

Westfield Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113960
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	325914
Inspection dates	3–4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Stephen McShane HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	185
Sixth form	4
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathryn Gould
Headteacher	Andrew Penman
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Littlemoor Road Preston Weymouth DT3 6AA
Telephone number	01305 833518
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Age group	3–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector.

Description of the school

The vast majority of pupils at Westfield have moderate learning difficulties. Over recent years the college's intake has included a higher proportion of pupils with more complex learning difficulties and disabilities. A significant number of pupils have autistic spectrum disorder, and some have social, emotional and behaviour difficulties or speech, language or sensory needs.

Over two thirds of the college's population are boys. A quarter of pupils are in receipt of free school meals. The vast majority of pupils are White British. A small number of individual pupils are from other ethnic groups. The college has all-through provision from Early Years Foundation Stage to sixth form. The numbers in the Early Years Foundation Stage and sixth form are small. The largest year groups are in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The college has an autism base of six classes and a nurture group.

As well as being a specialist technology college, Westfield is a Leading Edge school supporting 54 pupils in other local schools and a training school for teaching assistants, teachers in initial training and qualified teachers undertaking continuing professional development at postgraduate level.

The headteacher took up his post in January 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Westfield is a good school. Some aspects, particularly the care it gives to its pupils, are outstanding. Many parents commented on the happy, family surroundings and the dedicated staff. Many made comments about how their children 'love coming to school' and this was confirmed by the pupils themselves who said they enjoyed school and all its activities hugely.

In relation to their starting points, pupils achieve well throughout the school. They acquire good basic skills and gain a range of appropriate qualifications and accreditations. In recent years all pupils have continued into further education and the school's additional information shows that on completion of this some have been successful in gaining part-time or full-time employment. One of the impacts of the college's specialist status is the outstanding progress pupils make in information and communication technology (ICT). The excellent resources and staff expertise mean that pupils acquire good ICT skills and the ability to use this knowledge to enhance other areas of their learning, for example, in science or in art. Progress of many pupils in art is also outstanding. Many pupils do particularly well at GCSE in this subject, achieving B and C grades. Pupils produce outstanding portfolios of work, and the displays around the school, for example of portraiture, mask making or pottery, are of very high quality.

Both teaching and the curriculum are good. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and good pace is maintained. Pupils remain interested and engaged in the wide range of learning activities that are provided. In the best lessons, objectives are very precise, pupils take responsibility for their own learning, develop research skills, self-evaluate and set new targets leading to very good progress. However, this practice is not consistent throughout the school. Sometimes objectives are too general and do not guide learning sufficiently. Individual teachers within particular subject areas are innovative about the modules and activities they plan to capture interest, for example, exploring forensic science. There is a vast range of visits and trips, including residential activities, which allows pupils to build upon and make sense of their learning in different contexts.

Overall, pupils' well-being and personal development are good. Some aspects are outstanding. This is a testament to the fact, articulated clearly by governors, that 'at Westfield every child does matter'. The recently achieved Healthy Schools Award shows the school's commitment to pupils' health. The work on improving diet with, as pupils said, 'us not eating junk food anymore', the fabulous new gym facilities and sports hall, resulting in increased activity and fitness levels, and the school's good sexual health programme all together mean that students have an outstanding knowledge of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Pupils work and play very safely. They have a very strong spiritual, social, moral and cultural understanding which was shown particularly well in their discussion of a citizen's responsibility of voting in European elections. Pupils' behaviour is managed very well throughout the school. In all lessons observed, pupils were attentive. There are insufficient consistent opportunities, however, for pupils to take responsibility for their own behaviour. At times the high staff ratios mitigate against this. In the autism base, the very effective behaviour management techniques mean that learning takes place in a calm, predictable atmosphere and pupils feel safe and do not experience undue stress.

Following the departure of the previous headteacher and a number of other senior leaders, and a period when staff had to take on temporary positions of responsibility, the new headteacher's leadership has been welcomed by the school. He has correctly identified the

priorities for the school's development and has begun to work on these, although it is early days. The school sets challenging targets, expecting pupils to make at least good progress. A wide range of data on many aspects of a pupil's performance to monitor progress is collected. However this assessment information is insufficiently evaluated to ensure that it is robust and that individual pupils are consistently making the best progress they can.

Westfield rightly has a good reputation. One reason for this is the outstanding relationships it has with its many partners. Parents feel listened to. Multi-agency work very effectively supports individual pupils. Support for trainee teachers, and for other children and schools means that, as a recent Investors in People report said, 'as Westfield is so giving and supportive within the wider community...it can and does learn from others'. These links benefit the pupils of Westfield, as staff are able to develop ideas to innovate and work with others.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

At the moment there are four students in the sixth form, although in previous years the group has been smaller. All have Autistic Spectrum Disorder or Asperger's Syndrome. All the young people are very well supported to develop the social and life skills necessary for their next placement. The school works exceptionally hard with other agencies to ensure that transitions are smooth and have the best chance of being successful. The curriculum is based on the development of functional skills that is appropriate to the students' complex needs, but the lack of opportunities to gain additional qualifications or accredit learning is a weakness. Tracking and work seen shows students are making good progress.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

There are currently two children in the Early Years Foundation Stage who are taught alongside older children. Careful planning ensures that children are provided with the necessary activities to work towards their early learning goals. Progress towards these is currently satisfactory. Staff are caring, know the children well and there is appropriate emphasis on the children's personal and social development. This means that the children are acquiring important skills of playing and working together. Day-to-day management is effective. The use of assessment, however, is not good enough to ensure that children are making good or better progress over time.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of the range of assessment information available in the school so that it can be used by teachers, subject leaders, senior leaders and governors to ensure all pupils are making the best progress they can.
- Build on the existing good practice to ensure that all teaching is consistently of the highest quality.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are inevitably well below average because of pupils' learning difficulties. Pupils' starting points vary considerably from those pupils with attainments just below those expected nationally to those with more complex needs, for example, pupils with little verbal communication

and challenging behaviour. Overall pupils make good progress. The majority are making expected and better progress in acquiring literacy, numeracy and communication skills. Many pupils leave the school with an appropriate range of accreditation and qualifications: including GCSEs, entry level and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards. Many individuals are making particularly good progress taking into account their complex disabilities or additional social or emotional factors. This is often the result of appropriate provision in the classroom and targeted programmes, many developed in liaison with speech and language or occupational therapists.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn. They are polite and welcoming. Pupils expressed how safe they feel at school. Any rare incidents of bullying are quickly dealt with and resolved. Attendance is broadly average. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the school and the wider community through participation in the school council, fund raising, peer-teaching and becoming first-aid trainers and sport leaders. Pupils say they feel well prepared for further education and they have good basic and social skills to take with them. However, they do not consistently show at school their self-reliance and the ability to take responsibility for themselves and for their own behaviour.

Many pupils with autism, despite finding the world a confusing place, show calm behaviour. They can make appropriate choices, take turns and are improving their communication and self-help skills through some excellent classroom practice and individual education plans. They are also learning to cope with unexpected events or the particular challenges that autism or Asperger's syndrome presents to them.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The majority of teaching is good. Some of it is outstanding. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject and about the challenges that learning difficulties and autism bring. This means that lessons are well planned so that they are interesting and have appropriate activities. The good teaching, which was frequently observed in different parts of the college, introduced new ideas carefully to pupils while rehearsing and generalising others in an atmosphere that was calm and ordered. A good paced was maintained throughout. Learning is further supported by the careful use of the classroom environment that includes the celebration of pupils' excellent work in colourful displays, symbol timetables and prompts. Outstanding lessons incorporated opportunities to research and to self-evaluate, and the support the staff gave was particularly sensitive and well targeted. In some lessons the objectives set were insufficiently precise to ensure individual pupils were making the best academic progress that they could.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The exciting and varied curriculum makes a good contribution to the pupils' academic and personal development. It is varied and interesting with good coverage of core subjects. Teachers are flexible and knowledgeable in tailoring subjects to different groups, bringing concepts alive; from the varied challenges in GCSE art to a sensory curriculum that helps pupils develop their

responses to different stimuli. Individual teachers use opportunities to make cross-curricular links and provide important opportunities to generalise and practise learning, although this is insufficiently developed at a whole-school level. There are appropriate activities to explore international and cultural themes. The impact of specialist status is evident in the use of technologies to enhance learning from video editing and animation to music and sensory equipment. The use of microscopes in ICT generated awe and wonder in the pupils as they were able to examine the complex patterns of nature and then use these to generate posters and other material. There are a good range of lunchtime clubs available.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff are very knowledgeable about individuals. They offer kind and sensitive support. Links with staff from other agencies are excellent. The school has improved its identification of pupils at risk of underachievement and has put in appropriate interventions. Generally it is too early to measure the impact of these although the establishment of a nurture group has already provided significant benefits to the learning and social development of some of the more vulnerable pupils. All safeguarding procedures are securely in place. There are very good links with the local colleges, and students have opportunities to visit and attend taster weeks. A programme of work experience is in place. Links with parents are good. Parents of children with autism are invited to join the school's 'Early Bird' and 'Cygnet' programmes. Feedback from the families has been overwhelmingly positive with families expressing their gratitude, saying that it has made a huge difference to their child and to their family life: 'A real lifeline', said one parent. The school has begun some important work to track more thoroughly the development of life skills through the school so that staff can monitor progress in these areas more effectively. In some classrooms high-quality feedback to the pupils helps them to improve their work against clear targets and criteria; however this is inconsistent across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The governors and senior management team ensured that the school carried on its good work with high morale while the recruitment of a new headteacher took place. The new team has now improved the quality of self-evaluation and identified appropriate priorities. One of these recognises rightly that the role of middle leaders in evaluating and promoting standards is underdeveloped. The governors are very committed to the school. Through their stewardship and energy there have been significant improvements to the school's provision. It now has new purpose-built accommodation for autism, sports and fitness. Governors, however, do not sufficiently hold the school to account on the progress pupils are making and the impact of the provision. This is linked to the fact that the school's own data are not sufficiently robust and not sufficiently informing progress and developments. Like in its partnership work, the school contribution to community cohesion is outstanding and the outcomes are appropriate for all the pupils in the school.

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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	16-19
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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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3	

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

²IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	IE ²
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	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	2	

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
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	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**

07 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westfield Technology College

Thank you very much for making us so welcome on our recent visit to your school. It was a pleasure to meet you and see your college, the new buildings, the fantastic displays and watch you play and work so hard together.

Many of you told us that Westfield College is a good school and we agree. We agree with you that the staff are very kind and give you very good support to help you learn. We saw that you are making good progress because of the good teaching and all the interesting activities that you do. We were particularly impressed by your work in art and ICT. Sometimes, though, we thought you could make even better progress if you had clearer targets.

We saw that you behave well and that the pupils with autism are helped to stay calm by very skilful adults. We thought your knowledge of how to keep healthy was very good and we were impressed how thoughtful you were when you were discussing things. Sometimes we would like to have seen you take more responsibility for yourselves and not be so dependant on adults telling you what to do.

We have asked your new headteacher and his team to improve a couple of things.

- To look at all your records frequently and keep asking whether you are all making the best progress you can and help you make even more progress.
- To make sure that all teaching at Westfield is as good as the very good and outstanding teaching that we saw in some parts of the college.

It was clear to us that Westfield is a very happy place. This is down to the attitude and hard work of everyone. Keep it up so that the college can get even better and better.

I wish you all success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Stephen McShane Her Majesty's Inspector