



The Westwood School - A Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 103741
Local Authority Coventry
Inspection number 286742
Inspection dates 4–5 October 2006
Reporting inspector Cathy Morgan HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Mitchell Avenue
School category	Community		Canley
Age range of pupils	11–18		Coventry CV4 8DY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	024 76467779
Number on roll (school)	584	Fax number	024 76467321
Number on roll (6th form)	41	Chair	Phil Roughton
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Headteacher	Roger Whittle
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	4–5 October 2006	286742

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Westwood School was designated a Specialist Technology College in September 2004. Many of its students come from an area of Coventry in which there is considerable social deprivation. The student population is predominantly White British, although other ethnic heritages are represented. The number of students who have learning difficulties or disabilities and the proportion who are eligible for free school meals are higher than average. Levels of mobility are higher than are seen nationally, particularly amongst older students.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. The school recovered well from the disappointing performance at GCSE level in 2005 and results have improved in the last year. The external test and examination results for 2006 demonstrate that students' overall progress is improving significantly when compared with that of students of similar prior attainment nationally.

The school is gaining the confidence of a wide range of partners, parents, local schools and the wider community since becoming a Specialist Technology College. The college's specialism has enabled it to work successfully with local primary schools. As yet, there is no evidence of impact on standards across the school.

The school provides a safe and secure environment for students and has a caring ethos. Students benefit from effective links with specialist agencies on personal and health-related issues and they receive good guidance whatever their specific needs. Strong links with other partners help to provide effective personal support for the more vulnerable students. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory.

The school works hard to ensure students remain in school until the end of Year 11, and the majority achieve some form of accreditation. They benefit from the flexible curriculum in Years 10 and 11. Students are generally well prepared for their economic future, although a high proportion have low levels of literacy. The school works hard to prevent this from being a significant barrier to achievement for many.

Senior managers have introduced good strategies to minimise the effect of a high turnover of staff. They provide valuable support to new and inexperienced teachers, almost a third of whom have joined the school this term. Sixth-form students benefit from good teaching. In the main school, not all students make good progress in lessons. Whilst they are aware of their end-of-year targets, they are not always helped to tackle specific weaknesses in order to improve their performance in each subject.

Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Resources for information and communication technology (ICT), the monitoring of attendance and annual improvement planning have all improved. The new system of curriculum review involves a well defined self-assessment process. As yet, this is not being consistently and rigorously applied, which is preventing the accurate identification of areas for improvement in some subject areas. Despite working continuously to improve students' attainment and progress in English since the last inspection, standards remain low at the end of Year 9. The governors have not sufficiently held the school to account for this and for failing to meet other targets for students' performance.

The recent restructuring of staffing has strengthened provision and, within the senior leadership team, there is satisfactory capacity to improve. The recent improvement in achievement at Key Stage 3 is further evidence of the school's capacity to improve. The appointment of a director of transition demonstrates the school's recognition of the need to further strengthen the links with local primary schools and develop early

intervention strategies to ensure that students begin to make progress as soon as they enter the lower school.

Governors do not effectively hold the school to account. Although the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, performance in this one respect is inadequate. Before its next section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to monitor the progress that it has made in remedying this weakness. The school would receive two to five days notice of such a visit.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's view that the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. Whilst improving, standards are below average, although students make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment. The sixth form is small and the number of students joining each year varies considerably. Students benefit from the federation with other institutions and are able to choose from a range of vocational and academic courses. They gain confidence, acquire qualifications and most progress to higher education or employment. Facilities for social activities and private study are good. The recently appointed head of sixth form has already made a significant impact on provision and attitudes. Students say they receive good support and guidance from tutors and teachers in their school but most study their courses at other schools, where they feel guidance is less accessible.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement and raise the standard of attainment of students in English by the end of Year 9.
- Ensure the new self-assessment process is used more effectively to identify and target areas for improvement in all subjects.
- Provide clear feedback to students to enable them to improve their work and make more rapid progress in lessons.
- Strengthen governance to ensure that the school is held to account and meets challenging performance targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Attainment on entry to the school varies from year to year but generally students join the school with standards of attainment that are below the national average. Many have low levels of literacy.

Since the last inspection, attainment in national tests at the end of Year 9 has been below national averages. Recent test results indicate significant improvement in students' progress in mathematics and science. Targets were exceeded in mathematics

and science but were not achieved in English. Generally, tracking of pupils' progress towards targets lacks rigour.

Students' progress in relation to their prior attainment is satisfactory overall from the age of 11 to 16, but standards are below average. The proportion of students gaining at least five GCSE grades A* to C has improved since the time of the last inspection but remains below the national average at 35% in 2006. Standards of attainment in the sixth form are low but students achieve satisfactorily, given their starting points.

The school recognises the need to improve the progress made by more able students as the attainment of higher grades at GCSE and GCE A level is low. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress as a result of the good support that they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Most students enjoy coming to school and say that they are proud of it. The level of attendance is below the national average but the school works hard, in conjunction with families and with other agencies, to encourage the small proportion of disaffected older learners to attend regularly. The weekly school assembly and extra-curricular activities are used effectively to support students' spiritual, moral and social development and extend their cultural understanding.

Students have good opportunities to voice their views and are proud to take responsibility as peer mentors, prefects and school council representatives. They have been effective in bringing about improvements to school life. Students speak positively about the school's incentive merit system which recognises their academic and personal achievements.

Good progress is being made in encouraging students to adopt a healthy lifestyle. They are given good guidance to enable them to make sensible lifestyle choices and adopt safe practices in school. Students generally behave well. They respect and get on well with each other. Bullying is rare and there have been no permanent exclusions for the last two years. Staff deal firmly with incidents of anti-social behaviour and this is reflected in the rise in the number of fixed-period exclusions since the time of the last inspection.

Work-related learning and the extended work experience programmes help students to gain an understanding of the world of work. Further opportunities for students to make a positive contribution to the wider community need to be developed and this is acknowledged by the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good in the sixth form but are satisfactory for the whole school because students do not always make good progress in lessons.

Many students have difficulties with reading and writing and teachers work hard to address this in their planning. In the majority of lessons, teachers prepare a variety of tasks and students are often able to participate in effective practical activities and discussions. In one such lesson, students worked enthusiastically in small groups and by following the clear guidance from their teacher, were able to conduct a challenging experiment with minimal support. A well planned plenary enabled students of all abilities to demonstrate their clear understanding of some difficult scientific terms.

Teaching assistants provide good support in lessons to students with specific learning difficulties. Occasionally, teachers do not provide sufficient challenge for the most able students and tasks are not always matched sufficiently to the needs and prior attainment of different students. Although most students are aware of their overall targets, teachers do not always inform them of exactly what they need to do to improve their work. This prevents them from making more rapid progress in these lessons.

Specialist teachers are well deployed in the sixth form. Students are encouraged to work independently and they respond well to this. Good use is made of self- and peer-assessment to enable students to make good progress in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The satisfactory and improving curriculum meets the needs of most learners. A particular strength lies in the annual review and modification of the programme offered to students in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. These learners benefit from a range of academic and vocational courses offered in partnership with other local schools and further education colleges. However, recent changes to make the curriculum more flexible to meet students' needs have yet to produce an improvement in standards.

Students have good provision for work experience. Many gain a useful understanding of the world of business and enterprise through workshops led by representatives from local companies. Specialist Technology College status has enabled the school to offer enhanced study of science and engineering. Local primary school students benefit from involvement in technology projects which also prepare them well for their transition to secondary school. The school is making efforts to tackle the problems of low literacy by stressing the need for improvement throughout the curriculum. The draft literacy policy is clear and is due to be implemented fully this year.

The school offers a wide extra-curricular programme of activities, including sport, fitness and arts, allied to good cultural enrichment through visits to arts events and trips abroad. A popular study club does much to build students' confidence in tackling examinations and coursework.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Whilst there are a number of good features, care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. A range of skilled staff, including Connexions advisors and youth workers, is deployed effectively. They provide good personal advice and guidance to students regarding course options, further education choices and employment opportunities. The good and improving links with feeder primary schools ensure that students settle quickly when they first arrive at the school. Informative individual education plans are provided for all students with additional needs and the care provided for visually impaired students and those with severe communication difficulties is very effective.

Assessment information is used to identify and support students who are most at risk of underachieving and there are examples of this having a positive impact on the performance of a small number of students. A lack of a timely and rigorous analysis of performance data for individual subjects is preventing the early identification of individual and groups of students who would benefit from additional specialist support. The school has recognised the need to improve the monitoring of students' academic progress by form tutors.

Vulnerable students are very well supported and child protection procedures are secure. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is strongly committed to raising aspirations in the local community and has successfully led the school to achieve Specialist Technology College status. The senior leadership team has established good systems to manage students' behaviour and provide them with effective support. Equal opportunities and racial harmony are promoted satisfactorily.

Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The school has successfully minimised the effects of a lack of continuity in staffing through the recruitment of additional teachers and a reduction in individual teaching commitments.

Managers have recognised the need to improve teaching in order to raise attainment. They have strengthened procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and provide a well planned programme of continuous professional development. In addition, good practice is effectively shared, for example, through fortnightly demonstrations, staff

bulletins and the school Intranet. Training for subject leaders has increased their awareness of, and confidence in, the use of data analysis but this has not yet affected students' learning in all subjects.

The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory but does not always provide a sufficiently rigorous assessment of its weaknesses. Many of the criteria used to measure progress describe what has been done rather than what has been achieved. Governors are generally well informed and are supportive of the headteacher. However, the governing body needs to be more effective in holding the school to account and challenging aspects of underperformance. This relates particularly to the school's English results at the end of Key Stage 3, which declined in 2006 and where standards remain low.

Recent improvements to the leadership and management structure have led to clearer definition of roles, responsibilities and accountability. Improvements in senior leadership, the management of transition from Key Stage 2, achievement in mathematics and science, and aspects of teaching and learning indicate that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

- Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking with you, watching you working with your teachers and speaking with them about your progress. We were very impressed with your positive attitudes and the sensible way that you voice your opinions through the school council.
- Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. The majority of you behave well and get on well with each other. Your teachers and other adults in school care greatly for your well-being and your comments to us indicated that you appreciate the care and attention you receive. The school works well with others in the area and has introduced more courses to give older students, including those in the sixth form, better choices.

We have asked your school to help you to improve the standards you achieve in the Year 9 tests you take in English as they should be higher. We also want your teachers to give you clearer feedback to enable you to improve your work and make more rapid progress in lessons. The school managers have been asked to use the new self-assessment process more carefully to highlight the areas for improvement in all subjects. We have also asked the governors to check more closely on the progress of the school so that they can ensure you make faster progress and achieve higher standards.

We wish you every success in the future.