Inspection under Section 28 of the Education Act 2005

A report on the quality of education in

Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn
Park Street
Denbigh
LL16 3DR

School number: 6637010

Date of inspection: 21/06/10

by

Herbert James Phillips
16227

Date of publication: 17/09/10

Under Estyn contract number: 1300409
Introduction

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

The inspection of Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn took place between 21/06/10 and 24/06/10. An independent team of inspectors, led by Herbert James Phillips, 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.

Estyn’s reports follow its guidance for the writing and editing of reports, which is available on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.uk). The table below shows the terms that Estyn uses and a broad idea of their meaning. The table is for guidance only.

| Nearly all | with very few exceptions | Half/around half | close to 50% |
| Most       | 90% or more              | A minority      | below 40%  |
| Many       | 70% or more              | Few             | below 20%  |
| A majority | over 60%                 | Very few        | less than 10% |

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

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

There are three types of inspection.

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

For short inspections, there are no subject reports.

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

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

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

This school received a full inspection.
Year groups and key stages

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

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

Primary phase:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Y1</th>
<th>Y2</th>
<th>Y3</th>
<th>Y4</th>
<th>Y5</th>
<th>Y6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondary phase:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Y7</th>
<th>Y8</th>
<th>Y9</th>
<th>Y10</th>
<th>Y11</th>
<th>Y12</th>
<th>Y13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>

**The nature of the provider**

1. The school is currently located in four sites.

2. The school’s newly built Primary Department is located in the town of Denbigh and pupils transferred to the new site in September 2006. The facilities offer an up to the date environment for children in new accommodation with specialist play areas.

3. The Secondary Department moved into new purpose built provision in November 2004. The building has been designed to offer a safe and stimulating educational environment that meets the needs of young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) aged between 11 and 16 years. It provides specialist classrooms and play areas that include a computer suite, science laboratory, music room, food technology area and an Art and Design Technology workshop. The needs of the pupils with more complex difficulties are catered for in a specialist area that has classrooms with individual workstations, interactive and multi-media technology, a sensory room, specialist resources and a safe, secure teaching environment.

4. The provision for 14 to 19 Learning Pathways is located at Ty’r Ysgol, adjacent to the boarding facility on a hilltop just outside Denbigh.

5. Students aged between 16 and 19 years are accommodated at Rock House in the centre of Denbigh. The building has a convenient location and proximity to local facilities and the community. It is within walking distance of the town’s library, shops, cafes, community college and leisure facilities.

6. The residential accommodation ‘Gerddi Glasfryn’ is situated on the outskirts of Denbigh and is set on an elevated position overlooking open countryside. It was opened in September 2005 and the accommodation has been refurbished and modernised with the specific aim of meeting the needs of young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Gerddi Glasfryn forms part of Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn’s specialist provision and offers between 1 and 4 nights boarding Monday to Friday during term time.

7. All pupils admitted to the school have a Statement of Special Educational Need, indicating ASD or associated communication difficulties. The school currently offers over 100 places. A pupil can be admitted throughout of the year as long as there are places available.

8. There are currently 117 full-time equivalent (fte) pupils on roll at the school. The Residential Hostel accommodates between 26–30 pupils on a part time basis. In addition to Denbighshire pupils, the school also takes pupils from across Wales and a small number from England.
9 The majority of the pupils are from English speaking families from across the socio-economic range with 21% being entitled to free school meals. Welsh is taught as a second language and pupils from Welsh speaking families are able to be educated in Welsh. The majority of the pupils are boys due to the higher prevalence of autism in males.

10 The school has 17 class groupings within the statutory age range 3-16 years, plus two Post-16 class groupings. The Primary Department has five classes comprising one Foundation Stage class (R to Y2) and four Key Stage 2 (KS2) classes. Also on the Primary site is an ‘AsCE’ class for selected nursery and reception students from Denbighshire, all of whom also integrate into mainstream schools. In Key Stage 3 (KS3) there are five classes and at Key Stage 4 (KS4) there are four classes. Pupil placement in classes is made following consideration of a number of factors, which include academic progress, social and maturational development, personality, and group compatibility. Pupil abilities and ages vary within class groups and their needs are met with individual learning programmes. The number of pupils per class group varies between 3 to 11 pupils.

11 A Specialist Outreach Service to support schools in Denbighshire across all key stages has been set in collaboration with the local education authority (LEA) and part of the ‘Unlocking Potential of Special Schools’ strategy. Senior members of staff visit schools, offer advice, write a report and offer training to schools’ staff on ASD specific strategies. Termly reports on the service are sent to the LEA.

12 The school was last inspected in May 2004.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The school’s priorities and targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn Aims and Objectives are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the creation of a first class special school environment and a centre of excellence for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the promotion of inclusion and integration;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the provision of a range of high quality educational and care services for children with ASD;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- as far as possible, the provision of all services in both Welsh and English; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- the promotion of debate, training and research with regard to the education and care of children with ASDs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

14 Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn is very effective in the way that it meets the needs of its learners as a result of the consistent and skilled implementation of up-to-date approaches by all staff. Throughout the school, there are many outstanding features that together ensure that learners increasingly improve their personal and educational skills as they progress through the school. By reaching school leaving age, they are very well prepared for moving on to adult life with high levels of confidence, competence and maturity, according to their individual needs and abilities.

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

15 The inspection team did not agree with the school’s grading for six of the seven key questions in its Self-evaluation Report (SER). However, the SER was completed soon after a period of significant disruption to the school’s leadership and management and a newly formed Senior Leadership Team being established. Consequently many of the appropriate plans and procedures introduced had not been sufficiently embedded to enable confident judgements on their effectiveness. During the inspection, the team recognised outstanding features in current provision and these are reflected in the above table of grades. The school, however, was confident in allocating Grade 1 to Key Question 4, ‘How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?, matching the inspectors’ judgement.

Standards

16 It is inappropriate to make comparisons between learners’ attainments and national averages due to the nature, severity and complexity of learners’ special educational needs.
17 From 78 lessons observed, the grades for standards achieved were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18 Overall, the proportion of lessons where the standards of pupils’ achievement is Grade 2 or better is 98.8%. This is above the average 92% for special schools and the 24.4% judged at Grade 1 compares well to the national average of 27% as presented in Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI’s) report (2007-8).

19 Grades for standards in subjects inspected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection area</th>
<th>KS1</th>
<th>KS2</th>
<th>KS3</th>
<th>KS4</th>
<th>Post-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh second language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and communications technology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design technology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern foreign languages (French)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and design</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious education (including religious studies)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20 There are often outstanding features in the levels of learners’ achievement. In virtually all lessons observed, learners were successful in achieving their learning targets, both relating to the subject area and to their personal targets.

21 Learners of all ages and abilities develop very good attitudes to their work. Learners’ achievements in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology and in particular, in their personal, social and behavioural skills were consistently outstanding. All pupils make excellent progress is in their social and moral skills. Outstandingly the learners’ increasing self-awareness enables them to significantly overcome their ASD behaviours and attitudes as they progress through the age groups. The majority of pupils achieve high levels of independence, maturity, confidence and competence. The successful achievement of these skills ensures that, by the time they reach school leaving age, students are very well prepared for moving on to further education and training.
22 No significant difference was noticed in the levels of achievement of boys and girls. Learners with additional learning difficulties (ALN) achieve well as a result of the support they receive.

23 Attendance levels are good and compare well with attendance levels in mainstream schools despite the significant number of learners that have recurring medical needs.

24 Attendance levels are above the average attendance rates for special schools. Nearly all absences are health related, including a few which are long-term. Nearly all learners are punctual and lessons start on time.

The quality of education and training

25 The quality of teaching in the 82 lessons observed was judged as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26 Teachers consistently provide a high quality of teaching across nearly all subjects.

27 There are good or outstanding features in many of these lessons, including: establishing a highly positive and supportive teaching and learning environment, high quality interactions to engage the needs and interests of learners, the use a range of communication strategies to ensure learners understand and respond appropriately, effective management of learners’ behaviour, showing expertise in ASD and good use of appropriate approaches and strategies, and adapting lesson targets and strategies to ensure learners’ involvement in tasks and activities.

28 The supportive relationships, which are apparent in lessons and in all other activities, successfully motivate learners towards very positive and enthusiastic attitudes towards their activities. Appropriate opportunities are given for learners to make choices and make decisions, promoting thinking skills. A high level of consistency is achieved between the school and the residential hostel in the effective use of pupil management practices and in the approaches to developing learners’ key personal, social and communication skills.

29 Most lessons across all key stages are thoroughly planned, show good progression and continuity from previous learning and a good pace and variation of tasks and activities. Information and communications technology (ICT) resources are used effectively to support teaching and learning.

30 The school has developed a clear, useful assessment system for recording and reporting learners’ progress in the core subjects. Learners are increasingly involved in their own assessments and in setting their improvement targets. However, the assessment of pupils’ achievements in foundation subjects in key stages 2 and 3 is not as well developed. The school is aware of this and has plans to address this shortcoming. Additionally, the current system of
assessment has not yet been embedded for long enough for staff to monitor the progress of pupils or trends in performance over a period of time.

31 Parents are kept well informed about progress, contribute towards reports and are invited to attend review meetings.

32 Outstandingly, the school provides learning experiences that meet the range of learners’ needs and abilities at all ages and stages. At each stage, the curriculum is suitably broad and balanced, provides continuity and progression through and across the key stages and meets the wide range of learners’ abilities. With no disapplications from the national curriculum, provision ensures full equality of access to all pupils. A particular strength is the opportunity for learners in the Learning Pathways for the 14 to 19 age groups to gain appropriate accredited qualifications and have very good opportunities for work experience.

33 Learning needs are quickly diagnosed and Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are set for all learners. All have statements of special educational needs (SEN) that are updated at least annually in accordance with the SEN code of practice. Provision for developing learners’ basic and key skills is outstanding and built in to teachers’ planning. Targets and approaches are effectively shared with parents and residential staff, enabling very good consistent approaches to meeting learners’ particular or additional needs.

34 In both the school and residential provision, consistent emphasis is placed on developing thinking and problem solving skills. Learners are challenged to set their own targets for improvement and to understand what they have to do to achieve them. Very good emphasis is placed on developing skills for independent living.

35 The school and residential hostel make very good use of the local community to provide learners with real and meaningful experiences that greatly enrich and enhance their learning. Where appropriate, learners benefit from social and educational inclusion in mainstream schools. Excellent links with employers, the local colleges, Careers Wales and their progressive programmes of work experience greatly benefit learners.

36 Overall, the school effectively promotes learners’ personal, spiritual, social, moral and cultural development and provision to promote learners’ bilingual skills is consistently very good.

37 Entrepreneurial skills are promoted effectively throughout the age groups, and good attention is given to developing learners’ appreciation of the environment. Participation in international projects contributes to the development of pupils’ global citizenship.
Leadership and management

38 Outstandingly, the Acting Headteacher’s vision for the school has been shared and agreed, and there are common values, aims and high expectations throughout the school and residential provision. This has resulted in staff becoming highly motivated and a strong sense of teamwork being evident in all classes and departments. However, several of the leadership team are employed on temporary contracts, undermining the stability and security of school development.

39 The Acting Headteacher and the Head of Care have forged strong links between the school and the residential facility. Good procedures for sharing information, staff training and expertise have promoted consistent, effective approaches to meeting pupils’ needs.

40 The school has excellent partnership links with all stakeholders and is well supported by the local community. Strong partnerships are established with mainstream schools, with a sharing of expertise so that pupils with ASD in mainstream schools may be effectively supported by the school’s ‘Outreach’ project. There is good collaboration through these partnerships, promoting successful outcomes in agreed projects and addressing national priorities.

41 The school plans to extend the very good arrangements for the performance management of teachers to the appraisal of support staff. High quality training is provided to meet the professional developmental needs of staff, effectively developing their expertise in meeting the range of pupils’ needs.

42 The school governors have worked very effectively in support of school development and improvement. They gain excellent first-hand knowledge of the school’s strengths and development needs and play a key role setting the strategic direction for the school and challenging targets for school improvement. The key issues arising from the last inspection have been effectively addressed.

43 A good, holistic cycle has recently been established to review all aspects of the school’s work. The school’s self-evaluation report analyses the school’s strengths and areas in need of further attention correctly and thoroughly. The main findings of the self-evaluation process are directly linked to the School Improvement Plan.

44 However the school do not make the best use of the available data on pupils’ and students’ progress and attainments. This data is not sufficiently analysed to provide accurate evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in provision in terms of the outcomes for pupils.

45 There are many good and outstanding features to the way in which the school manages and uses its accommodation and resources. The development and deployment of staff is planned carefully to meet a very diverse range of pupil need. The school meets statutory requirements for workload remodelling. The use of the good range of specialists and external service professionals made by the school to enhance pupils’ learning is an outstanding feature. The quality and
range of learning resources is outstanding. Excellent use is made of resources beyond the school, including within the inclusion programmes at Ysgol Frongoch and Denbigh High School and link courses at Denbigh College of Further Education.

46 All the accommodation issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed and the lack of a hall/designated physical education (PE) area at the secondary site has been overcome by negotiated use of the attached high school's relevant facilities. The range and quality of the accommodation at the school and the residential hostel is now outstanding.

47 Robust systems are in place for financial management ensuring that the school’s priorities for development are sufficiently resourced. Staff and resources are deployed economically and efficiently and pupils’ needs are effectively met. Overall, therefore, with pupils achieving high standards, the school offers excellent value for money.

**Recommendations**

48 In order to continue to provide high quality education, the school needs to:

R1 Develop further the good practice that already exists in the assessment of learners’ progress by ensuring it is consistently applied throughout the curriculum.

R2 Establish more comprehensive self-evaluation processes, including making best use of the good assessment data in the identification of the school’s strengths and weaknesses so that future priorities for improvement are more clearly founded in the learning outcomes of learners.

R3 Stabilise and secure the school leadership.

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 1: Good with outstanding features

49 The findings of the inspection team do not match the grade 3 judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report. The team recognises and acknowledges several outstanding features within this key question. Accordingly, this key question is awarded grade 1.

50 It is inappropriate to make comparisons between pupils’ attainments and national averages due to the nature, severity and complexity of pupils’ special educational needs. Judgements on pupils’ levels of achievement are made in relation to their individual needs and abilities and the learning targets set for and with them in their individual education plans (IEPs). There were too few children under the age of five too make valid overall judgements regarding the standards achieved by these pupils.

Outstanding features

51 Overall, throughout the school, pupils and students respond very well to the established, positive approaches of the experienced and skilled teachers and support staff so that the outcomes for nearly all pupils include:

- settling-in quickly to school and making positive relationships with staff;
- very good progress in personal and social skills being made, enabling them to increasingly cope with changes and challenges as they transfer through the school age groups;
- achieving a realistic and positive self-awareness and an understanding of their own personal and educational targets;
- a progressively good understanding of what they need to do to achieve their agreed targets;
- consistent and very good progress in their ability to learn/acquire new skills and improve their knowledge and understanding across the range of curriculum subjects; and
- increasing numbers of pupils in key stage 4 (KS4) and at Post-16 realise their potential and gain appropriate accreditation for their achievements in a wide range of subjects.

52 Outstandingly, by the time they reach school leaving age the majority of pupils, in relation to their needs and abilities, achieve high levels of maturity, confidence and competence, enabling them to successfully move on to further education, training or employment.
53 From the 78 lessons observed, the grades for standards achieved were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

54 Overall, the proportion of lessons where the standards of pupils’ achievement is Grade 2 or better is 98.8%. This is above the average 92% for special schools and the 24.4% judged at Grade 1 compares well to the national average of 27% as presented in HMCI’s report (2007-8).

55 Grades for standards in subjects inspected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection area</th>
<th>KS1</th>
<th>KS2</th>
<th>KS3</th>
<th>KS4</th>
<th>Post-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welsh second language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and communications technology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design technology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern foreign languages (French)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and design</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious education (including religious studies)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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56 Throughout the school, across all subject areas, pupils and students, according to their learning difficulties and needs, are very successful in achieving their realistic, agreed learning targets.

57 Achievement in English is excellent throughout the school and the progress they make in their communication skills is outstanding. Pupils with limited speech make excellent use of Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and Makaton Signing to augment their communication. Pupils with no speech make outstanding use of their communication aids. Learners’ good achievements in Welsh and French make a very positive contribution to their speaking and listening skills.

58 Pupils’ and students’ bilingual competence is an outstanding feature throughout the school. Regular use of incidental Welsh throughout the day helps to build
their vocabulary and understanding. They respond with interest to Welsh stories, songs, hymns and action songs and enthusiastically to simple questions and greetings by the staff. Many gain increasing satisfaction in using their vocabulary and phrases.

59 In mathematics and science, pupils make excellent progress in KS1 and KS4 and students at Post-16 reach very good levels of competence in using mathematics in every-day life and apply their science knowledge to healthy living and safe use of equipment. Pupils in KSs 2 and 3 make good progress across the range of mathematics and science, achieving good standards in relation to their needs and abilities.

60 At all age levels, learners make very good progress and outstandingly achieve high levels of competence in their IT skills, enhancing their ability to cope with the transition to further education and training when they leave school.

61 In history, geography and religious education, learners make generally good progress and achieve good standards. In KS1 however, progress is excellent and at KS4 and Post-16 students gain an excellent knowledge and understanding of local history.

62 Generally good practical skills are achieved by all pupils in their programmes of study in design technology, art and physical education. Good creative skills are evident in art and music, with particularly high achievements at KS1 and Post-16 in art and in KSs 3 and 4 in Music.

63 Overall, achievements are often outstanding in a range of subject areas in KS4 and at Post-16, with pupils and students successfully following courses of study well matched to their individual needs. These courses lead to external accreditation through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (COPE), the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), the Princes Trust xl Awards, the Open College Network (OCN), the Business Technology Education Council (BETC), the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), and the WJEC through GCSE courses and Entry Level courses.

64 These courses enable most pupils to successfully achieve their potential. They become increasingly independent and confident in their work, many demonstrating the skills needed to sustain life-long learning.

65 Excellent progress is made in learners’ personal and social skills. They steadily improve their own personal, self-help and coping skills. They make very good progress in improving behaviour and their tolerance of new and challenging activities. They quickly become well motivated and develop very good concentration skills, often being fully engaged in their lessons and productive in their work. They listen and respond to each other, allowing others to speak, taking their own turn and showing each other respect and consideration.

66 All pupils make excellent progress in their social and moral skills. Their increasing self-awareness enables them to significantly overcome their ASD
behaviours and attitudes as they progress through the age groups, achieving good levels of social competence and positive moral values. They achieve a good awareness of the needs of others, a respect for diversity and positive attitudes to equality of opportunity.

67 Pupils continue to make good progress personally, socially, morally and in their communication skills whilst attending the residential provision. The complementary activities and consistent approaches to communication and behaviour management enable learners to continue to make good progress, applying their developing competences in wider social situations.

68 Behaviour is good and reflects the high expectations the school has of its learners. Most make good progress in achieving the targets set in their individual behaviour plans. In the last twelve months, there have been six fixed term exclusions and one permanent exclusion.

69 Average attendance over the three terms prior to the inspection was 91.9%, which is above the average attendance rates for special schools. Nearly all absences are health related, including a few which are long-term. Nearly all learners are punctual and lessons start on time.

70 Learners’ awareness of the world of work and the workplace develops well as they move through the school. From the age of 14, pupils gain good experiences through links with employers, the local college, Careers Wales and their ongoing work experience. They learn to participate in a range of local events and activities through the strong links with the local community, enabling good social integration after leaving school.

The quality of education and training

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

71 The findings of the inspection team did not match the grade 2 judgement made by the school in its self-evaluation report because the team recognised and acknowledged several outstanding features within this key question. Accordingly, this key question was awarded grade 1.

72 The quality of teaching in the 82 lessons observed was judged as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
<th>Grade 5</th>
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<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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73 Teachers consistently provide a high quality of teaching across nearly all subjects. There are good or outstanding features in many of these lessons.
Outstanding features are particularly apparent where teachers:

- establish a highly positive and supportive teaching and learning environment, so that learners gain maximum benefit from their experiences;
- engage in high quality interaction to engage the needs and interests of learners;
- use a range of communication strategies to ensure learners understand and respond appropriately;
- manage the behaviour of learners showing expertise and good knowledge and use of appropriate individual reactive strategies; and
- adapt lesson targets and strategies to ensure learners’ involvement in tasks and activities.

Nearly all teachers explain clearly what learners will do in a lesson and what they expect them to achieve. Teachers use a variety of communication aids to support learners’ ability to interact with others. These help them to gain confidence in expressing themselves, and contribute towards developing good communication skills.

The very supportive relationships, which are apparent in lessons and in all other activities, successfully motivate learners towards very positive and enthusiastic attitudes towards their activities.

Teaching staff make effective use of a wide range of resources and activities in most lessons, and indicate an extremely thorough understanding of how to meet the needs and interests of learners with autism.

Teaching Assistants (TAs) fully understand how to adapt approaches and provide high quality support for all pupils, be it on an individual or small group basis. They contribute very well towards learners’ personal and social development and ensure that they make good progress in lessons across all key stages. Staff work highly effectively as a team and teachers’ plans indicate appropriate use of TAs to support specific learners. This helps pupils to achieve high standards.

Planning for lessons in the Foundation Phase (Early Years and KS1) shows outstanding features with the pupils involved in identifying aspects of a topic they would like to learn. Most lessons across all key stages show good pace and appropriate variation of tasks and activities that maintain the interest and motivation of all learners.

Many teachers use ICT resources effectively to support teaching and learning, and provide opportunities for the more-able pupils to develop their own lines of enquiry. They promote thinking skills effectively by providing appropriate opportunities for learners to make choices and make decisions.

Good features can be seen consistently in lessons that show good progression and continuity from previous learning. The structure of most lessons enables
learners to remember the main points of the previous lessons and understand how these are linked to their current lessons. Nearly all teachers ensure that learners are given time to reflect and remember the most important aspects in lessons.

82 Most teachers evaluate learners’ progress throughout the lessons and staff adapt their approach to support the way many pupils learn. High standards for behaviour are set in lessons and these expectations are applied on a consistent basis.

83 Teachers have a good knowledge of the curriculum subject they teach. They keep up-to-date with recent development in teaching and with aspects of ASD through attending frequent training courses. This contributes well towards the good quality and effectiveness of teaching.

84 The school makes sure that all pupils, irrespective of needs, race, gender or background, have equality of opportunity and access to all activities.

85 Many teachers promote bilingualism very well through regular incidental use of appropriate Welsh greetings and phrases.

86 Teachers take very good account of learners’ individual needs, as identified in their IEPs when planning lessons and support. The planning shows flexibility that enables tasks and resources to be adapted appropriately, ensuring learners’ participation and enabling steady progress.

87 In the very few lessons where shortcomings were identified, teachers:

- did not provide sufficient time for discussing what learners have learned in the lesson, and how they think they have improved;
- did not provide sufficient modelling of techniques to demonstrate what is required of the learner;
- had a limited range of resources available; and
- provided written tasks that were too lengthy.

88 The school has developed a clear, useful assessment system for recording and reporting learners’ progress in the core subjects. Small steps of progress are recorded and this information provides a good overview of pupils’ progress and identifies areas that may still be in need of improvement. However, the assessment of pupils’ achievements in foundation subjects in KSs 3 and 4 is not as well developed. The school is aware of this and has plans to address this shortcoming. Staff meet regularly in order to standardise and moderate judgements on learners’ work and their progress in the core subjects ensuring a consistent approach throughout the school. The current system of assessment has not yet been embedded for long enough for staff to identify continuous progress of pupils or trends in performance over a period of time.

89 Learners benefit from good and clear verbal feedback at the end of most lessons and learners are asked to reflect on what they have learned. Many of the more-
able, older learners identify what they already know and what they would like to find out more about.

Parents are kept well informed about progress, and are invited to attend review meetings. They contribute towards the end of year reports that provide detailed information on progress across all areas of the curriculum and identify the next steps in learning. The school holds termly parents’ evenings to discuss progress, in addition to the annual review of each pupil’s statement of special educational needs.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

91 The school awarded itself a grade 2 in this key question. The inspection team disagreed with the school’s judgement and awarded it a grade 1 after having identified a number of outstanding features.

92 The school provides a rich curriculum that complies with all legal requirements and is an outstanding feature of the school. The curriculum provides an extensive range of activities. From the Foundation Phase (Early Years and KS1) up to and including the Post -16 students it provides a rich base that promotes individual pathways allowing pupils to achieve to their best.

93 Outstandingly, the school provides learning experiences that meet the range of learners’ needs, interests and abilities at all ages and stages. At each stage, the curriculum is suitably broad and balanced with curriculum maps and schemes of work (SoW) that are thoughtfully developed, not only to provide continuity and progression through and across the key stages, but also to meet the wide range of pupils abilities. This ensures full equality of access to all pupils, regardless of social or gender issues. There are no disapplications from the national curriculum.

94 A particular strength is the opportunity for learners in the 14 to 19 age groups to gain accredited qualifications and awards ranging from ASDAN modules to GCSE courses. Good attention is given to learners following appropriate Learning Pathways 14-19 that include subject options and very good opportunities for work experience.

95 Provision for developing learners’ basic and key skills is outstanding and built in to teachers’ planning. IEPs include targets for communication and literacy skills, numeracy and IT skills. Particularly successful are the strategies used throughout the school to promote effective development of learners’ communication skills. Additionally, consistent use by all staff, including residential staff, of effective and up-to-date approaches to promoting learners’ personal and behavioural skills is a model of good practice. Overall, provision at the school to meet the learning and personal needs of pupils with ASD, is of a high quality.
In both the school and residential provision, consistent emphasis is placed on developing thinking and problem solving skills. Learners are challenged to set their own targets for improvement and to understand what they have to do to achieve them. Very good emphasis is placed on developing skills for independent living.

The school makes very good use of the local community to provide learners with real and meaningful experiences that greatly enrich and enhance their learning. There are many educational visits linked to the range of curriculum topics covered, for example the children in the Foundation Phase visited a garden centre to investigate and buy the materials for their enterprise project. Learners regularly visit shops to buy the materials and ingredients for their practical activities such as preparing a meal, effectively promoting key skills and competences. Whilst in residence, excellent regular opportunities are provided to extend their personal and social competences. These include involvement with a local youth club and accessing local amenities such as cinemas, leisure facilities and swimming pools.

The school effectively promotes learners' personal, spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. The shared values and skills in behavioural management, total communication, personal awareness and high expectations of all staff is an outstanding feature of the school. Acts of collective worship meet statutory requirements. They are sensitive and purposeful, giving the learners a spiritual experience and time to celebrate achievement and reflect upon the day.

The school has excellent partnership links with all stakeholders and is well supported by the local community. Strong partnerships are established with mainstream schools, providing appropriate opportunities for social and educational inclusion for learners and a sharing of expertise so that pupils with ASD in mainstream schools may be effectively supported. Parents appreciate and value the effective partnerships they forge with staff in meeting their children’s needs. School governors are very supportive of the school and are very much involved in school life. This is strength of the school.

Very good provision is made for developing learners’ awareness of the world of work. Younger pupils have planned experiences in the community through educational visits. For pupils and students from the age of fourteen, excellent links with employers, the local colleges, Careers Wales and their progressive programmes of work experience greatly benefit learners. Employers’ needs are fully considered in arranging placements.

Provision to promote learners’ bilingual skills is consistently very good. Bilingual signs are prominent throughout the school and incidental Welsh is used regularly in lessons at all key stages. Welsh songs, hymns and action songs are evident where appropriate in lessons and during assemblies. Welsh speaking staff are effectively deployed to meet the needs of learners from Welsh first language backgrounds.

Good attention is given to developing learners’ appreciation of the environment and sustainable development with established practices for recycling,
composting and following the country code when out on field trips. Participation in international projects such as providing support for improving conditions in Romania contributes to the development of pupils’ global citizenship.

103 Entrepreneurial skills are promoted effectively throughout the age groups, starting at the Foundation Phase with a gardening project and by Post-16, students making items for sale through charitable projects using local markets.

104 Overall, the learning opportunities provided by the school appropriately reflect the national priorities for community regeneration and, especially, lifelong learning, with the excellent preparation for leaving school being reflected in the way that the vast majority move on to further education and training and some into employment.

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

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

106 The school is providing outstanding care, guidance and support for all its learners. All children, pupils and students are superbly nurtured within safe, productive and happy environments. Particular attention is given to ensuring pupils' health and safety and well-being.

107 A warm and welcoming ethos is maintained across the school sites, including the residential provision. All learners are valued. Highly specific individual programmes cover every aspect of their development, including well-being, communication, behaviour and academic progress. The outstanding provision for every learner ensures that there is full and equal access for all in developing appropriate skills for life. The commitment and dedication from all staff involved across the school complement the excellent relationships between adults and learners.

108 Residential provision at Gerddi Glasfryn is excellent. The idyllic setting enhances the excellent care and guidance currently provided by staff. Frequent liaison between staff across the sites, parents and carers and any other involved personnel ensures that the well-being of all residential pupils is a high priority. Senior staff oversee approaches and strategies across all school settings, including residential provision. Clear and precise records are meticulously kept which include both positive comments and any concerns. These ensure that information is shared appropriately between all relevant adults.

109 Learners’ views are valued greatly and school council members are eloquent in their support of the school’s excellent arrangements for care and guidance. They also represent their school with great pride at the Denbighshire Schools’ Forum. They know that their role is crucial in making valuable and effective contributions to school life.
110 Many parents are actively involved across the school. Parents and carers are fully involved and informed through home/school diaries, termly parents’ evenings and regular phone calls, complemented by Annual and Transitional Reviews and Annual Reports. Friends of the school strive tirelessly to organize and support regular events. Written letters and comments from the many and varied visitors to the school emphasize the exceptional levels of pastoral support available for learners throughout the school. Relationships between home and school are excellent.

111 There is relevant, challenging and appropriate guidance and advice given to pupils and students when making choices about available courses. From the youngest to the oldest pupils, information is shared about options and opportunities that will enhance their futures. Support for learning for pupils aged 14 to 19 within the Learning Pathways is both explicit and appropriate.

112 Induction programmes for learners are autistic specific and very effective. Pupils settle quickly into school life. Staff convene and attend review meetings regularly and make it a priority to involve all pupils in activities and new situations safely and securely. As a result, there is the minimum of disruption to their learning and well-being.

113 All learners have Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) following comprehensive assessments of their needs and difficulties. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are drawn up for each pupil and these are suitably reviewed and along with their ‘Statements’ updated in accordance with the SEN Code of Practice. Any specific learning difficulties, additional to ASD, are identified at an early stage and good, appropriate provision is made to meet those needs. For example, those pupils who are unable to speak are taught to use effective alternative means of communication including the use of pictures, sign and symbols. Those more-able pupils are effectively taught to use ‘touch-talkers’ and more sophisticated communication aids.

114 Highly qualified school staff, including speech and language trained personnel, (ELKLAN) and staff trained in specific medical conditions lead training across the school and for other interested parties. All learners’ needs are identified precisely and staff monitor their personal and social education and well-being with rigour. Specially enhanced areas such as the ‘Th. Inc.’ Room with specific therapy to improve sensory processing and physical co-ordination are havens of peace and tranquility. Individual counseling and therapy by a highly trained and experienced psychotherapist is enriching the pastoral support provided across the school. These are outstanding features.

115 The monitoring of attendance and punctuality is good. Nearly all absences are for medical reasons. Although targets are not set for whole school attendance, where there are issues over unauthorised absences, individual targets are set and monitored with the support of the Educational Social Worker.

116 The school works in partnership with others to make outstanding provision for careers education and guidance. All pupils from KS 4 to Post-16 have work
experience – either externally or within the school – to assist in the transition from school to the world of work or training.

117 Procedures for child protection are appropriately in place throughout the school and residential provision and all staff and governors receive annual update training. All heads of departments have received advanced training in child protection.

118 There is outstanding provision for all learners’ personal support and guidance. All learners regardless of their social, educational, ethnic, linguistic background or gender have equal opportunities to participate in all activities on a level suited to their individual abilities, it is an outstanding feature of the school. Learners whose first language is Welsh each have Welsh speaking learning support assistants.

119 Personal and social education and religious education lessons contribute to learners’ awareness of the importance of good race relations and the diversity of the multicultural society in which we live. The strong ethos of inclusion for all effectively promotes positive attitudes to fair play and personal choice, mitigating against stereotyping.

120 Learners’ good behaviour is effectively promoted through skilled behaviour management practices and provides appropriate and effective support when a learner’s behaviour disrupts learning. The school has effective measures in place to eliminate oppressive behaviour, including bullying, racial discrimination and all forms of harassment. Representatives from the school council were confident that any incidents reported would be treated seriously and dealt with promptly.

121 All reasonable steps are taken to ensure equal treatment for disabled learners. All the sites with the exception of Rock House have good disabled access and parking facilities. There is a Disability Equality Scheme and action plan in place.

Leadership and management

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

122 In its Self-evaluation Report (SER), the school awarded itself a grade 3 in this key question. The inspection team disagreed with the school’s judgement and awarded it a grade 1 after having identified a number of outstanding features.

123 The school’s self-evaluation was carried out by the school after a period of significant turmoil resulting from the resignation of the previous headteacher, the suspension of the previous deputy headteacher, the closure of the 52 week residential facility and the ineffective interim arrangements to provide headteacher leadership from external sources.
From Easter 2009, the appointment of current Acting Headteacher and the Head of Care for the residential facility at Gerddi Glasfryn enabled an appropriate leadership and management structure to be established. However, when drawing up the SER, although many of the strategic plans to address leadership and management issues had been put into action, procedures and practices were yet to be embedded into school provision. Consequently the Senior Leadership Team, staff and governors took this into consideration when awarding grades to each Key Question.

Leadership responsibility was quickly established for all the departments of the school and an effective acting Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is in place, including the Head of Care and the Business Manager. Outstandingly, the Acting Headteacher’s vision for the school has been shared and agreed, and there are common values, aims and high expectations throughout the school and residential provision. This has resulted in staff becoming highly motivated and a strong sense of teamwork being evident in all classes and departments.

Since the beginning of this school year, from September 2009, many of the challenging targets set for improvement have been achieved and good progress is being made towards achieving the others. These include the establishment of a cycle of effective Performance Management procedures for all teaching staff, appraisal interviews for all ancillary staff, yearly update training for the whole school on child protection plus extended child protection training for all heads of departments, clear job descriptions for all ‘acting posts’, appropriate whole staff training days, delegation of curriculum responsibilities with a cycle for curriculum subjects to be reviewed and updated, the establishment of link governors to all departments, and a management structure for the residential facility that includes Team Leaders.

The Acting Headteacher and the Head of Care have forged strong links between the school and the residential facility. Good procedures for sharing information, staff training and expertise, particularly for behaviour management and developing pupils’ communication skills, have promoted consistent, effective approaches to meeting pupils’ needs.

The school takes good account of national priorities including particular attention to developing pupils’ bilingual skills. Excellent partnerships have been developed with local schools and colleges and the use of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) grant for ‘Unlocking the Potential of Special Schools’ has enabled the school’s Outreach Programme to support pupils with ASD difficulties in mainstream schools. The school works very well in partnership with the Local Authority (LA) to ensure that the service is well coordinated, very successful and highly valued. The ‘Communication Forum’ supports this work effectively by ensuring local support networks are suitably involved.

Effective performance management leads to a good programme of training that ensures that all staff are gaining high levels of expertise in meeting the needs of the pupils. Several staff have become trainers in up-to-date approaches to meeting the needs of pupils with ASD.
The school governors have worked very effectively in support of school development and improvement. All are involved as named link persons to work with staff and monitor the quality of provision. Consequently they have excellent first-hand knowledge of the school’s strengths and development needs and have played a key role in planning and setting the strategic direction for the school. High levels of commitment have led to a regular programme of full committee meetings supported by interim meetings of all the sub-committees. All legal requirements are met.

The well considered link-governor system has effectively enabled very good monitoring of provision throughout the school and residential facility. The Finance Committee meets regularly to consider priorities and ensure that allocation of resources is directed where it is best placed to raise standards.

An appropriate action plan has been put in place to address the budget deficit that resulted from the leadership turmoil last year.

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

**Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings**

In its self-evaluation report, the school awarded itself a Grade 3 for this key question. The inspection team identified more good features and awarded a higher grade, judging that any shortcomings had been, or were being, effectively addressed.

The inspection team’s findings do not correspond very closely to those expressed in the school’s self-evaluation report. The inspection team awarded a higher grade for six of the seven Key Questions. In the six months since the school completed their self-evaluation report, outstanding progress has been made hence the inspection team were able to identify substantially more outstanding and good features in the six Key Questions.

The school’s self-evaluation report analyses the school’s strengths and areas in need of further attention correctly and thoroughly; it is based on Senior Leadership Team’s good knowledge of the school. The report is based on direct evidence of pupils’ work, lesson observation and includes information gathered from most of the other professional that are associated with the provision in the school. It also notes responsibilities, the timescale and the required tasks. The main findings of the self-evaluation process are directly linked to the School Improvement Plan.

However the school do not make the best use of the available data on pupils’ and students’ progress and attainments. The good procedures and practices in place for assessing pupil attainments, enables good planning to meet pupils’ individual learning needs. However, this data is not sufficiently analysed to provide accurate evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in provision in terms of the outcomes for pupils. Additionally, without such use of assessment data, the
governors can only make a value judgement on the effectiveness of the impact of school improvement initiatives.

137 A good, holistic cycle has recently been established, that integrates the school evaluation activities, together with a rolling programme to review all aspects of the school's work. The documentation used is set out clearly and systematically. There are clear links between evaluation and planning. Lesson observations followed by constructive feedback are an important part of the self-evaluation process, although the feedback does not always focus enough on the standards achieved by the pupils in the lessons.

138 All staff have made a good and positive contribution into the present self-evaluation report. A shared culture based on improvement, class observation and helpful and constructive links with members of the Senior Leadership Team has been established.

139 Pupils' and students points of view are fully considered by means of the School Council, and the head teacher’s ‘open door’ policy. The school's recently established ‘collegiate’ ethos with its strong emphasis on full consultation processes at all levels ensures that all members of staff have a sense of ownership of the evaluation processes and its outcomes. The school consults fully with parents, the Local Education Authority, employers and the local community in evaluating aspects of its work.

140 The school’s self-evaluation and Performance Management arrangements provide a good basis for the School Improvement Plan. Training on self-evaluation processes, analysing data and evaluating standards of achievement and teaching, have raised staff awareness and developed their understanding. The combination of self-evaluation and planning has recently had a clear impact on the continuous improvement of standards.

141 The School Improvement Plan concentrates on raising standards, enhancing the curriculum, developing staff skills and improving the school environment. The plan is successful in identifying specific targets, responsibilities, costs and specific criteria for evaluating the improvement strategies.

142 In pupils’ IEPs and Individual Reacting Strategies, the school sets purposeful and challenging targets based on pupils’ previous performance. These systems are thorough and effective. Close cooperation with the residential facilities ensures successful continuation of approaches.

143 Teaching staff engage in a continuous performance management process. This will extend to teaching assistants in September 2010. Care staff are provided with regular supervision and administration staff have annual appraisal. The school's arrangements for performance management and ongoing professional development have recently been interwoven very well with the development plans at each key stage as well as at a whole school level. They concentrate on detailed strategies to improve standards and the quality of teaching and learning.
144 The school ensures that there are sufficient resources available to support its main priorities and objectives and there is a close link between the School Improvement Plan and the budget.

145 The school has responded well to the key issues identified in the previous report. The SLT and the governors have regularly reviewed the action plan and significant progress has been made on all the issues identified.

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

Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

146 In its self-evaluation report the school awarded this question grade 2. The inspection team awarded a higher grade because the school has many outstanding features in this area.

147 The school has taken appropriate measures to secure its financial stability via a budget recovery plan with the local authority. The budget is predicted to be in balance by 2013. The measures taken ensure that the necessary savings will be made without a detrimental impact on the standards achieved by pupils.

148 The school employs sufficient well qualified teaching staff to enable the curriculum to be taught effectively. The head of care is appropriately qualified for the post. The school meets statutory requirements for workload remodelling. There are very good arrangements in place for teachers’ planning, preparation and assessment time. Administrative support is very good on each site. All staff are welcoming and efficient.

149 The nature and extent of staff training is an outstanding feature of the school:

- all staff have been trained on autism awareness and child protection procedures;
- there is an effective induction programme for new staff;
- the school has trained a team of teachers to the level where they are able to train other staff in specialisms relevant to autism such as PECS, TEACCH, Timian physical intervention and ELKLAN; and
- speech and language therapists also provide training on the skills and knowledge necessary for school staff to implement the Individual Communication Programmes they formulate.

150 The development and deployment of staff is planned carefully to meet a very diverse range of pupil need. There are many examples of this, including:

- in the secondary phase, a ‘carousel’ system facilitates efficient curriculum delivery by subject specialists;
- the creation of curriculum coordinator posts maximises the efficient delivery of each subject across the curriculum;
• a suitably qualified TA delivers the basic skills programme to children identified as having specific needs in this area; and
• the Headteacher carefully matches pupil needs with staff skills and attributes to form homogenous class based teams of teachers and teaching assistants.

151 The contribution of TAs to children’s progress in learning is an outstanding feature of the school’s provision:
• they were consistently observed working seamlessly as a team with their teachers;
• they are clear about, and confident in, fulfilling their roles in each class;
• they demonstrated an informed knowledge of the implications of autism for pupils’ behaviour and learning;
• they showed great skill in maintaining pupils’ attention and concentration and in assisting them to communicate successfully with, and relate to, their peers and other members of staff; and
• the newly formed team of speech and language therapy assistants demonstrated outstanding skill in implementing pupils’ Individual Communication programmes.

152 There is very good communication and joint working between residential care and school staff. This communication maximises the impact of both sets of staff on children’s learning and social development.

153 The quality and range of learning resources is outstanding. All classrooms and subject areas have sufficient good quality resources that enhance children’s learning potential. This includes the provision of information and communication technology to support learning.

154 Appropriate communication aids are provided for the small number of pupils who need them to access learning. Staff are well trained to support pupils’ use of these aids. Their use has led to significantly enhanced learning.

155 Library facilities are adequate but diverse, consisting of a small school library supplemented by the local town library and libraries within Ysgol Frongoch and Denbigh High School.

156 Excellent use is made of resources beyond the school, including within the inclusion programmes at Ysgol Frongoch and Denbigh High School and link courses at Denbigh College of Further Education.

157 All the accommodation issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed. The range and quality of the accommodation is now outstanding. Purpose built or refurbished classrooms provide an excellent learning environment. They have been fully equipped with new furnishings and fittings appropriate to the needs of pupils with autism.
Class bases and specialist areas are fully accessible for users with a physical disability. The secondary site lacks a hall and designated PE area. This potential deficiency has been turned into a strength, in terms of opportunities for inclusion, by negotiated use of the attached high school’s relevant facilities. A small number of pupils are reluctant to use these facilities but plans are in place to enable their willing access to them. The school grounds are adequate for purpose. They are accessible, inclusive and well maintained.

The residential accommodation is of outstanding quality. It is purpose built and has been designed to meet the social needs of the pupils concerned in an ideal pleasant, quiet, rural location. When in residence children and young people are provided with a wide range of leisure and extra-curricular experiences.

There is a range of specialists and external service professionals who support the work of the school. The use of these services made by the school to enhance pupils’ learning is an outstanding feature. It includes:

- the very close and productive working relationship between the school and the Speech and Language Therapy Service. In this context the decisions of the multi-agency Communication Forum consistently facilitate positive language development outcomes for pupils;
- the beneficial counselling service for pupils with emotional needs provided by the health service;
- the high level of support and intervention from the clinical psychologist; and
- numerous effective inputs from the local authority, including the educational psychology service, the statutory assessment team, the school’s link officer and advisory subject teachers.

Robust systems are in place for matching resources to the school’s priorities for development. The school is making very good use of its resources to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils. Efficient and effective use is made of all available resources, including:

- the priorities identified within the School Development Plan (2009-2012) are fully costed and these costs have been protected from the measures taken to implement the budget recovery plan;
- there are good self-review systems in place to consider and prioritise resource needs identified by subject coordinators in the annual planning cycle; and
- the school works very closely with the parents’ group, the Friends of Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn, to raise significant extra funding which is distributed fairly between classes and projects designed to raise the self esteem and well being of pupils, such as the pending equipment for the secondary playground.

According to Welsh Assembly Government statistics, the annual cost of a day place in the school is close to the average for special schools in Wales serving pupils with similar levels and complexity of need. Overall, therefore, with pupils achieving high standards, the school offers excellent value for money.
Standards achieved in subjects and areas of learning

163 Due to the small numbers of children under five years of age it is not appropriate to make overall judgements on their standards of achievement.

English

Key Stages 1, 2, 3, 4 and Post-16: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Outstanding features

164 At all key stages:

- pupils demonstrate genuine empathy with each others’ sensibilities, achievements and personal needs, to a level which is exceptional in a school for children with autism;
- pupils demonstrate excellent progress towards their Individual Communication Plan targets;
- pupils listen carefully and attentively to teachers and support staff;
- pupils respond very well to the direction, questioning and prompting of teachers and support staff;
- pupils listen and respond to each other, showing each other respect and consideration;
- pupils allow others to speak or respond before taking their own turn;
- pupils with limited speech make excellent use of PECS and Makaton to augment their communication;
- pupils with no speech make outstanding use of their communication aids; and
- pupils show considerable skill in using information technology to enhance their learning.

165 At KS1, pupils, some independently, some with support, sing simple songs in unison; and show awareness of, and sensitivity to, the needs and wishes of other pupils.

166 At KS3, less-able pupils, show excellent use of signs to support their communication, recall and recount the main events and characters of a simple story, make decisions when choosing their next activity and convey that decision through gesture, participate successfully in lessons requiring them to successively look and listen, take turns in responding orally, work collaboratively in small groups to name colours and write their responses, and, one pupil uses a sophisticated communication aid to very effectively contribute throughout lessons.

167 More-able pupils, empathise with the main characters in a book, and have a good understanding of plot and can discuss what has happened and predict what will happen next.
168 At KS4, less-able pupils show, within a whole class activity, their ability to take turns in responding and communicating with others and to listen attentively to others communicating with them and one pupil with very little language was able to follow a complex sequence of instructions accurately, and respond with appropriate gestures and actions.

169 More-able pupils, show an outstanding ability to produce extended pieces of writing which require them to show empathy with and understanding of others, and achieve outstanding results in accreditation at entry level English and GCSE English.

170 At Post-16, less-able pupils, with potentially challenging behaviour allied to their significant levels of autism, showed an outstanding ability to communicate and socialise effectively with their peers and teaching staff.

171 More-able pupils, show understanding of the ways in which meaning and information are conveyed in a range of source materials, select and analyse information and ideas from a variety of sources and present that information in a form appropriate to their audience, and gain excellent accreditation results.

**Good features**

172 Pupils of all key stages:
- develop their reading skills to a level appropriate to their ability;
- give an appropriate response to texts and stories; and
- make good progress in acquiring and using new vocabulary.

173 Pupils at KS1, recognise and say their name when it is written down, say their address and that of the school, understand and respond appropriately to the content of simple stories and songs, write over an adult's writing and copy write; and are learning good pencil control and letter shape formation.

174 At KS2, pupils participate fully and cooperatively in group-literacy games such as sound recognition and phonics bingo, pupils identify and say, by sound and shape, progressively more complex phonetic constructs, pupils can name and write initial and final letter sounds. Some pupils write simple consonant blends and digraphs and some write meaningful sentences. At their own level, and with appropriate support where it is needed, pupils are increasingly able to contribute their thoughts and responses to class discussions, and write clearly in increasingly well formed and spaced letters.

175 At KS3, less-able pupils enjoy the social experience of handling a book in a library session while the book is read to them by an accomplished reader, write simple words when prompted by the teacher or copy write words written by a teaching assistant, read basic sentences with support, and show developing handwriting skills. E.g. increasing pencil control.
176 More-able pupils recall the main events of a story, demonstrate understanding of the key points in a variety of texts, and are beginning to write for a variety of purposes and audiences.

177 At KS4, more-able pupils read well at a level appropriate to their age and ability and demonstrate a good understanding of character in books and plays both orally and in writing.

178 At Post-16, less-able pupils demonstrate an understanding of simple comparative concepts, independently use the internet to research terms and select appropriate information, and show levels of reading and writing skills appropriate to their age and ability.

179 More-able pupils independently use the internet to research themes and select and record information relevant to those themes, and show levels of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills appropriate to their age and ability.

Welsh second language

Key Stage 1:        Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
Key Stage 2, 3 and 4:  Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

180 Welsh is not taught as a discreet subject in Post-16.

Good features

180 In KS1, pupils make outstanding progress in acquiring the relevant vocabulary. They name objects and shapes and count to ten. Regular use of incidental Welsh throughout the day helps to build their vocabulary and understanding. They respond with interest and enthusiasm to Welsh action songs and to simple questions by the teacher. The more-able respond in short phrases to the questions.

181 In KS2 pupils are fully engaged in the lessons and respond in their individual ways to "Pwy wyt ti?" (who are you?) Pupils match words with pictures with confidence. They make good progress in oral Welsh and retention of taught vocabulary is good. They have a good knowledge of common greetings and respond appropriately to commands by the teacher.

182 Most pupils in KS3 listen attentively to instructions and stay on task. They identify the activities of the lesson with reference to a picture timetable. The more-able recognise a good range of common words and know the sounds of letters. They pronounce Welsh words well and participate confidently in the lessons. They enjoy participating in simple games that are successful in increasing their vocabulary.

183 In KS4 most pupils make good progress in oral Welsh and retention of taught vocabulary is good. They have a good knowledge of common greetings and respond appropriately to commands and questions by the teacher. The more-
able pupils know how to describe themselves and use and understand a limited range of the target language in familiar settings. They are confident when asking about meanings, or when seeking clarification or repetition.

In all key stages the use of incidental Welsh across the curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils’ achievement.

**Shortcomings**

In all key stages the less-able display a willingness to join in class discussion although their contributions are limited and mostly brief.

### Mathematics

| Key Stage 1: | Grade 1: Good with outstanding features |
| Key Stages 2 and 3: | Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings |
| Key Stage 4 and Post-16: | Grade 1: Good with outstanding features |

**Outstanding features**

Pupils in KS1 make excellent progress in their mathematics. They show a good knowledge of numbers to ten through regular counting activities and when singing ‘number songs’. Pupils make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of measurement, using non-standard units such as cups/spoons full and reading clock time by the hour. More-able pupils accurately use a ruler to measure and record length/height in centimetres.

Older, more-able pupils in KS1 understand ‘one more / less’ and complete simple additions up to 20. They match and name coins and basic geometric shapes and effectively use shapes such as oval, circle and triangle when making an image of an owl within a story theme. Younger and less-able pupils match objects, count to five and, with guidance, write the numerals. They sort items by shape, size and colour, understanding the terms ‘bigger’ and ‘smaller’.

Most-able pupils in KS1 solve simple numerical problems and carry out addition of money to find out the overall cost of items on a shopping list. For example, compost £6.95 + grow-bag £7.90 = £14.85, when recording costs of their mini-enterprise project. They gain a very good knowledge of basic fractions, for example, finding a quarter of 24.

More-able pupils in KS4 make excellent progress towards achieving accreditation at WJEC Entry Level Mathematics, gaining confidence and accuracy in applying the four rules of number and understanding fractions, place value, basic graphs, position, direction and symmetry and the properties of two and three-dimensional shape.
According to ability, students at Post-16 successfully work towards accreditation for their achievements in mathematics by the time they leave school. These include: AQA modules of work relating to basic numeracy, WJEC Entry Level, ASDAN including 'number handling' modules within the Bronze and Silver Awards, GCSE and, for the most-able, Higher Level GCSE.

**Good features**

In KSs 2 and 3, pupils make consistently good progress across the range of mathematics.

In KS2, younger/less-able pupils have a sound knowledge of number to ten. They ‘read’ the number value of coins to 10p and match all coins accurately. They understand the use of money and select appropriate coins to pay for an item in the class ‘shop’.

Older/more-able pupils in KS2 add and subtract numbers to 100 and show and understanding of multiplication, learning multiplication tables. They have a good knowledge of coin values and work out and record the total value of a group of mixed coins. Good problem-solving skills are evident as they find ways of making 20, such as 29-9, 80:- 4, or 3x7-1. They make effective use of ‘tally charts’ when carrying out investigations and measure accurately in centimetres using a ruler.

The most-able pupils in KS2 have a good understanding of place value by identifying the largest and smallest number made up of the numbers 9, 1, 7 and 4. They understand and use the symbols < and > and work out and accurately record on a chart the changes in height of sunflower seedlings at weekly intervals.

Pupils in KS3 make good progress in their knowledge and use of the four rules of number. Less-able pupils become increasingly confident in using addition and subtraction of tens and units and giving change from £1 for one item. More-able pupils become competent in giving change for the purchase of several items from amounts up to £20 using multiplication and subtraction in their calculations. Pupils become familiar with basic fractions with more-able pupils recording accurately a given number as the fraction of a total, such as 5/33. They also gain a sound knowledge of odd and even numbers, the properties of three-dimensional shapes and the recording of collected data on block graphs.

Younger/less-able pupils in KS4 become more competent in counting, matching and using money, correctly recording the number of items to 20 and have a grasp of odd and even numbers. They understand key number vocabulary including ‘how many’, ‘more’ and ‘less’. More-able pupils become confident in multiplying and dividing numbers by 10, 100, and 1000 and understand the use of decimal notation. They understand and use clock and digital time when solving problems relating to journeys and work out periods of time using calendars.
Science

Key Stage 1: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
Key Stages 2 and 3: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings
Key Stage 4 and Post-16: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Outstanding features

198 Across the school, most learners show a good awareness of scientific knowledge. Many are aware of key aspects of the natural world. All communicate their enjoyment in conducting scientific experiments through a variety of verbal and non-verbal assisted learning strategies. Across all the school sites and at college, pupils and students make good use of ICT to support their learning.

199 By the end of KS1, pupils know that potatoes grow in the soil and need water and sunshine to help them grow. Most can classify a selection into different types and sizes quickly and systematically. They know and understand extremely well what a compost bin is used for and that big and little creatures live in the soil. Nearly all pupils are excited to discover scientific facts and many ask questions at all stages of the lesson. A few pupils show excellent self help skills as they interact with others.

200 KS4 pupils excel in GCSE Entry Level science lessons of exceptional quality. All pupils rise to the challenges of making new materials and respond superbly to the high expectations made of them. They behave as scientists as they apply and extend their scientific knowledge. All pupils work in a science laboratory, donning white coats and goggles and completing risk assessments with competence and composure. The majority find out what a chemical reaction is and can tell the difference between permanent and temporary changes.

201 All KS4 pupils work enthusiastically and with pride and enjoyment. Their study of and care for creatures is outstanding as they watch and film the metamorphosis of the butterflies in the laboratory.

202 Post-16 students study science as part of their externally accredited studies at the local college. In addition, their involvement in a fruit, salad and vegetable co-operative in school promotes outstanding knowledge and understanding of the differences between healthy and unhealthy foods. From their base in town, Rock House, they extend their scientific experiences through discussions and practice of the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

203 The majority of students are fully involved in the whole process of sorting, weighing, classifying and distributing their produce and work as a fully co-operative and collaborative team. This is an outstanding feature of their scientific experiences. Many students confidently discuss and explain the various stages of their enterprise.
Good features

204 In KS2, evidence shows that pupils use a variety of communication systems very well to report their scientific findings. Many write with symbols producing worksheets and photographic evidence to support and record their work when listing items that come from trees. Most accurately identify and match materials such as metals or plastics, according to their characteristics. Photographs show that many pupils take great delight in checking their cress growth. Pupils’ work shows that a few pupils record their work very well, using appropriate scientific terms.

205 Pupils in KS3 participate in experiments enthusiastically to find out about balanced forces. More-able pupils use the interactive white board well to draw their answers, showing that arrows of the same size create balance when pointing in different directions. There are good links with Cwrcwlwm Cymreig as pupils study pictures of the Menai suspension bridge with avid interest.

Information and communications technology

All Key Stages and Post-16: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

Outstanding features

206 All pupils and students across the school are using information communication technology (ICT) effectively for a range of purposes. In all key stages, pupils use high quality programmes to develop their basic and key skills.

207 Most learners demonstrate exceptional skill in ICT in a variety of settings and across all subjects in the curriculum. These skills are fundamental to their communication skills and as a result, the majority of learners are making excellent progress against their individual targets.

208 In KS1, pupils make selections accurately when communicating symbols or sounds. Most know that a switch or a hand movement can activate programmes on the interactive whiteboard. As a result, they respond with enthusiasm and accuracy when using ICT to control objects or events. Their use and understanding of ICT across the subjects is outstanding.

209 KS2 pupils use interactive programmes superbly to improve their communication in personal and social education. Many pupils without speech are very successful in creating patterns and choosing colours and objects with great accuracy. Their delight as they choose and touch is infectious. Most pupils are totally absorbed in their tasks and show great concentration as they watch and listen.

210 In KS3, lower ability pupils explore computer programmes with enthusiasm, use a foot spa, fan and smell bank, showing very good reactions and responses. For a few pupils, these are very small but significant steps in progress against individual targets. More-able pupils excel in their work on famous people,
planning and producing power point presentations from information they have researched, to create a slide show. Their individual competency in ICT skills is outstanding.

211 For the majority of pupils in KS4 and students in Post-16 provision, learners’ ICT skills are very well embedded and have been built on progressively throughout the school. Web designing is well established for the most-able. Students accessing ICT at college show outstanding knowledge and understanding of recent developments. For less-able learners in these groups, their skills in ICT enable effective communication of their views, feelings and skills.

<table>
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<th>Design and technology</th>
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<td>All Key Stages and Post-16:</td>
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212 Throughout all key stages pupils are supported in developing and improving their skills in designing and making.

213 At KSs 1 and 2, pupils use a wide variety of tools and materials including re-cycled material. Pupils demonstrate a respect for tools at an early age and progressively develop their manipulative skills in cutting, gluing, joining materials. They discuss and refine their ideas and make confident choices.

214 Pupils in KS2 show a good knowledge of healthy eating. They make choices of ingredients to put on their pizza. They discuss sensible choices and give reasons. Less-able pupils are suitably supported by staff to make choices and complete tasks such as spreading tomato paste onto a base and choose toppings to sprinkle on top.

215 In KS3, pupils design a shopping game. They demonstrate a competent skill in carrying out a shopping exercise on the interactive whiteboard. They discuss the rules of games and evaluate and refine their ideas. They show confidence in designing and drawing their game and making up rules for play. They know the current price of foods and use this in their design.

216 Through KSs 3 and 4 pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of food groups and what constitutes a healthy diet. They recognise and use kitchen tools. The pupils successfully follow the accredited ‘food hygiene’ course. Post-16 students achieve good levels of independence in planning and cooking their own meals. They learn to grow their own vegetables.

217 By the end of KS4, all pupils have broad experience in using basic tools and demonstrate improved skills and competency. This includes use of sewing machines, electronic circuitry for model making, as well as heavy workshop machinery for cutting wood metal and bending plastic. They use software to promote computer design graphics.
Most-able students successfully follow design technology GCSE courses in the High School design technology department.

At Post-16, students gain good practical skills through becoming involved in many enterprises, such as bag making, card designs cushions etc., which are sold at local markets.

### Modern foreign language - French

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

Overall, pupils in KS3 make good progress in their work and achieve good standards in keeping with their age and ability.

Less-able pupils gain a good awareness and understanding of European Countries and their culture. They learn the location of the several neighbouring counties in relation to Britain and many know the capital cities, some iconic buildings and can identify the national flag. They gain a good basic knowledge of the different climate, typical foods and style of music. For example, they make typical meals such as Greek Salad, know the Eiffel Tower is in Paris and create an Italian Café experience, ordering pasta and pizza. More-able pupils learn the French names of different nationalities, responding to a description of a person from Spain with ‘Je suis Espaniol’. They use travel brochures to identify famous places such as the Tower of Pisa and Saint Mark’s Cathedral.

Older, more-able pupils in KS3 make good progress in developing a basic French vocabulary. They learn to greet each other and carry out brief conversations in French, asking and answering questions such as ‘Comment t’appelle tu?’ and ‘Ca va ..?’ and ordering food items. They progress well in their reading, identifying colours, names of animals and following written instructions. Their writing improves steadily using correct gender, adjectives, negatives and plurals such as ‘Je n’aime pas une tortue’.

Most-able pupils have the opportunity to study French at KS4 by following a GCSE course with pupils in Denbigh High School.

### History

#### Key stages 1, 4 and Post-16: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features

#### Key stages 2 and 3: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

**Outstanding features**

Most pupils in KS1 dress-up in Victorian clothes and show a very good awareness and understanding of the type of clothes worn at the time. They gain a knowledge of the passage of time through referring to what they did yesterday, or finding old coins in the soil and comparing these to coins used today.
225 Many pupils in KS4 show a very good awareness of the importance of the Chartist movement and know this created change in Britain in the nineteenth century. They successful compare this to other events that created change in society such as the suffragette movement and the impact of Hitler and the Nazis on Germany and Europe in the twentieth century. Many older/more-able pupils are aware of the inequality suffered by women and refer to the suffragette movement as a basis for the effort to obtain equal rights for women.

226 Most learners in the Post-16 groups paint pictures of local castles and describe the differences they have noticed between the way people lived in castles and their own lives today. They have created an outstanding historical ‘rail’ of Denbigh and have a very good knowledge and understanding of the history of Denbigh and its features.

Good features

227 Most pupils in KS2 notice the change in the seasons and in the environment, such as leaves changing colour. They know that occasions such as Remembrance Day refers to soldiers and people who have been killed in wars in the past. They are aware that St. David is the patron saint of Wales and that the way he lived is much different from the way people live today. Many pupils know the difference between new and old buildings in Denbigh.

228 Most pupils in KSs3 and 4 know why the USA went to war in Vietnam in the sixties, note the effect the American bombing had on Vietnamese villages, and how the war affected civilian life. They know the difference between a democracy and a dictatorship and understand that Wales is a democracy. Many pupils identify and describe the way photographs show life during the First World War.

Geography

| Key stage 1: | Grade 1: Good with outstanding features |
| Key stages 2, 3, 4 and Post-16: | Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings |

Outstanding features

229 Nearly all pupils in KS1 develop very good levels of understanding about different people and places in the world through a range of cross-curricular topics and project work. For example they know that penguins live in cold weather in the Antarctic, and that Llandudno, Prestatyn and Llangollen are places in North Wales where people visit in the summer. They have a very good knowledge and understanding of their immediate locality, identify specific places on a familiar route and draw pictures of features seen in a park.

Good features

230 Most pupils in KS2 develop a very understanding of daily weather conditions and use appropriate words and terms when describing the weather. They know what
type of clothes to wear in different weather conditions. Most pupils gain a good understanding of the local environment and can distinguish between man-made items in a locality and natural features. They identify features found on a beach and compare these well against features seen by the side of a lake. They have a good knowledge of familiar items seen in their houses, know that there are different types of houses and can create a simple map of the school locating specific places.

231 Most pupils in KS3 show a good awareness of road safety and are aware of the type of traffic seen on a road. They understand how to respond to a traffic lights and how it helps them to cross a road safely. Many pupils identify the weather conditions snow, rain, wind and sun and accordingly know what type of clothes to wear. They know the names and use of different types of buildings in their localities. The younger, less-able pupils remember what type of items they have bought in local shops.

232 Many pupils in KS4 have a good knowledge of why items need to be recycled and take an active part in improving the environment. They are aware of the dangers of global warming and know that temperatures have been rising in recent years. They know that people can influence the way the world’s environment is changing.

233 Most students at Post-16 identify many geographical features associated with Wales and locate places such as Ynys Llanddwyn or Anglesey after listening to the story of Santes Dwynwen. They have carried out projects to help improve conditions of life in various countries such as Romania and in this way, show an understanding that in many countries, people’s way of life is different to theirs.

Art and design

| Key Stages 1 and 4: | Grade 1: Good with outstanding features |
| Key Stages 2, 3 and Post-16: | Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings |

Outstanding features

234 At KS1, art is taught through the topics. Pupils are enthusiastic and achieve key skills by discussing, choosing and designing, such as when making their hats or an owl picture. They show independence in their choice of material, drawing, cutting and sticking. The staff sensitively support them in their work enabling them to become increasingly independent in tasks.

235 At KS4, pupils show an ability to discuss and evaluate their own work and support others. They research and develop their ideas through a variety of media, showing a growing awareness of colour, texture and final composition. They effectively record their design journey in their sketch-books. They have very good ICT skills that enable them to manipulate both hardware and software to research web sites to support and develop their ideas.
236 At KS4 and Post-16 pupils successfully follow different accreditation courses in WJEC Entry Level and GCSE. The achievement of those following art at GCSE or on College Courses is outstanding.

Good features

237 Throughout the school, pupils’ work shows good progression in skills acquisition and techniques. When working with local artists they acquire skills in the use of various media, including painting, clay work and photography. For example, in the design and making of a clay frieze that is on display in the school entrance.

238 At KS3, pupils with severe learning difficulties use their senses to feel, look and describe a clay model and then make one of their own. They show a developing skill in manipulating clay and using tools to mark and decorate their model.

239 At Post-16, less-able students use their art skills extensively throughout all subjects in recording their work. In Ty’r Ysgol, students have created a large collage to show a plan of their plants on their allotment. In religious education the pupils had used various mediums to create a large composition of Buddha. Two pupils were successful in being shortlisted with their compositions in The Young Britt Art Award.

240 In Rock house students have photographed their local environment and worked with local printers to choose their best photographs to turn into ‘commercial’ cards to sell. They were successful with their model of a dragon made from natural materials for the eisteddfod art competition. Students benefit from using their artistic skills to express their ideas and, therapeutically, their feelings.

Music

Key Stages 1 and 4: Grade 1: Good with outstanding features
Key Stages 2, 3 and Post-16: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Outstanding features

241 Pupils in KS1 enjoy experimenting and making sounds by beating, shaking and scraping and using percussion instruments. They maintain a steady beat and perform simple rhythmic patterns. They sing and perform action songs and move to music with increasing control and rhythm. Older, more-able pupils respond to music by moving faster or slower and reaching high or crouching low according to the pace and pitch of the music.

242 At KS4, pupils perform to a high standard. They learn to compose and perform to a wide audience of people. They enter regional competitions and festivals and receive high praise for their standard of performance. One pupil is following a course to achieve a GCSE in music.
KS4 pupils show a depth of knowledge and confidently listen, identify and categorise music into classical, modern classical, baroque or romantic. They identify composers and discuss their music. They can appraise music with feeling.

Higher ability pupils are independent in their ability to read music and demonstrate excellent skill in playing on electronic keyboards individually and as a group.

**Good features**

Pupils in KS2 clap rhythmically to music, sing in tune and many know the words to familiar songs, including Welsh songs. They enjoy expressing themselves through gestures when singing action and number songs such as ‘Five little ducks’ and learn to move in different ways according to the beat, pitch and volume of the music.

In KS3, pupils identify/name a range of instruments and know how to use them, individually sharing the sound with the class. They demonstrate loud and soft sounds effectively. They select appropriate instruments for making a required sound and increasingly perform with sustained rhythm.

At Post-16, students show good music appreciation when comparing different styles of music. They have a good knowledge of composers and give their reasons for their likes and dislikes. More-able students read sheet music and play the keyboard with increasing confidence and competence. They are familiar with the use of I-Pods.

**Physical education**

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<th>Key stage 1:</th>
<th>Grade 1: Good with outstanding features</th>
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<tr>
<td>Key stages 2, 3, 4</td>
<td>Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings</td>
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<td>and Post-16:</td>
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**Outstanding features**

Nearly all pupils in KS1 develop very good awareness of their bodies and their own potential as they respond positively to a range of different movements such as throwing or kicking a ball, taking part in horse riding or carting activities, or riding bicycles and tricycles. Most pupils follow instructions carefully and develop co-ordination and gross motor skills.

**Good features**

Across the school nearly all pupils are appropriately dressed for physical activities. They appreciate the need to prepare their bodies for exercise and the importance of taking fluids before, during or following exercise.
At KS2 many pupils develop their skills at sending and receiving using beanbags and throw the beanbags with increasing accuracy into hoops.

Older, more-able pupils in KS2 know how to keep a steady pace when running and understand why they need to warm up before taking part in activities. Most show good technique when throwing soft javelins or a ball.

Many pupils in KS3 know the names of equipment used in throwing events in athletics, and show a developing ability in throwing a shot put, or a soft javelin accurately. The more-able know how far to throw to improve on previous performance. They show good skills when bouncing, kicking or passing a ball to another person. Many younger, less-able pupils in KS3 respond very well to music in dance and move different parts of their bodies in keeping with the music.

Older pupils, in KS3 and KS4 show very good skills in sequencing simple gymnastic moves showing good control and self-discipline. They show good running techniques in races and vary their speed when running short or longer distances.

Many pupils from KS4 show an awareness of how to leap over small hurdles and use good style in keeping their leading leg straight. They develop good techniques in holding their bodies correctly when throwing a shot put or a soft javelin. They perform a standing jump well, keeping their knees bent and jumping forward confidently. They show good skills in throwing and catching a rugby ball and in striking a cricket ball with a bat.

Less-able pupils achieve a variety of basic swimming certificates and show progress in travelling through water over different lengths.

Many pupils in KS4 and Post-16 pupils make good progress in outdoor and adventurous activities, including mountain trekking, and walking, showing a range of skills. They play small-sided games such as football or rugby and know how to pass the ball to others in the same team.

Most students at Post-16, when undertaking fitness activities, know which equipment to use in order to develop particular parts of the body, and show good techniques when using equipment. They follow and understand a personal programme to develop fitness and know that using the correct amount of weight is important. They understand the benefits of resting between activities.

**Shortcomings**

A few pupils are unable to use power to project or throw soft javelins or shot putts and have not developed an awareness of how to throw accurately.
Religious education

All Key Stages and Post-16: Grade 2: Good features and no important shortcomings

Good features

259 KS1, pupils hear a range of stories from the Bible. They talk about the story of Noah with interest, with the more-able recognising animals and birds. They have a good knowledge of Christian festivals and how Christians celebrate their faith. They made attractive Easter cards and know why Christians send them to each other.

260 In KS2, pupils have good knowledge of the traditions and symbols associated with Christianity. The less-able can identify the main artefacts in a church. The more-able know the importance of rules to a community and can relate the rules to life in school and at home. They understand the importance of leaders to a community and know who the main leaders of the Christian church are.

261 In KS3, pupils have good knowledge of the Christian faith within their community, including its places of worship and religious leaders. They know of the main occasions in a Christian’s life and the significance of Christian events like Baptism to a believer. The more-able relate these to special occasions within the family. They show an increasing awareness of the diversity of religions and the importance of religious festivals to believers.

262 Pupils in KS4 are developing good knowledge and understanding of religions and what is distinctive to each. The more-able are developing a good understanding of the important moral and social issues within their community and can relate some of these issues to religious teachings. Their ability to evaluate and reflect improves as they mature, they now express their own views intelligently and the more-able support their arguments with personal views.

263 The less-able students in Post-16 gain good knowledge of the festival of celebration of Buddhist Day and demonstrate understanding of the occasion by playing games, sharing special food and making cards. The more-able students are making good progress towards gaining their ASDAN silver award. They produce an appropriate range of written work that demonstrates a thoughtful response to moral and social issues.

Shortcomings

264 A minority of pupils in KS3 and KS4, because of their special educational needs find it difficult to express beliefs through personal reflection.
The Inspection findings recognise the high standards of the school on pupils’ achievement, teaching and learning across all ages and ability, care and guidance of pupils’, leadership, management and financial management.

We are also pleased that the inspection found that key skills, bilingualism, communication skills, behaviour management, liaison between School and Residential, consistency of approaches, work experience opportunities, accreditation systems, links with the Community, Partnership with Stakeholders, accommodation, Specialist Outreach Service, Speech and Language delivery, and the contribution of TA’s are all recognised as outstanding features.

The report particularly confirms that the school is achieving its set aims of: creation of a first class special school environment and a centre of excellence for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD); the promotion of inclusion and integration; the provision of a range of high quality educational and care services for children with ASD; the provision of all services in both Welsh and English (as far as possible) and promotion of training with regard to the education and care of children with ASDs.

An action plan will be put in place to address the recommendations in the report. To further develop the good practise that already exists in the assessment of learner’s progress, establish more comprehensive self-evaluation processes, including making best use of assessment data and stabilise and secure the school leadership are aspects that we believe we can confidently address.

To stabilise and secure the school leadership is a priority for the Governing Body and will be addressed as soon as possible. Staff and Governors will start addressing the other recommendations during this academic year.

A copy of the school’s action plan in response to the Inspection recommendations will be sent to all Parents.
Appendix 1

Basic Information About the School

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of School</th>
<th>Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn</th>
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<tr>
<td>School type</td>
<td>Special School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age-range of pupils</td>
<td>3-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address of school</td>
<td>Park Street Denbigh Denbighshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Code</td>
<td>LL16 3DR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Number</td>
<td>01745 813914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-in charge</td>
<td>Mrs. Isabel Barros-Curtis (Acting Headteacher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of appointment</td>
<td>May 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair of Appropriate Authority</td>
<td>Mr. John Rogerson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered Inspector</td>
<td>Mr H James Phillips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dates of inspection</td>
<td>21st - 25th June 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2

School data and indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year group</th>
<th>N (fte)</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Y1</th>
<th>Y2</th>
<th>Y3</th>
<th>Y4</th>
<th>Y5</th>
<th>Y6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of pupils</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<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>Y14</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of pupils</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of teachers

<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>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staffing information

| Pupil: teacher (fte) ratio (excluding nursery) | 1 : 7 |
| Pupil: adult (fte) ratio in nursery classes | 1 : 2 |
| Average class size, excluding nursery classes | 7 |
| Teacher (fte): class ratio | 18 : 17 |

Percentage attendance for three complete terms prior to the inspection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>KS1</th>
<th>KS2</th>
<th>KS 3</th>
<th>KS 4</th>
<th>Post -16</th>
<th>Whole school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2009</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>92.7</td>
<td>94.6</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>92.5</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumn 2009</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>92.4</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>96.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2010</td>
<td>87.8</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>92.2</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>92.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals | 21 |
Number of pupils excluded during 12 months prior to inspection | 1 |
Appendix 3


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Curriculum Statutory Assessment 2008/2009</th>
<th>No. Pupils in Year 9 (End Key Stage 3) 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of pupils achieving each level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>English Maths Science Welsh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>41% 41% 41% 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>0 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>6% 6% 6% 0 TA – Teacher Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>18% 18% 29% 0 SAT – Statutory Assessment Tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>24% 6% 6% 0 Note: Not all students are entered for SATs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>6% 18% 18% 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>6% 12% 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 7</td>
<td>0 0 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public examination results
External Accreditation – Year 11/Post-16 - 2008/2009

All pupils undertake studies that are externally validated through GCSE, Entry Level Certificates, AQA units or ASDAN modular schemes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GCSEs</th>
<th>Entries</th>
<th>Grades Obtained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 x C 1 x E 3 x G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 x D 1 x E 2 x F 2 x G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 x Level 3 1 x Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.T.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2 x Level 2 5 x Level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 x Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASDAN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 x silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 x silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princes Trust XL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8 x Bronze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4

Evidence base of the inspection

Seven inspectors spent the equivalent of 25 inspector days in the school. They were supported by the school’s nominee.

These inspectors visited:
- 82 lessons or part lessons;
- registrations, assemblies and acts of collective worship;
- a range of extra-curricular activities; and
- pupils in residence.

Members of the inspection team had meetings with:
- staff, governors and parents before the inspection;
- senior managers, governors, teachers, support and administrative staff;
- the school council;
- representatives of the Local Authority and organisations associated with the school; and
- residential staff.

The team also considered:
- the school’s self-evaluation report and school improvement plan;
- 43 responses to a parents’ questionnaire;
- documentation provided by the school before and during the inspection;
- a wide range of pupils’ past and current work; and
- samples of pupils’ reports.

After the inspection, the Registered Inspector held meetings with senior managers and governors.
Appendix 5

Composition and Responsibilities of the Inspection Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspector</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Aspect Responsibilities</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. H. J. Phillips</td>
<td>RgI</td>
<td>Context, Summary, Key Questions 1, 5 and Contributions to 4</td>
<td>Mathematics, Modern Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Justine Barlow</td>
<td>Lay</td>
<td>Contributions to Key Questions 1, 3, 4 and 7</td>
<td>PSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Heddwyn Evans</td>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Key Question 6 and Contributions to 4</td>
<td>Welsh 2nd Language, Religious Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Glyn Griffiths</td>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Key Question 2</td>
<td>History, Geography, Physical education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Collette Gribble</td>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Key Question 4</td>
<td>Science, Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Heather Hodges</td>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Key Question 3</td>
<td>Design and technology, Art Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Trevor Payne</td>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Key Question 7</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Isabel Baros-Curtis</td>
<td>School Nominee</td>
<td>Nominee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Acknowledgement

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

Contractor

Baker-Phillips Educational Communications Ltd, Oaks Lea, Higher Knolton, Overton Wrexham. LL13 OLF