



# Westlands School and Technology College

Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 113526  
**Local Authority** Torbay  
**Inspection number** 289665  
**Inspection dates** 13–14 December 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Pauline Robins HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Westlands Lane
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		Torquay
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		TQ1 3PE
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01803 400660
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1319	<b>Fax number</b>	01803 408897
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	198		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	John C M Hart
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mike Stewart
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 November 2002		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	13–14 December 2006	289665

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Westlands School and Technology College is a larger than average, oversubscribed bi-lateral school set in an area where selective grammar school education is available. The vast majority of students come from a White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. The number of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average and the percentage with a statement of special educational need is high. There is a 12-place hearing support unit attached to the school.

The school was rebuilt in 2001 under a private funding initiative (PFI). It was awarded technology college status in September 2002.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Westlands School and Technology College provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students. It is a school of extremes; there are areas of great strength but also some weaknesses which need to be assiduously addressed. The process of school self-evaluation has been successful in bringing together staff and managers to reach a common understanding of the school's performance. However, the judgements reached are overly optimistic in many areas. The school has made progress since the last inspection but this has not always been sustained. Some initiatives are very new and it is not yet possible to see evidence of their full impact. Currently, the capacity of the school to improve is satisfactory. The school is working effectively with the local authority and needs to continue to do so to secure further improvement.

The inspection team acknowledges the impact of a selective system in reducing the number of high achieving students who join the school in Year 7. Nevertheless, achievement on entry to the school is broadly average, although each year group shows a widely varying pattern of ability. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below average and at the end of Year 11 are well below. However, there is an improving trend which is indicative of the satisfactory progress that the students make. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although there is some good and outstanding practice in the school there is some which is inadequate. In lessons where students are not sufficiently challenged they become bored and restless. There is evidence to show that the behaviour management strategies now in place have been effective around the school but need to be more consistently applied in the classroom.

The school offers a wide and varied curriculum which fits the needs of its students and is providing particularly well for disaffected students in Years 10 and 11. In addition to academic qualifications there is a good range of vocational courses and those which result in alternative forms of accreditation.

The staff care about the students in the school and do their best to support them. There is good partnership working with feeder primary schools to ensure a smooth transition from Year 6 into Year 7; increasing cooperation with other schools and colleges to provide the effective broad curriculum offer in Years 10 and 11; good consortia working with sixth form providers to attract students and encourage them to remain in education post-16. Provision in the sixth form is good as a result of effective leadership and management. The consistently good teaching ensures that students make good progress and reach the standards of which they are capable. They are well supported and guided to choose from a wide range of courses.

Although the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, standards and the monitoring and evaluation processes are inadequate. Before its next section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to check the progress that it has made in remedying these weaknesses. The school would receive two to five days notice of such a visit.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision in the sixth form is good. Teaching is consistently good and as a result achievement is good, with the majority of students making better than expected progress. The school has a generous approach to recruitment and accepts many students with relatively weak performance at GCSE. The school takes great care to provide each student with a combination of courses that closely match their capability and interests. This sometimes involves students following courses at neighbouring schools and colleges that offer a reciprocal arrangement. Good careers guidance is provided so that students have a clear notion of where their choice of courses may lead. The range of post-16 courses offered is impressive and covers the full range of A-level subjects with a good selection of vocational options.

The number of students in the sixth form is boosted by the significant number of international students who arrive in Year 12. These students make a very positive contribution to the school and their presence helps to raise the multicultural awareness of the home students.

Students are appreciative of the regular checks on their progress and of interventions to support them. They speak very positively about the guidance they receive when they enter Year 12 and are enthusiastic about the high quality of their teachers. Lessons are interesting and provide a good balance of support and challenge. They also appreciate the facilities that the school provides: comfortable common room and very good computing facilities. However, some are disappointed by the way in which lessons are often cancelled at short notice when a teacher is ill or needed elsewhere. Greater encouragement to indulge in sporting activities was sought by the students. They feel neglected in this area, with very limited opportunities available.

Good leadership and management of the sixth form enable staff to work well together as a team and to promote the development of students' independent study skills. Staying-on rates in the sixth form are good and the vast majority of students complete their courses.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve teaching by consistently applying behaviour management strategies, increasing levels of challenge and the amount of active learning in lessons, and planning better to meet students' individual needs.
- Focus the school's self-evaluation on the impact of the actions taken, rather than the provision made, and ensure that the process is consistently and rigorously applied.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

By the end of Year 9 students achieve standards just below national levels in the core subjects with levels improving over time; mathematics and science results are higher than in English. By the end of Year 11 in 2006, unvalidated results show 35% of students achieved five A\*–C GCSE grades, well below the national level of 57% and the school target of 50%. This figure will rise to 42% if science examination results appeals are successful. The number of students who achieve five A\*–G GCSE grades is improving and 98% of the year group gained at least one qualification. Specialist college targets are met by the end of Year 9, but not by the end of Year 11. Standards are variable across the school and between subjects.

Students make satisfactory progress. Some teachers have yet to take full advantage of student data to set appropriate targets and monitor progress. Students know their targets but some do not know how to improve. The school recognises that boys do not achieve as well as girls and have appropriate strategies in place to address this. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Most students enjoy coming to school and parents' questionnaires endorse this. Students are clear about which subjects they particularly enjoy and this is often related to the good relationships they form with the teachers in these subjects, and the degree to which they find the teaching captures their interest. Students feel safe in school and the majority shows consideration for others.

Behaviour is satisfactory. Students generally move sensibly around the school between lessons, and during breaks and lunchtimes. Behaviour in lessons is more of a mixed picture. Some students in Years 8 and 9 expressed concerns that incidents can occupy a lot of the teachers' time and they get frustrated that their learning becomes disrupted. The school is working hard to redress this and evidence shows behaviour and attitudes are improving.

Attendance has been below average for several years but is steadily improving as a result of robust monitoring and targeted support for students who persistently miss school. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The new house system is generally liked by students and they are positive about the mixed-age tutor groups. Through the school and house councils, students communicate their views about the school. Students acknowledge that some bullying in school occurs. A few parents, and students, have concerns that this is not always tackled as effectively as they would wish by the school. Students are aware of the need to eat healthily and follow active lifestyles. Many walk or cycle to school and take part in the

school's sporting activities. However, despite the school's good efforts, some students do not choose to eat and drink healthily.

The good opportunities for work related learning and vocational courses help to prepare students for the world of work. Their satisfactory achievement overall prepares them adequately for their future economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

In Years 7 to 11, teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is a proportion of good and, occasionally, outstanding teaching which results in students making good progress. However, the proportion of inadequate and satisfactory teaching is too high and leads to satisfactory, rather than good learning overall. In the majority of lessons, learning objectives are clear, and students understand them. In the best lessons, there is sufficient time for them to be summarised and reinforced by the end of the lesson, but often the pace of the lesson is too slow for this to take place. The majority of teachers plan lessons satisfactorily, but in the most effective lessons planning takes into account the needs of the full ability range. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support students with statements of special educational need and this enables them to make good progress. However, the support they give to students with more generalised learning difficulties is not regularly identified in teachers' planning and the expectations for the lessons are not always shared. Too frequently, students are not challenged sufficiently or the activities they are given are mundane and, as a result, they become bored and disruptive.

The school has equipped and trained all teachers to use information and communication technology (ICT) and in some lessons this is an effective motivator, particularly when there is an interesting simulation for students to interact with. However, this is not consistent and in some lessons the interactive nature of the whiteboards is not used to full advantage to enable students to take a more active role in their learning.

Marking is inconsistent. Most students know their target levels or grades, but many are uncertain how to improve them except in the most general terms such as 'by working harder' or 'concentrating more'.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school provides a good curriculum. All statutory requirements are met, but the time allocation for physical education in Years 10 and 11 is well below national expectations and needs to be increased. This has been recognised by the school and plans are in place to bring about a change. The programme for personal, social and

health education, citizenship and careers is particularly strong. The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is flexible and adjusted to meet the needs of individual learners. Alongside the wide range of traditional academic courses, the school offers an impressive number of vocational courses. The school has successfully introduced highly individualised programmes for the most disaffected students in Year 10 and this has already had a significant impact on improving attendance rates and reducing the number of exclusions. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities and this contributes significantly to students' personal development and enjoyment of school life. Good provision for students with learning difficulties or disabilities ensures their full access to learning, particularly for those with hearing impairment.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

The staff care greatly about the students and make every effort to help and support them on an individual basis. They know students well and work as a team to support their needs, including those who are at risk of disaffection or exclusion. There are efficient and consistent systems in place to monitor students' welfare and to help them feel safe and secure. The school works well with a variety of support agencies and the employment of a police officer in the school is much valued by the students. This good care and support has had an effect upon improving students' attitudes and behaviour. Arrangements for protecting and safeguarding students are satisfactory and meet the latest requirements. Students are given good support in choosing their options, and sixth formers appreciate the wide range of courses available to them and the careful guidance provided by teachers. Tutors effectively contribute to the process of monitoring students' progress and liaising with parents. However, subject teachers do not use data sufficiently to monitor progress and set targets.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. However, there is variability at both senior and middle management level. Some members of the leadership group carry huge areas of responsibility and this restricts their ability to monitor and evaluate rigorously. Staff at all levels are positive and have a strong commitment to the school and there is confidence in the senior management team.

The school has in place systems to monitor and evaluate performance but these are not showing sufficient evidence of raising standards. Information gathered from monitoring is extensive but is not consistently and rigorously used to provide effective evaluation. Criteria for success are not always quantifiable or sufficiently challenging. In particular, the monitoring of teaching and learning, by senior and middle leaders,



is not sufficiently challenging and requires further development. Too often, it focuses on teaching methodology rather than the progress that students are making.

There is a formal process for reviewing the work of departments which involves the subject link governor. This is good practice but the outcome of the process is not consistently showing an impact in all departments. Governors are very supportive of the school and have a wealth of experience in areas which relate to finance and buildings. They challenge and question the leaders of the school but are not sufficiently involved in the self-evaluation process as a whole to be able to hold the school fully to account.

Specialist school status has had a positive impact on the competency of staff to use ICT. The decision to apply for a change in status to become a mathematics and computing school is appropriate. Targets set for the specialist subjects have yet to be met at GCSE.

Valuable work has been done as a training school, which has been recognised within the consortium and by Exeter University. Unfortunately, the school is not meeting the new performance criteria for training schools and will forfeit its status.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	2
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	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	2
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	4	
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	3	
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**

As you know, I recently visited your school with a team of five inspectors. We would like to thank you all for the way you talked to us about the work of the school, and particularly those things that in your opinion are particularly good or which need to be improved. A special thanks to those students who represented you so well in meetings with individual inspectors.

We found that your behaviour around the school was generally good but there are some students who do not give their full attention in lessons, particularly when the work set is not challenging enough. Attendance has improved and the school has good systems in place to keep this on track. However, only you can make a real difference and attendance at school has a direct impact on the grades you achieve. You told us that most of you enjoy coming to school and feel safe when you are there. This is because the staff care about students. You are offered a good range of courses from which to choose at the end of Year 9 and in the sixth form and given good guidance in making the best choices. We have asked the headteacher, governors and staff to consider two main areas for future development:

- Improve the quality of teaching to raise the standard of your work by: being consistent in the use of behaviour management strategies; increasing the pace of lessons and the demands that teachers make on you; and planning lessons which meet the needs of all students.
- Change the way the school monitors its strengths and weaknesses; currently, there is too much concentration on how things are done rather than the effect they have.

It is now up to you to work with the staff to bring about the improvements which will take Westlands School and Technology College forward.