



**Office for Standards  
in Education**

**Inspection report**  
**The Albany Centre Pupil Referral Unit**

**Suffolk Education Authority**

Dates of inspection: 10-11 March 2004

This inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996 and was deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act

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## Basic information about the school

Name of school:	The Albany Centre Pupil Referral Unit
Type of school:	Pupil Referral Unit
Status:	Community
Age range of pupils:	14 to 16 years
Head of Centre:	Ms E Barker
Address of school:	Beard Road Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP32 6SA
Telephone:	01284 754065
Name and address of appropriate authority:	Suffolk County Council St Andrew House County Hall Ipswich IP4 1LJ
Chair of management committee:	Mrs M Raney
Local education authority area:	Suffolk
Unique reference number:	124529
Name of reporting inspector:	Mr K Gilbert HMI
Dates of inspection:	10-11 March 2004

## Introduction

1. The Albany Centre Pupil Referral Unit is situated in Bury St Edmunds, serving the western area of Suffolk. The centre has 24 students on roll, in Years 10 and 11, who have been permanently excluded from mainstream school or who are in danger of permanent exclusion. The centre admits students throughout the year, and some are dual-registered with their mainstream school. All but one of the students are of white European heritage and none speaks English as an additional language. Their attainment on entry is below average, often affected by poor attendance at school. The students have a range of special educational needs, which include complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. Eight of the students have a Statement of Special Educational Need.
2. The centre was inspected in March 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the centre and the centre was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education.
3. The local education authority (LEA) drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of March 2002. The centre was visited by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on four occasions to monitor the progress being made.
4. In March 2004 one HMI inspected the centre, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the centre has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of March 2002.

## Main findings

5. In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the centre no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its students. The main findings of the inspection are:
    - the students' attainment on entry is generally below average; in some cases well below average. They have significant gaps in their learning in many areas of the curriculum. The students' low attainment in literacy, especially in writing, hinders other aspects of their learning;
    - the 13 students in Year 11 who attended during the summer term in 2003 were entered for examinations. All of the students achieved at least one pass grade at GCSE; five achieved three GCSE pass grades. Three quarters of the students attained a nationally recognised certificate in information and communication technology (ICT);
    - the students' folders and lesson observations indicate that most students are now making satisfactory progress in relation to their capability, albeit that some are progressing from a very low level;
    - most of the students have good attitudes towards the staff, their peers and to their work. However, a small number of the students finds it difficult to
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maintain their composure, on occasions allowing their emotions to get the better of them and they then find it difficult to concentrate on their work. The behaviour of the majority of the students in lessons and around the centre is generally satisfactory;

- the attendance of many of the students is improving. The overall attendance for the first half of the academic year is higher than the comparable period in the previous year, however, at just over 70 per cent, there is still much to do;
- the centre effectively provides for the students' moral and social development through: centre gatherings; the emphasis on the code of conduct; opportunities for social interaction at breaks and lunch times in the centre and at other facilities; visits to places of interest; and trips abroad. The provision for the students' spiritual and cultural development remains unsatisfactory, although assemblies and some areas of the curriculum make useful contributions;
- the quality of teaching was satisfactory in all of the lessons, but it was good in only four. In the best lessons the teachers were able to engage the students' interest by using a range of teaching and learning styles. In some lessons the tasks were not sufficiently challenging for the range of abilities within the group. The non-teaching staff play an important part in developing the emotional and social welfare of the students and contribute to their learning through discussions and small-group work in lessons;
- all students benefit from provision on five days each week. The core and some foundation subjects are taught at the centre; sporting, recreational and some subjects requiring specialist equipment are taught at other facilities and outreach centres. The centre is working effectively towards a broad and balanced curriculum;
- all students have individual education plans and these are at the centre of assessment procedures. Teachers record progress against National Curriculum levels and share short-term targets with the students. Some targets are not sharp enough and, at times, the tasks are not firmly focused on enabling the pupils to achieve them;
- the head of centre has grown in confidence throughout the period of special measures. The centre is now led and managed effectively; morale has been maintained while teachers have been encouraged to extend their subject knowledge and skills in managing behaviour. The management committee has been well led by an enthusiastic chair and has a committed and knowledgeable set of members;
- the head of centre and all staff are aware of what still needs to be done. There has been some formal monitoring by the head of centre and the LEA's attached adviser, but with regular meetings in so small an environment much is shared as a matter of course;

- considerable effort has been put into improving the fabric and the facilities of the centre. Although limitations for science and ICT remain, areas for English, mathematics, art and design, calm reflection and for social gatherings have been improved.

## **Key issues**

6. In order to improve the students' quality of education further, the management committee, the headteacher and staff need to:

- continue with their actions to raise the students' standards of attainment and to further increase their rate of progress;
- improve the quality of teaching;
- use the data being gathered on the students' attainment to ensure the range of abilities within a group is fully catered for;
- improve the provision for the students' spiritual and cultural development;
- improve attendance.

## **Inspection findings**

### **Standards achieved by the pupils**

7. Several of the students travel long distances to attend the Albany Centre; some live 20 miles away and travel by taxi. Many have backgrounds involving disrupted schooling and long-term disaffection with learning. The centre admits students throughout the year and there is a need for regular programmes of induction. The arrival of new students inevitably has an impact on the social dynamics within the group. The students' attainment on entry is generally below average, in some cases well below average. They have significant gaps in their learning in many areas of the curriculum. Where data is available it is apparent that the students' attainment in national tests is modest when compared with that of mainstream pupils.

8. The 13 students in Year 11 who attended during the summer of 2003 were entered for examinations at entry and GCSE level in English, mathematics and science. Five of these achieved three GCSE grades C to G, and all of the students achieved at least one pass grade at GCSE. Overall, three quarters of the students achieved a grade C to G in mathematics and two thirds achieved similarly in English and science. These results were a considerable improvement over those of 2002. Three quarters of the Year 11 students attained Level 1 certification in Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT); several of the then Year 10 students also achieved this level and are now engaged on work associated with Level 2.

9. In English, the students' low attainment in literacy, especially in writing, hinders other aspects of their learning. For most, their attainment in reading is also below the

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standard expected of pupils in mainstream schools of a similar age, although some students have reading skills that are in line with age-related expectations. Several of the students write simple narratives in English and a variety of reports in other subjects; however, these are usually short and, in the main, employ simple vocabulary and sentence structures. In mathematics, the students' standards are slightly below age-related expectations overall, although their skills in number are higher than in other aspects of the subject. These number skills are applied well to real-life situations. The students are also making good advances in other strands of the National Curriculum programmes of study including shape, measurement and handling data. In science, the students have some difficulties in recording their investigations and in making scientific observations and forming hypotheses. However, most grasp scientific concepts especially when they are applied to situations they meet outside the centre.

10. The students' progress was at least satisfactory in all of the lessons; in four lessons it was good. Most students develop good learning habits because routines are well established and expectations are constant. They made satisfactory and sometimes good progress in those lessons where the teaching was effective in meeting their particular needs. Nearly all the students made at least satisfactory progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. Discussions during lessons were mostly relevant to the tasks and generally continued in an orderly manner, with the students presenting reasoned arguments and listening to the contributions of others. At lunchtimes the students sit and eat with the staff which enables some to have conversations with adults in a one-to-one situation or in a small group. A few students find the demands of the centre's academic curriculum very challenging and, as a consequence, continue to make slightly slower progress in these subjects than their peers. However, many of these students achieve well during their work placements and in the more practical aspects of their work.

### **The pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

11. The students' attitudes to their learning were good in three lessons and satisfactory in six, and best in lessons where they were appropriately challenged and employed on tasks they enjoyed. Attitudes were unsatisfactory in two lessons. Most of the students have good attitudes towards the staff, their peers and to their work. A small number of the students find it difficult to maintain their composure throughout a series of lessons, allowing their emotions on occasions to get the better of them and they then find it difficult to concentrate on their work. Several of the students enter the centre with chequered histories of attendance and with emotional and social difficulties. A small minority of these continue to display challenging attitudes and are on occasions reluctant to settle to work.

12. The behaviour of the students in classrooms and around the centre was mostly satisfactory. Incidents that happen outside of the centre, particularly after a weekend or a holiday, can for some students result in bouts of poor behaviour, incidents between students and unacceptable language. The students understand the code of conduct and the expectations of the centre and most of them readily conform to the requests of the teachers. On most occasions the teachers deal consistently with incidents, but on occasions they do not insist that the list of expectations is followed and the students are quick to see the inconsistencies. There have been one permanent and eight fixed-term exclusions during the last twelve months, and these have been for extremes of behaviour, sometimes involving

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physical violence. However, the sanction has rarely been needed and staff use a variety of strategies to maintain good order. Internal exclusions for periods of calming have been used to good effect.

13. The behaviour of individual students is monitored daily with a well-established system of rewards. The students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour and targets are agreed with members of staff. During a session at the end of the day the targets are reviewed and points awarded. On many occasions the students can accurately assess their own success and level of reward. Peer pressure has an impact when individuals find it difficult to settle. The increasingly supportive approach by the students for each other has been a notable change over the period of special measures.

14. The work ethic is strongly emphasised by all staff during the day. Many of the students are developing good work habits and periods of reflection result in some students expressing their intention to achieve success in GCSE examinations with the hope that a college place will result. Increasingly, it is evident that more of the students can settle and produce pieces of acceptable work of which they are proud. Although most students prefer to work independently, group activities are sometimes used. Although homework does not feature as part of a regular routine, some students undertake tasks at home and complete elements of their coursework.

15. The attendance of many of the students is improving. Six of the students have achieved an attendance rate of over 90 per cent since September, while nine others have attended for over 75 per cent during the same period. The non-attendees and the three poor attendees depress the overall rate of attendance for the centre. At 70 per cent, the average attendance rate is an improvement on the attendance for a similar period in the previous year. However, the centre acknowledges that there is still more to be done. The centre works well with the educational welfare service and with Connexions. Agreements between home and the centre and between the school and the centre have improved communications, and telephone calls and visits are made to the students' homes whenever necessary. The distance from home to the centre for some students makes immediate reactions to the telephone calls difficult.

16. Ten of the sixteen Year 11 students who left the centre in summer 2003 now attend college, two as part of a modern apprentices' scheme, training in accounting and plumbing. An eleventh has already found employment and two others are working with Connexions who are endeavouring to help them find a suitable apprenticeship or scheme. Already the present Year 11 students are investigating future options, both through careers guidance in the centre and with Connexions' help.

17. The centre's programme of work-related opportunities has been extended, with students being given close support and guidance when participating in a range of placements within the local community and beyond. These placements help the students to prepare themselves for the future and have led to employment at weekends and future opportunities for work.

18. The centre's ethos is now good, and pervades all aspects of its work. The provision for the students' personal, moral and social development is good. Throughout the day, the staff explain, demonstrate and endeavour to insist upon appropriate attitudes and behaviour.

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This is generally successful, although an even greater consistency of approach is necessary from some staff. At the daily meetings of all staff and students, complaints and concerns are discussed openly, and the students are reminded about the choices available to them and the results of irresponsible behaviour are made clear. The students' development is also enhanced by the centre's programme for citizenship and personal, social and health education. To support aspects of the centre's work in this area there are opportunities for social interaction at breaks and lunch times when staff sit and eat with the students, and visits to places of interest and trips abroad.

19. The centre's provision for the students' spiritual and cultural development is unsatisfactory. The head of centre is aware of this and has started to broaden the students' experience in these areas. An assembly has been introduced when mainly moral themes are considered, and festivals, traditions and world concerns have also been discussed. Having successfully taken a group to France last summer, another group will be visiting World War I battlefields in June, as part of their history work.

### **The quality of education**

20. The quality of teaching was good in four lessons and satisfactory in seven. The proportion of good teaching remains too small but the present situation is a considerable improvement over that found in March 2002, when two thirds of the lessons were judged unsatisfactory or poor. In the good lessons, the work captured the students' interest and the teachers broke down the tasks into suitable steps to ensure that the objectives were met. The teachers explained the basic concepts clearly, recognising that some students had significant gaps in their previous learning. In all of these lessons the planning was thorough with the needs of the range of abilities in the group being met. Good questioning techniques and an enthusiasm for the subject sustained the students' interest throughout the session. The time scheduled for the lesson was used effectively with a useful concluding plenary session, which prepared the students for the next lesson.

21. In the satisfactory lessons, some students completed too little work in the time available. The more vociferous individuals in the group were allowed to dominate and the conclusion was shortened by the students' urgency to go to break or lunch time. In these lessons the tasks were not always wholly appropriate to the students' needs; some students completed the tasks quickly because they were too easy.

22. The support staff play a significant and valuable role in the work of the centre. They work effectively alongside the teachers in supporting the students' social and personal development, especially in improving their behaviour. They are particularly valuable in engaging the students in sporting and recreational activities, and they accompany them in the early days of their college placements and their experience of the world of work.

23. The centre is working effectively towards a broad and balanced curriculum and provision now better meets the needs of the students than was the case at the time of the inspection in March 2002. All students benefit from provision on five days each week. There is sufficient emphasis on English, mathematics and science, taught mainly during the mornings, and humanities, art and design, personal, social and health education and citizenship. Some aspects of design and technology have been added with an intention of developing this further. Other centres are used for lessons in ICT and for outdoor and leisure

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pursuits. However, facilities for ICT are being developed in the centre and some sports training by coaches from a premier football team has taken place on site. Courses are also run in conjunction with the local college of further education and several students take part in work experience.

24. The centre has an agreed policy for assessment, recording and reporting and appropriate procedures are now in place. However, the application of the procedures varies in quality from good to unsatisfactory. More remains to be done to ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of the students' specific academic strengths and weaknesses and of their potential for future achievement. Because of the past poor attendance of several of the students, Key Stage 2 and 3 national test results are often unavailable. Baseline tests are conducted which give some guidance towards attainment levels. In some subjects there are good assessment procedures, but in other areas it is less well developed. Some teachers are, therefore, not able to use their assessments effectively to set realistic and challenging targets for the students. All of the students' work is marked, but some teachers give better guidance towards improvement than others. Parents and carers are informed of levels of attainment and progress through a recently modified reporting process.

25. All students have individual education plans. The targets are appropriate and review procedures are in place. The eight students who have a Statement of Special Educational Need have appropriate support and the monitoring of their progress guides the modification of their short-term targets. There is a need to consider these targets more regularly in the short-term lesson planning in some subject areas.

26. The centre has undergone some refurbishment with modifications to certain teaching areas. Provision for English, mathematics and art and design has been improved, and areas for calm reflection and social gatherings have been provided. The science room is to be refurbished by the start of the next academic year and facilities for ICT will be improved within the same timescale. Several laptop computers have been purchased as a short-term measure, while facilities at a local centre meet immediate subject needs.

### **Leadership and management**

27. The head of centre has grown in confidence over the period of special measures. The centre is now led and managed effectively. There is a clear sense of purpose and direction. The move away from the use of the extensive range of off-site providers to a curriculum taught mainly on site involved a change of philosophy. In the past most students were provided with two or three days of activities, but this has gradually changed to five days of provision, increasingly centre based. The head of centre has led her team of teachers and support assistants well through this evolving change of practice. The staff have seen increasing numbers of students on site at any one time, which has brought with it a variety of new challenges. These initiatives have been well managed by the head of centre, and staff have been encouraged and supported while they have adapted to the changes taking place. Morale is good; successes along the way have been celebrated. There is also an awareness that there is still much to do.

28. The management team gives good support to the head of centre. Its members have gained in skills and confidence and the head of centre has delegated responsibilities when

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appropriate. Co-ordinators of subjects, together with the fourth teacher, have established schemes of work and resources have been purchased as necessary.

29. The monitoring of the teaching has been undertaken by the head of centre, assisted by the LEA's attached adviser. Teachers have considered their strengths and areas for development. Advisers and consultants from the LEA have given guidance and training as required.

30. The management committee has been well led by an enthusiastic chair and has a committed and knowledgeable set of members. Although supportive of the head of centre and the staff, questions are appropriately asked to ensure progress is being maintained.

### **Implementation of the action plan**

31. The inspection report of March 2002 required the centre to address six key issues. These principally related to: raising standards; improving the quality of teaching; effectively managing poor behaviour; broadening the curriculum; improving management; and ensuring that the students who have a Statement of Special Educational Need and those that are dual registered have better provision. Overall, reasonable progress has been made, with some good features, but there is still much work to do.

32. The examination results and the progress being made in the core subjects in particular are evidence of the gradual raising of standards. With the assistance of the LEA's advisers and consultants the teaching has been monitored and training given where necessary. There is now no unsatisfactory teaching, but too small a proportion is good or better.

33. The behaviour of the students has improved, but there is a small number who continue to present considerable challenges. The strength of the centre is that this unacceptable behaviour is managed from within, and short-term exclusions are now few in number.

34. All students are now receiving five days provision, including in-centre teaching and associated activities, an experience of work, college courses and centre-supervised external provision for ICT and physical education. The centre provides a broader curriculum including the core subjects, humanities, art, music, drama, ICT, physical education, citizenship and personal, social and health education. Some food technology is provided with minor elements of design and technology using resistant materials.

35. The head of centre provides effective management and leadership. She has maintained morale through difficult periods of staff absence and has introduced changes systematically and sympathetically. The members of the senior management team have undertaken a wider range of responsibilities and have carried out their roles effectively. The head of centre has been well supported by the LEA and the members of the management committee, the chair in particular.

36. Provision for the students who have a Statement of Special Educational Need and those who are dual registered has improved. In the case of the latter, further liaison is needed to ensure that what is organised by the school is meeting the needs of the students concerned.

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## **Appendix – Information about the inspection**

The centre was inspected under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 by a Registered Inspector and a team of inspectors in March 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the centre and, in accordance with that Act, the centre was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education.

The centre was visited by HMI in October 2002 and in March, July and November 2003 to assess the progress it was making to implement its action plan and address the key issues in the inspection report of March 2002.

In March 2004, one HMI returned to inspect the centre for two days. The inspection was carried out under section 3 of the School Inspections Act 1996, which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any centre to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 10 inspection under the same Act.

Eleven lessons or parts of lessons, one assembly and three registration sessions were inspected. The students were observed at breaks and lunch times and samples of their work were inspected. Meetings were held with the head of centre, the three other teachers and the LEA's attached adviser. Informal discussions were held with other staff and students. A wide range of the centre's documentation was scrutinised. Account was also taken of the evidence from previous monitoring inspections.

The inspection assessed the quality of education provided and the progress the school has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of March 2002 and the action plan prepared to address those key issues.

**Notes**









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# **The Albany Centre Pupil Referral Unit School**

## **Suffolk LEA**

**Dates of Inspection: 10-11 March 2004**

**By Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools from the Office for Standards in Education**

### **SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

The Albany Centre Pupil Referral Unit is situated in Bury St Edmunds, serving the western area of Suffolk. The centre has 24 students on roll, in Years 10 and 11, who have been permanently excluded from mainstream school or who are in danger of permanent exclusion. The centre admits students throughout the year, and some are dual-registered with their mainstream school. All but one of the students are of white European heritage and none speaks English as an additional language. Their attainment on entry is below average, often affected by poor attendance at school. The students have a range of special educational needs, which include complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and moderate learning difficulties. Eight of the students have a Statement of Special Educational Need.

The centre was inspected in March 2002. The inspection was critical of many aspects of the work of the centre and the centre was made subject to special measures because it was failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education.

The local education authority (LEA) drew up an action plan to address the key issues from the inspection of March 2002. The centre was visited by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on four occasions to monitor the progress being made.

In March 2004 one HMI inspected the centre, assessing the standard of education provided and the progress the centre has made, in particular in relation to the main findings and key issues in the inspection report of March 2002.

### **MAIN FINDINGS**

In accordance with section 14 of the School Inspections Act 1996, I am of the opinion that the centre no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its students. The main findings of the inspection are:

- the students' attainment on entry is generally below average; in some cases well below average. They have significant gaps in their learning in many areas of the curriculum. The students' low attainment in literacy, especially in writing, hinders other aspects of their learning;
- the 13 students in Year 11 who attended during the summer term in 2003 were entered for examinations. All of the students achieved at least one pass grade at GCSE; five achieved three GCSE pass grades. Three quarters of the

students attained a nationally recognised certificate in information and communication technology (ICT);

- the students' folders and lesson observations indicate that most students are now making satisfactory progress in relation to their capability, albeit that some are progressing from a very low level;
  - most of the students have good attitudes towards the staff, their peers and to their work. However, a small number of the students finds it difficult to maintain their composure, on occasions allowing their emotions to get the better of them and they then find it difficult to concentrate on their work. The behaviour of the majority of the students in lessons and around the centre is generally satisfactory;
  - the attendance of many of the students is improving. The overall attendance for the first half of the academic year is higher than the comparable period in the previous year, however, at just over 70 per cent, there is still much to do;
  - the centre effectively provides for the students' moral and social development through: centre gatherings; the emphasis on the code of conduct; opportunities for social interaction at breaks and lunch times in the centre and at other facilities; visits to places of interest; and trips abroad. The provision for the students' spiritual and cultural development remains unsatisfactory, although assemblies and some areas of the curriculum make useful contributions;
  - the quality of teaching was satisfactory in all of the lessons, but it was good in only four. In the best lessons the teachers were able to engage the students' interest by using a range of teaching and learning styles. In some lessons the tasks were not sufficiently challenging for the range of abilities within the group. The non-teaching staff play an important part in developing the emotional and social welfare of the students and contribute to their learning through discussions and small-group work in lessons;
  - all students benefit from provision on five days each week. The core and some foundation subjects are taught at the centre; sporting, recreational and some subjects requiring specialist equipment are taught at other facilities and out-reach centres. The centre is working effectively towards a broad and balanced curriculum;
  - all students have individual education plans and these are at the centre of assessment procedures. Teachers record progress against National Curriculum levels and share short-term targets with the students. Some targets are not sharp enough and, at times, the tasks are not firmly focused on enabling the pupils to achieve them;
  - the head of centre has grown in confidence throughout the period of special measures. The centre is now led and managed effectively; morale has been maintained while teachers have been encouraged to extend their subject knowledge and skills in managing behaviour. The management committee has
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been well led by an enthusiastic chair and has a committed and knowledgeable set of members;

- the head of centre and all staff are aware of what still needs to be done. There has been some formal monitoring by the head of centre and the LEA's attached adviser, but with regular meetings in so small an environment much is shared as a matter of course;
- considerable effort has been put into improving the fabric and the facilities of the centre. Although limitations for science and ICT remain, areas for English, mathematics, art and design, calm reflection and for social gatherings have been improved.

### **KEY ISSUES**

In order to improve the students' quality of education further, the management committee, the headteacher and staff need to:

- continue with their actions to raise the students' standards of attainment and to further increase their rate of progress;
- improve the quality of teaching;
- use the data being gathered on the students' attainment to ensure the range of abilities within a group is fully catered for;
- improve the provision for the students' spiritual and cultural development;
- improve attendance.