

Westfield Community Technology College

Tolpits Lane, , Watford, WD18 6NS

Inspection dates

28–29 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The majority of students make good progress and learn well in many subjects, particularly mathematics.
- Since the last inspection the proportion of students gaining 5A* to C grades, including English and mathematics has been steadily rising and in 2012 it rose significantly, well above the national average.
- Teaching and learning are good and some teaching is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and they match work very well to their students' individual needs.
- Students enjoy school, behave well and have good attitudes to learning. They feel safe and well cared for. Attendance is above average.
- Students who follow vocational courses in the sixth form achieve very well.
- The principal has high expectations of all students and staff and she is leading a relentless drive to ensure that the school continues to improve. She is well supported by a strong team of senior leaders.
- Governance is a strength of the school. Governors very effectively hold the school to account and closely monitor the quality of teaching and student achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some groups of student's do not always exceed the expected progress in English.
- Student achievement data is not always presented in ways that support teachers and managers in their planning and monitoring requirements.
- The sixth form requires improvement because not enough students achieve the highest grades in 'A' level subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 lessons, of which six were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made six short visits to lessons as part of their learning-walks.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, three members of the governing body, which included the Chair of the Governing Body, and school staff, including middle and senior leaders. A discussion was held between the lead inspector and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors analysed 40 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) during the inspection.
- They observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including those relating to the monitoring of teaching and teacher appraisal, minutes of governors’ meetings, records relating to attendance, behaviour, safety and bullying, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Richard Sutton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Pentlow	Additional Inspector
Chris Ockendon	Additional Inspector
Helen Owen	Additional Inspector
Keith Brown	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is well above average and the proportions supported through school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Almost half of the students are from minority ethnic groups, which is well above average, and the proportion of pupils identified as speaking English as an additional language is also well above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The school works in partnership with another local school in order to provide a wider range of subjects for sixth form students.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen achievement in English, particularly for average and higher-ability students, so that higher proportions make progress beyond that which is expected by:
 - refining how students' work is marked and assessed in English lessons so that teaching can specifically take account of achievement in reading, writing and speaking and listening
 - ensuring that all teachers in all subjects effectively plan lessons that meet the needs of students' achievements in reading, writing and speaking and listening.
- Ensure that more high-ability students achieve the highest grades in 'A' level subjects by developing a systematic and strategic approach to sharing the very best practice in sixth form teaching.
- Refine and develop the process of monitoring student progress so that the achievement of all groups of students is presented to different staff in more appropriate ways that fully meet their planning and monitoring requirements.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students typically start the school with levels of achievement well below average. Students make good progress throughout the school, particularly in mathematics, and in 2012 the proportions achieving 5A* to C grades, including English and mathematics was well above average.
- Students in receipt of the pupil premium, those speaking English as an additional language, those from ethnic minority groups and disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress in all year groups across most subjects. This is because teachers have consistently high expectations of all students. The school is successfully closing gaps between the achievement of these groups of students and other students.
- As a result of consistently good rates of progress across most subjects, students are very well prepared for their next stage of education, training or employment. Good achievement is having a positive impact on the increasing numbers of students staying on in the sixth form to continue their studies.
- Mathematics is a strength of the school and significant numbers of students make progress beyond what is expected nationally. Progress in English is also good but achievement does not match the high standards achieved in mathematics because some groups of students, particularly those of average and high-ability, do not consistently exceed expected progress.
- The most able students take their GCSE English and mathematics examinations at the end of Year 9 and the school has a good proportion of students who have already achieved good grades in these subjects.
- Students following vocational courses in the sixth form make good progress. However, not enough high-ability students studying 'A' level subjects achieve the highest grades that they are capable of achieving. Recent improvements in the sixth form entry requirements as well as improvements in teaching are now resulting in better achievement for these students but it is too early to see the full impact of this.

The quality of teaching is good

- The vast majority of teaching is consistently good and sometimes it is outstanding. High quality teaching is typically characterised by high expectations of every student and activities which interest, motivate and engage students very well because they are effectively matched to individual needs.
- Lessons frequently progress at an appropriately fast and challenging pace and teachers use assessment and marking to very good effect, so that students are able to use this information to improve their work.
- The teaching of disabled students and those with special educational needs is also good and sometimes outstanding. For example, in a year 7 lesson skilful teaching enabled students to progress their knowledge and understanding at a rapid rate through the effective use of questioning; as a result students made outstanding progress in mathematics.
- The teaching of students who receive the pupil premium is similarly good and this extends

beyond the classroom for these and other students. For example, the school uses part of its pupil premium funding to facilitate a wide range of support for these students including Saturday morning mathematics classes and one to one support in English and mathematics. Funding is also spent to support these students with educational trips and purchase additional teaching and learning resources.

- Teaching effectively enables students to develop resilience and independence. In many lessons observed by inspectors teachers encouraged students to take responsibility for aspects of their learning and so develop the ability to work independently showing a real determination to succeed.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge as well as examination specification knowledge. This supports students very well so that they are clear about what they have to do in lessons to demonstrate success against their individual targets.
- Teaching is not outstanding because there is not enough consistency across all subjects and year groups.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The vast majority of students have good attitudes to learning and they work hard with interest and enthusiasm. Students enjoy school and this is seen by their improving attendance which is above average.
- The behaviour of students in lessons is almost always good but where teaching is sometimes less successful the behaviour of some students disrupts learning. Students who inspectors spoke to felt that behaviour is usually good but they would like some teachers to use the school sanctions for disruptive behaviour more consistently. Inspectors agree with this view.
- Behaviour around the school at break, lunchtime and after school is similarly good. In part this is because the school places a high priority on student safety and consequently many teachers are always visible at these times.
- Students say that they feel safe at school. They value greatly the support and care that they receive from all adults and they have a good level of understanding about safety issues.
- Students are very clear that bullying is rare in the school and they say that this is an improvement on recent years. They have a good understanding of the various forms of bullying. On the rare occasions when concerns about bullying are raised by students they are confident that teachers will always take swift action. Parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire agree that bullying is rare.
- Students have many opportunities to engage in positions of responsibility such as the school council, for example. As well as empowering students to make decisions about the school the school council also enables them to foster positive relationships across year groups.

The leadership and management are good

- The principal has high expectations of all students and adults. She has successfully gained the respect of all members of the school community and secured the support of staff and students alike.

- The team of subject and achievement leaders are similarly ambitious for all their students and this is seen through the good quality of teaching.
- Teachers are very well supported in their professional development through regular 'Master Teacher' sessions and the weekly 'Key Coaching' meetings. Staff speak very favourably about these opportunities and can identify how this training directly helps them to further improve their teaching.
- The subjects that students study are well matched to their needs. They are enriched by a variety of after school clubs, trips and visits which students enjoy and which enable them to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Although the school enters the most able students for GCSE mathematics and English at the end of year 9, it ensures that students take these examinations again if they do not achieve the highest grades. Those who do are able to begin studying 'A' level mathematics or English early.
- The management of staff performance is robust and rigorous and plays a central role in helping to further improve teaching. The school links teachers' pay and progression through the salary levels very well to their impact on students' achievement.
- The partnership with another local school is effective in providing a wider, more diverse offer of subjects for some sixth form students.
- The local authority has provided support for the sixth form partnership with another local school. Overall the support is 'light touch'.
- Leadership and management are not outstanding because student achievement is not monitored precisely enough. It is not always presented to different groups of staff in ways that they can make the best use of it to further enhance achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is a strength of the school. Governors are committed to the school, they have been fully engaged in developing its ethos and vision and they share the high aspirations of the principal. Many have a high level of skill and expertise and so they are very able to hold the school to account for the quality of teaching and students' achievement and they are able to compare the school's performance with other schools. Governors know how the pupil premium is spent, why it is spent in the way it is and the good impact it is having on achievement for these students. Governors receive high quality information with respect to the management of teacher performance and they are fully equipped to monitor the extent to which good teachers are rewarded and any underperformance is addressed. Governors ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities regarding safeguarding; all staff have been vetted and are trained appropriately to keep students safe and free from harm.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117532
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	401673

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1108
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Rosen
Headteacher	Emma Aylesbury
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2010
Telephone number	01923 231560
Fax number	01923 210568
Email address	headspa@westfield.herts.sch.uk

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