

Weston Point College

Picow Farm Road, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 4UN

Inspection dates

12–13 March 2013

Overall effectiveness

Good

2

Pupils' achievement

Good

2

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

2

Quality of teaching

Good

2

Quality of curriculum

Good

2

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

2

Leadership and management

Good

2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- From very low levels of attainment, attendance and behaviour in previous schools, the students make good overall progress across all these areas during their time at Weston Point College.
- The students' behaviour improves significantly because of the dedicated close supervision and focused support provided by all staff.
- Leaders and managers are constantly striving to improve the quality of provision.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good because it is well focused on the students' personal, social, emotional and learning needs. As a result, the students make good progress in their learning.
- There is a broad and relevant curriculum, which helps the students re-engage with learning in a way that interests and motivates them to learn.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Not all students attend school regularly and they continue to show low standards in key literacy and numeracy skills.
- The behaviour of a few students is, on occasions, unacceptable.
- Some teaching is too direct and limits the opportunities for the students to complete their work independently from the teacher.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school requires improvement and must take action to meet schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

- This was a short notice inspection, whereby formal notification was given to the school at the start of the first day.
- Lesson observations were carried out during the morning of the second day, and focused on core subjects. Three lessons were observed, comprising three teachers and other adults providing in-class support.
- The inspector conducted separate interviews with the headteacher and three proprietors. He also had on-going discussions with staff and students during the inspection.
- A range of documentation was read, including key policies and teachers' planning, in addition to the responses on Parent View.

Inspection team

Brian Blake

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Weston Point College is an independent day special school, which is registered for 24 students, both boys and girls, aged from 11 to 18 years.
- The school, which opened in November 2008, is located in the north-west borough council of Halton.
- There are currently 15 students on roll, almost all of whom are of White British heritage.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs linked specifically to their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The students come from five different local authorities from around the north-west region.
- For some students, daily travel time can be lengthy because of severe traffic problems on routes from home to the school, at both the start and end of the school day.
- Prior to starting at the school, the students have a history of severe disruption to their education caused, primarily, by poor attendance and challenging behaviour in their previous schools.
- The school has recently made an application to the Department for Education (DfE) to make use of a second site, in addition to the main school. This is located about one mile from the main school building. It is currently in the process of being formally considered for approval and registration by the DfE for students with greater vulnerabilities than those currently attending the main school.
- The school aims to offer the most vulnerable and challenging students the opportunity to re-engage with learning. It further aims 'to be a happy, vibrant and caring college with a dedicated staff team providing high standards of teaching and excellent pastoral care'.
- The school was last inspected in December 2009.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The school must meet the following independent school standard:
 - for all students registered at the school wholly or partly funded by a local authority, the school must provide an annual account of incomes received and expenditure incurred in respect of that pupil to the local authority and, on request, to the Secretary of State (paragraph 24(1)(h)).
- Improve teaching further by:
 - ensuring that teachers ask more open-ended questions to promote and encourage students' thinking
 - ensuring that teachers avoid reading text aloud from the white board, worksheets or text books that the students can easily read for themselves.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the most recent independent schools' regulations are used as part of the school's on-going self evaluation
 - ensuring that the school development plan has more detailed and clearer priorities and actions for improvement.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

From very low levels of attainment when the students start at the school, the vast majority make up on lost ground so that by the time they leave at the end of Year 11, the gap in their performance against national averages has closed significantly. This achievement is also particularly impressive in terms of the students' improved attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning. These low levels of attainment when starting at the school are due entirely to a history of severely disrupted education, and apply, in particular, to the students' abilities in literacy and numeracy, where almost all have never taken the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. The students have no tradition and, in many cases, no desire to read or write for pleasure on a regular basis. However, once the students start at the school, they are immediately assessed for their abilities in a number of key literacy and numeracy skills and, from then on, all teaching focuses on helping them to improve in these important areas. As a result of effective teaching and support, together with the constant reinforcement and practising of reading, writing and speaking, the vast majority of students make good progress in their learning, with many gaining some form of accreditation by the time they leave the school. For example, six students leaving the school last year gained between two and seven nationally recognised awards; almost all of which were at entry or full GCSE level.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Although all the students have the ability to be extremely disruptive to their own and others' learning, the vast majority are making good gains in their self-esteem and confidence. They are also developing a greater awareness of the ways in which they need to behave both in school and outside among the general public. These improvements are the result of focused and well-targeted support by all adults who work with the students, in and out of school. Almost all the students have, or have had, very biased or skewed views about different parts of the community in which they live; for example, law enforcement or other ethnic groups. However, the school tackles overt or extreme racist or ill-informed views robustly and, as a result, the students are gaining a better understanding of how to behave and how to treat or respond to others with whom they come into regular contact. Well-established links with different external support agencies, including public service providers, are also helping the vast majority of students to learn and appreciate that there are adults who understand their difficulties and are always willing to lend a helping hand. The students generally appreciate this extra support, especially in school where they can work in lessons in very small groups or as individuals. Attitudes to learning can vary from lesson to lesson, but generally the students understand and abide by the rules of the school. Staff are unrelenting in their constant challenging of inappropriate behaviour or attitudes. This does not always prevent the students from expressing inappropriate views or comments so, while students' appreciation of other faiths, beliefs and different cultures is developing, it is developing slowly. These all-round student improvements are key to the vastly improved rates of attendance, the reduced number of serious or repetitive behavioural outbursts, and the significant reduction in negative attitudes since starting at the school. The end result is improved progress and achievement in learning. Some students, however, still have poor rates of attendance and, because of this, do not do as well as they should.

Quality of teaching

Good

The significant gains in learning that the vast majority of students make is down to good quality teaching that takes accurate account of their behavioural, emotional, social and learning needs. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly, making good use of relevant resources and the time available. Teachers have excellent working relationships with the students, and although behaviour can sometimes be very challenging, these episodes are managed very effectively and with minimum disruption to other students. The teachers know the students very well and, through

regular assessment of their progress, lessons are generally well planned to ensure that there is sufficient and appropriate challenge in their learning. Some teachers, however, overly direct the students' learning, which prevents them from taking greater responsibility for parts of their work. For example, some teachers constantly read text from the white board or the worksheet when the students are more than capable of doing this for themselves. Also, far too many questions are of a closed style, which requires too little thinking on the part of the students before responding. The majority of students appreciate the work of the staff, and some, in talking with the inspector, praised the small class sizes because they feel they get better and more frequent support than they did in their previous schools. This encourages them to be more positive in their attitude to school, and motivates most to work much harder than they have ever previously done.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The school provides a broad range of subjects, which meet all the regulations, in addition to being very well matched to the needs and achievements of all the students. Activities are carefully planned to ensure that there is constant reinforcement of key literacy and numeracy skills throughout the students' time in school; this is making a significant contribution to the good quality achievement being made by the vast majority. The school uses published schemes of work in almost all subjects and so is able to ensure that there is continuity and coherence to the planning for different subjects across the school. The staff recognise that for the typical student who attends the school, class-based subjects are more effectively taught in the morning, with a range of more practical activities during the afternoon. This balance works well, particularly as the practical activities take place out of school, and are therefore providing numerous opportunities for the students to mix with others in the local community in a way that is helping them to understand, more clearly, how to behave appropriately in public. There are well established links with Connexions and the recent focus on a broader range of personal, social and health education issues, together with different citizenship aspects, are providing many opportunities for the students to learn more about themselves, their behaviour, and their personal views on the law and the public services. The staff believe that the students are now more accepting and reflective about life, with the vast majority understanding how they must modify and change their behaviour if they are to succeed when they leave school. Not all the students are as accepting of these necessary changes, but those who are, make the most impressive gains in their learning, attendance and improved behaviour.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

The overall quality of the school's provision for the students' welfare, health and safety is good, with all the regulations being met in full. The school has a very high level of awareness of the welfare, health and safety of all students. Security in and around the school is good. Entry into the main school building is via a locked door, which is well supervised. Suitable checks are made on the identity of visitors, and all adults who work in the school have been checked to ensure that they are suitable to work with the students. Staff readily apply safe practice procedures in classrooms, and the excellent adult to student ratio in lessons ensures that there is targeted and immediate support for both students and staff, if the need arises. This means that any incidents of bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively. All policies are sufficiently detailed to ensure that they benefit staff and students alike. This ensures that the students feel safe in school. Suitable records are kept of all serious behavioural incidents, and appropriate action taken when the need arises.

Leadership and management

Good

The overall quality of leadership and management is good because there is a shared vision and a high level of commitment between the proprietors, headteacher and staff to make the school as

good as it can possibly be. This vision ensures that staff place a high emphasis on treating each student as an individual who requires highly specialised support to help them overcome the numerous problems which have plagued their education and affected their ability to make suitable progress in their learning. The new headteacher is helping the staff and students to raise the level of their expectations of each other, and accept that some form of external national accreditation is the minimum that should be expected at the end of Year 11. School planning is adequate and although the proprietors and staff know the strengths and areas for development very well, they do not always articulate this clearly enough in the development plan. Also, part of the school's current self-evaluation is based on a dated set of the independent school standards. The school's premises and accommodation are of a suitable standard and meet all regulations. Classrooms are of an adequate size for the number of students using them. The students have regular sessions of physical education and other practical activities off-site in specialist accommodation, which offers a full range of facilities, including the opportunity for the students to shower. The school's complaint's policy is clear and fully compliant with the regulations. The provision of information for parents and carers is clear and, with the exception of the school providing an annual account to the placing local authorities, all other regulations are met in full.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	135749
Inspection number	408744
DfE registration number	876/6013

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Special day school catering for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	11–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Chris Brannan, Mike Searle, Allen Baynes, Tim Whitwell
Chair	Not applicable
Headteacher	Timothy Whittle
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2009
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,200 to £38,000 depending upon individual need.
Telephone number	01928 574667
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	timothywhittle@hotmail.co.uk

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