

# West Park School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112997
<b>Local Authority</b>	City of Derby
<b>Inspection number</b>	325738
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nada Trikić 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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1314
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Neville Taylor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Brian Walker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 November 2005
<b>School address</b>	West Road Spondon Derby DE21 7BT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01332 662337
<b>Fax number</b>	01332 280767

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

West Park is a larger than average comprehensive school. It became a specialist school for mathematics and computing in 2005. The school population is predominantly White British, with a small number from a range of ethnic groups. A few pupils are at an early stage in learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special education need is below average, although that of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Provision for a small number of vocational courses is made in partnership with local schools and colleges.

The school gained the ICT Mark in 2007 and Healthy Schools Award in 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

West Park is a good and improving school. A typical response from a parent was, 'We feel the school is more like an extended part of our family where we can always find support and information'. Indeed, staff have created a safe, harmonious and caring ethos where young people grow in confidence and self belief. Staff know pupils very well and are sensitive to their needs. Effective systems are in place to support vulnerable pupils to provide good care, support and guidance. Pupils say that they feel safe and valued. These features contribute greatly to pupils' good personal and spiritual development, social and moral awareness, and a sense of well-being as shown in warm friendly relationships. Pupils readily take on responsibilities such as sports leaders, 'buddies' to younger pupils and through the highly successful Duke of Edinburgh award scheme which make a good contribution to the community. Although pupils have some awareness and appreciation of cultural and diversity issues, it is recognised that this is capable of being extended further to strengthen global awareness.

Since the last inspection, standards and achievement have varied across key stages, subjects and groups of learners. Overall standards have been above average in Key Stage 3, supported by strengths in mathematics. Many groups of learners made good progress in 2007, although lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities did not make the progress expected. As a result, steps have been taken to strengthen provision through nurture groups, and tailored support for literacy and numeracy skills. This is beginning to boost skills and confidence.

In Key Stage 4, standards have been broadly average, although the proportion gaining five or more higher-grade passes has been significantly below average. Results in 2007 were disappointing, including a significant dip in mathematics, with many groups of learners not making enough progress. Girls and higher attaining pupils performed well in English, although pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities did less well. This is attributable to a lack of rigour in examination preparation, staff turnover in mathematics, and weaker aspects of leadership and provision.

Leaders were determined to tackle these weaker aspects and identified key areas to accelerate progress. A careers course was introduced to promote inclusion by helping learners to see the link between qualifications and future opportunities. This is successfully raising aspirations, supplemented by a more rigorous approach to progress tracking, intervention and examination preparation, and greater accountability for pupil progress. The impact has been rapid, leading to a significant improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more higher grade passes in 2008, a record for the school. Once English and mathematics are included results show an improvement of 10%, and exceed the national average. These outcomes demonstrate good leadership, management and progress, and above average standards. The school has a good capacity to improve. Good systems provide detailed assessment and target information for teachers to support planning. Leaders recognise that tracking and analysis of progress information for groups of learners is less well developed. This has been the case for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who make satisfactory progress.

The school's specialism is influential in raising the profile of the school within the community through strong partnerships, and extended opportunities for pupils and families. Community cohesion is well promoted through these relationships. The good and improving curriculum is enhanced by additional vocational courses to ensure relevance, and opportunities to develop

practical and work-related skills. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good although not consistent across the school. The monitoring of teaching, learning and marking is not sufficiently rigorous to provide consistently good learning experiences. Strengths in teaching lie in excellent subject knowledge, high expectations, use of information and communication technology (ICT) to engage pupils, and the enthusiasm and commitment of teachers and support staff. Pupils enjoy their lessons, know their targets and appreciate the additional sessions to keep them on track.

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

- Ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers by consolidating recent provision and regular monitoring of skills.
- Improve rigour in systems to monitor and evaluate teaching, learning and marking, to reflect the school's best practice.
- Extend pupils' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity and global awareness by increasing curriculum opportunities and external links.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enter the school with broadly average standards. Progress continues to be stronger in Key Stage 3, although recent improvements have boosted the performance of older learners. Senior and subject leaders have, critically, reviewed courses on offer to provide a stronger match to the needs and interests of pupils. This is already having an impact on levels of achievement and motivation. Improvements in standards and achievement are also supported by the positive attitude of pupils, and shared commitment of staff. Pupils respond very well to opportunities to review their progress with staff, and value the support they receive. Parents are increasingly involved in supporting achievement and can gain access to online reviews of progress.

The school has high aspirations and sets ambitious targets. Specialist targets are broadly met in mathematics. In ICT, targets are exceeded in Key Stage 3. Pupils have underachieved in Key Stage 4 for a number of years due to weaknesses in the management of coursework. This has been tackled through good leadership, teaching and the rigorous monitoring of progress. Innovative projects designed to motivate and challenge pupils, supported by regular feedback have led to a significant increase in standards and good achievement.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are happy, feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Attendance is at the national average. Pupils say there are few incidences of bullying and are confident that issues are dealt with effectively. Behaviour and attitudes to learning continue to improve and engagement in lessons is evident. Pupils report that the 'consequences' behaviour system is used consistently and they are fully aware of expectations. Pupils are taught how to ensure their own safety through the 'safe and sound' project and internet safety is given high priority. The importance of developing healthy lifestyles is also understood, with pupils happy with the meal choices and the range of sporting activities on offer. Pupils develop many good work-related skills that provide well for their future working lives through the recently introduced accredited careers programme.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is improving through effective themed weeks. Pupils' contribution to the community of the school is good. This is seen in the way in which pupils willingly take on responsibility, such as 'buddies' to vulnerable Year 7 students, bullying mentors and prefects. They are keen to raise funds for charity. However, a greater awareness of local and global issues could be developed by further engagement. The school recognises the need to promote involvement through the school council, as their contribution to school improvement is currently underdeveloped.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

In good lessons, the purposes are clear and are linked to well-planned learning activities. Teachers have good subject knowledge, are enthusiastic and have high expectations for learning and behaviour. Relationships in lessons are very good and encourage a positive and enjoyable learning environment. Pupils' level of engagement is high because the pace is brisk. There are high levels of challenge and a wide range of teaching strategies are used, including ICT, which ensures good levels of concentration and motivation. In the very best lessons, pupils make rapid progress because they are involved in recognising and making improvements in their work.

In the majority of lessons, group and paired work are used effectively to encourage discussion, cooperation and independent learning. In some lessons, work is not always well matched to pupils' abilities and insufficient time is provided for them to reflect and to consolidate their learning, which slows progress. Whilst verbal feedback is good, written feedback is too variable and does not provide pupils with enough information on what they need to do to improve. Although lesson monitoring by senior and subject leaders identifies strengths, it is not sufficiently robust to ensure a whole-school approach to improve teaching and learning still further.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum in Key Stage 3 is comprehensive and well planned. Drama is used well to teach personal, social and health education. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is improving. Vulnerable pupils in Year 7 are taught in a special base where they learn to cope with the demands of school life and, along with low attainers, they are helped with basic skills. High achieving and talented pupils are identified and challenged, both in class and through special events. In Key Stage 4, all learners study a range of accredited subjects, including careers management, citizenship and religious studies, which are matched to their aptitude, and prepare them well for adult life. Sport is a strength of the school and many pupils enjoy the wide range of opportunities on offer.

The school specialism has been used effectively to provide resources in all subjects for ICT. Pupils have many opportunities to use computers in class, helping them to learn more independently. The school's virtual learning environment is used creatively for research, communication between pupils and their teachers and to monitor progress with tasks. Courses to involve learners from the community have also benefited from a focus on ICT.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

There is a happy atmosphere in the school community and tutors play an effective role in getting pupils ready for learning at the start of each day. Pupils and parents agree that the transition from primary school is smooth and successful. Staff analyse data well to meet social and emotional needs. The pastoral team monitors those pupils at risk of exclusion, 'hot kids', closely. There are several rungs in the system to help these pupils remain in this safe school environment. Vulnerable, early language learners and lower attaining pupils are better served by the nurture group sessions but, as yet, specific data is not systematically kept to measure progress. Pupils with social and emotional difficulties develop communication skills and self-esteem through innovative drama sessions. There is full compliance with all legal requirements for safeguarding pupils.

The majority of teachers regularly assess work and suggest targets for improvement; however, this is not as consistent as it could be. Year heads track pupils' progress and intervene as necessary in a variety of ways, and parents are kept informed. The 'getting back on track' intervention programme supports pupils in Key Stage 4 well to meet their target grades. Progress interviews and assessment days keep parents informed, but opportunities are missed to discuss targets set with pupils and parents together.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher is highly respected by staff and pupils alike. He has a strong, calming presence around the school. The leadership team provides good support. Leadership is developing well through the delegation and distribution of responsibilities to staff at all levels. Recent appointments have strengthened the role and impact of middle leadership. Procedures for line management are systematic, supportive and effective.

The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory. Although the senior leadership team has an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses, monitoring information from observations of teaching and learning is not sufficiently robust, as it is too reliant on information provided by subject leaders. Senior leaders do not have a sufficiently clear view of the progress made by different groups of learners within subjects. The strategic planning process is good, resulting in a concise improvement plan focused on the right areas.

The governing body is committed and has a sound understanding of the school's work. Members support the school well but are not fully integrated into procedures for review and self-evaluation. The management of specialist status is good. Resources are deployed wisely to enhance teaching and learning and to promote links with the community. The dedication of staff, including the high quality support staff, and the proven impact of leaders in raising achievement indicate good capacity for further improvement.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

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

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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 learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

21 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of West Park School, Spondon, DE21 7BT

Thank you for being so welcoming and friendly when we came to inspect your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking to you, and hearing your views. The staff know you very well and have worked very hard to support your achievements and personal development, and to create a safe environment. You very much value the support and care you receive from all staff. We were impressed with your positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons, and around the school. You are given many opportunities to take responsibility within the school and to develop leadership skills. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme was clearly very popular. Although there is a school council, it is not fully developed so that you can take a more active part in the school's improvement. I know there are plans to put this right.

West Park is a good school and it is improving all the time. The headteacher has led the school well, to raise standards by setting you challenging targets. Improvements have been made to provide a greater range of courses, to check your progress more carefully, and to help you keep on track. Older learners told us that the careers course was very helpful in making you think about the qualifications you need for the future, and to prepare for the world of work. As a specialist school, you have many opportunities to develop your skills and expertise in ICT. We could see that teachers were using ICT well in lessons to add variety and to improve your learning. The school has been able to extend opportunities within the community. The virtual learning environment is also an exciting venture providing new experiences and ways of learning.

We decided at the end of the inspection that your school needed to improve a few areas in order to be even more successful. We have asked the school to look carefully at the progress made by those pupils who find learning more difficult in order that they can make better progress. We think school leaders need to check on the quality of lessons and marking, so that good ideas can be shared across the school. We have also asked the school to help you to extend your understanding of different cultures and global issues through more opportunities within the curriculum, and links with other countries.

You, yourselves, can help the school to improve further by attending every day; thinking more about what you are learning in the classroom, and what you need to do to improve.

Our very best wishes for the future.

Nada Trikić

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools