

INSPECTION REPORT

PARKSIDE LEARNING SUPPORT CENTRE

Ipswich

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124527

Headteacher: Stuart Bailey

Reporting inspector: Margaret Julia Goodchild
15918

Dates of inspection: 22 – 25 April 2002

Inspection number: 244561

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Type of school:	Pupil referral unit
Unit category:	For school phobics and school refusers
Age range of pupils:	14 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Unit address:	Spring Road Ipswich Suffolk
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Appropriate authority:	Suffolk LEA
Name of responsible officer	John Taylor
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15918	Margaret Julia Goodchild	Registered inspector	English	<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How good are curricular and other opportunities?</p> <p>How well is the unit led and managed?</p>
			Art and design	
			Personal, social and health education	
			Equal opportunities	
9075	Juliet Baxter	Lay inspector		<p>How well does the unit care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the unit work in partnership with parents?</p>
23886	Declan McCarthy	Team inspector	Science	
			Physical education	
			Special educational needs	
18242	John Godwood	Team inspector	Mathematics	
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PARKSIDE LEARNING SUPPORT CENTRE

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE UNIT

Parkside Learning Support Centre serves the needs of pupils in Years 9 to 11 who are school phobics or school refusers. There are 32 pupils on roll, 19 girls and 13 boys. All pupils are of white UK heritage; there is one traveller. Three pupils have statements of special educational need. All pupils have individual education plans for their emotional difficulties. The intake ranges from pupils with deep anxiety and fears to those who have rejected the mainstream system of education; others have suffered rejection or severe bullying in mainstream school. Their social backgrounds are varied, but all have deep insecurity, low self-esteem, and isolation from their peer group when they begin at Parkside. Many pupils have been out of school for a substantial amount of time – for as long as two or three years – before attending the centre, and pupils' attainment on entry is necessarily adversely affected by missed schooling. However, pupils range in ability from those who are predicted to gain A* in GCSE examinations to those with learning difficulties. Four pupils are on roll at the centre only, having been excluded from their previous schools; the remainder are dual registered with mainstream schools.

HOW GOOD THE UNIT IS

Parkside Learning Support Centre is a very effective pupil referral unit. Pupils achieve very well and meet with significant success at GCSE. There is a high proportion of very good teaching and pupils display very positive attitudes to learning. The profound progress pupils make in their confidence and self-worth is a direct result of the high level of care and respect they receive. The headteacher has a clear vision and provides dynamic leadership. The Centre gives very good value for money.

What the unit does well

- Pupils achieve very well and meet with considerable success at GCSE.
- Teaching is very good overall and it is consistently strong in a number of subjects.
- As a result of the high level of care, pupils make very good progress in their personal development and some make excellent gains in confidence.
- The curriculum offers a very good range of relevant courses and experiences.
- The Centre is very well resourced and provides an extremely positive learning environment.
- The headteacher is a very effective leader and, in his management of the Centre, is very well supported by a number of subject co-ordinators and by the local education authority.

What could be improved

- The diagnosis of pupils' learning difficulties, especially in literacy and numeracy, and the recording of individual strengths and weaknesses in subjects need further development.
- More work needs to be done to bring all teaching up to the very good level of much of the teaching in the Centre.
- The management committee is not as effective as it could be, and the local education authority has not met the requirement to set performance objectives for the headteacher.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the local education authority.

HOW THE UNIT HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The centre has made very good improvement since it was last inspected in March 1998. There has been a distinct improvement in the management by the local education authority and funding arrangements are much improved. There has been a great deal of development in the last year, with the appointment of a new headteacher, following a period with an acting headteacher. Standards have risen and pupils enjoy vastly improved facilities. The centre is now very well resourced, especially in information and communication technology, and the accommodation has been upgraded, and includes specialist facilities for science. The amount of taught time pupils are allocated has more than doubled. The attendance rate remains unsatisfactory overall but most pupils now attend very well and there is little unauthorised absence.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils are achieving in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	by Year 9	by Year 11	Key very good A good B satisfactory C unsatisfactory D poor E
English	B	A	
mathematics	B	B	
science	A	A	
personal, social and health education	A	A	
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	

* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs

During their time at the centre, pupils achieve very well and many gain a number of GCSEs, some at the higher grades A* to C. Pupils in Year 9 make good progress overall, although the progress of higher-attaining pupils is better than that of lower-attainers. In Year 11, progress is very good and pupils are prepared very effectively for further education, training or employment. Boys and girls achieve equally well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the unit	Very good. Pupils have extremely positive attitudes towards the centre. They respect staff, are well motivated and enjoy their studies.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils respond very well to the centre's high expectations of behaviour. They are courteous, friendly and welcoming.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are responsible and take pride in the centre. They carry out helpful tasks during the day and make very good relationships with both centre staff and their fellow pupils.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. In spite of very good individual rates of attendance on the part of a large number of pupils, the overall rate at the centre remains unsatisfactory owing to unavoidable authorised absence resulting from illness and a very small number of poor attenders.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Year 9	Years 10 and 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching is very good overall and it was at least good in nearly all the lessons observed. Teaching is good overall in English, ranging from satisfactory to excellent. It is good in mathematics and very good in science. Teaching is consistently very good in art, careers education, and personal, social and health education. It is good in information and communication technology.

Where teaching is very good, teachers have high expectations and lessons are very well structured. Work is challenging and pupils gain significantly in their ability to contribute verbally and express themselves. Relationships are strong in all lessons, but teaching that is good in some other respects does not always challenge pupils enough. Where teaching is satisfactory, this is usually the result of less secure subject knowledge and set work that is not matched to the ability span within the class. Literacy and numeracy are taught effectively in some lessons; individual targets for literacy and numeracy need to be diagnosed more precisely to inform teachers of pupils' needs. Pupils concentrate very well and many work hard, especially on their GCSE coursework.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE UNIT

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Pupils are provided with very good learning opportunities and supported in achieving a range of accredited qualifications. This prepares them very well for further study, training or employment.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory. Some teachers provide very well for these pupils, but targets in individual education plans are not specific enough and learning difficulties are not diagnosed sufficiently.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The Centre provides very well for pupils' personal development. Social development is promoted very well. There is good provision for spiritual development because the centre's very strong focus on developing self-esteem leads pupils to reflect on who they are and on their relationship with the rest of the world. Provision for moral development is very good, supported by clear expectations and mutual respect; that for cultural development is good.
How well the unit cares for its pupils	The centre is committed to a very high quality of care and protection for its pupils, resulting in their ability to flourish, develop and regain confidence and self-esteem.

Pupils make very good progress in establishing constructive relationships and significant gains in self-confidence. There are only limited opportunities for pupils to develop a multi-cultural awareness, though the headteacher is conscious of this and is seeking ways to extend it.

The centre encourages and supports a very strong partnership with parents and carers. In return, parents feel welcomed and valued. They appreciate greatly all the centre does for their children and are extremely complimentary about what it has to offer.

HOW WELL THE UNIT IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher, appointed a year ago, is dynamic and visionary. He has the confidence of the staff and is supported by very good co-ordinators in several subjects. The potential for further development is excellent.
How well the local education authority fulfils its responsibilities	The local education authority now supports the work of the centre very well in almost all respects. This marks a very good improvement since the last inspection.
The unit's evaluation of its performance	The significant developments in the past year have been a direct result of the centre's ability to evaluate its performance and identify priorities for development.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used very well and the centre does all it can to achieve best value in its spending decisions.

There is a good match between teachers' qualifications and the subjects they teach. All subjects except ICT are co-ordinated by teachers who are qualified in the subject and most

lessons are taught by subject specialists. There is a small, very effective team of non-teaching staff. The centre's accommodation is very good and is much improved since the last inspection. It offers very good specialist facilities and is maintained to a high standard, with high quality displays that help to build pupils' self-esteem and confidence by valuing the work that they do. The centre is very well resourced. It has recently acquired an exceptional range of ICT facilities and has exciting plans for its use.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE UNIT

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and carers are very pleased with the progress their children are making. • They are very grateful to the staff for the way their children have gained in confidence. • They find staff approachable and feel well informed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents would like to see a wider choice of subjects at GCSE.

Inspectors' judgements support parents' positive views. Some pupils would benefit from a wider range of subjects at GCSE; at present, the centre is offering all the subjects it can but is looking into the possibility of widening the range of subjects available through the use of the Internet and video conferencing.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The unit's results and pupils' achievements

1. The centre has sustained and built upon the positive examination results reported at the time of the last inspection and has recently gained a School Achievement Award from the DfES¹ in recognition of improved standards. In the last two years, there has been a particular increase in the number of pupils gaining five or more A* to G grades at GCSE. In 2001, of the 30 pupils who left, 13 gained five or more A* to G grades (many at A* to D); three gained five or more A* to C grades. Seven non-attending pupils left with no accredited results; all the remaining pupils gained one or more A* to G grades. When they leave the centre, most pupils go on to further education, training or employment. A small proportion of pupils returned to mainstream school in the last year.
2. Parents and carers are very pleased with the progress their children are making, and academic achievement is very good when pupils' educational histories and their personal difficulties are taken into account. Their reading ages on entry also show that they are making very good progress. There is no marked difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress in Year 9 and good progress in Years 10 and 11, with very good progress in those lessons where teachers provide targeted support. The achievement of all pupils is much enhanced by the increased time they are allocated at the centre and by the improved learning resources and specialist facilities.

English

3. Pupils join the centre with a wide range of prior attainment. All pupils have gaps in their previous education but while some arrive with difficulties in reading, writing and spelling, others have good literacy skills and have the potential to do very well at GCSE. Most pupils are reluctant to speak at length when they first join the centre and some find any verbal interaction initially very difficult. Standards are below average overall at the end of Year 9 but some pupils achieve average or above-average standards by the end of Year 11. In 2001, pupils achieved some of their best results in English: 13 out of 30 pupils gained GCSE in English language, with nine higher grades B or C; 13 gained GCSE in English literature, with eight A* to C grades. The standard of work seen at the end of Year 11 is at least in line with these results, which represents an improvement on standards at the time of the last inspection, particularly in the proportion of pupils gaining higher grades.
4. In Years 9 and 10, higher-attaining pupils achieve well; those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. All pupils achieve very well overall in Year 11. In Years 9 and 10, pupils with literacy difficulties do not receive support sufficiently targeted to their individual literacy needs. They make progress with reading, writing and spelling through English lessons, through the contribution other subjects make to their literacy development, and particularly through the individual support provided by the learning support assistant. Their difficulties are not thoroughly diagnosed, however, and work is not always matched sufficiently to their needs. This is currently most evident in Year 9, where two pupils with statements of special educational need often do the same, or almost identical, work as a higher-attaining pupil in the same group. During Year 11, pupils make rapid progress in developing their coursework for GCSE or

¹ Department for Education and Skills

Certificate of Achievement. By this time, many pupils are achieving much more than might be expected, given their fragmented educational histories. Their progress is supported by some very good and, at times excellent, teaching in Year 11.

5. By the end of Year 9, higher-attaining pupils have a good understanding of set texts and, in answering questions about characterisation, show an awareness of the motives of different characters. They read expressively and readily contribute ideas and perceptions in class. They are astute in comparing different pieces of writing that they have studied and are able to imitate the style of a given writer. Lower-attaining pupils read familiar texts with reasonable accuracy, although their reading age on entry to the Centre is as much as six years behind their chronological age. They are able to select points from the text to back up their point of view. Pupils make good use of information and communication technology in redrafting their work, but the work of lower-attainers in Years 9 and 10 includes frequent spelling mistakes, colloquial expressions and limited understanding of punctuation.
6. By the end of Year 11, higher-attaining pupils show a good literal understanding of plot, themes and characterisation, and are able to talk and write about aspects of structure and particularly about symbolism. For instance, a pupil noted that 'The images of Verona are visually frenetic' in relation to the film setting of 'Romeo and Juliet'. They show an emerging awareness of the 'voice' of the author, for example, noting that 'Dahl adopts the role of the omniscient narrator'. They make convincing comparisons of two texts. Higher-attaining pupils contribute perceptive points in class discussions and often lead discussions, listening and responding effectively to others' contributions. Other pupils are more dependent on teachers' explanations and analyses, but all pupils make careful notes that are useful subsequently when they come to develop their coursework. For instance, in a lesson where the teaching was excellent, pupils began by finding the poem 'Blessing' quite impenetrable but their individual notes towards the end of the lesson were capable of supporting further independent analysis very effectively. Pupils' written work shows that they are able to develop ideas begun in class, and many pupils make good use of the text to back up their interpretation and make further connections. For example, in their study of 'Romeo and Juliet', pupils choose effective quotations from the play. In analysing Simon Armitage's 'Poem', lower-attaining pupils needed to have quite a lot of vocabulary explained and were led into an understanding of the different nuances of words by the teacher's very clear explanations and skilled questioning. Thus, by the end of the lesson, they were able to understand a range of meanings implied by the poet's choice of language, to understand something of the poem's structure, and to make judgements about the character portrayed in the poem. The writing of lower-attaining pupils includes some personal reaction to the text and an awareness of the conventions in particular genres, although the focus is rather more on describing the plot than on textual or thematic analysis.
7. Higher-attaining pupils read aloud fluently with expression; others do so generally with accuracy. Lower-attaining pupils occasionally stumble over unfamiliar words, but their confusion with similar sounding words shows that they are using their phonic skills to work out the possible pronunciation. The writing of higher and average attaining pupils engages and sustains the reader's interest. Spelling is almost invariably correct and the choice of words is often imaginative, with varied sentence structures. Higher-attaining pupils use a range of punctuation to aid expression, including semi-colons; they have the capacity to manipulate a theme and write in a range of styles.

Mathematics

8. Pupils join the centre with a wide range of attainment. Many have missed some education and have gaps in their prior knowledge. Standards are below average overall at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11, though some pupils achieve average and above average standards. In 2001, 15 out of 30 pupils gained a GCSE in mathematics, with five gaining higher grades B or C. The standards in work seen at the end of Year 11 are similar to these results. There has been a significant rise in standards since the last inspection.
9. Pupils achieve well. They receive good teaching and feel supported by the very positive atmosphere they find in the centre. They are expected to work carefully and set out their work well. These factors enable them to gain confidence in their mathematical ability and learn well.
10. In mathematical investigations, pupils work systematically and find mathematical patterns, which they can express algebraically. They test their findings and higher-attaining pupils find general solutions that fit a range of situations. However, most pupils are not successful in explaining why the formulae work.
11. Higher-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 reach higher grades in GCSE by the end of Year 11. They succeed with algebra up to the solution of simultaneous equations and are able to solve problems using trigonometry. Average and lower-attaining students achieve GCSE grades that are below the national average. They use equations and other algebra, and in statistics they calculate averages and present data in a variety of graphs. They work steadily in a focused way, but their understanding of the work is not secure, leading to some errors in the more advanced work. Lower-attaining pupils continue to have some numeracy problems, for example in their knowledge of multiplication tables and units of measurement.
12. There is a small class of Year 9 pupils who have started work on the GCSE syllabus. These pupils gain a reasonable understanding of decimals, and learn to do calculations using written methods. They have some difficulties with numeracy and their work shows little progress with fractions, but they learn some basic algebra and geometry, and are able to design a questionnaire for a survey. They achieve well overall, but the work they do is not always well matched to their prior attainment, because there is a wide range of ability in the class and all pupils follow basically the same course.

Science

13. Pupils' achievement in science is very good and has improved since the last inspection. Year 9 pupils are working towards National Curriculum levels similar to those of pupils in mainstream schools and are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment because teaching methods are closely matched to pupils' abilities, enabling them to learn well. Boys and girls achieve equally well. In biology, pupils know the functions of the skeleton and the blood. Higher-attaining pupils know that crabs have external skeletons, they know the difference between an endoskeleton and exoskeleton, and they know the two main arteries and veins in the heart. Lower-attaining pupils know that the skull protects the brain and that red blood cells carry oxygen. In chemistry, pupils know the differences between acids and alkalis. Higher-attaining pupils know that when acids and alkalis react together, they produce a salt and water. Lower-attaining pupils know that acids turn indicator paper red and alkalis turn it blue. In physics, pupils make simple circuits and draw circuit diagrams. Higher-attaining pupils know the differences between a series and parallel circuit and lower-attaining pupils observe a bulb shining brighter in a series circuit. Pupils make equally good progress in their investigations and are increasing their knowledge of how to record results. For example, in an

investigation into the speed of cars, pupils measured the time intervals of passing cars in Spring Road, at an interval of 26 metres, and were able to calculate the speed of several cars and record this in a table.

14. Pupils of all abilities in Years 10 and 11 are achieving very well because they are following a range of GCSE courses matched to their abilities and they are consistently very well taught. For example, lower-attaining pupils follow a single science GCSE and higher-attaining pupils take a double GCSE in science. In 2001, 19 pupils achieved success at GCSE, with six higher grades B or C. Nearly all pupils gained B to D grades and one pupil gained two C grades in the double award for GCSE. This year three pupils are expected to gain at least C grades in the double award. This represents very good achievement when pupils' previous history of non-attendance and under-achievement on entry to Parkside are taken into account. These results are achieved because the teacher consistently sets very high expectations for the completion of homework and course work and ensures that pupils work hard in lessons. Standards are clearly rising, as all pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow either the single or double award syllabuses and are entered for GCSE. The improved facilities for science are supporting higher achievement than was possible at the time of the last inspection.
15. Pupils in Year 10 have a good understanding of how crude oil is separated into various fuels by fractional distillation and have a good understanding of heat transfer. Higher-attaining pupils know that fuels have different boiling points and condense at different temperatures, and this is the process of fractional distillation. Lower-attaining pupils know that kerosene and diesel are extracted from crude oil by this process. Year 10 pupils are developing their investigative skills further; for example, they carry out the electrolysis of water using the principles of fair testing well, assembling the apparatus correctly and recording their observations accurately. Higher-attaining pupils write up their experimental reports properly with appropriate headings. Lower-attaining pupils observe two gases liberated from the electrodes and draw the apparatus correctly. In biology, Year 11 pupils have a very good understanding of the respiration and excretory systems. Higher-attaining pupils know that respiration and photosynthesis are opposite processes and that urine is transferred from the kidneys to the bladder through the ureter. Lower-attaining pupils know that the body breathes in oxygen and gives out carbon dioxide during respiration and that the kidneys filter the blood. In chemistry, pupils understand the difference between exothermic and endothermic reactions. They have a good understanding of the chemistry of carbon and know how to test for different carbon-hydrogen bonds. In physics, pupils understand the properties of waves. Higher-attaining pupils know how to measure amplitude and lower-attaining pupils know the differences between a crest and a trough. Year 11 pupils are also improving their investigational skills, for example in calculating and recording the angles of incidence and reflection. During an experiment on the reflection of light, pupils were able to observe that the angle of incidence was equal to the angle of reflection. Higher-attainers understood the concept of the 'normal' as an imaginary line at 90 degrees to the surface of the mirror. Lower-attaining pupils observed that light travels in straight lines.

Art and design

16. The Centre has sustained the high standards achieved in art at the time of the last inspection and places considerable emphasis on giving pupils opportunities to express their feelings through art. In 2001, 19 pupils gained A* to G grades at GCSE, with the vast majority gaining A* to C and over half achieving A or B grades. Pupils in Year 9 and in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well in art as a result of the consistently very good teaching and some very good extra-curricular opportunities.

17. By the end of Year 11, pupils develop a good range of preparatory work using a range of media and processes. Higher-attaining pupils have very good technical skills, evident in Japanese calligraphy and watercolour paintings in a Japanese style, as well as in tonal drawings. Average-attaining pupils can draw from secondary sources with a good level of accuracy. Lower-attaining pupils on the art and design course at the further education (FE) college show sound skills of recording from observation, evident, for example, in their use of line and tone in figure drawing. All pupils are able to develop and sustain a theme through a range of technical experiments. They combine and manipulate imagery well. More able pupils show sophisticated associative thinking; for instance, in the way one pupil has arranged parts of a bicycle to represent animals' heads. Other work, also on the theme of dreams and Surrealism, is imaginative and expressive of pupils' inner world. The 'Changing Faces' project, under the guidance of an artist-in-residence, shows in-depth exploration of identity and this personal exploration is mirrored by technical experimentation. Excellent stimulus materials have been produced by the teacher in the display on masks and have led to some very good work in three dimensions.

Careers education

18. Pupils make very good progress in learning about a range of topics relevant to the world of work and to their future career opportunities. Lessons are packed with highly appropriate information that complements the knowledge pupils gain from work experience, attendance at college or training. In a very good lesson in Year 11, pupils learned about National Insurance, income tax, gross and net pay, pension schemes, overtime, the basic wage and how to calculate their tax liability. They also made good progress in numeracy, through calculating percentages and considering how much take-home pay they would have once stoppages had been deducted.

Information and communication technology

19. Standards in information and communication technology are below average because pupils have been out of school for significant periods of time before coming to the Centre and do not follow the full National Curriculum. However, they achieve well in learning the skills needed for word processing, desktop publishing, databases and spreadsheets.
20. Pupils join the centre with a wide range of backgrounds in information and communication technology. Some are computer literate but others lack confidence and have few skills. Pupils learn the basic computer skills of loading, saving and printing. In word processing, they learn to lay out and format text, to insert and delete text and to correct typing errors. Their desktop publishing skills include the use of headings and sub-headings and how to incorporate pictures. In using spreadsheets, they enter numerical data and use simple formulae to calculate, for example, total costs of meals in a restaurant or 'income = unit price x quantity'. Pupils are successful in mastering these skills and produce attractive, well-presented work.
21. All pupils at present follow the same course, which is a recognised qualification in basic information and communication technology skills, though not a GCSE. They work at their own pace and take assessments when they are ready – hence higher-attaining pupils work faster and attain more independence. In 2001, six pupils passed tests in at least three applications and gained a full certificate. Three more were not successful in all the tests, but received a certificate for the modules that they passed. There are sound plans to introduce broader courses next year that will enable pupils to gain

qualifications equivalent to a GCSE, at two different levels. In the work seen, pupils in Years 10 and 11 were making good progress towards passing the tests.

22. Some pupils use computer software without fully understanding the concepts they are using. In word-processing, for example, many pupils are slow to understand the meaning of 'justified' text and to distinguish clearly between 'serif' and 'sans serif' fonts, even though they use these in their work.
23. Pupils get few opportunities in information and communication technology lessons to use their initiative in finding, analysing and presenting information for a specific purpose, because of the narrowness of the curriculum. There are some opportunities to apply and extend their skills in other subjects and in helping to prepare the centre's newsletter, but these opportunities are at present under-developed and are not co-ordinated across the whole centre.

Personal, social and health education

24. Pupils make very good progress in personal, social and health education, as a result of consistently very good teaching. They gain an understanding of their personal strengths and aptitudes, and learn to express reasoned opinions. Most particularly, they grow in self-respect and in their awareness of others as social, physical and emotional beings. Discussions and relevant topics help them to appreciate the importance of taking responsibility and playing an active role as citizens. They find out about healthy eating and the importance of exercise, and practise communicating assertively, by, for example, learning how to write a letter of complaint. They benefit greatly from the key skills course at the FE college, where they are challenged to make presentations and negotiate with other students. Although most pupils find this difficult, they generally rise to the occasion and extend their personal boundaries of what is possible for them, and are pleasantly surprised by what they are able to achieve.

Physical education

25. It was only possible to observe a golf lesson at the local golf club during the inspection. However, photographic evidence and discussions with the co-ordinator have made it possible to make judgements about provision for physical education. It is clear that pupils' achievement is very good because the centre makes excellent use of local resources such as the swimming pool and the local golf club, where pupils are taught new skills by well-qualified instructors. Pupils develop their physical skills and co-ordination well through a wide range of leisure and sporting activities, which includes competitive football matches with local schools, professional coaching on Tuesday afternoons at Ipswich Town Football Club, aerobic walking and a gardening club. This leads to an increase in pupils' confidence and self-esteem. As a result of professional coaching and the very good leadership of the co-ordinator, pupils have recently won a football tournament. In golf, pupils have made very good progress in pitching and putting. They demonstrate good skills in balance and control, for example, when pitching a ball from a green bunker with a sand iron using a half swing. Parkside benefits from a teacher with a recognised swimming qualification who takes pupils swimming every week. However, pupils are not yet preparing for recognised swimming awards from the Amateur Swimming Association.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

26. As soon as visitors to the centre arrive in the building they are conscious of a calm and positive atmosphere. This initial impression is soon confirmed when pupils start their

lessons after their brief assembly on arrival every morning at the centre. They concentrate well and are very interested in their work. They have a very clear picture of what they have to do to succeed and make very good use of the lesson time available. These extremely positive attitudes result in pupils looking forward to their future in a manner they would never have envisaged when leaving mainstream education. When reading pupils' past records, the outsider is aware of a remarkable transformation in attitude and motivation on the part of the vast majority of young people who attend the centre. In a number of instances, parents report a change of attitude within a day of starting at the centre.

27. Behaviour is very good at all times. Pupils understand the rules and procedures that provide the daily framework of the centre. Their response to the staff's very high expectations of good behaviour is positive and consistent. No inappropriate behaviour was observed during the inspection and there have been no exclusions in the year prior to the inspection or in the current academic year. Bullying is a term that pupils refer to only in the context that this was something many of them experienced in mainstream school.
28. Relationships are of the highest quality throughout the centre. Pupils speak warmly of all staff in a manner that is an appropriate combination of informality and respect. In discussion with pupils, they remark frequently how comfortable they feel with their teachers and how they feel valued in a way they have never experienced before in an educational establishment. They know everyone is on their side and wants them to do well at the centre and in the future. Pupils form very good relationships with each other. They make friends and enjoy their social times together. If they are required to work collaboratively in lessons, they do this enthusiastically and co-operate well, sharing ideas and discussion. When talking with pupils in a group, it is impressive to see how well they relate to each other and take a strong interest in each other's activities and future lives.
29. Every pupil who joins the centre arrives with a crucial lack of confidence and extremely low self-esteem. Within a very short time, they begin to smile and start to work through their problems, resulting in a willingness to contribute to the community life of the centre with a newly developed sense of self-worth. They carry out friendly tasks in the centre, for example making sure that visitors are welcomed and taken care of. They take a pride in their surroundings and respond very well to the centre's strong belief that work should be proudly displayed to celebrate achievement. They feel emotionally and socially secure in the centre, and there are examples of a number of pupils who have made excellent progress from a position of intense anxiety when they first attended. It is remarkable that students who previously rebelled in every way against mainstream school should ask if it was possible for the centre to have its own sweat shirt to demonstrate their sense of belonging. In discussion with some pupils, they were asked how they felt about the centre and what it was doing for them. The reply 'it is a good feeling that comes from inside me' is a clear illustration of the centre's effectiveness in providing for pupils' personal development.
30. Undoubtedly, pupils' positive attitudes, high standards of behaviour, warm relationships and very good personal development, all of which has been sustained since the previous inspection, make a profound contribution to all they do and achieve at the centre.
31. The individual attendance rate of the majority of pupils is regular and very good, particularly in relation to their previous records. It results in an overall rate that is much higher than in most pupil referral units. There is a low rate of unauthorised absence and

the authorised absence can be clearly explained by a small group of pupils. There is one persistent non-attender, a very small number of erratic attenders, and two pupils who have long-term medical problems and attend the centre when they can. In spite of Parkside's favourable attendance rate in comparison with many similar establishments, the overall rate of attendance has to be judged as unsatisfactory. All pupils who attend the centre regularly do so with enjoyment and are always punctual.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

32. The centre has sustained the very good quality of teaching found at the last inspection, so that teaching remains a strength and contributes a great deal to pupils' achievement and personal development. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons seen; it was at least good in all but three lessons; it was very good and occasionally excellent in two thirds of lessons. Teaching is very good in Years 10 and 11, with consistently very good - and some excellent - teaching in science; consistently very good teaching in art, careers education, food technology, and personal, social and health education; teaching that ranges from satisfactory to excellent in English; good and some very good teaching in mathematics. Teaching in information and communication technology is good. Teaching is good overall in Year 9: it remains generally very good in science and in art, with good teaching overall in English and satisfactory teaching in mathematics.
33. Where teaching is at least very good, teachers convey high expectations and use time very efficiently, so that pupils are made aware that every minute counts. They have very positive relationships with pupils and gain full attention throughout. Planning is detailed with clear learning objectives and subject-specialist knowledge is used to full effect in the choice of teaching methods. Lessons are highly structured, with varied learning activities and plenty of opportunity for pupils to take part in discussion or answer probing questions. Most particularly, teachers in these lessons combine an excellent sensitivity and knowledge of individual pupils' difficulties with a high level of challenge. This is revealed in the work that is set and in teachers' expectation that pupils will think deeply and respond fully. Teachers show enthusiasm for the subject and use innovative methods to engage pupils. Homework is used effectively in the best lessons as a means of extending pupils' learning and the expectation that it should be completed is communicated unequivocally.
34. Where teaching is good and where it is less frequently only satisfactory, lessons are planned with examination syllabuses in mind and teachers are clear about what they intend to teach. However, they sometimes focus rather more on the activities to be covered than on what they want pupils to understand or be able to do by the end of the lesson. As a result, they do not choose the best means to achieve their purpose and these lessons are generally less structured than where teaching is at its best. Occasionally, this leads to some lack of clarity and means that pupils learn more superficially, often as a result of teachers being non-specialists in the subject. Teachers in these lessons have good relationships with pupils and are supportive at all times, but they do not have sufficient confidence to challenge and engage pupils at a deeper level. As a result, the pace sometimes slackens and pupils' verbal contributions are limited. Teachers, however, manage pupils' behaviour very effectively and maintain discipline throughout. Very occasionally, teachers do not act as good role models for pupils and make comments that are at variance with the high expectations in the centre as a whole. Homework is rarely set in these lessons or, where it has been set, pupils have not completed it. The setting of homework is rather lax in relation to pupils in Year 9.

English

35. Teaching is good overall in English, but it ranges from satisfactory to excellent. The best lessons were observed in Year 11, with a GCSE group and with a group of lower-attaining pupils who are being entered for the Certificate of Achievement. In the very good and excellent teaching, the teacher is highly skilled in questioning pupils and involving them in discussion. This was evident in the analysis of a poem by Simon Armitage, when the teacher pushed pupils to think deeply about the poem by asking questions such as, 'What do you make of this word? What quality does this word give to the poem?' and in relation to the central character, 'What is your response to a man like that?' As a result, pupils were able to connect emotionally with the poet's intentions and glean a range of important points to note in the writing frames the teacher had provided to support them in preparing to write an essay. With the higher-attaining group, the same teacher provided very good contextual information about the poem and explained the importance of moving beyond the literal interpretation of a work. He used his excellent subject knowledge to explore the form and imagery of the poem 'Blessing' and ensured, through discussion and detailed analysis, that pupils were aware of different layers of meaning. In both these lessons, teaching showed sensitivity to pupils' difficulties but challenge and high expectations were not compromised. Throughout, pupils were expected to engage fully in the lesson and to work as hard as possible. As a result, both groups showed total respect for the teacher, individual pupils showed courage in expressing their ideas, and pupils' own notes showed that they had gained a great deal in understanding.
36. Where teaching is good, planning includes clear learning objectives very well linked to GCSE syllabus requirements. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and this supports pupils in considering the plot and characterisation, and includes some attention to textual analysis. In these lessons, teachers make set texts accessible and interesting to pupils, often through devising worksheets and other support materials. Video clips are used - for example, they were used well in the lesson on 'Romeo and Juliet' - to emphasise particular points and to promote discussion. Teachers are encouraging and ask some good questions. This was evident in a Year 9 lesson on 'Our Day Out' by Willy Russell, when the teacher asked, 'What does that tell you? How would you describe her?' Pupils are made to feel safe in these lessons, but teachers sometimes hold back when greater challenge would be appropriate. As a result, there are instances when higher-attaining pupils reach a more shallow interpretation of a work than they might otherwise do. Their written work provides an opportunity for them to explore their ideas further but some opportunities to do that are lost when teachers could take pupils to deeper levels of meaning and promote greater social development but do not do so.
37. In a satisfactory lesson in Year 10, the teacher had set homework in the previous lesson but pupils had not completed it. Learning objectives were clear in the lesson plan and the teacher shared with pupils some of the conventions used in writing a newspaper article, and asked some appropriate questions. However, pupils were not made aware of what would constitute an effective article and they had difficulty getting started on their writing through a lack of clarity in the teacher's explanations. Pupils related well to one another, contributed well to the lesson and there was a comfortable atmosphere in the class. There was, however, a little irrelevant chatting and no real feeling of urgency from the teacher. Pupils made satisfactory progress but could have gained much more from the lesson.
38. Teachers mark work regularly and sometimes diagnose strengths and weaknesses so that pupils are clear about what to do to improve, but some marking leaves spelling mistakes unchecked and tends to praise effort and achievement, without giving pupils

enough advice about what more they might do. Teachers provide detailed verbal feedback to pupils and keep careful records of pupils' attainment in pieces of coursework. There is not, however, enough formal assessment of what pupils have mastered and what they are still learning, or use of this to plan work that matches the needs of individual pupils. In Year 9, particularly, the teaching does not take enough account of the wide range of ability in the class.

Mathematics

39. The teaching of mathematics is good. All teaching includes a high level of care and support for individual pupils, which leads to good relationships and an atmosphere of mutual respect. In this supportive environment, pupils gain in confidence in their mathematical ability and hence make good progress. Pupils concentrate well and cover a good quantity of work.
40. The teaching of the specialist mathematics teachers is characterised by very clear explanations that enable pupils to understand the concepts and methods they need for examinations. Teachers use resources very well to make ideas clear, such as the fact that the area of a triangle is equal to half the area of a rectangle. The teaching is very systematic in ensuring that pupils take a step-by-step approach and are thoroughly prepared with all they need to know. There is some planning to match learning activities to the differing abilities within the class, but this is not done in all lessons. Homework is set in some lessons, particularly when pupils are preparing for examinations.
41. In a few lessons, teaching is very good. In these lessons, teachers show a high level of skill in diagnosing what individual pupils know and use teaching methods that successfully enable pupils to think for themselves and contribute their own understanding to the lesson. In this way, pupils benefit from fast learning and also make developments in their social skill and confidence, through demonstrating to other pupils. Most lessons do not give enough emphasis to such active learning.
42. In a similar number of lessons, teaching is satisfactory. These lessons efficiently cover the examination course and give pupils plenty of practice. The teaching methods are somewhat limited, however – generally consisting of an explanation by the teacher, with some questions to check that pupils understand, followed by exercises from a textbook. These lessons are not flexible enough to respond to unexpected difficulties, and sometimes the exercises are not properly matched to the introduction of the lesson.
43. Teachers mark work regularly and encourage pupils by giving praise for their work. There is not, however, enough formal assessment of what pupils have mastered and what they are still learning, or use of this to plan work that matches the needs of individual pupils. In Year 9, particularly, the teaching does not take enough account of the wide range of ability in the class.
44. Pupils almost always behave very well and they are keen to learn. They respond well to the very good support they get from teachers and the mutual respect that is inherent to the ethos of the centre. Pupils who join the centre with poor attitudes to learning quickly improve and their work becomes longer and more careful, with better presentation. Pupils are willing to try when they cannot immediately see how to solve a problem. They set their work out well.
45. Many pupils are very quiet and shy. When teaching is very good, they are willing to discuss their work with each other and demonstrate their understanding to the rest of the class. This is quite rare and is an area for development. Just occasionally, a few

pupils become a little argumentative or unco-operative. This is rare and is due partly to individual pupils' own frustrations but is occasionally a reaction to teaching that is not well matched to their understanding and is either too hard or too easy.

46. The complexities of timetabling mean that there has to be some non-specialist teaching. There is good teamwork between the main mathematics teachers. There is good informal support for the non-specialist teachers, but a need for further support, through additional written guidance, joint planning and observation of lessons.

Science

47. The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is consistently very good and sometimes excellent in Years 10 and 11 and is at least good and sometimes very good in Year 9. As a result, pupils learn and achieve well in Year 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11.
48. Where teaching is very good, lessons are taught by the subject co-ordinator, who has excellent subject knowledge and provides very well thought-out learning activities based on scientific enquiry. This ensures that pupils quickly acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills, and build on their prior learning. A rich variety of interesting activities, such as demonstration, direct teaching, investigation, discussion, small group work and individual work are included in each lesson. Information is delivered in a brisk and lively manner so that pupils are always focused, try hard and work at a good pace. Resources are very well chosen and used very effectively to bring the subject alive. As a result, pupils are well motivated, and persist with their activities. The teacher maintains very good relationships with pupils so that they listen well and follow instructions precisely. Expectations for learning are always high, evidenced, for example, by the consistent setting and marking of homework. This has a positive effect on pupils' behaviour and attitude to the subject. Pupils always behave very well and have a thirst for more knowledge because the teacher does not tolerate mediocrity. Therefore, pupils want to do their best.
49. The teacher makes very good use of ongoing assessment within every lesson. Learning objectives are discussed with pupils at the start, the teacher checks that pupils are on course to achieve these as the lesson proceeds, and informs them of what they have achieved at the end of the lesson. Thorough assessment is evident also in the marking of pupils' work; each task is marked and pupils are praised for their achievements. Expected GCSE grades are recorded and the teacher corrects errors, paying particular attention to the spelling of key scientific vocabulary. Pupils, therefore, have a very clear idea of the progress they are making.
50. Another key feature of very good teaching is the meticulous attention to the application of literacy and numeracy skills in lessons. For example, when a Year 9 pupil with a very low reading age was struggling with 'pulmonary' artery, the teacher broke the word down into syllables and focused on the letter sounds until the pupil was able to say it, and then read and write it. Pupils are always reminded to record the correct units in measuring such things as volume and mass during investigations, and the teacher furthers their understanding of algebra in the use of scientific formulae. Very good, targeted support is provided in lessons so that pupils of all abilities make equally good progress. The teacher uses quick-fire repetitive questioning, pitched accurately to different levels of attainment, not only at the beginning of lessons but at various unexpected times during the lesson. This not only enables pupils to master new knowledge and understanding but keeps them focused throughout the lesson. This is often presented in the form of trick questioning injected with a great deal of humour so pupils enjoy the lesson as they try to outwit their teacher.

51. Where teaching is excellent, precise links are made between science in the real world and science in the laboratory; for example, the teacher linked the industrial process of fractionation to extract fuels with pupils' investigation into the heat released from burning kerosene and diesel. Another feature of excellent teaching is the detailed explanation of practical investigative tasks at the beginning so that pupils quickly engage in their experiments and develop high levels of scientific enquiry. Where teaching is good, rather than excellent or very good, the teacher is less secure in subject knowledge and planning sometimes includes too many activities. Good lessons proceed at a slower pace, so there are a few more incidents of minor disruption such as calling out or talking over others. However, such behaviour is always managed well by the teacher's re-focusing on the task.

Art and design

52. Teaching in art is consistently very good. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and provides clear guidance to pupils. Teaching is both purposeful and sensitive, so that pupils feel reassured but are also challenged continuously. Pupils are given very good opportunities to express their individuality: the teacher encourages them and gives them confidence, while moving them on in their thinking. Excellent relationships are evident in all lessons and pupils receive well-targeted support. Any mildly inappropriate behaviour is dealt with calmly and very effectively, so that pupils concentrate well and often work with total absorption. The teacher provides very good opportunities for pupils to explore ideas and experiment. Very well chosen visual reference materials stimulate pupils' practical work and there are examples where the work of other artists has been used very effectively as a source of stimulus. Information and communication technology is used well in some lessons and for some pupils, although there is scope to make greater use of new technologies to support visual experimentation.

Careers education

53. Teaching in careers education is consistently very good. Learning objectives are very clear, based on thorough and detailed subject knowledge. The teacher has high expectations and is firm in his handling of pupils' behaviour. It is clear that pupils are expected to contribute as well as they possibly can and to concentrate fully. Pertinent questions push pupils to think deeply and contribute verbally. The teacher is sensitive and encouraging, but also highly challenging. Every moment counts and pupils are made aware of the importance and relevance of the subject to their future. Lessons are packed with valuable information. As a result, pupils learn very well and frequently make major shifts in confidence and in their ability to function as effective members of society.

Information and communication technology

54. The teaching of information and communication technology is good. The teacher is not an information and communication technology specialist but has adequate subject knowledge for the courses that are taught. Pupils make good progress in learning information and communication technology skills because they receive clear explanations and are carefully guided through the practical work. They have sufficient practice, and good records are kept of their progress and achievements.
55. Lessons are well structured, with revision of previous work preceding new learning and practice. They are also well organised, with seating arrangements designed to enable pupils to concentrate on whole-class discussion or individual computer work, as appropriate. Classroom management and relationships are good, leading to a good

learning atmosphere. Pupils enjoy the work and are motivated by the success they achieve in producing an attractive outcome. The room is well equipped, thus removing barriers to learning, except that there is insufficient clip art easily available for pupils to incorporate into their work.

56. The course that pupils follow is tightly structured. Higher-attaining pupils are able to follow the course independently. Lower-attaining pupils are at times too dependent on the teacher because the style of questioning used in lessons does not lead them to consider information and think for themselves. Pupils enjoy learning information and communication technology. They are motivated by the practical tasks and because they achieve attractive outcomes. They co-operate well and help each other.
57. There are plans for all teachers to take part in the national training programme in the use of information and communication technology in teaching their subjects. This training is to be co-ordinated by the headteacher. It should enable teachers to give pupils more opportunities to apply their information and communication technology skills in the learning of other subjects.

Personal, social and health education

58. Teaching in personal, social and health education is consistently very good. The teacher has a very purposeful and dynamic style, which engages pupils' full attention and encourages them to take part in discussions. Work is pitched appropriately to engage pupils socially and supports the development of basic skills. Learning objectives are precise and ground rules are very clear, which puts pupils at their ease. The teacher has excellent control and this enables pupils to talk about sensitive issues. Tasks are highly structured and non-threatening, and the atmosphere is secure. The teacher has high expectations and conveys these clearly, for instance, by saying, 'You've all got to write down at least two ideas'. Pupils respond quickly to such instructions. They work particularly well in pairs, showing enjoyment in their learning, but also discuss important topics as a group. Lessons are very well organised with carefully chosen resources, and time is used very well. The Internet was used to very good effect in a lesson on contraception, and a video of teenage mothers discussing finance was very relevant in a lesson concerned with working out the financial effects of having a baby and of living independently. The teacher manages delicate issues with utter confidence and is highly knowledgeable. She has excellent relationships with pupils and first class interpersonal skills.

Physical education

59. Pupils are taught by very well qualified physical education instructors within local facilities used by the centre. Good links have also been established through the Connexions service to provide summer outdoor activities such as riding and sailing to further increase physical skills. Parkside have submitted an exciting bid through the Outward Bound Trust to take up to ten pupils on a global expedition to such places as Kenya, in order to extend their physical challenges. If successful, pupils will have the opportunity to climb Mount Kilimanjaro and participate in an African Safari, which should also enhance their cultural development. The centre has established links with a local secondary school, which has been awarded sports college status. This school has committed itself to providing activities that Parkside is currently unable to offer, such as fitness training, the use of a climbing wall and access to an all-weather sports area, as part of its bid for specialist college status. The Centre is now waiting for the school to put these arrangements into effect.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

60. There has been excellent improvement in curricular provision since the last inspection, when pupils attended for approximately 12 hours a week. Provision is now almost full time: most pupils attend for 4.5 days a week and some attend a drama workshop or other activities on the remaining afternoon. The local education authority is, thus, taking very good steps towards full-time provision, which becomes a requirement in the near future for pupils who are out of school.
61. The curriculum appropriately combines formal academic study with activities that prepare pupils for work or further training. Pupils study English; mathematics; science; art; leisure and recreation, including cookery, walking, gardening, and golf (leading to Golf Foundation Merit Award); careers education and guidance; and personal, social and health education. They have a weekly session of community education (exploring issues through drama and working towards an accredited English Speaking Award). Once a fortnight, Year 10 pupils have access to the design & technology facilities in a local 'beacon school', where they are taught by mainstream teachers.
62. Pupils normally take six GCSEs (or Certificates of Achievement for some lower-attaining pupils), in English language, English literature, mathematics, double science (open to all with sufficient background in science – those without do single science), and art. They also take Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT), and CLAIT 'plus' is to be developed for higher-attainers. Accreditation through the ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) Youth Award Scheme is supported through personal, social and health education. The centre intends to explore the possibility of supporting more subjects through the Internet and through the introduction of global conferencing. Some parents would like to see a wider range of GCSEs on offer and, certainly, any developments to broaden pupils' opportunities would be beneficial.
63. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a choice of work-related courses at the local FE college or with approved training providers for one day a week. This represents an improvement since the last inspection, when pupils had some opportunity to experience taster courses at a local agricultural college but no regular opportunities to take part in FE college courses, vocational training or ongoing work experience. At the FE college, five are taking a GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) module in media studies, two are taking a NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) level diploma in hairdressing, and all are taking key skills at Levels 1-2. Some Year 10 pupils are taking art & design at college, leading to Open College Network accreditation. Five pupils are currently on extended work experience (which pupils have as an option one day a week in Year 11), and nine attend other off-site provision, through New Careers Training. Through the latter, a small number are studying office administration and information and communication technology.
64. One afternoon a week, pupils who are out of school – many in receipt of home tuition – and who may be suitable entrants for Parkside attend for 'catch-up' work and to make the transition to being educated in a group situation. Opening the unit's facilities to pupils who may be suited to a placement here provides very well for effective integration from home tuition into group work. Parents testify to the effectiveness of this system. The fact that outreach work has begun into mainstream schools is another very positive development.

65. There is a meaningful policy statement for each subject of the curriculum and long-term plans reveal very good subject knowledge on the part of co-ordinators. For example, the long-term plans for English include extension and foundation work for different abilities, and very good reference is made to syllabus requirements. Staff are very aware of the need to plan so that pupils who join the centre at various points during the year can have their needs met and be prepared for examination success. There is appropriate provision for GCSE and for Certificate of Achievement, so that accreditation is matched to pupils' prior attainment and ability. The subject makes good use of information and communication technology in word-processing, particularly to help pupils with redrafting their work and to improve presentation.
66. In mathematics, the curriculum is based on the GCSE examination course and all students are prepared for this. There are work plans for Foundation and Intermediate levels and accelerated courses for students who join the centre in Year 11. These plans provide a satisfactory coverage of the course, but do not include enough guidance to support the non-specialist teachers. There is too much reliance on textbooks in some lessons, leading to teaching which lacks variety and is not sufficiently responsive to individual pupils' needs. The mathematics curriculum has been improved since the last inspection. The time allocated to mathematics has been increased to three 45-minute lessons. The arrangements for GCSE coursework have been improved. As a result, students have this year achieved significantly better results in their coursework and have been able to demonstrate their ability to use and apply mathematics.
67. There is currently very little use of ICT in mathematics, though there are firm plans to provide computers and graphical calculators and ensure that all pupils use ICT regularly in their learning. Some pupils use a computer-based integrated learning program to practise their numeracy and there are plans to extend this for all pupils next year.
68. There is some extra-curricular mathematics. A number of pupils last year sat the 'Mathematics Challenge' – a national problem-solving contest. They gained only moderate success, but there are plans to enter this again, with more practice, in order to give pupils the interest of trying mathematics beyond the examination syllabus and practising their thinking skills. The mathematics co-ordinator has a clear aim to make mathematics enjoyable for all pupils.
69. Learning opportunities are very good in science. The subject is very well planned to accommodate the needs of pupils of different abilities. Termly plans are reviewed regularly and the examination results from the previous year are used to develop new termly plans. Particular care is taken in choosing the examination syllabus that is most suited to a pupil's individual needs, and a large number of syllabuses is used as appropriate. All pupils benefit greatly from the range of GCSE courses on offer.
70. The curriculum in art is varied and relevant. Learning opportunities are particularly well linked to the need for pupils to explore and express their feelings. Most emphasis is currently placed on work in two dimensions, although pupils have some opportunities to work with clay and to experiment with other ways of working in three dimensions. The centre intends to purchase a kiln and a lino printing press to extend pupils' range of experiences. There have been trips to art galleries and exhibitions in the recent past but not in the current academic year. At present, the Internet is used as a means of giving pupils access to resources and images available in galleries. The time allocation for art, with two 45-minute lessons a week, is tight. The teacher does what she can to overcome this, however, by allowing pupils to do extra coursework on Tuesday afternoons and at lunchtimes.

71. All pupils have one information and communication technology lesson a week. They do not follow the full National Curriculum, but take a recognised course in information and communication technology skills known as CLAIT. Pupils follow the course at their own pace and own level and take the assessments when they are ready. This is well suited to the fact that pupils join the centre at different times and, for some, attendance is problematic. There are plans next year to extend the course to a new, broader version, which is equivalent to GCSE and will be available at two different levels.
72. Some use is made of information and communication technology in other subjects, but this is not at present co-ordinated across the whole curriculum. Art lessons make use of computers as well as a digital camera and a scanner. In English, pupils create their own newspapers. Pupils use the computers in the PSHE room to find information from the Internet on subjects relevant to their personal development. In careers, pupils use software that provides guidance on career choices and they word process part of their own National Record of Achievement.
73. There are some exciting plans for future ICT curriculum projects. A computer-based music project is about to begin, in which pupils will work with a visiting musician to create sounds and images from the centre and communicate these using the Internet and video-conferencing to other schools. There are also plans to use the video-conferencing equipment for 'distance learning' of subjects not available in the centre, and for communicating with other schools. At present, selected pupils make use of an integrated learning program to develop and practise their literacy and numeracy skills. Once the centre's network is fully installed, this will be made available to all pupils.
74. There is a strong commitment to including all pupils and to matching the curriculum to their individual needs. The centre is effective in providing very well for boys and girls, and makes very good provision for average and higher-attaining pupils. The emphasis on gaining academic qualifications means that more able pupils have a very good chance of achieving enough higher grade passes at GCSE to enable them to continue with their studies. The provision of training opportunities and work experience means that all pupils, including those who are lower attaining, gain skills that should stand them in good stead in the future. The centre is most concerned to design specific 'packages' that meet the needs of individual pupils in Years 10 and 11, through a combination of accredited courses, college, training or work experience placement. This is supporting pupils very well towards their chosen direction upon leaving the centre.
75. Individual education plans have been introduced quite recently for all pupils and this is a positive development. However, these are unsatisfactory because the targets set for literacy and numeracy are written as teaching targets, they are too broad and they do not inform pupils of what they are expected to achieve. Therefore, they cannot be used effectively to plan lessons and it is very difficult to measure a pupils' progress against the targets set. The learning support assistant provides literacy support to individual pupils, which goes some way towards meeting the needs of those with difficulties in reading, spelling and writing, but work is not targeted precisely enough.
76. The centre makes satisfactory provision for developing pupils' numeracy skills. Teachers of mathematics and other subjects support this well, but there is not yet a whole-school plan. In science, pupils use formulae to calculate speed, measure angles of incidence and reflection and work out the cost of electricity bills. PSHE lessons include calculations of personal expenditure and, in careers, pupils use percentages to calculate income tax and VAT. They learn the importance of checking that they have a correct answer. A policy for co-ordinating the teaching of numeracy within all subjects

is in the process of being written and all staff are to be trained in teaching numeracy, jointly with the staff at the local beacon school.

77. Personal, social and health education makes a major contribution to pupils' personal development and to preparing them for life after compulsory school age. It covers an appropriate range of topics and makes very good use of a range of resources to enliven the curriculum. The centre is taking part in a drug education pilot scheme called 'Learning Together'. This involves Year 10 pupils working with parents to enhance knowledge and understanding of drugs and issues that surround young people today, and has led to some very positive and innovative work. Provision for sex education is also very good, and pupils are made well aware of how to keep themselves safe and healthy.
78. Parents questioned whether there should be more extra-curricular activities, but provision is already good. Last year, there was a trip to France. There is a drama workshop every Tuesday afternoon, run in collaboration with the New Wolsey Theatre, and it is planned that two touring theatre groups will work with members of the drama group. A music workshop has been held, and an artist-in-residence worked for three days with Year 10 pupils on a project called 'Changing faces', which enabled them to explore issues of identity. The football team recently won a mini-tournament against two other local pupil referral units, and a number of boys take part in a coaching forum at Ipswich Town Football Club. Pupils contributed to the organisation of a Christmas bazaar at the centre.
79. The centre has developed some strong links with other agencies and establishments. There are partnerships with the Learning Skills Council, with training providers, the further education college, a local agricultural college, businesses, the theatre, community education and the healthy schools project. The centre has close and productive links with a local beacon school and potential links with a local school that has recently been awarded sports college status.
80. Careers education and guidance were very good at the time of the last inspection and the high standards apparent then have been maintained and increased. In 1999, Parkside was the first pupil referral unit in Suffolk to be awarded the Suffolk Standards for Careers Education and Guidance. Pupils in Year 11 engage in a ten-day work experience placement, and all are offered the chance to extend this for one day a week after the initial placement. Links with a large number of agencies result in opportunities for vocational education, work experience and courses in a number of establishments for all pupils in the centre. Increased funding since the last inspection has enabled the centre to offer a much greater variety of educational opportunities and there are exciting plans for further development in the coming months.
81. The centre has a good careers office and library and also welcomes considerable input from Connexions Suffolk. In discussion with pupils, it is very evident that they are well informed about the large number of choices available to them, which helps them enormously in looking at their future careers and work patterns. They are also very clear that the centre's staff and those staff in other establishments do all they can to help them to make informed and wise decisions with regard to their future.
82. Provision for pupils' personal development and in particular their social development is very good. Many pupils first arrive at the centre in a very fragile emotional state and initially find social interaction extremely difficult, often because of previous negative experiences. They make very good progress in establishing constructive relationships with the staff and other pupils and make significant gains in self-confidence. There are

several pupils currently in the centre who, when they arrived, were extremely withdrawn and incapable of forming relationships, but who have become happy and relaxed and are learning well.

83. There are several reasons for this very good social development – a major one being the excellent individual support provided by teaching and non-teaching staff. All staff, in their work and interactions with pupils, embody the ethos of the centre, which is one of mutual respect, in which all individuals are valued and are expected to take a positive attitude to themselves and others. As a result, pupils feel accepted and respected, and hence grow in self-esteem and confidence.
84. Social development is also promoted through many lessons and other activities. Most teachers are skilled in giving pupils opportunities to work together and express their views to others, in small groups and to the whole class. There are some other lessons where pupils are very passive and where lesson planning would benefit from a more conscious approach to pupils' involvement and social development. Year 11 pupils spend one day a week at Suffolk College. They are carefully prepared and very well supported in this because the new environment is large and initially they find it intimidating. Because of the very good support, pupils mix well with other college students and gain in confidence through meeting a wide range of other young people and adults. In individual tutorial sessions, pupils sometimes agree individual targets for social interaction, such as to initiate a conversation out in the community, and feel a sense of pride when they achieve this. Most pupils are also very supportive of one another.
85. There is good provision for pupils' spiritual development. The centre's very strong focus on developing self-esteem leads pupils to reflect on who they are and their relationship with the rest of the world. Through their own personal growth in overcoming their difficulties, many pupils develop a higher degree of self-awareness than they would have done otherwise. Art lessons support pupils in developing a vocabulary to express their own inner world, and some English lessons provide opportunities for reflection in the study of literature. Discussions in PSHE lessons are skilfully managed and encourage pupils to articulate their own views and gain an awareness of their personal strengths and aptitudes. Many posters in the centre encourage pupils to value themselves and overcome self-imposed limitations. High quality displays celebrate what pupils have achieved. There is, however, little focus on a Divine Being, and morning assemblies do not include any spiritual reflection. Although pupil referral units are not obliged to hold a daily act of collective worship, the time when pupils come together in the mornings is not used as well as it might be and could very usefully include a spiritual component.
86. There is very good provision for pupils' moral development. This is well supported by the mutual respect enshrined in the ethos of the centre. All the staff are very aware that they are role models and they set a very good example in their behaviour towards pupils and each other. The non-teaching staff as well as the teachers, are very effective in this. The centre has a clear code of conduct and there are high expectations for behaviour. Pupils come to realise, through experience, that treating other people well achieves better results than being selfish. When behavioural incidents do occur, they are dealt with very effectively. Issues are talked through and unacceptable behaviour is challenged, but without damaging self-esteem and the worth of the individual pupil. Pupils are expected to take responsibility and to accept the consequences of their own actions.

87. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. In art and English, pupils study the work of artists and writers from their own and other cultures. There are good links with the New Wolsey Theatre, which runs a drama workshop each week. The centre is active in developing opportunities for cultural development. There was recently an artist-in-residence who worked with Year 10 pupils for three days on 'Changing Faces' – an art project focusing on awareness of self and others. A music project is about to begin, in which a professional musician will work with pupils in developing musical images of themselves and the centre, and communicating these with other schools using the new video-conferencing facilities. There are only limited opportunities for pupils to develop a multi-cultural awareness, but the headteacher is conscious of this and is seeking ways to extend it. A touring drama group ran a workshop that explored racial issues and pupils responded well, showing no racist reactions. There was a trip to France last year and staff are seeking funding to support a trip to Kenya.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

88. The centre provides a secure and caring environment, which ensures that all pupils flourish and develop. The strong commitment to the highest standards of pastoral and personal care has been sustained and extended since the previous inspection. This enables all pupils to improve academically and play a full part in the centre community.
89. Health and safety is of prime importance in the centre and there is an annual inspection by the local authority as well as daily vigilance on the part of all staff and pupils themselves, for example in science lessons. Two members of staff are appropriately trained in first aid and one member of staff is the named officer for child protection. This officer works in close association with the member of staff responsible for personal, social and health education.
90. The monitoring and promotion of attendance is detailed and thorough. The centre's headteacher is aiming for a 95 per cent attendance rate and procedures are in place to ensure that this target can be vigorously pursued. Certificates are awarded for good attendance, immediate contact is made on the first day of absence and, on occasions, staff collect pupils from home if there are appropriate reasons for doing so. There is little more that could be done to promote and monitor attendance at the centre but the inspection team is confident that all avenues will be explored to achieve the headteacher's target.
91. The centre has well-ordered procedures to check on attendance at other institutions when pupils are working away from the centre, for example at the FE college and work experience placements. The receiving educational establishments are required to inform the centre immediately if a student does not turn up. The centre will then put its procedures into immediate action. Occasionally, this arrangement can fall down, as was observed during the inspection when one establishment had failed to notify the centre that a pupil had not attended the relevant course for two weeks running. This resulted in the student being considerably behind with a study project.
92. Pupils are extremely well supported by the centre in so many ways. Each pupil has a personal tutor, with whom they meet weekly to discuss their work and personal progress. Social targets are set at these weekly meetings. At one of the weekly staff meetings, pupils are the focus and their needs are fully discussed. Pupils receive feedback from these meetings so there is a positive ongoing dialogue that fully involves them. Each pupil has a personal student file and a communications file to which all staff have access so they can be kept fully up to date and informed on progress.

93. There is considerable input into the centre from a number of outside agencies with whom the Centre has excellent relationships. This includes community education staff, a counsellor, a school nurse and an advisor from Connexions Suffolk.
94. The centre's provision for personal, social and health education strongly underpins pupils' care. An exciting outreach facility is showing signs of success in its early days that could result in both high quality preventative work and a means of identifying pupils for whom Parkside could provide a future alternative learning environment.
95. There has been satisfactory improvement in assessment arrangements since the last inspection with a satisfactory range of assessment systems in place, a few of which are proving effective as an aid to planning. These systems include improved opportunities for accreditation through public examinations pitched to the particular levels of pupils' ability such as GCSE and Certificates of Achievement, and a thoughtful assessment and marking policy has been produced since the last inspection in an attempt to improve whole school co-ordination.
96. Pupils come with little or no information on their prior attainment, mainly because they have been out of school for so long. The centre is improving its system for gathering assessment information from secondary schools before a pupil is admitted; all feeder schools are asked for information regarding academic achievement and the pupil's file is also requested. Where this is missing or not up to date, pupils are given reading and spelling tests as soon as possible after entry. There is no initial assessment of what they know in relation to numeracy or mathematics on entry to the centre, though the co-ordinator is seeking a suitable test. Feeder schools are asked for social and personal information using a profile and questionnaire. The information gained is used by staff at the centre after about six to eight weeks to monitor any changes in behaviour and attitude and at later intervals to measure progress. All pupils are reviewed after about eight weeks of starting the centre; the review information is shared with parents and the pupil.
97. However, assessment on entry does not include any detailed assessment of a pupil's strengths and weaknesses in literacy and numeracy, and there is no detailed analysis of the underlying difficulties in learning, such as a pupil's ability to sequence numbers, objects or letters, which would help teachers to plan lessons and write more meaningful individual education plans. There is currently insufficient expertise in the use of diagnostic assessment to formulate effective individual education plans. The headteacher acknowledges the need to develop individual education plans for each pupil further so that they have clear, measurable and specific targets, especially for literacy and numeracy, and is receiving support from the LEA link adviser for this.
98. Beginning in September 2001, staff have conducted assessments with Year 10 pupils in English and mathematics in order to use a nationally recognised system to predict GCSE grades, track progress and measure the value that is added to each pupil's attainment. Pupils' progress is assessed formally by end-of-year examinations and mock examinations. The results of these examinations are used to plan the final revision that students need. Each pupil has an individual GCSE target and covers the syllabus that is appropriate for that target. However, teachers do not have enough information about what pupils have mastered in their previous school or with their previous teacher. There is insufficient recording of what pupils have learned and what they still need to learn as they progress through their courses in English and mathematics, although assessment of each piece of coursework addresses syllabus criteria appropriately. Because of this, some gaps in pupils' understanding are not dealt with and teachers' lesson plans are often not matched well enough to the needs of

individuals in the group. This is evident in mathematics throughout and is an area for further development in English. Pupils are regularly tested in science and the teacher has detailed information on pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Assessment is being developed in art. There are good records of pupils' initial knowledge of ICT on joining the centre and of their progress and achievement as they work through the modules in the course.

99. The centre is beginning to use computers to record assessment information so that teachers will have more immediate access to data, which in turn should help them to plan more effectively. Good systems are in place for monitoring pupils' behaviour and attendance through individual target setting and review, for example, through individual behaviour management plans, and there are some good systems for monitoring academic progress in individual subjects.
100. The centre fulfils its responsibilities for ensuring that it provides for the needs of pupils who have a statement of special educational need; legal requirements are met. Annual reviews are held on time and parents are involved in the process, but provision for extra literacy support identified in some statements is not fully in place because the literacy support provided is too general and not determined by a full analysis of a pupils' strengths and weaknesses in literacy. Literacy activities provided are not closely matched to the individual literacy difficulties recorded in the statements of special educational need.
101. National Records of Achievement, which are completed for Year 11 pupils by the Easter in which they leave, inform parents and future employers of a pupil's achievements. National Records of Achievement provide good information such as work experience reports, certificates gained and copies of half-termly progress reports. All pupils now have the opportunity to write comments about the progress they have made during their time at Parkside and this is good practice.

HOW WELL DOES THE UNIT WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

102. The centre's partnership with parents is yet another strength which has been well sustained and, indeed, improved since the last inspection. Comments from parents and carers illustrate their support for the centre and how they feel about its provision for their children. Their observations include, 'It's a godsend', 'It's wonderful', and 'Staff are very supportive'. This makes it very clear how appreciative they are and they feel valued themselves as vital contributors to their children's education.
103. The centre now provides a regular newsletter for parents to ensure they are fully informed of events. Parents are warmly welcome to contact the centre whenever they wish. They can visit formally or informally and telephone at any time if they are worried or concerned. Being always available to parents is an essential part of the centre's approach and this reaps its own rewards in their support and, on occasions, their participation in the centre's affairs. They support fund-raising events, for example the Christmas Bazaar and a five-a-side football match.
104. A progress report for each pupil goes to parents every half term, indicating attendance, progress and achievement. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There is also an annual report at the end of the academic year. The inspection team support parents' views that these reports are helpful, but while written comments in the half-termly reports describe well what pupils have learned and their attitudes to learning in each subject, they do not inform parents sufficiently of pupils' achievements within subjects in terms of gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Parents are

involved in the annual review of statements and in individual education plan reviews. Many parents attend reviews and are encouraged to add or share any concerns with staff.

105. There has been another positive innovation in the provision of a course for the parents of pupils at the centre on the development of parenting skills. Parents have responded very warmly to this course that is offered annually in conjunction with the Parent Partnership Service of Suffolk County Council. Parents appreciate the course content and meeting other parents to whom they can talk and share problems and views. The headteacher sees the possibility of the formation of an informal parent association or friends' group arising out of the course on parenting skills. If successful, this could only strengthen further an already very positive partnership with parents and carers.

HOW WELL IS THE UNIT LED AND MANAGED?

106. The headteacher, who has been in post for just a year, provides very effective and dynamic leadership. His vision ensures that there is clear educational direction and he has very high expectations for what the centre can become. He has worked strategically in a short time to achieve dramatic improvements in the fabric and resourcing of the centre, and built a very positive team of staff through empowering others and gaining their trust. As a result, the centre has sustained and built upon the many strengths found at the time of the last inspection. The headteacher is very active in promoting the centre - for instance, in putting forward a convincing case in bidding for a School Achievement Award - and in seeking to develop ICT to the full. He is keen to reach out not only locally and nationally, but also internationally. He has the awareness to take the Centre to a position of excellence.
107. Staff with management responsibilities make a very good contribution to the centre's work and share in the headteacher's vision for the centre. Examples of particularly effective subject co-ordination are to be found in science, art, careers education, and personal, social and health education, but the fact that all subjects are led by subject specialists is significant in the good and often very good practice to be found. Non-teaching staff make a major contribution to the work of the centre and to the very good progress that pupils make. All staff share in a strong commitment to improve and the centre's capacity to succeed, now with much improved support from the local education authority, is excellent.
108. English is co-ordinated by the headteacher, whose teaching provides an excellent role model for other teachers of the subject. He works closely with the other main teacher of English and there has been some productive liaison with the local beacon school. Some monitoring of teaching has taken place, but there is a need for more formal monitoring to take place in order to address the variation in the quality of teaching within the subject. Further expertise is needed in relation to diagnosing literacy difficulties, writing individual education plan targets and ensuring that all teachers match work to the range of abilities within a class.
109. Mathematics is managed by a specialist teacher who works part-time and has been in post for two terms. In that time, good progress has been made in improving the provision for mathematics. A mathematics teaching room has been created and new teaching resources purchased. Very good links have been made with local schools, including the local beacon school and other pupil referral units. These links are being used well, along with advice from the LEA, to extend teachers' expertise within the centre. The mathematics co-ordinator has identified most of the important priorities for development and has incorporated these in a well-constructed development plan.

There are two areas for development that are not already included in the school's planning. The first of these is to improve assessment and use the information to plan lessons that meet the full range of ability in the class. The second is to include more opportunities in lessons for pupils to talk about and demonstrate mathematics, thus developing their thinking skills and social development.

110. Science is very well led by an experienced and well-qualified science co-ordinator who monitors the curriculum closely and provides very good support to the non-specialist science teacher. This ensures that teaching is always as at least good and that all pupils make at least good progress. The new accommodation and learning resources for science are excellent and of extremely high quality. This ensures that pupils can carry out investigations in a real laboratory situation so that they achieve very well at GCSE.
111. The use of information and communication technology in the centre is about to expand rapidly and, as a result, the management of the subject is in a state of transition. The information and communication technology course is developing well in that this is the first year that all pupils are being taught information and communication technology. There are plans to extend this next year to a broader course that can be taken at two levels, equivalent to a GCSE grades A* to C or D to G. The information and communication technology teacher is not qualified in the subject but has sound subject knowledge and is planning to take a course to extend her own skills to teach the new course. Pupils' achievement in ICT and other subjects would benefit from more planned opportunities to apply their ICT skills and to use them in independent, creative ways. The centre's recent acquisition of high quality computers, interactive whiteboards and video-conferencing equipment has created very exciting possibilities. The headteacher has many ideas for the constructive use of this equipment, but these ideas are yet to be translated into definite plans and not all staff currently have the skills to use the facilities effectively.
112. The headteacher is acting as special educational needs co-ordinator and provides satisfactory leadership for improving provision for pupils with learning difficulties. He has ensured that all pupils now have an individual education plan and has purchased an information and communication technology package to provide individual programmes to support pupils' learning in literacy and numeracy. Although he receives ongoing support from Suffolk LEA for this new role and has recently attended a course on the revised Code of Practice, the centre has yet to identify priorities for implementing the revised Code of Practice by September. The headteacher maintains good links with outside professionals such as the educational psychologist and the Connexions Service.
113. The Centre has a clear set of aims which reflect the needs of the pupils: the rationale and purpose of the Centre are very clear and appropriate. Very good procedures for evaluating the Centre's effectiveness lead to effective action that improves provision. A great deal of development has taken place in the past year, which shows that appropriate priorities are recognised and acted upon. There are further exciting plans to fine-tune provision. In spite of this, there is no annual development plan and the centre is still working largely to a three-year plan developed before the appointment of the current headteacher. This has not held back development in any way, but the establishment of a new long-term strategic plan and a costed annual development plan are important omissions. The centre has regular procedures for taking pupils' views into account and some procedures for consulting parents.

114. The headteacher carries out some monitoring, most particularly in relation to performance management, but otherwise limited formal observation of teaching. In the current academic year, the headteacher has spent two half-days a week overseeing and supporting the work of the other pupil referral unit in the town (which has a part-time head), and has effectively only been able to give four days a week to his role as headteacher at Parkside. This has necessarily limited the time he has had for some aspects of his role, and monitoring is an area where more needs to be done. Since much of the teaching is very good and most is at least good, there is a much potential for developing all teachers to the level of the best by introducing greater rigour in monitoring. The centre regularly reviews its curriculum to make sure it matches the needs and aptitudes of the pupils.
115. There has been a substantial improvement in the local education authority's leadership and management of the centre. A detailed EOTAS² policy has been established since the last inspection and this sets out local education authority policy clearly and provides an effective framework within which the centre can operate. The local education authority has systematic procedures for gathering information about the provision and assuring its quality, partly through regular visits by the link adviser and through regular reports by the headteacher to the management committee. Procedures for referring pupils to the centre are effective, so that it receives pupils it is likely to be able to help. By having pupils dual registered with mainstream schools, the LEA – through its EOTAS policy – is able to call upon schools to help with pupils on roll at the centre. This is a very wise strategic move and supports the centre's liaison with other schools. The centre has a new designated officer since the last inspection: the immediate line manager is the Senior Education Officer for Pupil Services in the Southern Area of Suffolk. He and the link adviser provide good support and, in almost all respects, the local education authority is doing everything it can to promote excellence. It has not, however, ensured that the headteacher's objectives have been set as part of performance management, and some aspects of the management committee could function more effectively.
116. The management committee has a valuable mix of members representing educational establishments and a reasonably multi-agency approach, as recommended nationally. The headteacher produces a termly report for the management committee so that its members are kept well informed about the work of the centre, and meetings provide a valuable arena for discussing developments. The local councillor on the committee has recently secured a considerable sum of money towards the purchase of video-conferencing facilities and is a regular visitor to the centre. While members of the committee are supportive to the work of the centre, other members do not visit to see its work in process. Moreover, the chair of the management committee has not attended any of its meetings in the past year. Consequently, the committee is not supporting the centre as well as it should do, although this appears to be having a limited impact. In almost all respects, the headteacher is able to work effectively in collaboration with the local education authority.
117. The quality of the staff is an important factor in the centre's success in promoting pupils' very good personal development and academic achievement. There is a good match of teachers' qualifications and experience to the subjects they teach. All subjects except information and communication technology are co-ordinated by teachers who are qualified in the subject. Most lessons are taught by specialist teachers, though because many teachers are part-time and the timetable is complex, some teaching is done by non-specialists. These teachers are well supported on a fairly informal basis, but there

² Education other than at school

is a need for additional written guidance and monitoring and development of teaching to support the non-specialist teaching.

118. There is a small but very effective team of non-teaching staff, responsible for administration and finance, learning support for pupils with special educational needs, catering and cleaning. Members of the team make a very important contribution to the centre through their efficiency and care and the emotional support they provide to the pupils. The teaching assistant is working towards a qualification for that role.
119. The centre puts a high value on staff development and has recently gained Investors in People status. Staff have attended an extensive range of in-service training in the past year. All teachers are soon to be trained in using ICT in their teaching. The headteacher has developed a process to ensure that teachers pass on what they have gained in courses to the rest of the staff. The art teacher, who is an art specialist but not a trained teacher, is on the graduate training programme. Performance management has been introduced and teachers and some support staff have performance objectives. The performance management process is used to evaluate the impact that in-service training has on the quality of teaching. The mathematics co-ordinator has developed very good links with a local beacon school and is using the LEA adviser and good practice from other schools to develop teaching methods for mathematics in the centre.
120. There is scope for some additional structure in the staff development processes. The headteacher is aware that staff development is not planned sufficiently or fully linked to school development priorities. The induction of new staff is done informally, but is effective because of the small size of the centre. Staff handbooks are being written, and these will provide a sound basis for staff induction.
121. The centre's accommodation is very good and is much improved since the last inspection. A new mobile classroom provides good specialist facilities for science, cookery and mathematics. There are also specialist rooms for English, art and PSHE. Connexions Suffolk has funded a room for careers and personal planning, with high quality computer facilities and a designated area for careers interviews. There has been substantial refurbishment and extensive redecoration and the centre is a very pleasant environment for learning and social activities. The PSHE room, for example, is comfortably furnished in a manner that is conducive to small group discussions. There is a pleasant kitchen/dining area and students have their own social space with a pool table. The corridors have been carpeted, the heating and lighting improved and the toilets re-furbished. The quality of display around the centre is very high and celebrates pupils' achievements in all their subjects as well as many extra-curricular activities. Many of these improvements are recent and have given additional value to the work that staff and pupils do.
122. The centre is very well resourced, both for teaching subjects and in its ICT equipment. There has been a very good improvement in resources since the last inspection. The new science room is very well equipped for practical work and English has a good collection of videos. PSHE and careers are well resourced with information sources and with computers connected to the Internet for researching further information. There are sufficient mathematics resources, though the recently appointed co-ordinator is still planning the purchase of further resources, including graphical calculators and computer software.
123. The centre has recently acquired an exceptional range of ICT facilities and has exciting plans for its use. Some of the equipment is still waiting to be brought into use. There

are as many computers as there are pupils, and a number of these are very new, high specification machines. All the computers have Internet access; there is some networking and there will shortly be an adequate number of networked computers in all teaching rooms. The centre has equipment for video-conferencing. The headteacher is still planning the best use of this equipment but intends to use it for distance learning of new subjects and communication with other schools in this country and abroad. There will soon be two interactive whiteboards – computerised screens that are large enough to display to the whole class and enhance teachers' demonstrations and explanations. Some pupils make use of an integrated learning program to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, and once this becomes accessible through all the networked computers, it will form part of every pupil's regular activity.

124. Financial planning has improved since the last inspection and is now good. The centre has a fully delegated budget; this enables it to develop improved learning opportunities and ensure that good resources are in place to teach the curriculum. The headteacher ensures that he achieves best value in spending decisions. For example, he obtained a free mobile classroom, which now provides excellent accommodation for science, food technology and mathematics, and he used savings on accommodation costs to provide very good resources. He has also purchased computers at a substantial discount, using grant funding very well to provide high levels of information and communication technology equipment to support learning. These initiatives have already led to an improvement in teaching and achievement in some areas. The headteacher has also used grant funding well to provide increased security and to create an additional classroom for the Connexions service.
125. Internal procedures for controlling income and expenditure are good and have been improved since the last inspection. The centre now has a computerised system for managing its accounts, and a new part-time bursar who works closely with the headteacher and the LEA to ensure that proper procedures are in place for managing the budget. The centre is making good use of new technologies to ensure efficient administration, for example in developing a database of pupil information so that all staff can access this quickly and plan more effectively. Accommodation and learning resources are well used to support the curriculum and teaching and learning; staff expertise is used very well. The new science accommodation ensures that pupils of all abilities achieve well in GCSE examinations and the local golf club now provides accredited certificates for pupils. In view of the very good progress pupils make in their attitudes and behaviour, their very good achievement by the time they leave the centre and very good improvements in the curriculum, Parkside Learning Support centre provides very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE UNIT DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

126. In order to build on the centre's existing strengths, the headteacher should:

- (1) Improve assessment practices, by:
 - using appropriate methods to diagnose pupils' learning difficulties, especially in literacy and numeracy;
 - ensuring that individual education plan targets are precise and measurable;
 - providing literacy support that matches pupils' statements of special educational need and their learning needs;
 - keeping ongoing records in all subjects that indicate the strengths and weaknesses in individual pupils' work.
(Paragraphs 96 – 101)

- (2) Bring all teaching up to the level of the best by:
 - tightening expectations over the setting of homework;
 - introducing more formal lesson observation, especially where teaching is less strong;
 - ensuring that all teachers match work to the different learning needs and abilities in the class;
 - raising the expectations of some teachers with regard to pupils' personal and academic challenge.
(Paragraphs 34, 114)

The local education authority should:

- (1) Ensure that the headteacher's performance objectives are set without further delay, as it is in breach of the 31 December 2001 deadline.

- (2) Improve the effectiveness of the management committee.
(Paragraphs 115 – 116.)

Minor issues:

- Use of the registration / tutor time in the mornings is not as good as it could be;
(Paragraph 85).
- More could be done to foster pupils' spiritual development;
(Paragraph 85).
- A costed annual development plan and a revised strategic development plan need to be produced;
(Paragraph 113).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	34
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	17

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	20	9	3	0	0	0
Percentage	6	59	26	9	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than three percentage point[s].

Information about the unit's pupils

Pupils on the unit's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the unit's roll	32

Special educational needs	No of pupils
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the unit's special educational needs register	32

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
Unit data	14.00

Unauthorised absence

	%
Unit data	2.7

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for last whole term before the inspection

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	32
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y9 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y[9– Y11

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	211,774
Total expenditure	190,341
Expenditure per pupil	5948
Balance brought forward from previous year	-
Balance carried forward to next year	21,433

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the unit during the last two years	1.5
Number of teachers appointed to the unit during the last two years	1.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	-
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	-
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	-

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	32
Number of questionnaires returned	13

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	23	0	0	8
My child is making good progress in school.	85	15	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	69	23	0	0	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	46	0	0	8
The teaching is good.	77	15	0	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	77	23	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	92	8	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	23	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	85	15	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	85	15	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	85	7	0	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	46	0	0	16