficient regularity to provide up to date information. However, the views of teaching staff on particular issues are sought through the department structures and senior managers’ line management of departments. Pupils on the School and Year councils comment on certain issues, such as canteen facilities, and, in the past, a year 10 group did complete a survey on the quality of school provision. Self-evaluation by governors is not systematic.

130. Not all the school’s self-evaluation judgements matched the inspection team’s findings, which were lower for three of the seven key questions. Even though
self-evaluation in the school has concentrated on subject performance rather
than whole school issues, the two subjects found in the inspection to have
shortcomings in important areas were not identified in the school’s own report.
The report rightly celebrates the many successes which the school has enjoyed;
it does not, however, always identify shortcomings.

132. The SDP links well to the LEA’s strategic priorities and rightly gives a high
profile to raising standards, although there is no obvious link between
documented self evaluation findings and the priorities for action. The plan
contains a mixture of genuine development needs and aspects of the school
which are already effective and are not development priorities. The level of
detail for the actions to be taken varies considerably, some of which is helpful in
making clear what needs to happen and some of which is open to wide
interpretation. Responsibilities are well defined.

133. Timescales are not always specific and the intended outcomes of the actions to
be taken are mostly expressed in very general terms so that it is difficult to see
how progress will be gauged. There are no costings in either the SDP or
departmental plans. The allocation of resources to identified priorities is not
automatic, but spending can mostly be matched to improvements in quality and
standards as, for example, in the provision of laptops to some SEN pupils.

134. Some departmental plans, such as that for mathematics, are well set out and
forward thinking, reflecting both school priorities and subject needs. Progress
with Departmental Development Plans (DDPs) is monitored effectively by the
deputy headteacher.

135. Self-evaluation and development planning were key issues in the last inspection
report. There has been progress in some aspects but some of the same
shortcomings remain.
Key question 7: How efficient are leaders and managers in using resources?

Grade 2: - good features and no important shortcomings

136. In its own self-evaluation report the school judged this key question to be grade 1 “Good with outstanding features”. The inspection team identified one outstanding feature, with the rest being good, so grade 2 was judged to be appropriate.

The adequacy, suitability and use made of staffing, learning resources and accommodation

137. The school has enough appropriately qualified staff to teach most aspects and subjects of the curriculum. There are, however, a few exceptions where non-specialist teaching has had a negative impact on how well learners learn. The management of curriculum time has led to minimal progress in religious education at key stage 4.

138. There are enough classroom assistants with relevant experience to support pupils with SEN. The VI resource is very well staffed, with two teachers and nine support staff for twelve pupils. Assistants work effectively with teachers to support pupils at both key stages and the learning resource manager extends this support. Technicians in information technology, art and science make sure that all pupils have access to equipment that is well maintained.

139. In art, history, home economics and information technology pupils use a good range of appropriate learning resources. In art and history good quality materials produced in-house support students’ learning. Overall, resources are adequate in other subjects except religious education where there are no suitable texts in year 9 and in information technology where subject specific software is limited at key stage 3.

140. The school buildings are generally in good condition and are well maintained given the funds available.
- In general, departmental rooms are conveniently placed and this will be further improved on the imminent completion of the new building works.
- Classrooms provide stimulating environments. Displays are very good in history and the library and mainly good in other curriculum areas. Corridors are used well to display pupils’ work and other relevant material.
- The facilities in some toilets are not fully maintained and are being abused, resulting in unsanitary conditions towards the end of the school day.
- The number of floors at different levels and the resulting stairs present potential difficulties for pupils with disabilities. There are also some uneven surfaces in parts of the outside areas. However, health and safety considerations are monitored well.
141. Outside resources, including visits to cultural centres, are used well to match pupils’ needs and interests and to develop very good partnerships with the community. The library provides a pupil friendly environment; it is open for half an hour before school, and also after school, to allow pupils access, and pupils are encouraged to read frequently and widely. Subject displays are prominent, making the correlation between subjects and reading material explicit. The library is well managed; it is a resource that continues to make an important contribution to the quality of pupils’ learning.

How efficiently resources are managed to achieve value for money

142. Governors with relevant experience support the headteacher and senior administrator in managing the budget efficiently. The accounting system allows the school to monitor and review spending regularly. Good intelligence is gathered from primary feeder schools on predicted pupil numbers. This improves the reliability of budget forecasts. The budget is currently in deficit but effective measures are in place to resolve this issue. The LEA is informed of risks and the headteacher pursues innovative solutions to financial problems.

143. The school provides value for money; for example, by comparing the costs of service providers and by sharing with other schools the costs of in-service training and some reviews, which the LEA has formally recognised as being efficient uses of resources.

144. The headteacher is pro-active and very successful at securing additional funds. This is an outstanding feature and demonstrates a determined effort to provide resources that will improve pupils’ experience of school.

145. Generally, spending decisions match the priorities in the SDP; however, the SDP does not include costs, anticipated outcomes or opportunities for review and evaluation of the impact of spending. The SMT and governors are not sufficiently involved in the process of review and evaluation of the outcomes of expenditure.

146. Funds are allocated to faculties using a formula, which barely provides for the basic needs of most subjects. The match between resources and pupils’ needs has been maintained through careful management and use of stock. For some curriculum areas the situation is becoming increasingly difficult. Additional funds may be accessed by application to the headteacher. This has led to development in a number of curriculum areas, for example data logging equipment in science and computer software in French. The SMT is not involved sufficiently in this process; bids are linked to development priorities but monitoring of outcomes is informal.

147. Each year, middle managers identify staff development needs; these are linked to the SDP and to DDPs. The deputy headteacher effectively prioritises needs and the school has benefited from a good training programme. Expenditure has led to measurable improvements, for example in the development of teaching
strategies and improvement of standards in art at key stage 3. Other development needs are identified in DDPs but consistent with shortcomings in the SDP, these do not include costs, anticipated outcomes or opportunities for review and evaluation of the impact of spending. The school has recently achieved Investors in People status.

## Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

### Art

**Key stage 3 - Grade 2**: good features and no important shortcomings

### Good and outstanding features

148. Pupils are well motivated, work productively and achieve good standards in their knowledge, understanding and skills.

149. All pupils make good use of the work of artists, craftworkers and designers from different periods, cultures and contexts to inform the development of their work.

150. Through group work pupils develop ideas and values on a range of issues. They are able to express their ideas confidently through discussion and group presentations.

151. Pupils develop good skills using a range of materials and techniques in two and three dimensions.

152. The majority of pupils have a good understanding of what they are required to do and how well they are doing. Regular feedback enables pupils to make progress during lessons. More able pupils can use appropriate language to talk about what they need to do to improve.

153. Pupils show maturity in their relationships with others. Many extend their understanding of issues and their ability to work together through an extensive range of extra-curricular activities.

154. Pupils make good use of ICT to collect relevant information and to manipulate images as part of the design process.

### Shortcomings

155. Pupils’ reporting skills from first-hand sources are underdeveloped.

156. Pupils’ abilities to record information and develop ideas and techniques are underdeveloped because they do not keep sketchbooks.
157. Teachers’ planning for the development of pupils’ skills is generally not sufficiently cohesive or detailed, which slows down pupils’ acquisition of these skills to some extent.
Key stage 4 - Grade 3: good features outweigh shortcomings

**Good and outstanding features**

158. More able pupils and less able pupils achieve good standards relative to their abilities. A significant number of more able pupils achieve two separate GCSEs in art.

159. Pupils collect visual information purposefully. More able pupils’ annotated sketchbooks show rigorous analysis and evaluation and the development of ideas towards a final statement.

160. Pupils use a range of materials and techniques in two and three dimensions to produce good final outcomes.

161. Pupils study contemporary themes such as anti-smoking and anti drink-driving, and talk confidently and with maturity on a range of issues. Knowledge and understanding gained inform the development of personal responses.

162. Using appropriate software, pupils develop very good skills in ICT. The outcomes of image manipulation and montage techniques are very good.

**Shortcomings**

163. There is some underachievement among middle ability pupils and, at GCSE, the attainment of A* -C grades by girls is below national and LEA averages.

164. Rigorous analysis and evaluation are not consistent features. Consequently, connections between the work of others and the development of pupils’ own work are tenuous.

165. Opportunities for students to work from first-hand sources are limited. This inhibits the development of their recording skills and their imagination.

166. Teachers’ planning is not explicitly linked to the assessment objectives. Consequently, pupils are often unclear about what they need to do to improve their performance.

**History**

Key stage 3 - Grade 1: good with outstanding features

Key stage 4 - Grade 1: good with outstanding features

**Good and outstanding features**

167. Standards in history have improved since the last inspection. In particular, pupils now benefit from the use of teaching materials that are well matched to pupils’ abilities and teachers work hard to make sure that learning is fun.
168. In key stages 3 and 4 pupils generally make good progress and a substantial minority of pupils make very good progress.

169. The numbers of pupils who enter GCSE examinations in history and the proportion of these pupils who achieve A*-C grades are consistently well above Welsh averages. These excellent examination results reflect the sharp focus that teachers place on pupils’ understanding of examination criteria.

170. Pupils in key stages 3 and 4 have a clear understanding of chronology, cause and consequence. These pupils are developing their understanding of historical significance.

171. The great majority of pupils can analyse information from a range of sources appropriate to their abilities. They can recall historical facts, and select and use information effectively. This is a good feature of pupils’ work in key stage 3 and a particularly strong feature of pupils’ work in key stage 4.

172. Key stage 3 pupils with SEN perform well orally in role-play activities and key stage 4 pupils following entry-level courses perform soundly when working on examination tasks.

173. In key stage 3 and key stage 4, pupils become increasingly aware that historical events can be interpreted in different ways and they apply this knowledge effectively when completing their GCSE coursework. In addition, GCSE pupils work in groups to research historical topics, and apply their knowledge by making presentations to other pupils. These presentations make very good use of ICT.

174. Whole-school activities and projects are particularly well used to develop pupils’ understanding of the democratic process and the individual’s role within a democracy.

Shortcomings

175. At key stage 3, pupils’ knowledge and understanding of the study of ‘Wales in Industrial Britain’ and aspects of local history are not of quite the same high standard as the rest of the history course.

Home economics

Key stage 4 - Grade 1: good with outstanding features

Good and outstanding features:

176. In both GCSE child development and GCSE food and nutrition courses, pupils’ achievement in examination work is outstanding. Examination results are consistently higher than LEA and National averages, and pupils of all abilities
achieve higher results than would be expected for their ability. This has been a long-standing feature of the GCSE child development and GCSE food and nutrition courses.

177. Practical work is of a high standard and pupils pay particular care to risk assessment and economic use of food and textiles. Pupils also carry out detailed investigations resulting in coursework that is never less than good and sometimes outstanding.

178. Pupils make good progress with an enthusiastic and committed attitude to learning. Pupils with SEN often perform at a higher level than expected.

179. Oral and written work is of a good standard, with pupils of all abilities able to speak with clarity and confidence, using specialist terms precisely.

180. Pupils use ICT appropriately and in a variety of ways, and this improves the quality of their classwork and coursework. In particular pupils’ use of ICT in GCSE child development classes helps them to design and manufacture products skilfully.

181. Pupils work effectively as members of teams and have a mature approach to learning and good problem-solving skills. Problem-solving is particularly well developed in the GCSE food and nutrition course.

**Shortcomings**

182. A small number of pupils do not fully understand which aspects of their work are good, what needs to improve, and what they need to do to improve.

**Information technology**

**Key stage 3 - Grade 4:** some good features, but shortcomings in important areas

183. Standards achieved by pupils in year 7 have improved since the last inspection, although across the key stage as a whole there has been less significant progress.

**Good and outstanding features**

184. In year 7, where information technology is taught as a subject by a small team of teachers, pupils become enthusiastically engaged in their work and make rapid progress. They quickly gain confidence when accessing the school network and relevant software. By the end of year 7 most pupils can use a range of information technology skills effectively and use information technology terms accurately.

185. In particular year 7 pupils word process effectively, use formatting tools, and combine text and images. They start to create documents and presentations
that are suitable for particular purposes. They collect data and most pupils can start to model that data to solve problems. They can present their findings clearly, using both graphs and text. Many pupils can assess their own progress effectively and start to make improvements.

186. Pupils with SEN show confidence in their work. They achieve good standards and demonstrate particularly high motivation to succeed.

Shortcomings

187. There are undue variations in standards of pupils’ achievement across key stage 3. In years 8 and 9, pupils are taught information technology by teachers in a wide range of other subjects. During these two years, progress becomes slow and uneven and the standard of their achievement has shortcomings in important areas. In particular, year 8 and year 9 pupils make very little progress in significant parts of the national curriculum, especially data handling. By the end of the key stage, pupils’ achievement does not therefore reflect an appropriate range of knowledge and understanding in information technology.

188. By the end of key stage 3 most pupils can word process, make presentations and use the internet effectively to support their work in other subjects. However, they are rarely aware of how to improve their information technology skills in the context of the other subject studied. Very few pupils attain the higher levels of the attainment target.

189. Key stage 3 pupils mostly achieve low standards of achievement in data handling and modelling. They have few opportunities to demonstrate these skills, build on them or learn how to improve.

Key stage 4 - Grade 1: good with outstanding features

190. Standards achieved by pupils have improved significantly since the last inspection.

Good and outstanding features

191. Pupils in key stage 4 achieve grades at GCSE which are significantly above both the county and national averages. Pupils make rapid progress at the start of the course to enable them to address all their investigations productively. GCSE results, when compared with those of similar schools, show particularly significant achievement by less able pupils.

192. Pupils respond very well to the sophisticated targets set for them by teachers, and they take responsibility for charting their own progress and improving their work. They are well motivated and take full advantage of all available resources. With well targeted guidance and support in lessons they develop effective information technology study skills.
193. By the end of the key stage they are confident independent students who perform well in all aspects of the GCSE course. They understand how a theoretical understanding of the concepts supports their performance in coursework. They work enthusiastically to identify realistic problems, collect data, test its validity and evaluate their solutions. They achieve very good standards in their coursework, demonstrated by the quality of investigation and presentation in many of the projects.

Modern foreign languages

194. Since the last inspection the standards achieved by pupils with SEN have improved and the speaking and listening skills of pupils of all abilities have also improved.

Key stage 3 - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

Good and outstanding features

195. In key stage 3, the teachers’ consistently good use of French in lessons helps pupils to develop effective listening skills, allowing them to follow instructions and explanations.

196. From year 7 onwards pupils learn to speak French in the classroom, asking for help or equipment, for example. Many, including some pupils with SEN, can recall language and give opinions. More able learners vary tenses and link sentences together.

197. Throughout key stage 3, pupils make good progress as they learn new vocabulary and structures. Pronunciation is generally accurate and pupils read aloud with fluency and understanding.

198. Writing skills develop well over the key stage. Written work is generally neat and accurate. By year 9, pupils are beginning to write effectively in extended sentences.

Shortcomings

199. The development of pupils’ reading skills is limited by a restricted range of materials and sources of information. Pupils of average ability are over-reliant upon support and do not practise new language independently.
Key stage 4 - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

Good and outstanding features

200. Examination courses attract a higher proportion of students than is the case nationally. The percentage of passes at A*-C in French compares favourably with national averages.

201. Standards in GCSE and AS French show good features and no important shortcomings. In GCSE Spanish good features outweigh shortcomings.

202. AS pupils ask questions and find appropriate answers from a demanding text. French and Spanish GCSE pupils talk confidently on familiar topics.

203. There are examples of coursework essays of a high standard in GCSE French and Spanish.

204. Listening skills continue to develop well and students are able to obtain information from familiar and unfamiliar language.

205. The written work of year 11 AS pupils shows an emphasis on creating more complex sentences using a range of connectives and a wider vocabulary. Pupils understand grammatical explanations and are able to use their new knowledge well in subsequent practice exercises.

Shortcomings

206. Some pupils are a little reticent orally, are confident only with the current topic and its vocabulary and structures and do not have the strategies to deal readily with the unpredictable.

Religious education

Key stage 3 - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

207. Since the last inspection, standards have improved in key stage 3.

Good and outstanding features

208. Knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and practices are never less than sound and often good. The more and least able pupils in particular have a good grasp of the subject content covered relative to their abilities. Pupils from different backgrounds and groupings achieve good standards.

209. A particular strength is the degree to which pupils understand how their own and others’ experiences of life might relate to religious belief and practice e.g. in linking ideas about special journeys with the religious concept of pilgrimage.
210. Pupils are enthused about their work in religious education and have a positive attitude to learning. They are very willing to explore issues and they engage in research work. Pupils work well together and readily share ideas. Speaking and listening skills are good. Written work is satisfactory, with some good examples of extended writing in which pupils express their own ideas.

211. Pupils make good progress overall and have some awareness of how to improve further.

Shortcomings

212. Knowledge of different religions, other than Christianity or Judaism, is not always secure or in sufficient depth.

213. Progress in the use of some key skills, particularly writing, problem-solving and ICT, to improve subject standards, is more limited than in others.

Key stage 4 - Grade 4: some good features but shortcomings in important areas

214. Since the last inspection, when religious education in key stage 4 was unsatisfactory, the limited time afforded to the subject has continued to result in a number of shortcomings.

Good and outstanding features

215. Pupils have a positive attitude to the subject and appreciate its relevance. Within the lessons which pupils do attend, they are quick to grasp basic ideas about contemporary issues. Some of the more able pupils can appreciate a broad religious perspective relating to the topics studied.

216. Pupils are generally willing to engage in debate and are mostly confident speakers and sensitive listeners.

Shortcomings

217. Pupils are lacking the essential religious knowledge and understanding to enable them to explore issues in any depth e.g. they have a very sketchy knowledge of different beliefs about God which restricts their understanding of both religious worship and issues around the sanctity of life.

218. While there is some understanding of relevant contemporary issues, pupils are unable to build on previous work.

219. Written work is very limited in scope and gives little opportunity for pupils to explore and express their own ideas and beliefs. Apart from speaking and listening, limited progress is made with key skills.
Religious studies

GCSE Religious studies - Grade 2: good features and no important shortcomings

Good and outstanding features

220. Pupils are motivated by, and make good progress in, the examination course and results have been good overall.

221. Coursework standards are good. Pupils’ completed assignments are well organised, properly detailed and show a sound understanding of both religious concepts and wider, related issues.

222. Pupils have a good grasp of the course content e.g. most are able to relate in detail events of the crucifixion and show an understanding of the religious and political background at the time. They are able to explain the significance of Biblical events and teachings to Christians today.

223. Most pupils are able to evaluate an issue by offering arguments for and against and by presenting their own points of view, supported with reasons.

Shortcomings

224. More able pupils have yet to achieve more sophisticated evaluation skills e.g. offering a critique of different arguments before drawing their own conclusions.
School's response to the inspection

The Headteacher, Staff and Governors welcome the report. It is pleasing to note that recognition is given to the high standards achieved in so many aspects of the school.

In particular, the report confirms that the quality of care, support and guidance provided by the school is outstanding. It recognises that the school has effective measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour and the diversity of pupils' backgrounds is recognised and valued within the school. The report recognises the VI Resource is of a very good quality. Very able pupils and pupils with special educational needs generally make very good progress and their achievements are good. Most importantly, the inspection report makes clear that we are achieving our aim to make our school a happy and secure place in which pupils grow in confidence and independence.

There are several outstanding features in the school's provision of appropriate learning experiences and a number of features contribute positively to effective teaching including the recognition that teachers and pupils get on very well together and that pupils get on well together. We are pleased that the report notes the school’s extra-curricular provision is outstanding as is the transition link between the school and its primary feeder schools.

The high standards achieved by pupils reflect the quality of teaching and learning within the school, and the skill and dedication of teachers and the care and talent of support staff are duly acknowledged. The report provides useful recommendations for further improving performance, as in making further use of assessment for learning and addressing shortcomings in provision and standards in information technology at key stage 3.

A copy of the school’s action plan in response to the inspection recommendations will be sent to all parents. The governors’ annual report to parents will report on the progress we are making on the inspection recommendations.

The school would like to acknowledge the professional, collaborative approach and the diligence of the inspection team. Their positive endorsement of our school means that we can confidently move forward and build on the many excellent features that are highlighted in the report. The report gives us a valuable external audit and a firm base from which to move forward.
Appendix A

Basic information about the school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of school</th>
<th>Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School type</td>
<td>Community School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age-range of pupils</td>
<td>11-16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Address of school       | Afan Valley Road
                          | Cimla                             |
                          | Neath                            |
| Post-code               | SA11 3TA                         |
| Telephone number        | 01639 791300                     |

Headteacher: Mr D A Griffiths

Date of appointment: 1 April 1997

Chair of governors/Appropriate authority: Councillor Peter Rees/Neath Port Talbot LEA

Registered inspector: Mr Michael Tibbott

Dates of inspection: 15 – 18 November 2004
## Appendix B

### School data and indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year group</th>
<th>Y7</th>
<th>Y8</th>
<th>Y9</th>
<th>Y10</th>
<th>Y11</th>
<th>Y12</th>
<th>Y13</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of pupils</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>843</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Full-time equivalent (fte)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Staffing information

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding special classes)</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in special classes</td>
<td>3:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average class size (excluding special classes)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher (fte): class ratio</td>
<td>1.6:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to inspection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>KS3</th>
<th>KS4</th>
<th>Post-16</th>
<th>Whole School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autumn 2003</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
<td>91.5%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2004</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>93.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2004</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>95.5%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>93.86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals | 18.8% |
| Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection | 27    |
## Appendix C

### National Curriculum Assessment Results

#### End of Key Stage 3:

#### National Curriculum Assessment KS3 Results 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of pupils at each level</th>
<th>Number of pupils in Y9: 174</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D A F W 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 EP 5+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English:</strong> Teacher Assessment</td>
<td>School 0 0 0 0 0 1 3 28 32 21 14 0 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National 0 1 1 0 0 2 9 22 34 21 8 0 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English:</strong> Test</td>
<td>School 0 1 0 0 0 0 9 20 23 28 17 0 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National 0 4 4 0 0 0 8 23 31 21 9 0 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematics:</strong> Teacher Assessment</td>
<td>School 0 0 0 0 0 5 15 19 39 20 0 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National 0 1 1 0 0 1 9 21 26 27 13 0 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematics:</strong> Test</td>
<td>School 0 5 0 0 0 0 2 19 18 33 21 0 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National 0 6 2 0 0 0 8 22 23 27 12 0 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science:</strong> Teacher Assessment</td>
<td>School 0 0 0 0 0 0 2 26 27 31 12 0 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National 0 1 1 0 0 1 9 22 32 24 10 0 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science:</strong> Test</td>
<td>School 0 1 0 0 0 0 1 13 37 33 13 0 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National 0 4 1 0 0 0 7 20 32 24 11 0 67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Percentage of pupils attaining at least level 5 in mathematics, science and English or Welsh (first language) according to teacher assessment and test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>According to teacher assessment</th>
<th>According to test results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the school 54%</td>
<td>In the school 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Wales 53%</td>
<td>In Wales 53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### National Curriculum Assessment KS3 Results 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of pupils at each level</th>
<th>Number of pupils in Y9: 146</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D A F W 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 EP 5+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English:</strong> Teacher Assessment</td>
<td>School 0 4 1 0 0 0 3 18 12 44 16 0 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National 0 1 1 0 0 2 9 22 34 22 9 0 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English:</strong> Test</td>
<td>School 0 3 0 0 0 0 5 18 32 31 9 0 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National 0 3 4 0 0 0 8 21 31 23 10 0 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematics:</strong> Teacher Assessment</td>
<td>School 0 1 0 0 0 0 4 16 21 43 14 0 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National 0 1 0 0 0 1 8 2 25 29 14 0 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematics:</strong> Test</td>
<td>School 0 5 0 0 0 0 3 18 12 44 16 0 72</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National 0 5 2 0 0 1 7 19 21 32 14 0 68</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Science:</strong> Teacher Assessment</td>
<td>School 0 1 0 0 0 0 9 21 27 24 18 0 68</td>
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<td></td>
<td>National 0 1 0 0 0 1 8 21 32 25 11 0 69</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>In the school 60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Wales 57%</td>
<td>In Wales 57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

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
Public Examination Results:

| For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ |
|---|---|---|
| Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2003 | 0 |
| Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil | 36 |
| The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2003: | School | UA | Wales |
| entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent | 85% | 86% | 87% |
| attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both | 51% | 52% | 51% |
| attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both | 83% | 85% | 85% |
| attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator) | 36% | 37% | 38% |
| entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE | 97% | 99% | 97% |
| attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent | 77% | 79% | 74% |
| attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent | 93% | 95% | 93% |
| attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent | 7% | 5% | 7% |
| attained one or more Entry level qualification only | 2% | 3% | 3% |
| attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Foundation level or NVQ level 1 | 0 | - | - |
| attained a GNVQ Part 1, a GNVQ at Intermediate level or NVQ level 2 | 0 | - | - |

For pupils aged 15, results in GCSE, Entry Level Qualification, GNVQ and NVQ

| Number of pupils aged 15 on the school roll in January 2004 | 0 |
| Average GCSE or GNVQ points score per pupil | 36 |
| The percentage of 15 year old pupils who in 2003: | School | UA | Wales |
| entered for 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent | 87% | 88% | 87% |
| attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to C, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both | 55% | 54% | 51% |
| attained at least 5 GCSE grades A* to G, the equivalent vocational qualifications or a combination of both | 86% | 86% | 85% |
| attained GCSE grades A*-C in each of mathematics, science, English or Welsh first language (the core subject indicator) | 36% | 40% | 38% |
| entered at least one Entry level qualification, GCSE short course or GCSE | 99% | 99% | 97% |
| attained one or more GCSE grades A*-C or the vocational qualification equivalent | 86% | 81% | 75% |
| attained one or more GCSE grades A*-G or the vocational qualification equivalent | 96% | 95% | 93% |
| attained no graded GCSE or the vocational qualification equivalent | 4% | 5% | 7% |
| attained one or more Entry level qualification only | 2 | 3 | 3 |
Appendix D

Evidence base of the inspection

A team of thirteen inspectors visited the school between 15th and 18th of November, and spent the equivalent of 40 days, between them, in the school. The team met before the inspection to plan the inspection, and after the inspection to discuss their judgements and scrutinize the inspection evidence and the report.

During the inspection, the team of inspectors visited:
- 93 lessons, with the majority of these lessons being in the six nominated subjects of art, history, home economics, information technology, modern foreign languages and religious education. However, the lessons visited covered all ages and abilities of pupils, all subjects taught at the school and the great majority of teachers;
- courses being delivered off the school site by partner providers;
- some extra-curricular activities;
- a cross-section of registration periods and assemblies;
- two partner primary schools and the local college of further education.

Before the inspection began, members of the team held meetings with senior managers, the governing body, parents and staff;

During the inspection, members of the inspection team held meetings with:
- senior and middle managers, a wide variety of teachers and support staff and some governors during the inspection;
- groups of pupils representing all ages, abilities and ethnic groups and members of the school council.

The team also considered:
- a selection of pupils’ work, including the work of boys and girls and covering an appropriate range of ages, abilities, subjects and aspects of learning;
- comprehensive documentation provided by the school both before and during the inspection;
- responses to a parents’ questionnaire;
- comments from a wide range of pupils about the school.
## Appendix E

### Composition and responsibilities of the inspection team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team member</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr Michael Tibbott</td>
<td>Registered Inspector, Key questions 1 and 5, Key skills (numeracy), mathematics and science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Sue Allerston</td>
<td>Key question 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Lorraine Buck</td>
<td>Key question 7 and art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Richard Knowles</td>
<td>Key questions 2 and 3 and geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Eilian James</td>
<td>Lay inspector and Key question 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Trevor Guy</td>
<td>Key question 6, religious education and physical education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr David Maddox</td>
<td>History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs P Jones</td>
<td>Home economics and technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Miriam Norton</td>
<td>Information technology and Key skills(ICT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Sally Mills</td>
<td>Key skills(literacy), English, drama and media studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr D Trace</td>
<td>Modern foreign languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Kevin Adams</td>
<td>Music, Welsh and bilingualism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Sian Nicholas</td>
<td>Vocational education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Mel Lewis</td>
<td>Deputy Headteacher at Cefn Saeson and nominee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contractor: ESIS  
G5  
Treforest Industrial Estate  
Pontypridd  
CF37 5YL

The inspection team would like to thank all members of staff at Cefn Saeson, the pupils, their parents and the Governing Body for the warm welcome and support that was offered the team during the recent inspection.
Inspection under Section 10 of the Schools Inspections Act 1996

SUMMARY REPORT FOR PARENTS

Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School
Afan Valley Road
Cimla
Neath
SA11 3TA

School Number: 671/4064

Date of Inspection:
15 - 18 November 2004

by

Mr Michael Tibbott: Inspector Number 16073

Under Estyn contract number: T/9/04
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Copies of this report are available from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide copies of the report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the cost of reproduction may be made to others requesting a copy of the report.
Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School was inspected as part of a national programme of school inspection. The purpose is to identify good features and shortcomings in schools in order that they may improve the quality of education offered and raise the standards achieved by their pupils. The inspection of all schools within a six-year cycle is also designed to give parents more information about their child's school. A copy of this summary is sent to every family with a child at the school. The full report can be obtained from the school.

The inspection of Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School took place between 15 – 18 November, 2004. An independent team of inspectors, led by Mr Michael Tibbott undertook the inspection. Estyn, a statutory body independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales, commissioned the inspection.

The team was required to report on the standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided by the school, the quality of leadership and management and the contribution made by the school to its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This summary report may be reproduced for non-commercial educational purposes but only as a whole and provided it is reproduced verbatim without adaptation and the source and date thereof are stated.

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

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

The nature of the provider

1. Cefn Saeson School is an 11-16 mixed comprehensive school serving Cimla, Tonnawr, Pontrhydyfen, Tonna and parts of Neath. There are 843 pupils on roll. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds, with just under 19% entitled to free school meals, which is above the national average, and just over 10% coming from areas suffering from social and economic disadvantage. English is the first language of nearly all pupils, although there is a small but growing number from ethnic backgrounds, for some of whom English is not the first language.

2. Pupils represent the full ability range and provision is made for a wide variety of special educational needs (SEN), including a Visually Impaired (VI) resource, which serves pupils from across the Neath Port Talbot County Borough. Some pupils from Swansea City and County Borough Council also attend the VI resource. There are 200 pupils on the SEN register of whom 21 have statements of SEN.

3. The school has developed educational links with its local primary schools and with the wider community. The school also works closely with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Neath and Afan College and various training providers to improve the range of learning opportunities available to pupils aged 14 and over.

4. The school serves the same community as during the last inspection in 1999 but has extended and improved its buildings and playing fields since that time.

The school’s priorities and targets

5. Teaching and non-teaching staff are determined that their pupils should be at the centre of everything that they do. The school expects pupils to succeed and celebrates their successes.

6. The management team produces an annual strategic plan following consultation within the school and with the governing body. A developing feature of the school development plan (SDP) is the link made between departmental, school and Local Education Authority (LEA) priorities.

7. Senior managers and the governing body work with the LEA to set targets for National Curriculum and external examination performance. In addition, the governing body has identified a range of strategic priorities in the SDP. These priorities include:
   - raising pupils’ academic standards;
   - improving support and guidance for pupils;
   - improving the quality of accommodation and resources;
   - providing staff development;
   - improving community involvement;
   - improving financial performance.
Summary

8. Cefn Saeson Comprehensive School has made progress in addressing some aspects of all the key issues in the last inspection report but some shortcomings remain.

Table of grades awarded

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

Standards of achievement in the six chosen subjects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Key stage 3</th>
<th>Key stage 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home economics including:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• GCSE Food technology</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• GCSE Child development</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern foreign languages</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious education including:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Religious education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• GCSE Religious studies</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standards of achievement

9. The standards achieved by pupils varied across the six subjects inspected with:
   • history (key stages 3 and 4), home economics (key stage 4) and information technology (key stage 4) having good standards with outstanding features;
   • modern foreign languages (key stages 3 and 4), art (key stage 3), religious education (key stage 3) and GCSE religious studies (key stage 4) having good standards with no important shortcomings;
   • art (key stage 4) having good features which outweigh shortcomings;
• information technology (key stage 3) and religious education (key stage 4) having some good features but shortcomings in important areas.

10 Overall the proportion of lessons where standards were grade 1 or grade 2 is very high and represents a significant improvement from the last inspection.

11 In recent years pupils have generally performed better than the Welsh average and better than pupils in similar schools.

12 Good features of GCSE performance include:
• pupils attaining a higher 5+ A*-C pass rate than in most similar schools across Wales;
• steady improvement in GCSE results for many years and a significant improvement in 2003 and 2004;
• good entry rates for girls and rapidly improving entry rates for boys.

13 Some features of GCSE performance are slow to improve, particularly the pupils’ average point score and attainment of the core subject indicator (CSI).

14 More able pupils and SEN pupils generally make very good progress and their achievements are good.

15 Pupils at key stages 3 and 4 communicate well. They are attentive listeners and effective speakers, and they use these skills effectively, particularly during group work. Reading and writing skills are also generally good. Most pupils retrieve information well and writing in extended prose communicates meaning clearly. Pupils make appropriate progress in Welsh, but the school currently has no plans to provide bilingual education across the curriculum. Pupils have good number skills and knowledge, being able to handle and interpret data and calculate in a range of contexts. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills are well developed by the end of year 7, but progress afterwards is uneven. The use of ICT as a learning tool varies considerably across departments, being good in some departments and very limited in others.

16 Pupils’ personal and social skills and their wider learning skills are generally well developed. Problem-solving, though well used occasionally, does not have a high profile in either key stage.

17 Attendance has improved greatly since the last inspection and is clearly good. Pupils arrive punctually for lessons and behaviour is very good. Pupils are co-operative, show respect for each other and value diversity. A very high proportion of pupils stay in full time education or training when they leave Cefn Saeson, in nearly all cases transferring to the local college. Permanent exclusion rates are a little higher, and fixed term exclusions lower than LEA averages.
The quality of education and training

18 The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall. The proportion of lessons where the quality of teaching was grade 1 or grade 2 is very high and represents a significant improvement from the last inspection. This applies to the six chosen subjects and to the range of other lessons that were seen.

19 A number of features contribute positively to effective teaching. In particular:

- relationships between pupils are very good, as are relationships between pupils and their teachers;
- lessons are generally well planned and learning objectives and tasks are clearly understood by pupils;
- teachers and learning support assistants work well together;
- teachers encourage pupils to ask and answer questions, to discuss their work and to use ICT, audio-visual and other resources to develop their knowledge and understanding.

20. The school’s pupil profile and monitoring systems are used effectively to motivate pupils and to set targets and review progress. Teachers provide effective oral feedback in classrooms and mark work regularly and accurately. In some cases, pupils set targets themselves and plan to improve. Reports provide appropriate information about achievements and general progress but not about the knowledge and skills being developed in subjects. In most respects, reporting procedures meet statutory requirements.

21. Where teaching has important shortcomings, then typically:

- learning objectives are not clear to pupils or are not clearly matched to the course requirements;
- assessment does not guide pupils sufficiently about how they can improve their work.

22. The range of subjects offered by the school provides pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum which is generally well organised. The school’s extra-curricular provision is outstanding. The provision made for pupils with visual impairment is good with outstanding features and provision for pupils with SEN is good. Provision for pupils’ moral, social and cultural development has many good features, but assemblies tend not to be spiritually uplifting occasions and often provide no spiritual message.

23. Although there are several outstanding features in the learning experiences which the school provides for pupils, some statutory parts of the curriculum are not provided, particularly a daily act of collective worship, and the provision of reports for parents for religious education and information technology in some years. Some shortcomings in curriculum organisation also contribute to depressed standards in religious education at key stage 4 and information technology in years 8 and 9.
24. The school provides good work related education programmes for disaffected pupils and significant work experience for all year 10 pupils. The Curriculum Cymreig is evident in many aspects of the school's work and education for sustainable development has been promoted effectively across the school.

25. The quality of care, support and guidance provided by the school is outstanding. Relationships are generally very good and pupils are confident that they would find help and support if they had a problem in school.

26. The care and support team is effective, its members working together to identify pupils’ problems and provide support. The VI Resource is of a very good quality.

27. Communication between parents and teachers is good, and pupils and parents benefit from clear and appropriate guidance about a number of curriculum issues such as pupils’ option choices and progress. Form tutors are increasingly involved in improving pupils’ work in subjects, and the rewards system in year 7-year 9 encourages good behaviour.

28. Pupils are supported effectively when they transfer to Cefn Saeson from primary schools. There is a good activity-based Personal and social education (PSE) programme. Systems are in place to assure pupils’ well-being and health. Child protection systems are secure.

29. Pupils’ attendance is effectively monitored and absences are followed up very effectively.

30. The SEN team and the VI resource have made a significant impact on the quality of provision for additional learning needs. The school caters well for a broad range of special needs and works effectively with external agencies.

31. Comprehensive assessment systems allow effective planning for support of pupils with additional learning needs. Learning assistants work well with special needs pupils in classes or in withdrawal groups. Individual education plans are of good quality and are regularly reviewed.

32. The school has effective measures to eliminate oppressive behaviour including bullying, sexism and racism and the diversity of pupils' backgrounds is recognised and valued by staff and pupils.

33. The school is aware of access issues under the Disability Discrimination Act and acts appropriately to ensure that the needs of disabled pupils can be met. The design of the building creates some difficulties for pupils with disabilities, but nearly all pupils manage well.
Leadership and management

34. The headteacher provides strong leadership and communicates a clear set of values to staff, pupils and parents. The senior managers ably support the headteacher in building effective communication, which is very good at a personal level. There are some inconsistencies in the way that information is shared by line managers.

35. Clear links exist between the priorities in LEA and school strategic planning.

36. The work of the two deputy headteachers contributes significantly to improvements in the support and guidance that pupils receive and to improvements in teaching and learning. The work of the two assistant headteachers contributes significantly to outstanding transition links between the school and its feeder primary schools, and to strong links between the school and the local college.

37. Senior managers work closely with department heads to set appropriate targets for pupils. Monitoring work carried out by year heads, form tutors and subject teachers contributed to the school’s good GCSE results in 2004.

38. The governing body effectively supports the headteacher and challenges the school, its members acting as critical friends. The governors are effectively led by an experienced chairperson who is aware of the statutory responsibilities of governors. The governing body discharges all its statutory duties, apart from ensuring the delivery of some statutory areas of the curriculum.

39. The school has made progress since the last inspection by improving aspects of school self-evaluation and development planning. The SDP addresses important issues, but the number of targets could be reduced and the plan streamlined.

40. Senior managers have a broad and generally accurate overview of performance and provision in school, but this overview is not sufficiently detailed to inform development planning effectively.

41. Self-evaluation is based on ESTYN criteria but is not always supported by robust evidence. However, the analysis of data and setting of targets are becoming increasingly refined and help the school to raise standards of pupil achievement.

42. The departmental review programme has rightly focused on teaching and learning, but the process has not been consistent, particularly the input of external consultants. Areas for development have not always been identified and the review findings are not drawn together by senior management to provide a whole-school perspective on issues such as assessment.

43. Although the school review system has focused on departmental performance, those subjects identified in this inspection as having shortcomings in important
areas were not identified by the school review and the school's self-evaluation judgements are often higher than those of the inspection team.

44. The school has enough teachers and support staff and their experiences and qualifications are generally well matched to the school's needs. Most departments have sufficient resources but there are shortages in religious education and information technology. Accommodation is generally good and is currently being improved, but some pupils' toilets are unsanitary by the end of the school day.

45. Outside resources are used effectively and the library is pupil friendly and well used. The headteacher ensures that the school provides good value for money, for example by comparing the costs of a variety of service providers.

46. Governors with relevant experience support the headteacher and senior administrator in managing the budget efficiently. The budget is currently in deficit but effective measures are in place to resolve the issue.

47. The headteacher is pro-active and very successful in securing additional funds, and uses these to enhance pupils' experiences of school. Spending decisions generally match SDP priorities, but the SDP lacks details of cost or fails to link costs to outcomes for monitoring. This is also the case with departmental development plans.

48. Departments are allocated funds using a formula, which barely provides for basic needs in most subjects. The match between learning resources and needs has been maintained by careful management and use of stock, a situation that is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. Some departments have acquired additional funds and the headteacher has matched their funding, allowing some good development work to take place. The Senior Management Team (SMT) is not sufficiently involved in the decision-making process and monitoring of the educational outcomes of spending is informal.

49. A staff development budget is used effectively, its priorities being well-matched to the school's training needs.
Recommendations

In order to improve further, the school needs to:

- address the shortcomings in provision and standards in information technology in key stage 3 and religious education in key stage 4;
- make self-evaluation more systematic, comprehensive and rigorous;
- focus on essential developmental priorities when planning for improvement, detailing a course of action and clear criteria by which progress can be judged;
- continue to build on the good work which is extending and improving approaches to learning and teaching;
- further improve the quality of teachers' written comments in order to help pupils to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills in the different subject areas and to ensure consistency in reviewing pupils' future progress.
- ensure that all statutory requirements of the school's provision are fully met.

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

The inspection team would like to thank all members of staff at Cefn Saeson, the pupils, their parents and the Governing Body for the warm welcome and support that was offered the team during the recent inspection.