

Westlands School and Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113526
Local Authority	Torbay
Inspection number	338196
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Karl Sampson

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1367
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	267
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin Stentiford
Headteacher	Mr Michael Stewart
Date of previous school inspection	16 December 2006
School address	Westlands Lane Torquay TQ1 3PE
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 39 lessons, observed 31 teachers and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the school's work, policy documents and students' work. They also scrutinised 59 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, and questionnaires completed by staff and a sample of students from each year group.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well all groups of students are achieving, particularly in English and mathematics
- how effectively and consistently provision meets the needs of all groups of students, including the most vulnerable
- the contribution made by the mathematics and computing status to school improvement
- the impact of the monitoring and evaluation carried out by senior and middle leaders on student outcomeshow effectively sixth form provision meets the needs of all learners.

Information about the school

Westlands School is a larger-than-average bi-lateral school set in an area where selective grammar school education is available. The school has held mathematics and computing specialist status since 2005. Most students are of White British heritage and the vast majority speak English as their first language. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is above the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is greater than that found nationally. Their needs include moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural issues. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is more than double the national average. There is a designated resource base in the school for students with hearing impairment.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Westlands School is a good and improving school. In this caring and supportive environment, students feel safe, enjoy their learning and achieve well. All students make good progress in their learning regardless of their background, starting points or special educational needs. The school has made major strides forward in the three years since its last inspection. Making these improvements has not been easy. It has necessitated a change of approach by staff at all levels but the impact of the school's development work on leadership, teaching and the curriculum is evident in the rising trend of attainment throughout the school, which is now broadly average. The school is in a good position to continue this improvement because:

- expectations have been raised and staff are held more firmly to account
- targets are now challenging and a more frequent and rigorous tracking system is being used effectively to monitor students' progress and raise achievement
- school development planning and successful interventions to support learning are firmly based on the findings of accurate self-evaluation
- leaders have good systems in place to support the development of teaching and non-teaching staff, especially for aspirant and practising school leaders at all levels
- there is a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration among staff and a commitment to raising attainment and improving achievement for all.

The quality of learning in classrooms across the school has improved significantly since the previous inspection. It is improving because of the sharper and more rigorous monitoring by senior staff, with a clear focus on improving classroom practice. At its best, the teaching enthuses and engages the students through innovative approaches to learning, challenging activities, and opportunities for students to learn independently of the teacher. It is underpinned by effective questioning and precise subject-specific marking and assessment which enable students to understand exactly what they need to do to improve. However, these skills are not yet shared by all teachers across the school. School leaders recognise the need to refine monitoring and evaluation so that the very best practice is seen across all curriculum areas.

'Students are polite, friendly, and they behave well. They talked enthusiastically about how the school's effective care and guidance supports their good personal and academic development. The school provides particularly good support to students who are potentially vulnerable as well as tailoring provision for those students whose behaviour might otherwise exclude them from education and examination success. Attendance is improving year on year and is now average, thanks to effective tracking systems. Students make a good contribution to the life of the school and the wider community, thanks to the quality of the curriculum, the effective range of partnerships and the

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excellent opportunities arising from the school's specialist status. However, students' understanding of the cultural diversity of contemporary Britain is less well developed.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching in the school to at least 85% and outstanding teaching to 20% by the end of the academic year 2011/2012 by:
 - ensuring that systems for monitoring and supporting teaching and learning result in the very best practice being seen more consistently across the curriculum
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment data consistently well when planning lessons so that work matches the needs of individual students and provides high levels of challenge for all
 - ensuring consistency in the use of day-to-day assessment so that all students understand the subject-specific actions that they must take to improve their work.
 - ensuring students are given more opportunity to work independently, creatively and collaboratively and take greater responsibility for their learning and progress
 - developing teachers' use of probing questions in lessons to give students opportunities to develop and explain their ideas fully, especially the more able students.
- Ensure students develop their understanding of other cultures within the United Kingdom, by extending current provision in this area and monitoring its effectiveness.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In the large majority of lessons observed, students made good progress, enjoyed their learning and engaged enthusiastically with a wide range of activities. The greatest gains in learning were observed in those lessons which actively involved students and encouraged to them be co-constructors in their learning. These lessons were skilfully designed to challenge and interest every student, regardless of ability.

' In the past, the achievement of students in English and mathematics has been lower than in other subjects. However, improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, curriculum changes including opportunities for early entry and a sharply focused intervention programme are helping to even out the gap in achievement.

Analysis of the current Key Stage 4 results and standards seen in lessons and books demonstrate that all groups of students are making good progress. The school's latest data suggest that students currently in Years 10 and 11 are well placed to achieve their challenging targets.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including the small number

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of hearing impaired students, make similar progress to their peers because of the good support they receive. Teaching assistants promote learning well but also work hard to enable their students to become more independent.

Students' treatment of others is respectful and considerate. Both hearing and hearing impaired students appreciate the mutual benefits derived from working alongside each other in lessons.

Behaviour overall is good, especially in the lessons that engage and motivate students. A small minority of students who returned the questionnaires, or who spoke to inspectors, said that there are occasions when their learning in lessons can be disrupted by others.

' The mathematics and computing specialism makes a good contribution to students' achievement, development and enjoyment of school life. It engages students in learning and helps them to gain the skills they need for education, training and employment. The school is doing all it can to raise students' aspirations and, last year, the number of students who left school and who were not in education, employment or training was below the national average.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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How effective is the provision?

The school provides a caring environment and a range of personalised learning programmes which give good support to all students. Good partnerships with a range of outside agencies ensure that students' diverse needs are met. Foundation learning groups support students who find learning a struggle, and the school's 'Crofton House' base supports students with challenging behaviour and those who are more vulnerable. They are valuable aspects of provision which ensure that some students do not choose to stop coming to school because they find being in lessons difficult.

The school has developed a comprehensive and detailed system to set targets for students and to track their progress. The resulting information is used well to identify students who could achieve more but not all teachers make full use of this information when they plan their lessons.

The curriculum is developing well and provides an appropriate level of flexibility to meet the needs of individuals. The Opening Minds course in Year 7 is having a positive impact on students' transition to secondary school. There is a good balance between academic and vocational courses. At Key Stage 4, specialist status and the school's partnership work with other local providers have improved the richness of vocational and applied opportunities available. This has enabled a much greater degree of personalisation for students when selecting courses and as a result their aspirations, achievement and enjoyment are improving. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, although in some cases participation rates are relatively low.

The school accurately evaluates the quality of teaching as good. The large majority of lessons observed were good or better. At their best, lessons are inspiring. These lessons are carefully planned to meet the differing needs of students and are underpinned by positive relationships with classes which establish a great platform for learning. Less effective lessons, where progress is at best satisfactory, typically have the following characteristics:

- a tendency for teachers to talk for too long, with the result that students spend too much time listening passively
- learning activities that are not challenging or do not match the needs of all students and are slow paced
- questioning that rarely delves deep in order to check and develop students' understanding or too few opportunities for students to develop their ideas independently or collaboratively.

' In some lessons observed, there was evidence of effective assessment practice. For example, the physical education department make innovative use of new technologies to engage students in a dialogue about assessment and provide clear subject-specific guidance about how the students can improve the quality of their work. However, such good practice is not consistently in place across the curriculum. Too often, guidance is of limited value and simply confirms whether students have completed work, corrects what they have written, or provides general comments.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, ably supported by an effective leadership team, has set a very clear vision for the school and, since the last inspection, has implemented a wide range of strategies for improvement across all areas of the school.

Leaders at all levels share the same vision for improvement, focusing on the quality of teaching and learning for all students. Thorough self-evaluation draws on a wide range of information which helps the school to identify areas for development, leading to increasing accountability and improving outcomes for students. The school is sometimes overly optimistic in making judgements but is nonetheless accurate in evaluating strengths and weaknesses.

Governors provide good support and a satisfactory level of challenge. Their confidence and expertise in evaluating the performance of the school in relation to national expectations, and in holding it to account, are growing. They are also linking more effectively to departments.

The school works closely with a wide range of partners and this has had a significant impact in securing improvements in the quality of the curriculum and the quality of care, guidance and support. Effective procedures are in place to ensure students' safety, and all current safeguarding requirements are met. The school promotes equality of opportunity strongly through effective policies and procedures that ensure that outcomes and experiences for all students are fair and positive.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. Its strengths are in the well-established international links and its engagement with the local community. Specialist status has enabled the school to introduce an effective community learning programme. The school is developing its strategy to improve students' engagement with other communities across Britain.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The school has an inclusive approach in promoting further studies for all students and the sixth form continues to build upon the work of the main school to further raise aspiration and achievement. All students, including those with special educational needs and the small number of hearing impaired students, make good progress as a result of well-planned provision which effectively meets their pastoral and academic needs.

Students are proud of their school and work well together, with staff and with international students to create a positive and enabling atmosphere. 'Teaching is good overall and students commented positively about the quality and variety of approaches used by staff. Students receive good quality feedback on their work.

Excellent partnership with local providers ensures that students benefit from a broad and varied curriculum offered which meets the needs and aspirations of all its learners. However, the school recognises that some students find the transition to AS level study difficult and that this is a priority for further development.

' Leadership and management are good and there are effective systems in place to monitor sixth form performance. These are used regularly and effectively to identify areas of underachievement and plan appropriate interventions to improve subject performance. As a result, examination results are improving and the numbers of students beginning and completing courses are rising.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

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Views of parents and carers

Of the parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, the large majority responded positively to every statement. Parents and carers are particularly appreciative of the school's arrangements to meet their child's particular needs, keep them safe and enable them to enjoy school. A few parents and carers raised concerns about the school's effectiveness in communicating information and how well it responds to suggestions or concerns. Inspectors recognise that any lapse in communication is a concern for those involved but consider that the school works hard to communicate with parents and carers and act upon their views. The school recognises that it needs to persist in finding effective ways of communicating with some families, particularly those who are unable to come into school, or do not have access to the internet.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1367 pupils registered at the school.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Westlands School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	32	37	63	3	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	18	31	39	66	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	36	32	54	5	8	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	34	31	53	6	10	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	18	31	34	58	3	5	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	29	33	56	4	7	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	17	39	66	7	12	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	12	20	42	71	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	31	38	64	0	0	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	17	29	26	44	8	14	4	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	25	31	53	8	14	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	17	29	36	61	4	7	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	39	32	54	2	3	2	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Westlands School, Torquay TQ1 3PE

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. We judged the school to be good. It has worked really hard since the last inspection to improve your achievement. Senior leaders, staff and the governors are all determined that you should have the opportunity to succeed, and their work enables you to achieve good outcomes. You told us how much you appreciated the work of your teachers and the improvements that had been made.

You enjoy coming to school, are well cared for, have a good range of curricular opportunities and are well taught. You particularly appreciate the positive benefits that mathematics and computing status has brought in terms of helping you to prepare successfully for life beyond school. You told us you feel safe, and we think your behaviour in and around the school is good. You are polite, friendly and make a good contribution to the life of the school and the wider community. We particularly enjoyed the uplifting singing of the 'Star Makers' and wish them well for the forthcoming competition in Salzburg.

The school's leaders are working to monitor and improve the consistency of lesson quality, and are aware that sometimes your lessons don't always challenge you or help you to progress as quickly as you could. In order to improve the school further, we have asked the school to concentrate on two things in particular.

- Improve teaching so that more of it is consistently good and outstanding by:ensuring lessons best meet your needs and provide you with challenging learning activities which engage you more actively in learningallowing you enough time to develop and explain your ideas and take greater responsibility for your own learningensuring that teachers consistently give you high quality feedback on your work so that you always know how to improve in each subject.'
- ensuring lessons best meet your needs and provide you with challenging learning activities which engage you more actively in learning
- allowing you enough time to develop and explain your ideas and take greater responsibility for your own learning
- ensuring that teachers consistently give you high quality feedback on your work so

that you always know how to improve in each subject.

- Increase and monitor carefully, the number of opportunities for you to broaden your understanding of other cultures within this country.

You can certainly help your teachers with some of these things.

Very best wishes for your future happiness and success,

Yours sincerely

Karl Sampson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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