

Westfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117055
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	358070
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	6
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Leigh Brazewell (shadow chair) and Cathy Roberts (IEB chair)
Headteacher	Nicki Gilbert (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2008
School address	Westfield Walk Leominster HR6 8HD
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector who observed nine lessons taught by four different teachers. Meetings were held with a group of pupils, representatives of the interim executive board and shadow governing body, the School Improvement Partner, local authority representatives and staff. The inspector observed the school's work, looked at information about pupils' progress, staff and pupil surveys and safeguarding procedures, and analysed 20 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at the following.

- How much progress is being made by different groups of students in English and mathematics?
- How effectively does the curriculum support students in making progress towards their future lives?
- How good are outcomes and provision for the sixth form compared to the rest of the school?
- How effective is leadership, including governance, in driving improvement and securing enough progress, given their long-term temporary nature?

Information about the school

Westfield is small in size for an all-age special school. Students have a variety of special educational needs and/or disabilities, predominantly severe learning difficulties. About one third of students additionally have autistic spectrum disorders and a few students have profound and multiple learning difficulties. Very few students are from ethnic groups other than White British. A very few students are dual registered with mainstream schools. The school caters for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but has not had any children in this age group for over two years. The sixth form students are taught as a separate group, but all other teaching groups are mixed age. The school has recently gained the International Schools' Award and the Eco Green Flag. Some outreach work is undertaken in local mainstream schools.

The position of headteacher has been in an acting capacity for four years, and the current acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have been in post since March 2010. The school has been governed by an interim executive board since December 2009 and this board now oversees the work of a shadow governing body appointed in July 2010.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Westfield is a satisfactory school. Students' achievements are satisfactory in academic subjects and good in their personal development. All groups of students, including those with additional and complex needs, make satisfactory progress overall, which results from satisfactory teaching and the satisfactory curriculum. Progress is most rapid in the sixth form, where students achieve well in all their courses. In Key Stage 4 progress slows for some students, particularly because their individual targets in literacy and numeracy are not always challenging enough.

Students have an extremely positive attitude to school, which they really enjoy. This is reflected in their above average attendance and outstanding behaviour. They focus well in lessons, work very hard and always want to do their best. Students are particularly kind to one another and sensitive to each other's needs, which is why they feel so safe in school. They are also very appreciative and respectful of the differences between people.

There are many strengths in provision, including good care guidance and support. Effective links with a wide range of other providers and organisations ensure students with additional difficulties and complex needs are well supported. The curriculum is very practical so that almost all learning, including key skills, takes place in real life contexts. This helps students to be able to apply their learning right away. Regular assessment of students' progress has become much more accurate, and it is used appropriately to support learning. Students' individual targets have recently become more challenging. They are used well in literacy and numeracy lessons, but when student groups are mixed for practical subjects, staff do not always use these targets effectively. This means that tasks involving key skills are not always well matched to ability. The curriculum provides highly relevant, accredited courses in personal and independence skills but not in literacy and numeracy. Progress is satisfactory in key skills, but the lack of eventual qualifications hinders students' understanding of the how these skills relate to their future lives.

Teaching and support staff are skilled in helping students understand what is being taught, and lessons are lively and enjoyable. Senior staff recognise that in a few lessons, tasks are not age-appropriate for some students and staff do not always model sufficiently mature language in order to help prepare older students for life beyond school.

All leadership roles within the school, including that of the governing body, are temporary and have been so for some considerable time. This has slowed school improvement by creating uncertainty among staff and parents and carers about the school's future direction. It has also prevented the roles of subject leaders from developing effectively. Despite this, the new acting headteacher has secured several improvements to the school; most importantly, in establishing a positive staff team spirit and developing a reliable system for regularly monitoring progress. This is leading to more challenge in lessons and

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some faster progress recently. More accurate self-evaluation has enabled suitable priorities to be set, and the capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the quality of teaching and the rate of progress for all students, especially in Key Stage 4, by:
 - ensuring that all individual literacy and numeracy targets are sufficiently challenging
 - making sure that these targets are used effectively in practical subjects, so that tasks involving key skills are matched closely to ability.
 - Improve the way the curriculum supports learning by:
 - developing pathways towards qualifications in key skills
 - ensuring that all activities are age-appropriate to every student.
 - Strengthen the capacity of leaders to improve the school further by:
 - establishing permanent leadership roles, including the governing body, as a matter of some urgency
 - developing the role of subject leaders in school improvement.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students approach each lesson with enthusiasm and listen very carefully to instructions, so that they can do their best. The satisfactory progress that they make is equally true for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties, girls and boys, but the severe nature of their learning difficulties means that it is not appropriate to judge the attainment of most students. There is little difference between subjects in the progress made. A few students, especially the more able with autistic spectrum disorders, make good progress because the support they receive is so skilled. In one lesson a lively discussion about the meaning of a sentence was led well by students, demonstrating their confidence to contribute. In Key Stage 4, the work sometimes provides less challenge and progress slows for a few students.

Students have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and are keen to have fruit in their lunch boxes. For example, they enjoy timing how fast they can run lengths of the hall, and many enjoy exercise such as swimming or horse riding. Students' good contribution to the school and wider community includes entertaining local elderly residents, raising funds for good causes and caring for the environment by recycling.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ 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.

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum includes activities which allow students to learn numeracy, literacy and independence skills in a way that is relevant to their everyday experiences. The very wide range of these activities, from music and gardening to catering and construction, allows each student to follow their different interests. Staff take careful note of students' preferences and involve them fully in preparing for the world of work and a future which suits them. Staff use technology skilfully to help students learn, and most students are very comfortable with using computers. Teaching assistants are skilled at helping students understand their work and lessons are thoroughly enjoyable. Teachers use assessment increasingly well to set targets and plan work which is challenging, although it is of variable quality in practical lessons. In some lessons, older students join activities that are more appropriate for younger students, and they sometimes lose interest as a result. The school also recognises that although many courses are relevant to students aged 14-19, they are not always accredited and so are not always seen as equally relevant to their future careers. Very positive relationships and very effective behaviour management mean that lessons run smoothly and the school is a safe, welcoming and happy place to be.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The new acting headteacher has worked well to overcome some significant barriers to stability within the school. As a result all staff work closely as a team towards a shared and ambitious vision, and teaching and learning are improving. The uncertainty and disruption caused by temporary leadership over four years have hindered more rapid improvement; for example, intended initiatives such as developing the range of accreditation have not been fully implemented. There has also been considerable, but unconnected, staff turnover and absence during this time. One result of this is that the roles of subject leaders are underdeveloped and a high percentage of staff are temporary. Nevertheless, the dedicated staff team has ensured that students continue to learn and develop their skills to at least a satisfactory level. The development of accurate information about students' progress has recently enabled challenging targets to be set and has provided senior leaders with a clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development. The new shadow governing body is beginning to bring some considerable skills to the work of leadership and in the meantime, the interim executive board has provided sufficient challenge and ensured that all statutory requirements are met.

The school is effective in ensuring that all students have good equal opportunities and there is no discrimination. Safeguarding procedures are of good quality, are regularly reviewed and are carefully overseen by the shadow governing body. Good promotion of community cohesion includes links nationally and in Africa. The school is very active locally in establishing greater understanding and inclusion of people with learning difficulties.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

There have been no children attending the Early Years Foundation Stage for over two years and there were no children attending during the last inspection. The school has suitable accommodation and resources with outdoors access and equipment. Staff retain the necessary skills. Two members of staff have a first aid certificate including the paediatric requirement. The school is ready to secure appropriate provision to a satisfactory level for any EYFS children who may attend. There are no outcomes data or current practice to report.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
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

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Staff know the students extremely well, based upon an accurate assessment of their progress. Students like to contribute fully in lessons which are strongly work-related. The atmosphere in lessons is relaxed and students are

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confident to make their views heard. In one lesson, for example, they were planting bulbs and enthusiastically discussing their work, showing good insight into the process. Students make particularly good progress towards accreditation of their skills for everyday life, such as independent travel, self care, money management and computer skills. They also make good progress in literacy and numeracy and all move on to further education, training or work. They play a full part in the rest of the school, for example through acting as play leaders and reporting their activities on the Children's Trust Shadow Board to the school council. Students benefit from a very broad curriculum which is clearly focused on their future lives. Extensive links with other providers ensure that students have access to a wide range of experiences including, for example, horticulture and animal care. A key strength is the involvement of students in designing their own pathways to the future including, quite recently, the option of going straight into work. The school recognises that without a structure of courses leading to qualifications in literacy and numeracy, students are not always fully aware of how necessary these skills will be in their everyday lives. Leadership of the sixth form has been consistently good, despite staff changes. There is a strong vision for development, with recently improved assessment and monitoring of progress.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
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

The proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires was well above average, and they are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school. They particularly like the projects supported by the school which provide regular weekend and holiday activities. As one typically commented, 'Westfield is, in my opinion, the best school and I cannot rate it highly enough.' A few concerns were expressed regarding the uncertainties around leadership, although parents and carers have appreciated the dedication of staff during this time.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Westfield 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 inspector received 20 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 28 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	85	3	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	95	1	5	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	85	2	10	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	70	5	25	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	18	90	1	5	1	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	75	5	25	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	80	4	20	0	0	0	0
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)	16	80	4	20	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	17	85	3	15	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	70	6	30	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	80	4	20	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	85	3	15	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	85	3	15	0	0	0	0

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 all 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



11 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Westfield School, Leominster, HR6 8HD

Thank you for being so welcoming when I visited your school. I enjoyed meeting you very much and seeing some of your lessons. Yours is a satisfactory school, which means that it does some things well but some can be better. You do lots of interesting things which you told me about. Even though your teachers sometimes change, they all work hard to make the school right for each of you. You always try to do your best, and so you make at least satisfactory progress in your work and develop good personal skills for later life.

I have asked your school to help you make even faster progress in your work by making sure that:

- your work is always hard enough, especially in practical lessons
- you are able to gain more qualifications
- activities in lessons are right for your age, especially for the older students.

I am sure that you will discuss these ideas with your teachers and help them by continuing to work hard.

The way you help each other and look after the school is very impressive and your behaviour is some of the best I have seen. This is why your school is such a happy and welcoming community.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Potheary

Lead inspector

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