

# Welcombe Hills School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	132202
<b>Local Authority</b>	Warwickshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	341309
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sue Aldridge

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	180
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	26
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Martin Grubb
<b>Headteacher</b>	Judith Humphry
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 October 2006
<b>School address</b>	Blue Cap Road Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 6TQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01789 266845
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who observed 19 lessons. In each case a different member of staff was seen teaching; in some cases lessons were led by teaching assistants. Five sessions were joint observations with the headteacher. Meetings were held with members of the leadership team, the senior management team, governors and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, plans, policies and the school's analysis of assessment information. Questionnaires completed by pupils, staff and 36 parents were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively the school interprets its analysis of pupils' progress in order to evaluate their achievements
- how successfully the curriculum meets pupils' diverse needs through its accommodation, provision for encouraging pupils' awareness of multi-cultural diversity and partnerships with others
- how widely pupils are involved in their learning so that they are clear about what to do to improve
- what impact the school's specialist status has had on the outcomes for pupils.

## Information about the school

Welcombe Hills serves the whole of south Warwickshire and was formed from an amalgamation of two special schools. It caters for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs, including moderate learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder, severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It gained specialist status for performing and visual arts in September 2009. Almost all pupils have a statement of special educational needs; a few children in the Nursery are undergoing assessment. Almost all pupils are of White British origin. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Children in the Reception year are taught alongside pupils in Years 1 and 2, in an 'early years' setting. There was a change of headteacher in January 2007. The school's work has been recognised by Active Mark and Sportsmark, and it has Healthy Schools status.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

At Welcombe Hills, the headteacher, staff and governors work well together to achieve good outcomes for the pupils in a caring environment. Despite having accommodation that presents a number of challenges, the collective determination to overcome difficulties and constructive partnerships with others mean that the school is successful.

The extent and nature of pupils' learning difficulties mean that standards are low. Tracking information shows that standards in the arts are rising as a result of the wider opportunities now available. Although the school does not yet track pupils' progress in all subjects, this is an ongoing development. Other inspection evidence shows that the great majority of pupils make good progress, because the teaching is good. In some instances, when teaching is highly skilled, pupils make outstanding gains from their starting points. Children in the Nursery get a very good start because there is high quality provision here. The small number of children in Reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress. Despite good practice in identifying challenging targets for individuals, lesson planning is not always detailed enough to take full account of the wide range of needs and ages. In the early years setting, staff use several forms of assessment and recording, but none provides the school with a good means of evaluating children's progress in the six areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Teaching has many strengths. Staff know pupils very well and have good working relationships with them. There is a good range of different approaches used to engage pupils with different needs, including the use of signs and symbols to support pupils' understanding and communication. However, a few staff are not confident in the use of all approaches, and the school recognises the need for further training. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution, leading some sessions as well as supporting individuals. Occasionally, they play a minor role when they could be more pro-active in stimulating and engaging pupils.

A lack of space indoors and out is overcome by having constructive links with the school next door and in the local community. Careful thought has been given to getting the most out of the space inside, and refurbishments have created some specialist areas linked to the school's arts programme. However, this has sometimes been at the expense of other areas, such as a science room. Although there are many strong features of the curriculum, the restrictions imposed by the accommodation limit what can be provided, and physical space as well as structural and budgetary considerations mean that there are very few options open to the school. Those that exist are being exploited well.

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Provision to encourage personal development is good. As a result, pupils adopt healthy lifestyles at school, feel quite safe and contribute well to the school and wider communities. They develop their basic skills well, acquire enterprise skills and a good knowledge of work and opportunities in adult life, so they are well prepared for life after school.

There is good capacity for further improvement. The school's history of improvement has been good and staff and parents are confident in the leadership and management of the school. Self-evaluation is mostly accurate and involves all stakeholders. It includes a detailed analysis of the progress and attendance of all groups of pupils. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by senior managers has identified nearly all weaknesses that exist. The school has made good use of recent national guidance in evaluating progress and knows its pupils' needs well. However, its detailed analysis reveals it has used a way of calculating progress that has, in some cases, led to a somewhat exaggerated view.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise the quality of teaching so that all lessons are good or better by undertaking effective monitoring and support activities to ensure that
  - planning in Reception, Years 1 and 2 takes good account of the ages, starting points and needs of all children
  - all staff are trained, confident and competent in using signs and symbols and they consistently support learning
  - teaching assistants have a prominent role in supporting learning in every lesson.
- Strengthen the school's self-evaluation by
  - establishing systems for tracking pupils' progress in all age groups and all subjects
  - ensuring that there is a suitable means of evaluating children's progress in the six areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage
  - correctly calculating gains made by pupils so that a valid comparison can be made with pupils nationally.
- In conjunction with the local authority, improve the accommodation to address the weaknesses identified in this report.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Learning and progress is good. In lessons, pupils behave well, and this contributes well to the progress they make. Those who need adult support, co-operate well with those who provide this, by responding readily to physical and verbal prompts. Pupils with complex needs generally respond well to stimulation, by smiling and vocalising, for instance. They show clear trust of the adults around them. Enjoyment is evident in

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many lessons. The youngest children take part enthusiastically in role-play activities in the Nursery, and older ones join in with action songs. Older pupils are keen to answer questions, explain their answers and develop wider discussion about relevant topics. As they mature, pupils and students show a good capacity to work collaboratively, such as when they share ideas about balanced meals. They also work well independently, when they write their own newspaper articles, for instance. Older pupils and students know their personal, academic and social targets and they assess others' work sensibly and sensitively. Although there are no evident differences in the progress made by groups with different special educational needs across the school, children in Reception, and pupils in Year 1 and 2 do not make consistently good progress in lessons. Nonetheless, their progress is always satisfactory or better.

Pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem. They show consideration for one another and pleasure at others' success. Their appreciation of nature is evident in their delight at finding mini-beasts such as a small worm and looking at these under a lens. Pupils clearly understand the difference between right and wrong, and they are tolerant and respectful of differences. They learn well enough about cultural diversity in Great Britain, but do not have many first-hand experiences of different races and religions. Cultural development, particularly through the arts, is good. Pupils make healthy choices at school and take part in a good range of physical activities. They are adamant that bullying is a rare occurrence at school. They behave sensibly and safely, show respect for adults and warmly welcome visitors. Members of the local community comment favourably on their behaviour and conduct. Pupils are proud of their school and particularly welcome the opportunities that they have to perform out of school, alongside mainstream peers. These developments, linked to specialist status, have raised the profile of the school in the local community, and provide valuable opportunities for pupils to participate on an equal footing with peers. Pupils' enthusiasm for school is well reflected in their good attendance. They have a voice through the student council. A programme of residential experiences successfully develops older pupils' and students' independence skills. Similarly, pupils from Year 7 upwards take part in a good range of enterprise activities, such as selling sandwiches at lunchtime. Those aged 14-19 experience the world of work as well as community service, by collecting litter in the area or working for the National Trust. There is good support to prepare them for life after school, so that they are well aware of the opportunities that exist and have opportunities to sample these.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Staff manage pupils well by implementing behaviour management plans faithfully and effectively. Occasionally pupils would benefit from withdrawing to a quiet room to calm down but the school does not have the space for this. The great majority of planning makes effective use of assessment information to design challenging tasks and activities. In Year 3 upwards, groupings of pupils and students into classes that take account of ability, needs and ages make the planning process simpler. Occasionally, in the early years setting, planning is less detailed, so pupils' needs are not always met well during lessons and they make satisfactory rather than good progress. Activities are designed to appeal to pupils and so they all enjoy their lessons. Staff make good use of a variety of methods and resources. For instance, sensory approaches are used effectively to stimulate pupils with complex needs and small areas of low stimulation within classrooms are used successfully so that pupils with autism can complete work without distractions. Visual timetables and schedules help these pupils to understand what activity comes next and staff warnings prepare them to make changes of activity or location. In general, class teams work well together, but on a few occasions teaching assistants are not fully effective in supporting learning, either because they are passive or because their role is too limited. On these occasions, learning and progress is satisfactory rather than good. Staff are very good at giving praise when it is earned and successes are readily celebrated. Older pupils and students are clear about their personal targets and what they need to do to improve. Staff question well, using more difficult questions to challenge more able pupils, and are quick to clarify if they uncover any misunderstanding.

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Strengths of the curriculum include opportunities for enrichment and extra-curricular learning, both of which have been enhanced through the specialist status developments and the forging of new creative and sporting partnerships. There is a good programme of residential school journeys, which provide increasing challenge as pupils get older. A group of sixth form students were away during the inspection sailing on the Solent, for instance. There is an independence flat in which pupils and students acquire personal skills for adult life. Good use is made of an adjacent school's field for physical activities but the need for older pupils and students to go off-site to a leisure centre leads to some imbalance on timetables when whole mornings are given over to physical education and swimming.

Staff work effectively with other agencies to provide support such as physiotherapy and speech therapy, although there is limited accommodation for these professionals to use on the school site. Staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding, including child protection, the management of epilepsy and challenging behaviour. Well targeted support for vulnerable pupils has a significant impact on behaviour, social interaction and confidence and there are some striking examples of how pupils have been helped to overcome barriers to learning. Good quality advice and guidance helps pupils and students make well informed decisions about their lives after school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher effectively sets the tone for the school as a welcoming and cohesive community. The deputy headteacher has successfully led the specialist status development. Roles and responsibilities are widely shared among teaching and non-teaching staff. Staff morale is high. The school improvement plan is effectively informed by self-evaluation and the vision and ambitions of leaders. Senior leaders have been successful in eradicating some weak teaching and moving practice on from satisfactory to good and even outstanding in some cases. Collectively, they set challenging whole-school targets as well as those for individual pupils.

Equality of opportunity is taken seriously and requirements are met. Senior leaders and phase leaders carry out a range of monitoring, evaluation and development activities to ensure that all pupils do equally well. However, the lack of a robust means of tracking pupils' progress across all age groups and subjects has resulted in some weaknesses not being identified quickly, in the early years setting. Pupils' participation in the local



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community has been raised significantly by activities associated with specialist schools status.

Governors provide good support, by liaising with the appropriate authorities on matters such as the accommodation and speech therapy support. They also challenge decisions, such as that on the choice of specialist status. Governor representatives are fully involved in the processes of school development planning and target setting. They know, from their regular visits to school and committee work, where its strengths and weaknesses lie. Governors contribute strongly to the direction taken by the school too; currently they are actively pursuing the possibility of off-site sixth form provision.

Governors and leaders ensure that requirements for safeguarding are met. They undertake regular health and safety checks, and designated governors take responsibility for checking recruitment records and procedures. Recently, the school identified the need to strengthen the curriculum input for pupils so that they know in detail how to keep safe when using the internet. Although it has taken some time, there is now a firm date for the local authority to complete perimeter fencing. The fencing around the outdoor play area for younger children is not quite high enough to prevent determined children from getting over it, although staff are vigilant and supervise children well.

The school has considered the extent to which it encourages community cohesion and has a suitable action plan to develop this further. However, there has been little evaluation of the impact of this. The school serves its community well by integrating children and pupils from other schools into its classes for some lessons, thus sharing its expertise.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

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## Early Years Foundation Stage

Staff work effectively with parents and other agencies. Speech and language therapy support helps children to acquire language skills and a suitable means of communication. Children in the part-time nursery class make good progress, because regular, detailed assessments are used very well to plan their learning and to decide on the next steps. Children thoroughly enjoy sessions where they choose activities, as staff make use of a wide range of appealing resources. Role play activities are linked effectively to stories, such as the The Three Little Pigs, and they engage children well, making straw houses for instance.

Children in Reception learn alongside those in Years 1 and 2. Staff tried teaching in groups of children with similar needs last year and found that this was not particularly successful, so this year children are in mixed ability and mixed age classes most of the time, and this is under review. In the reception classes, children's needs are met adequately, and they make satisfactory progress overall in lessons. Occasionally, progress in teacher-led activities is good, such as when children enjoy number songs and join in enthusiastically, singing, signing and making actions.

The best progress is in personal, social and emotional development because there is a strong emphasis on this important aspect. Children learn to wash hands before eating, sit sensibly to eat their healthy snack, and get on well together, sharing toys at playtime. They become more independent, acquiring self-help skills in dressing and eating, for instance. Adults have warm and caring relationships with children, who are mostly happy and settled. Teaching assistants are effective in supporting individuals, such as those who need specialised feeding.

Although key developments and progress through P levels are recorded, monitored and measured, leadership has not been fully effective either in assuring the quality of planning or establishing a robust means of evaluating progress across all the areas of learning. There are plans to record using an electronic profile from September 2010.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Sixth form

Teaching and learning are good, and students make good progress and achieve well in their time in the sixth form. They enjoy coming to school and taking part in the range of

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activities on and off the school site, so attendance is high. Although the sixth form students are taught in distinct groups, their accommodation is not separate from the rest of the school and they have no common room. However, they acquire independence skills well in school and the community. Links with Connexions have been strengthened since the last inspection and students have good opportunities to experience and visit the different options available to them on leaving school. They may remain in the sixth form for up to three years and each has a programme tailored to suit their leaving date. Similarly, there is nationally recognised accreditation for all, and the school is exploring opportunities that are opening up locally for accreditation in the foundation tier of the new diploma. Students are involved well in community activities too, and this gives them a sense of satisfaction as well as an understanding of citizenship. They acquire enterprise skills and grow to understand what it means to work and to serve the community. The provision is evaluated effectively through measuring gains and comparing these with students nationally.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

**Views of parents and carers**

In a relatively low return of questionnaires for a school of this type, the very large majority of parents and carers who responded were positive about all the questions asked. Almost all are confident that the school helps children to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Positive comments added to questionnaires included recognition of children's enjoyment of school, praise for the way that pupils are cared for, and appreciation of increased extra-curricular opportunities in sport and the arts. Inspectors agree that these are strengths. A small number of concerns were noted, although these were usually in the context of overall appreciation of what the school provides. These include concerns about the provision for speech therapy and opportunities for students once they have left school. In response to these concerns, the governors are pursuing the issues. Inspectors found that the school makes good use of the speech therapy provision available.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Welcombe Hills School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 180 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	67	10	28	1	3	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	27	75	5	14	1	3	1	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	50	15	42	2	6	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	53	12	33	2	6	2	6
The teaching is good at this school	21	58	12	33	1	3	2	6
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	50	12	33	1	3	4	11
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	47	18	50	0	0	1	3
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	18	50	12	33	1	3	3	8
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	58	11	31	0	0	3	8
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	58	10	28	1	3	3	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	47	14	39	1	3	3	8
The school is led and managed effectively	25	69	8	22	0	0	3	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	72	7	19	0	0	3	8

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



12 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Welcombe Hills School, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6TQ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited recently. We enjoyed our visit, including the sandwiches made by Ash as part of their enterprise.

We agree that Welcombe Hills is a good school. Most of you are making good progress and you told us that you enjoy coming to school very much. You behave well and this helps you to learn. The school is doing a good job in encouraging you to eat and drink sensibly and take plenty of exercise. It is good that you all feel safe at school too. We were impressed to see how much you all help out and take responsibility at school as well as in the community. You learn very useful skills when you run your own small businesses, go out on work experience and help out in the community. You also learn about the sort of opportunities that you can choose between when you leave school and are helped to make the right decisions.

You are successful because you and the staff work hard together. The teaching is mostly good and staff take good care of you and help you when you need it. There are some things that need to improve.

Teaching needs to be good, or better than this, in every lesson. Staff are going to plan lessons well, use signs and symbols to help you learn, and all adults in class will play a part in helping you to learn.

Staff will check on your progress in every subject and class. They will find out how well you are doing compared to others at schools like yours.

The staff and governors are going to work with people in Warwickshire to make the school's buildings and grounds better.

We wish you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Sue Aldridge

Lead inspector

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