

Inspection of an outstanding school: Westfield Arts College

Littlemoor Road, Preston, Weymouth, Dorset DT3 6AA

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 February 2023

Outcome

Westfield Arts College continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who are 'supported to thrive and flourish in their own unique way' and 'a great family and community feel' are views of Westfield Arts College shared by many parents and carers. They describe what it is like to be a pupil at Westfield. Staff create an atmosphere that is calm and productive. Pupils get the care and support they need to overcome challenges. Staff have high expectations of all pupils, and as a result, pupils achieve extremely well.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They fully understand the school's ethos and values. Pupils are supportive of each other during lessons and at social times. They accept each other's differences and say, 'Nobody minds if you think differently.' Bullying is extremely rare. If it does happen, pupils say that adults sort it out quickly.

Pupils are happy. They enjoy warm relationships with staff. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging. This helps them to feel safe.

Pupils relish the diverse range of wider opportunities on offer. These help to develop pupils' skills and interests in many areas, such as outdoor education and creative arts. Pupils of all ages and abilities attend these activities regularly. Pupils and students develop high levels of independence and are well prepared as they move into adulthood.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The quality of education and care that pupils receive is outstanding. Leaders ensure that pupils learn an aspirational curriculum that meets their needs exceptionally well. As a result, pupils, including students in the sixth form, gain the knowledge and skills they need as they move through the school. They become ready for the next stage of their education, training or employment.

Leaders are not complacent. Together, with the staff, they reflect on and tweak areas of the curriculum so that it continues to improve. This ensures that pupils and students have

the best possible chance to succeed. Therefore, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning and achieve well.

Staff at Westfield do not put a ceiling on what their pupils can accomplish or the success they can experience. Pupils have high aspirations. Students in the sixth form transition to college, university or employment with success.

Teachers know pupils exceptionally well. They use their knowledge of pupils and subject expertise to explain information clearly. Teachers select activities that help pupils to gain, recall and use new knowledge well. For example, older pupils use their mathematical knowledge, such as measurement, beyond the classroom. Teachers use assessment effectively to check what pupils remember and enable them to plan the next steps in learning.

Leaders are ambitious that every pupil will become, at the very least, a functional reader. Systems are in place to identify accurately those pupils at the earliest stages of learning to read. Staff support pupils expertly to strengthen their knowledge of phonics. Pupils read daily to improve their fluency and comprehension. There is a wide range of books across the school. Leaders select texts with care to ensure that these are age- and stage appropriate. For example, dyslexia-friendly texts are readily available for pupils who need them.

Pupils' wider personal development is integral to the school's work. Leaders plan and sequence the curriculum for personal, social and health education with care, according to pupils' needs. Pupils build knowledge of how to keep themselves healthy and lead safe, active lives. They show their understanding of different cultures, faiths, types of families and relationships. Through their personal development, pupils are taught to respect each other's right to be heard, to listen and to be listened to.

Pupils are exceptionally courteous both to each other and to adults. Pupils demonstrate impeccable manners. This was seen during the inspection. They warmly welcomed inspectors, waiting for them to pass through doors and walk down steps. Pupils are positive and enthusiastic learners who embrace every opportunity the school provides. They show commitment to their education through regular attendance and positive attitudes in lessons. Pupils work well together, for example in constructing the roundhouse to support their history work. This develops pupils' socialisation skills and the ability to work together.

The relationship between leaders and staff is harmonious. Staff comment on how there is a 'climate of kindness'. They are united in their belief that every pupil deserves the very best quality of care and education. Leaders ensure that staff get time, opportunities and guidance to develop their teaching practice. Staff feel well supported. They appreciate what leaders do to listen to them. Staff value what leaders do to help them manage their workload and support well-being. Leaders are ably supported by governors, who provide both support and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, including governors, have created a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained to notice and report any signs of concern. Leaders respond swiftly to support pupils and families in need of help. They do not hesitate to escalate concerns when required. Staff carry out the required checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils. Leaders provide a curriculum that teaches pupils to understand age-appropriate risks, including internet safety and healthy relationships. Pupils know that a trusted adult will listen to them if they have any concerns and will help them.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in September 2011.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	113960
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10211049
Type of school	All-through special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	38
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Bruce Bonwell
Headteacher	Seán Kretz
Website	www.westfield.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including moderate and multiple learning difficulties. A number of pupils have autism spectrum disorder.
- The school uses one alternative provider for its pupils that is registered with Ofsted.
- The school is a member of the Teaching Alliance of Dorset Special Schools.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior leaders, school staff and four members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector met with an education challenge lead from Dorset local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and creative arts. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to a selection of pupils in Years 1 to 13 reading to an adult.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation, including the safeguarding checks carried out on staff working at the school. They considered how well the designated safeguarding lead acts on concerns about pupils' welfare and safety. Inspectors talked to pupils, staff and governors about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- The lead inspector considered key documentation, including the college improvement plan.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. An inspector met with leaders to discuss and scrutinise how they respond to behaviour incidents.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments, and the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paula Marsh

Ofsted Inspector

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