

Westlands School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111782
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	310682
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	David Smith

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	6–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Colin Whittaker
Headteacher	Mr Bill Hitchcock
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2004
School address	Eltham Crescent Thornaby Stockton-on-Tees TS17 9RA
Telephone number	01642 883030
Fax number	01642 883070

Age group	6–16
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Inspection number	310682

© 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 Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Westlands is federated with a local special school and therefore has an executive headteacher, head of school and a shared governing body. Approximately 15% of pupils in the school are girls and a small minority of the pupils are looked after by the local authority. All pupils have statements of special educational need. The majority are experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties whilst about a quarter have autistic spectrum disorders. The vast majority of the pupils are White British. The school provides boarding provision during the week for up to 14 pupils. An inspection of the residential provision was carried out by Ofsted childcare inspectors during the same week as this inspection. The school has attained Healthy Schools' Status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Westlands is a satisfactory school where pupils' attendance is good but their behaviour is inadequate. Due to the federation of Westlands with a local school, leadership and management are now satisfactory, as is the progress since the last inspection. Pupils make satisfactory progress towards targets that have an adequate level of challenge. However, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) make good progress towards challenging targets. The residential provision is good and meets, or exceeds, all National Minimum Standards.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and the majority of pupils enjoy their learning. The adequate use of assessment systems ensures that the majority of pupils' work is neither too easy nor too hard. There is no marked difference in the performance of groups of pupils such as boys, girls and pupils in public care. However, pupils with ASD are taught well and make good progress. Pupils make satisfactory progress in mathematics and English although they make too little progress in their reading. Pupils enjoy using computers, but too few opportunities are provided for pupils to use them in lessons. There are times when teaching does not engage pupils and, as a result, their negative behaviour gets in the way of learning and achievement is inadequate.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and enjoyment of their learning are satisfactory for the majority but the behaviour of a significant minority of pupils experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) is inadequate. Pupils have positive attitudes and behave well whilst in residence. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. However, moral development is inadequate as pupils' pay too little attention to staff's guidance on how to behave appropriately and place themselves at risk. The school has attained Healthy Schools' status reflecting their work in promoting healthy lifestyles. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school community by helping, for example, to manage the school's enterprise activities.

The curriculum is satisfactory and good for pupils with ASD. The school provides an appropriate curriculum to prepare the younger pupils for a return to mainstream education. The older pupils have an extending range of challenging external accreditation. Pupils with ASD respond well to these opportunities and achieve well. The school is less successful in engaging the older pupils experiencing SEBD and their achievement is satisfactory rather than good. Local facilities are used effectively to make up for shortcomings in the school's own accommodation for physical education.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Safeguarding procedures are in place and the staff try to provide a safe environment, although pupils place themselves at risk by, for example, climbing on the school roof. Pupils are very aware of their behaviour targets but, other than the pupils with ASD, they are not aware of their targets for learning. The school has adequate links with other agencies and these make a valuable contribute to advice and guidance. The majority of parents are positive about the school but a significant minority are rightly concerned about pupils' behaviour in the school.

Senior leaders have high aspirations for the school's future and, in addition, middle leaders and the governing body make an adequate contribution to the satisfactory capacity to improve. Self-review processes are satisfactory and accurately evaluate the overall effectiveness of the school. However, some judgements are over optimistic and reflect their ambition for the school's future rather than the current situation.

Although pupils' behaviour is inadequate the quality of teaching and learning and, as a result, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Focussed improvements have had a positive impact resulting in good attendance and the school has the capacity to maintain improvements.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the boarding provision is good. It is well led and managed and, as a result, meets or exceeds National Minimum Standards. A particular strength is the support provided to families and this is appreciated by parents. Relationships are very good, promoting a consistent and stable environment that provides good opportunities for pupils' social development. They have the confidence to discuss any concerns with staff. The care provided is good, with clear guidelines for pupils' behaviour and, as a result, they behave well. There are good links between care staff and teachers but there is insufficient emphasis placed on extending pupils' learning by, for example, the provision of regular homework and help with their reading. Good use is made of the locality and pupils thoroughly enjoy their exciting range of activities there, such as swimming and bowling.

What the school should do to improve further

- Take decisive action to improve the effectiveness of the management of pupils' behaviour.
- Increase access to computers so that pupils have more opportunities to enjoy and extend their learning.
- Extend pupils' understanding of how to improve progress in their learning including improvements in their reading.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The achievement of boys and girls is satisfactory and they make satisfactory progress towards their adequate targets. It is not appropriate to draw comparisons with national standards because of pupils' learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils with ASD make good progress towards their challenging targets and achieve well. Across the rest of the school, pupils make adequate progress in maths and apply their skills to everyday uses such as enterprise activities. Many pupils have difficulty with their literacy skills and make too little progress in their reading. In contrast they respond well to practical and creative activities such as art and music. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make adequate progress and there is good success in returning some of them to mainstream schools. There are opportunities for some Key Stage 3 pupils to spend time in mainstream education and this boosts their progress. Older pupils with ASD make good progress in their challenging external accreditation. However, the disaffection of some of the pupils experiencing SEBD means that they make satisfactory rather than good progress. The range of available courses is extending and pupils enjoy courses such as the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) music but their negative attitudes restrict progress, for example, in science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy their learning and, as a result, their attendance is good. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders make good progress in their personal development and particularly enjoy their friendships in school with other pupils. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. However, moral development is inadequate due to the negative behaviour of some pupils experiencing SEBD. There has been a marked reduction in the use of exclusion but too much time is still wasted by pupils' disruption and disobedience and, as a result, their progress is satisfactory rather than good. Lunch is a pleasant social occasion where, despite the limited dining space, pupils and staff relate well to each other. Pupils respond well to the structured activities during their breaks. In contrast, pupils put themselves at risk by absconding into the locality or climbing on the school roof. Pupils share in and celebrate each other's achievement during the school assemblies which are a positive aspect of the school community. The school has gained Healthy School status and this reflects their appropriate focus on healthy lifestyles. However, it has a major battle to combat some habits such as pupils' nicotine addiction.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and this matches the school's own evaluation. Typically, the use of assessment ensures pupils' work is at the right level and there is sufficient challenge to promote satisfactory progress. Pupils are aware of their tasks and take reasonable pride in their work. Pupils respond well to the use of computers, for example, to research Egyptian history but too few opportunities are provided to extend pupils' learning by the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Teaching assistants provide satisfactory support but with a greater emphasis on behaviour than learning. Teaching and learning are good for pupils with ASD and, on occasions, for pupils in the rest of the school. In these instances, teaching is enthusiastic, pupils are fully engaged, enjoy their learning and achieve well. Learning is made exciting, expectations are high and good levels of challenge ensure pupils make good progress. Strong teamwork provides consistent behaviour management. In physical education lessons, despite the limited space, pupils follow instructions and make good progress in improving their basketball skills. At times, teaching is inadequate, particularly when the text is too difficult for pupils to read and the use of worksheets fails to motivate them. Pupils quickly lose interest, misbehave and staff do not have the skills to re-engage them in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is good for pupils with ASD because it is carefully tailored to meet their specific needs. In their classrooms, the range of displays reflects the diversity of their activities and, in particular, their exciting variety of food technology topics. There is a good central resource for ICT and well-used interactive whiteboards in class but too little use is made of computers in other subjects. Staff make best use of the available accommodation with, for example, improved facilities for design and technology. However, some of the rooms are too small, such as in art and science, and this contributes to pupils' disruptive behaviour.

There is satisfactory use of visits and visitors, for example, to enhance the creative and performing arts, which are strengths of the school. There is good use of the locality to ensure pupils have an appropriate physical education curriculum. The use of college and alternative provision helps to enhance the curriculum for pupils at Key Stage 4. Enterprise activities are adequate and there is a good initiative to involve parents in social and shared activities with the pupils. Parents attending this event during the inspection made many positive comments about the support provided for their child in school. Social opportunities are enhanced by access to after school activities alongside pupils in residence.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school has worked hard and effectively to reduce absence rates and limit the use of formal sanctions.

Child protection procedures are in place and there is compliance with the legal requirements for safeguarding. The staff team tries to keep pupils safe, although at times they put themselves at risk by, for example, leaving the school site without permission. Risk assessments are completed but they are not specific enough to cover individual activities. There is a strong and successful focus on the provision of appropriate opportunities for the inclusion of the younger pupils in local mainstream schools. Also, older pupils are encouraged to take on increased responsibility such as Sports Leadership and helping to organise the school's mothers and toddlers group for local residents. The provision for the range of pupils' learning difficulties and disabilities is appropriate. Connexions make a valued contribution by providing pupils with work-based learning and also help prepare pupils for the next stage of their education. Pupils with ASD are made aware of their learning targets but this is a recent initiative for other pupils and they do not yet know how to improve their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leadership has been strengthened following the federation with a local special school. The executive headteacher and head of school work well together to lead a determined drive for continual improvement. They have effectively focused on improvements in attendance and the reduction of exclusions, although behaviour is still inadequate. Middle managers are making an increasing contribution to leadership providing, for example, good strategic planning to help boost pupils' achievement. Equally, governors provide satisfactory support and challenge, and make a valuable contribution to the satisfactory capacity to improve. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection and there is a common sense of purpose and understanding of the challenges ahead. The current development plan has too many priorities and senior leaders see the need to have a manageable number of targets that focus more sharply on raising achievement to good. Self-review reflects an accurate picture of the school's overall effectiveness but is over-optimistic in some other aspects. The majority of parents are supportive of the school but a significant minority have well-founded concerns regarding pupils' behaviour. The local authority has provided good support to the school's finances which, as a result, means the school now provides satisfactory value for money.

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.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	4
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

16 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westlands School, Stockton-on-Tees, TS17 9RA

Mr Willday and I enjoyed our visit to your school. You made us feel welcome particularly during our time in the residential provision.

This is what we found out about the school.

- The senior leaders, staff and governors at the school have high ambitions for your future education.
- The progress of those of you with autistic spectrum disorders is good.
- During your time in residence you make good progress in the way you cooperate with each other and behave well.
- Your help with enterprise activities and school-based events, such as the mothers and toddlers group, is much appreciated.
- You are encouraged to be healthy and you clearly enjoy physical and practical activities.

We thought your school was satisfactory and the following things would help to improve it.

- You should have more opportunities to use computers in the classrooms.
- Ensure that you do not put yourselves at risk of harm or lose time in class due to inappropriate behaviour.
- It is important that the school ensures that you know how to improve your work, particularly your reading.

You can play your part by, in particular, taking more regard of the advice given by staff to improve your behaviour.

Yours sincerely

David Smith

Lead inspector