



# Westfield Community Technology College

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 117532  
**Local Authority** HERTFORDSHIRE  
**Inspection number** 290865  
**Inspection dates** 2–3 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Tony Beaver

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>Community College address</b>	Tolpits Lane Watford Hertfordshire WD18 6NS
<b>School category</b>	Community	<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 231560
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18	<b>Fax number</b>	01923 210568
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Chair</b>	Mr Chris Miller
<b>Number on roll (community College)</b>	997	<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms J Spavin
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	132		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body		
<b>Date of previous community College inspection</b>	21 January 2002		

<b>Age group</b> 11–18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 2–3 November 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 290865
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the community College

This is a larger than average sized mixed comprehensive technology college with a small but growing sixth form. Students come from Watford and neighbouring districts. Specialist technology status was recently re-designated. Students' ability on entry is well below average. Most students of above average ability attend local selective schools. The number of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average. Many students have disadvantaged backgrounds and above average numbers are entitled to free school meals. Some students join the college after Year 7. Almost half the students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and some are at an early stage in learning English.

The college is an Extended School and provides for a wide range of community needs, including day-care. It has shared use of a sports centre on site, holds the Sportsmark and is an Investor in People.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the community College

### Grade: 2

The college provides its students with a good quality of education. Its leaders have an accurate view of its effectiveness. Innovative changes are helping students with wide ranging needs to be responsible and successful learners within a caring environment. The college is a harmonious, friendly and supportive community in which to learn so that students' personal development is good. Students of wide-ranging abilities from different minority ethnic and social backgrounds are educated successfully together. Relationships across the college are very good. The large majority of students enjoy attending the college, behave well and learn successfully with their friends. Increasing numbers of students of all levels of ability choose to stay on into the sixth form because their experience of the college is favourable.

The college's commitment to the wider community is excellent and shown in its status as an Extended School. This enables it to link effectively with local schools and other partners in extending educational opportunities. It is also an important focus and support for its local adult community. Partnership with parents, outside agencies and adult learners are very positive. Day-care provision is good and helpful to many parents. Specialist technology college status enables students to receive an improved quality of education. Specialist status assists learning across the curriculum. Students and teachers benefit from the modern equipment readily available in the learning resource centre, where students learn to be active and responsible learners. For example, increasing numbers of students use college facilities beyond the staggered, working day.

The impact of the college's work is to be seen in improved standards. The school provides for a very wide range of needs and abilities, but it has far fewer students of higher ability than other schools. Standards are below average, but students achieve well and make good progress, given their starting points. This is reflected, for example, in the impressive GCSE examination results gained by Year 11 students in 2006. This year group entered the college with well below average standards, but almost half the students in Year 11 attained five or more GCSE grades A\* to C, the college's best ever result. Students of lower ability also achieve very well, including many with learning difficulties and disabilities. Those for whom English is an additional language achieve well. However, a small minority of students from White British backgrounds do not achieve as well as others, as the college itself correctly identifies. Previously, different groups have been targeted to ensure improved standards, and the college has been effective in accomplishing this. The college cares well for all, and the student support centre is effective. Although the quality of support and guidance to help students achieve well is effective, the process of academic review of students' work does not involve subject teachers consistently enough. Teaching and learning are good and enable students to achieve well. Teachers are generally competent in ensuring successful learning takes place. However, a good pace of learning is not fully sustained throughout lessons when teachers do not involve students actively enough at all stages. The good curriculum and staggered timetabled day are innovative and adapted well to students' needs.

Leadership and management are good and have raised standards by effective innovation to ensure students get a good education. The college is an increasingly popular choice with parents and students. The impact of leadership is apparent in improving standards and ensuring good achievement. The headteacher, staff and governors are vigorously committed to improving the college further. The college's capacity to improve is outstanding because there has been sustained improvement beyond competent management of the issues from the last inspection. For example, the college has won re-designation in 2006 for its technology specialism in recognition of its success as a specialist school. Examination results are the highest ever achieved. The college's commitment to raising aspirations and extending learning opportunities to young people and adults in the local community is outstanding and contributing to a harmonious local environment. Leaders rightly inspire confidence in students, staff and parents to take the college further forward.

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

#### **Grade: 2**

The sixth form is good. It is increasingly popular and provides students of wide-ranging abilities with flexible learning opportunities. Some study for three years to achieve the qualifications they need. Students make good progress and gain above average results on intermediate-level courses. They reach average standards on advanced courses and achieve very well, given the low starting points of many students. Students have mature attitudes to learning and act responsibly towards younger members of the school. Students are well taught and well cared for, guided and supported in their academic work and in making choices for the future. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and ensure good value for money.

### **What the community College should do to improve further**

- Ensure the small minority of students from White British backgrounds, who do not achieve their full academic potential, receive support to improve their attitudes to learning and, therefore, the standards they achieve.
- Involve subject teachers more effectively in the process of academic review to extend the help students receive to improve their work.
- Ensure that a good pace of learning is sustained in every lesson so that students are challenged to learn from a good range of varied and enjoyable activities.

### **Achievement and standards**

#### **Grade: 2**

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

Students enter the college with well below average standards. In the Year 9 national tests, standards are below average. Results in English have usually been well ahead of those in mathematics and science, until a reversal in 2006. In Years 10 and 11, standards are also below average, but improving. The percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A\* to C has risen consistently since 2003, and in 2006 almost

half the year group reached this standard, the college's best ever performance. Few students fail to pass at least one GCSE subject. The college sets itself challenging academic targets, and results come close to them. Progress is good. However, in Years 10 and 11, a small minority of students from White British backgrounds does not maintain the rate of progress of the majority. Otherwise, students of all abilities from all minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who are at an early stage in learning English, achieve well. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress and achieve well. In the sixth form, students make good progress. The results of intermediate level vocational courses are good. Average standards are reached on advanced courses. An exceptionally high proportion of students complete their courses.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' personal development and well being are good. Attendance has improved marginally, and is in line with that of most schools indicating that most students enjoy college. The large majority of students mature into sensible young adults with high aspirations. In the sixth form, they settle quickly to develop independent learning skills. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. Relationships are harmonious, there is an ethos of mutual respect and students are quick to praise each other's efforts. Behaviour is good and well managed. Students say they feel safe in the college. Students also say there is little bullying, and when it occurs it is dealt with effectively. Plans are at an early stage to develop internal exclusion to reduce fixed-term exclusions from school. Many students enjoy college sport. They understand the importance of healthy eating but complain that the cost of a healthy lunch is too high. Students take on leadership to support the college and wider community, for example, they have composed the constitution of the new student parliament. They develop good basic and work-related skills, particularly those who follow the work-related learning programme, and this prepares them well for their future working lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning are good across all years. In the sixth form, students are effectively encouraged to learn with increasing independence. Teachers encourage and value students. Learning objectives are shared with students and guide them to make good progress. Activities are increasingly well planned throughout lessons, and encourage students to be responsible learners. In a few lessons, the pace of learning slows and students' interest, achievement and enjoyment diminish. Students are helped

to assess their own work. Poor behaviour is dealt with effectively. Teachers' good subject knowledge extends students' understanding well, and the use of whiteboards and digital projectors adds interest and stimulation in lessons. Students are challenged in most lessons because teachers use assessment well to decide the level at which to pitch learning activities. Occasionally, work is not fully adapted to meet the needs of the most able. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are taught well and make good progress.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is good in all years and meets students' needs well. The Year 7 programme encourages independent learning. The curriculum gives all students a diverse range of opportunities. In Years 10 and 11, different programmes are available to meet all students' needs and give continuity into the sixth form. There are very valuable work-related opportunities, especially for those who have difficulty following the mainstream curriculum. The staggered timetable enables students to make full use of the college's facilities and the good range of extra-curricular activities. Every student is taught how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Specialist technology status enables strong partnerships to develop with the community, which contribute to students' achievement. The Extended School programme greatly broadens the opportunities for students and the community. The sixth form curriculum provides good opportunities for all levels of ability. Consequently, increasing numbers of students are choosing to stay on for further study.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good in all years. There is a very strong commitment to child protection, health, safety, and the care and welfare of students. The college's extensive student support team and an excellent network of external agencies provide intensive and effective support for vulnerable and disaffected students. Consequently, although a small minority of White British students are less interested than most in learning the college is planning additional targeted support to raise the achievement of this group. Support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language is good and enables these students to make good progress, although the number of support staff is low. The coordination of support for the highest attaining students is less well organised. The process of academic review is good, but the involvement of subject teachers is not consistent. Students are well informed about courses and future pathways.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management are good in the main college and the sixth form. The college's self-evaluation is accurate. The headteacher and senior leadership team give very clear direction, and this has led to considerable improvement since the last inspection. Governors are well informed, provide strategic direction, review developments regularly and challenge management. The college is increasingly popular with parents. The revised structure of middle management is well focused on raising standards. Standards are rising, and impressive examination results show the positive impact of the measures adopted. The monitoring of teaching accurately identifies needs for professional development, and ensures teaching is good. Accommodation has improved greatly. Buildings are well maintained and secure. The resources for learning are good and readily available to students. Leaders and managers ensure that the college gives good value for money.



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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>Community College 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>	2	2
How well does the community College work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the community College's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	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>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this community College require special measures?	No	
Does this community College require a notice to improve?	No	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

6 November 2006

Dear Students

Westfield Community Technology College, Tolpits Lane, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD18 6NS

Thank you very much for your courtesy, friendliness and willingness to talk freely with inspectors during our recent visit to your college. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the good quality of education you receive. This letter is to tell you the outcome of the inspection.

You told us that the college gives you a good education. You like going there both to learn and to socialise with friends. You spoke warmly about the very good relationships among staff and students, and you said you feel safe at college. You think the college's status as a specialist in technology is of considerable benefit to you. We agree with you on all these points. Inspectors were also very impressed with the rapidly improving GCSE examination results. Year 11 achieved the college's best ever results last year. Sixth formers consistently achieve well. Inspectors were pleased to note the strong sense of purpose the vast majority of you show in lessons, and the sensible way in which you behave around the college.

Some things could be better. A small percentage of students from White British backgrounds do not make as much progress as the rest of you. Your college knows this and is working hard to remedy this weakness. We agree with you and many parents that you would benefit from the closer involvement of subject teachers in the process of academic review. Occasionally, your rate of learning in some lessons slows down, and inspectors think that more activity for you in some lessons could help maintain your interest and enjoyment.

Inspectors fully agree with you that your headteacher and the school's leaders work hard to help you achieve your best.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Tony Beaver

Lead inspector