

# Improving schools

A guide to recent Ofsted reports to support school improvement



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## Foreword by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Children and young people have only one chance of a good education. Yet today, over two million pupils attend 6,000 schools that are less than good. We need to work together to make sure all schools are good schools.

From September 2012, Ofsted's new inspection framework makes it clear that the only acceptable form of provision is good or better. Ofsted expects schools to improve quickly to a good standard and we are being more proactive in supporting schools to secure the necessary improvements. Her Majesty's Inspectors are being assigned to schools that require improvement to help them progress to a good standard within a four-year period.

This booklet is designed to help schools that are not yet good to learn from what works well elsewhere. It highlights the good practice identified in our reports on key curricula and organisational issues. It draws attention to the findings from these reports, each of which identifies the characteristics of outstanding provision. But I also want to make very clear that Ofsted inspectors will not arrive with a preferred teaching style or model lesson. Inspectors will want to see evidence that pupils are making good progress, but we will not be prescriptive about lesson structure.

This booklet is published alongside *Getting to good*, a report which identifies the steps taken by headteachers in 12 schools that have improved to good or better. While each school is unique, there are common features of the journey to good that all schools can – and should – learn from.

I urge headteachers, governors and all those who have the responsibility to improve our schools to read the referenced reports in this booklet and to take note of the good practice observed by inspectors in schools across the country. As a former teacher and headteacher, I know how tough the journey to good is, but I also know how rewarding it can be. I wish you every success on this journey.

**Sir Michael Wilshaw**  
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

## Introduction

Alongside inspections in all areas of care and learning, each year Ofsted carries out a programme of survey work to look in more depth at subjects and areas of learning in a wide range of provision for learners.

This booklet highlights recent Ofsted publications of particular relevance to primary and secondary schools. These feature examples of how some of the best schools have achieved excellence in teaching and in improving outcomes for children and young people. We hope that you find the experiences of others useful on your own journey of improvement.

The full reports and other useful materials, including over 200 good practice examples, can be found on our website, [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).





'Getting to good identifies the key characteristics of the schools which have improved to become good or better.'



## Getting to good

This report explores how some of the best headteachers have raised standards and strengthened leadership capacity in their schools. Detailed case studies shine a light on the actions taken by 12 headteachers who improved their schools to good or better.

The report looks in detail at what schools did to improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum. It draws on evidence from good practice case study visits, headteacher focus groups and previous Ofsted survey reports.

*Getting to good* identifies the key characteristics of the schools that have improved to become good or better. It highlights the importance of determined and resolute leadership from the headteacher, high quality professional development and rigorous performance management of staff, all of which increase the capacity for consistent and sustained whole-school improvement. The report also identifies ways of increasing the effectiveness of governing bodies, often from a position of relative weakness.

*Getting to good* (120167), September 2012;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120167](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120167)

### Further resources

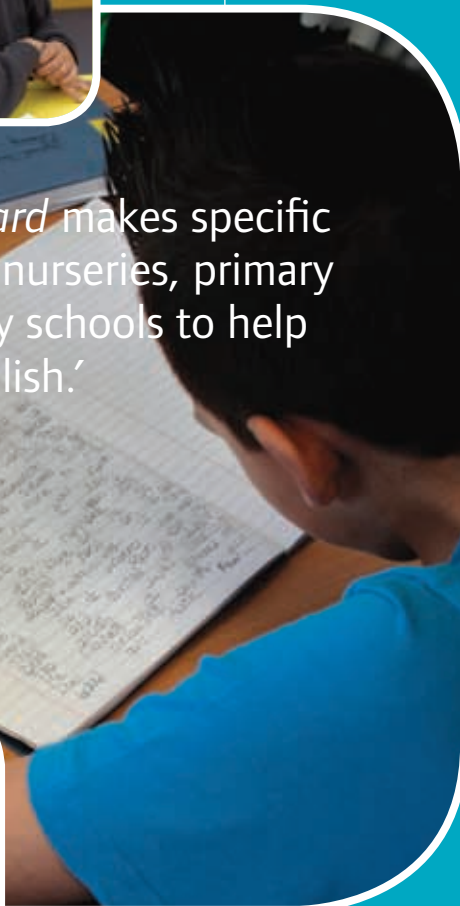
- *Twenty outstanding primary schools – Excelling against the odds* (090170), October 2009;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090170](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090170)
- *Twelve outstanding secondary schools – Excelling against the odds* (080240), February 2009;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/080240](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/080240)
- *Twelve outstanding special schools – Excelling through inclusion* (090171), November 2009;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/090171](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/090171)
- *Schools that stay satisfactory* (110151), December 2011;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110151](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110151)







'Moving English forward makes specific recommendations for nurseries, primary schools and secondary schools to help raise standards in English.'



## Moving English forward

This report is for all who teach English, those who lead the teaching of English, and headteachers of primary and secondary schools, especially where English is not yet good or outstanding.

We know that too many pupils fall behind in their literacy early on. In most cases, if they can't read securely at seven, they will struggle to catch up as they move through school. While standards have risen in GCSE English, 30% of pupils still did not achieve at least a C grade in 2011. Little progress has been made in closing the gap between the performance of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and other pupils.

*Moving English forward* makes specific recommendations for nurseries, primary schools and secondary schools to help raise standards in English. It explores 10 problems, including how to improve the teaching of writing and how to emphasise spelling and handwriting; how to develop flexible lesson plans so that pupils are clear about what they're expected to learn; how to support children whose levels of language and communication on entry to school are weak; and how to develop literacy in the curriculum through the school.

*Moving English forward* (110118), Ofsted, March 2012;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110118](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110118)

### Further resources

- *Excellence in English* (100229), May 2011;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100229](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100229)
- *Removing barriers to literacy* (090237), January 2011;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090237](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090237)
- *Reading by six: how the best schools do it* (100197), November 2010;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100197](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100197)





*'Mathematics: made to measure* identifies the features of teaching mathematics, the curriculum and leadership of mathematics which make the most difference for pupils.'



## Mathematics: made to measure

This report explains how primary and secondary schools can drive up the quality of mathematics teaching. It highlights how the best schools tackle in-school inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, even where they have struggled to recruit mathematics specialists.

*Mathematics: made to measure* identifies the features of teaching mathematics, the curriculum and leadership of mathematics that make the most difference for pupils. It explains what works well, what doesn't, and why. It highlights the concerns that schools must address to ensure that all pupils receive the first-rate mathematical education that they need and deserve.

We know that there is need for improvement in mathematics. First, too many of our able pupils are not fulfilling their potential. More-able pupils are not challenged sufficiently in Key Stage 1 and the extensive use of early GCSE entry very often hinders more able pupils' chances to excel at A level. We also know that too many pupils who have a poor start or fall behind early in their mathematics education never catch up.

There is too much in-school variation in the quality of mathematics teaching and the curriculum experienced by pupils. We regularly see outstanding and satisfactory teaching in the same school, and sometimes inadequate teaching too. We should all be concerned by the survey's findings that secondary pupils in the lowest sets consistently receive the weakest teaching and that too much teaching concentrates on passing tests and examinations, rather than developing understanding and problem-solving skills.

This report will help you to address these areas which require improvement and improve the teaching and leadership of mathematics teaching in your school.

*Mathematics: made to measure* (110159), May 2012;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110159](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110159)

### Further resources

- *Good practice in primary mathematics: evidence from 20 successful schools* (110140), November 2011;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110140](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110140)
- *Mathematics: understanding the score* (070063), September 2008;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/070063](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/070063)



'Successful science dissects science lessons that were less than good and suggests how these lessons could have been improved.'



## Successful science

*Successful science* identifies the strategies used by the highest performing primary and secondary schools to raise standards in science. It makes clear that schools must strive to engage and challenge all pupils in science, particularly in scientific investigation and how science works.

As well as highlighting the common features of the best teaching and learning, *Successful science* dissects science lessons that were less than good and suggests how these lessons could have been improved. The most successful schools prioritise pupils' attainment, monitor and evaluate teachers' performance and set very challenging targets for pupils. Staff within successful science departments plan together and share good practice.

To find out more about how they do it, and for practical ideas on driving improvements in science teaching and the leadership of teaching in your school, read *Successful science*.

*Successful science* (100034), January 2011;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100034](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100034)

### Further resources

- *Success in science* (070195), June 2008;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/070195](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/070195)





## The special educational needs and disability review

Just over one in five school-age children in England are now identified as having special educational needs. Ofsted found that these pupils are disproportionately from disadvantaged backgrounds, are much more likely to be absent or excluded from school, and achieve less well than their peers.

Over the last five years, these outcomes have changed very little and the proportion of children identified with special educational needs has risen sharply. This is unacceptable.

*The special educational needs and disability review* will help headteachers and school leaders to narrow the gap. It identifies the characteristics of the best teaching and learning and provides clear guidance about and recommendations for securing the very best outcomes for pupils. It also draws attention to the widespread problem of over-identification, where low achievement as a result of poor quality teaching leads to children being wrongly identified as having special educational needs.

*The special educational needs and disability review* (090221), September 2010;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090221](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090221)

### Further resources

- *No place for bullying* (110179), June 2012;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110179](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110179)
- *Supporting children with challenging behaviour through a nurture group approach* (100230), July 2011;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100230](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100230)

*'The special educational needs and disability review will help headteachers and school leaders to narrow the gap.'*





## Other relevant reports

### Alternative provision

This report highlights too much variation in the quality of provision experienced by pupils educated in settings other than their school. It draws attention to what is too often poor quality monitoring and evaluation of provision by schools and pupil referral units, and sets out the elements of successful alternative provision and the good practice in finding, commissioning and selecting that provision.

*Alternative provision* (100233), June 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100233](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100233)

### No place for bullying

This report identifies a range of strategies that have helped schools create a positive culture and prevent and tackle bullying. The report highlights the importance of consistent policies and practice, well planned but flexible curriculum provision and effective monitoring and evaluation by senior leaders and governors. It shows schools how to create a positive culture and prevent and tackle bullying. It includes nine good practice case studies drawn from schools which have tackled and prevented prejudice-based bullying.

*No place for bullying* (110179), June 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/110179](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/110179)

### ICT in schools 2008–2011

This report shows primary and secondary schools how to strengthen provision in ICT. The report explores seven issues arising from the survey evidence that focus, with good practice case studies, on: the impact of the use of assessment on pupils' achievements and future success; the curriculum and qualifications; professional development of staff; e-safety; use of virtual learning environments; availability of ICT resources; and securing best value.

*ICT in schools 2008–2011* (110134), December 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110134](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110134)

### School governance: learning from the best

School governing bodies that clearly understand their roles and responsibilities, build productive relationships with school leaders, know their schools well and use the views of parents, pupils and the wider community are best equipped to drive improvement in their schools. This report looks at good practice from 14 schools where governance was judged outstanding, and focuses on the key characteristics of these schools.

*School governance: learning from the best* (100238), May 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100238](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100238)

### Personal, social, health and economic education in schools

Most schools are equipping children and young people with the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills to live healthily, safely, productively and responsibly, but in just under one in four of the schools visited, the quality of teaching was variable and teachers' subject knowledge and expertise were not good enough. This report explores the current issues of the economic education element of PSHE, good practice in inclusion in PSHE education and areas for improvement.

*Personal, social, health and economic education in schools* (090222), July 2010; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090222](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090222)

### Music in schools: wider still, and wider 2008–2011

This report highlights the importance of giving sufficient, regular time for developing aural awareness and musical understanding and ensuring that schools prioritise giving pupils opportunities for practical, creative application and response to music. It also recommends that schools do more to ensure the sustained participation and musical achievement of specific groups of pupils. The report focuses on ways to tackle seven priorities for music education in schools. Good practice case studies of music teaching include a range of lessons from every type of school in different styles. The report is accompanied by six films that highlight the impact external providers can have on achievement and participation.

*Music in schools: wider still, and wider 2008–2011* (110158), March 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110158](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110158)

### Making a mark: art, craft and design education 2008–11

This report looks at the reasons why, after a good beginning in art, too few children are making consistently good enough progress to flourish creatively, especially boys, despite a clear enjoyment of the subject. The report contains a large range of images of the best work seen, which was characterised by a breadth of drawing media used for a range of purposes such as recording, experimenting, analysing, and developing ideas. Case studies show good practice being promoted by energetic subject leaders who ensured that the exciting world of art, craft and design was reflected in and beyond the classroom. Their impact was reflected in work in art galleries, self-motivated pupils, outside lessons, strong teamwork, vibrant displays and challenging exhibitions of work.

*Making a mark: art, craft and design education 2008–2011* (110135), March 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110135](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110135)

## Other relevant reports

### Transforming religious education

This report evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of religious education (RE) in primary and secondary schools, with clear recommendations to schools for improvement. Some of the case studies focus on weak teaching and give guidance on how those lessons could be improved. The report also considers the key issues and concerns at the heart of RE teaching today, such as the core purpose of the subject; how attainment is defined; how key concepts and questions can be used in RE; how learning should be structured and progression can be defined; ways of balancing the need to foster respect for pupils' religions and beliefs within open, critical, investigative learning in RE; and the place of teaching about humanism and non-religious beliefs.

*Transforming religious education* (090215), June 2010;  
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090215

### Schools and parents

Parental engagement can be a powerful lever for raising achievement in schools and there is much research to show the value of schools and parents working together to support pupils' learning. Schools have been encouraged to shift from simply involving parents with the school to enabling them to engage themselves more directly with their children's learning. This report evaluates how effectively the partnership between parents and schools has developed. It draws on evidence not just from inspections but also from organisations working with parents and parents' groups, and evidence that Ofsted already held, such as data from its parents' panel and school inspections.

*Schools and parents* (100044), April 2011; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100044

### History for all

This report evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of history in primary and secondary schools and includes examples of good practice. History is well taught, pupils enjoy it and achieve well. However, some primary teachers find it difficult to establish a clear picture of the past so that pupils can develop a secure understanding of chronology. The report discusses some of the key issues facing history teachers and describes the essential components of effective learning in history.

*History for all* (090223), March 2011; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090223

### Modern languages: achievement and challenge 2007–2010

This report explores the good progress that primary schools are making in introducing languages to children against the barriers to good language learning in secondary schools. These obstacles include insufficient use of the chosen language in lessons and a drop in the numbers studying languages. The report is divided into primary and Key Stage 2, Key Stages 3 and 4, and post-16 outcomes and provision.

*Modern languages: achievement and challenge 2007–2010* (100042), January 2011;  
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100042

### Geography – learning to make a world of difference

This report evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of geography teaching in schools and assesses the challenges faced in the subject. Case studies show how, by paying greater attention to literacy, the global dimension of geography and the use of topical exemplars, teachers enhance pupils' learning, engage them and made lessons more interesting and enjoyable. They also highlight how good and regular fieldwork motivates pupils and enhances their learning in geography and encourage a higher than average take-up of examination courses.

*Geography – learning to make a world of difference* (090224), February 2011;  
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090224

### Economics, business and enterprise education

This report evaluates the strengths and weaknesses in economics, business and enterprise education in primary schools, secondary schools and colleges. The report looks in detail at strengths and weaknesses of two separate aspects of the curriculum: formally assessed economics and business courses taken by students aged 14 to 18 in secondary schools and colleges; and whole-school enterprise education – that is provision to promote economic and business understanding and enterprise and financial capability for all pupils in primary schools and students in secondary schools.

*Economics, business and enterprise education* (100086), June 2011;  
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100086

## Other relevant reports

### Girls' career aspirations

This report evaluates the extent to which careers education, guidance and other provision raise aspirations and inform the choices of courses and careers by girls and young women to support their long-term achievement. It found that some girls are receiving weak careers education, which is making it difficult for them to make properly informed choices about courses and careers. The report identifies weaknesses and examples of good practice in these areas. It considers how mentoring could be used more extensively to support young women in overcoming barriers to achievement and how schools can engage more successfully with employers to provide work experience opportunities for girls that would tackle vocational gender stereotypes.

*Girls' career aspirations* (090239), April 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090239](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090239)

### Safeguarding in schools: best practice

This report illustrates and evaluates the features of best practice in safeguarding, based on inspection evidence from the 19% of all maintained primary, secondary and special schools, residential special schools and pupil referral units inspected between September 2009 and July 2010 where safeguarding had been judged outstanding. It also draws on a more detailed analysis and evaluation of safeguarding practice in a small sample of outstanding schools visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors. The features of outstanding practice are wide-ranging and the report explores them in detail, with examples of best practice from outstanding schools.

*Safeguarding in schools: best practice* (100240), September 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100240](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100240)

### Leadership of more than one school

This survey evaluates the impact on provision and outcomes for pupils where leadership responsibility is shared between federated schools. It looks in particular at a sample of schools that are in federations that have one governing body and, in the majority of cases, share a headteacher or an executive headteacher. It also considers the path taken by schools that make the decision to federate and to share leadership in this way. The report contains examples of good practice from a range of federations in primary and secondary schools, in a range of different communities, for other federations and those considering federation to use.

*Leadership of more than one school* (100234), September 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100234](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100234)

### Supporting children with challenging behaviour through a nurture group approach

Nurture groups help support some of the country's most vulnerable children. Well-planned, rigorous intervention that focuses on academic as well as social, emotional and behavioural progress can make a huge difference to the lives of children who might otherwise be left behind. This report found that many pupils attending such groups were making substantial progress in developing their behavioural, social and emotional skills. The most successful groups also placed a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills and viewed success in basic skills as a key factor in raising self-esteem. The report provides practical advice to those who support children with challenging behaviour, so that those children are given the opportunity to thrive.

*Supporting children with challenging behaviour through a nurture group approach* (100230), July 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100230](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100230)

### Meeting technological challenges?

The challenge for the design and technology (D&T) curriculum in England is to keep up with technological changes and to help prepare young people for future roles in the design, technological, engineering and scientific industries. The report notes that too many teachers are failing to keep pace with technological developments or expand on their initial training sufficiently to enable them to teach the technically demanding aspects of the curriculum. This often results in an outdated curriculum in the later years of primary schools and early years of secondary school. The report looks at the need to improve boys' achievement and how schools are challenging gender stereotyping in pupils' choice of subject and what they design. Good practice examples in the report can be used by teachers to help tackle this issue.

*Meeting technological challenges?* (100121), March 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100121](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100121)



## List of publications referenced in this booklet

Title	Publication date	Reference
Alternative provision	June 2011	100233
Economics, business and enterprise education	June 2011	100086
Excellence in English	May 2011	100229
Geography – learning to make a world of difference	February 2011	090224
Getting to good	September 2012	120167
Girls' career aspirations	April 2011	090239
Good practice in primary mathematics: evidence from 20 successful schools	November 2011	110140
History for all	March 2011	090223
ICT in schools 2008–2011	December 2011	110134
Leadership of more than one school	September 2011	100234
Making a mark: art, craft and design education 2008–2011	March 2012	110135
Mathematics: made to measure	May 2012	110159
Mathematics: understanding the score	September 2008	070063
Meeting technological challenges?	March 2011	100121
Modern languages: achievement and challenge 2007–2010	January 2011	100042
Moving English forward	March 2012	110118
Music in schools: wider still, and wider 2008–2011	March 2012	110158
No place for bullying	June 2012	110179

To find any of these publications on our website enter 'www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/' followed by the reference number.

Title	Publication date	Reference
Personal, social, health and economic education in schools	July 2010	090222
Reading by six: how the best schools do it	November 2010	100197
Removing barriers to literacy	January 2011	090237
Safeguarding in schools: best practice	September 2011	100240
School governance: learning from the best	May 2011	100238
Schools and parents	April 2011	100044
Schools that stay satisfactory	December 2011	110051
Success in science	June 2008	070195
Successful science	January 2011	100034
Supporting children with challenging behaviour through a nurture group approach	July 2011	100230
The special educational needs and disability review	September 2010	090221
Transforming religious education	June 2010	090215
Twelve outstanding secondary schools – excelling against the odds	February 2009	080240
Twelve outstanding special schools – Excelling through inclusion	November 2009	090171
Twenty outstanding primary schools – excelling against the odds	October 2009	090170

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This publication is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120054](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120054).

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