



Westwood College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124407
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 292986
Inspection date 31 January 2007
Reporting inspector Susan Morris-king HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Westwood Park
School category	Community		Leek
Age range of pupils	13–18		ST13 8NP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01538 370930
Number on roll (school)	622	Fax number	01538 399928
Number on roll (6th form)	333		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mandy Bennett
		Headteacher	Keith Hollins
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2003		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
13–18	31 January 2007	292986

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Westwood College has a low number of students who are eligible for free school meals. Almost all the students are White British. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average, although the number of students with learning difficulties is below average. The college has a very stable population: almost all students who join the college in Year 9 complete their compulsory education there. The college, along with some of the middle schools in the local area, is part of the national pilot for a shortened Key Stage 3: about two thirds of the students take their national Key Stage 3 tests at the end of Year 8 before they join Westwood. Twenty-five percent of the sixth form join the college at the start of Year 12, having attended other local secondary schools.

The school gained specialist status in the visual arts in September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Westwood College is an outstandingly effective school. The headteacher's belief in the importance of inclusion is exceptionally strong; he communicates this clearly to the whole college community and it permeates all that he does. This belief is shared by the senior leadership team and the staff, and is translated into an excellent degree of attention to the individual academic and pastoral needs of every student. Students, staff, parents and governors are overwhelmingly positive about their college, and proud to be a part of it, yet the college is not complacent and there is a continual drive for improvement.

Students' attainment on entry to the college is broadly average. Good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching, an excellent curriculum which is carefully tailored to meet the range of students' needs, and superb care and support enable students to make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average. Recent unevenness in the progress students make in English and mathematics has been rigorously tackled by the leadership team and heads of department to good effect. Standards in art are exceptionally high, and students make excellent progress in this subject.

Many students have already completed their national Key Stage 3 tests by the time they join the college in Year 9. The college uses this as an opportunity to skilfully enrich students' learning experiences: students take dance lessons, study drama, learn lifeskills, and enjoy cross-curricular three-day projects, as well as being thoroughly prepared for their GCSE courses. The college is constantly refining its Key Stage 4 curriculum so that it meets the needs of every student, including the highest attainers and those who benefit most from a vocational programme. The BTEC courses which a few students follow are a particular strength because they allow some vulnerable students to make excellent progress with their academic and personal skills. The college's specialist status makes an excellent contribution to its success. Art and media studies enrich students' experience both through the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities. More able students have the opportunity to take extra GCSEs and AS levels alongside sixth form students through after-school enrichment programmes. Work with local and nationally recognised artists is highly motivating.

The very high quality of the curriculum and the care, guidance and support students receive result in outstanding personal development. Students recognise they are well treated. In response, their behaviour is calm and mature and they treat each other and staff with respect. The college pays ample attention to students' physical and mental well-being, which enables them to learn how to look after their own health. Students value the way in which the college and sixth form councils and student membership of the governing body and staff working parties allow them to play an important role in decision making. The college has a strong grasp on the progress students make in Years 10 and 11. In Year 9, although the individual progress of students is well monitored, the lack of consistency in the assessment and recording systems used by different subjects makes it harder to compare the progress of individuals and groups than in Years 10 and 11. The headteacher and senior leaders are highly analytical of

the college's strengths and the areas which could be developed further. They have successfully increased the level of accountability which they expect of middle leaders, who have welcomed the challenge and risen to it with eagerness. Whilst much of the recording of this evaluation is thorough and rigorous, a few aspects need refinement.

The college's successes, combined with the improvements which have been made since the previous inspection, indicate that it has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Standards in the sixth form are above average and students' achievements are good. The curriculum is outstanding: students can choose from a wide range of courses which include vocational options such as travel and tourism and business, and more traditional courses such as physics, French and classical civilisation. Students can choose from three different art courses, and also have the opportunity to study for AS levels in music technology and film studies after school. Excellent leadership from the head of sixth form and the team of tutors has created an environment in which students are exceptionally well supported and guided towards an aspirational range of career options. Students rise to the challenge. Those who join the college at the start of Year 12 quickly settle and become very well integrated within the year group. Students are articulate and confident and very positive about their experiences. The sixth form guidance system is exemplary, and this is being extended into the rest of the college. The head of sixth form has trained the tutor team so that they are able to use data extremely well to have a meaningful dialogue with their students in regular individual tutorial sessions. Students are given plentiful guidance about where and how they can apply to university or to college, and those who may be eligible for Oxford or Cambridge are given additional support to help them to make an informed decision and to apply if they choose to do so.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop a consistent method of assessment and record keeping across the curriculum in Year 9 to enable the progress of individuals and groups to be easily tracked and compared.
- Ensure that the college's rigorous monitoring and evaluation activities are clearly and consistently recorded.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards are above average and students' achievement is good in Years 9, 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Students enter the college with average standards. By the time they reach the end of Year 9, standards are slightly above average overall. Since 2004, students have made less progress in English than in science and mathematics during Year 9; whilst standards in mathematics and in science have been above the national

average, standards in English have remained in line with it. However, actions taken by the school to improve learning in English mean the progress students make in the core subjects during Year 9 has become more even.

By the end of Year 11, standards are above average. The percentage of students who gain five A* to C grades and five A* to G grades is above the national averages, and only a very small number leaves with no GCSEs. Following targeted support from senior leaders, small pockets of previous underachievement in some subjects were almost eradicated by the college in 2006, and students are on track to meet challenging targets for 2007. The percentage of students gaining five GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, rose to 53% in 2006, which is above provisional national figures.

Since 2004, students have made exceptionally good progress in English during Key Stage 4, but progress in mathematics has been no more than satisfactory. However, following a range of support from senior leaders, 2006 mathematics results have shown a positive improvement and indicate that students have made more progress than in previous years. Girls achieve exceptionally well. Students with learning difficulties make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students' behaviour is excellent in Years 9-11 and in the sixth form: they have mature attitudes to their work and respond extremely well to the college's culture of mutual respect. Exclusion is very rarely used. Attendance is good throughout the college. During the inspection, one student expressed the view that at Westwood 'you don't just learn subjects, you learn how the real world works', and there is ample evidence to support this view. Because the college puts a clear emphasis on work-related learning and on careers and enterprise education, students continually learn skills from Year 9 onwards which are highly relevant to their future. Students take a good level of responsibility for each other, and contribute very well to the local and wider community, particularly through art-related activities. Their awareness of global issues such as poverty is well developed through the curriculum; for example, one tutor group chose to sponsor a student in a Kenyan school following an extended cross-curricular project. Students make good use of the opportunities they have to stay healthy, such as healthy food options and regular exercise.

Students benefit from a very safe environment in which they feel that they can ask for help and support if they need it and that this will quickly be given. Those with learning difficulties and other vulnerable students feel included and valued, and play an important role in the college; for example, two students have significantly improved the college grounds and gardens as part of their BTEC course. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching is good overall. Teaching in art is outstanding and students are highly motivated by the experience they receive, which leads to exceptionally good results. There are pockets of outstanding teaching across the curriculum. Senior and middle leaders and teachers have worked hard over the past three years to iron out some unevenness in the quality of teaching in mathematics, English and German, with a high degree of success. New assessment methods have recently been introduced and these are developing well; students are increasingly aware of their targets and what they need to do to improve. In the sixth form, students are well aware of their targets. The college has a relentless drive to improve teaching and students' learning even further. A recent detailed study by a newly qualified teacher into boys' achievement has led to a series of suitable actions being taken. The director of learning has a clear vision of what needs to be refined in order to make outcomes for students consistently excellent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The outstanding curriculum is driven by the college's commitment to inclusion and its determination that all students should be valued and succeed. As a result, students have valuable opportunities to work together in different ways, sometimes in mixed ability groups and at other times on highly individualised courses such as the BTEC programme. The range of extra-curricular activities offered is very broad and greatly appreciated by students; international links are a particular strength. Projects such as creating a mural on the side of a local building help students to see their work in a relevant context outside of college.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The outstanding feature of the care and support which the college provides is its very strong focus on the needs of each individual. Where students are underachieving, this is quickly noticed and action is taken. A wide range of mentoring carried out by a range of staff is tailored to deal with different issues, which may be personal or academic. The leadership team take a strong mentoring role. A college counsellor, stress management courses for Year 11 students, clinic sessions run by the college nurse, and a part-time youth worker all help to meet the general needs of all students, and the more specific needs of some, very well indeed.

More vulnerable students make good use of the excellent support offered by the inclusion team; for example, they can meet together at lunchtimes to talk, play chess or do coursework. Each student who attends the local college part-time has a personal tutor who ensures that they are fully aware of what is happening at Westwood and supports them with course work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The college's senior leadership team is characterised by its clear and coherent understanding of the college's successes and its drive to make outcomes for the students even better. Each member of the senior team has a clearly defined role. The line management system is a particular strength; this has greatly increased the level of accountability for middle leaders. They have welcomed this and have risen to the challenge of being analytical about their subject areas. The cycle of subject reviews leads to good quality action plans, the effectiveness of which is then rigorously monitored by the senior team. This process has led to significant improvement in several subject areas. Excellent use has been made of the skills of non-teaching staff to introduce aspects such as construction and land management into the curriculum for a small group of students.

The chair of governors has a very good knowledge of the college. Since the previous inspection, the improvements made to governance have been excellent. The governing body is now in a very strong position to challenge as well as to support the college, and does so very effectively.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
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

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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 your excellent contribution to our inspection this week. We appreciated how you talked to us in your lessons, around school, and in the two groups with whom we met, and who shared their opinions. You were extremely articulate, and expressed your views very clearly and positively, which helped us to understand what is distinctive about Westwood.

Westwood provides you with an outstanding quality of education. You receive an excellent level of care and support which helps students with different abilities, needs and talents to achieve well. You told us that you value the way in which you are treated as young adults. What we saw during the day is the impressive way you respond to this: students' attitudes to each other, to staff and to learning are excellent, and you show respect to the staff and to each other. You have a very wide range of opportunities both through the curriculum and through enrichment activities, which you clearly value – the foreign exchange visits, after-school exam classes such as AS film studies and GCSE textiles, and music and drama activities were just a few of the options you mentioned to us.

It was particularly good to see how the college designs the curriculum so carefully so that whatever your interests and needs, they are being met. We were very impressed with the superb quality of the sixth form artwork, and the way in which students explained the rationale for their work so articulately. We were equally impressed by the excellent improvements the students on the land management course were making to the school grounds, and their clear explanations of what their course involved. You have a good range of opportunities to make your views known, and to take responsibility for improving the college, for example through being members of the School Learning Improvement Council and the sixth form council and the governing body, and joining staff on working parties.

We have asked the college to take two actions to help it to improve even further:

- Make the system of assessing and recording your progress in Year 9 clearer.
- Record clearly all the monitoring which senior and middle leaders carry out.

We wish you every success in the future.