

Westfield Community Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117532
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	339028
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2010
Reporting inspector	David Jones HMI

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

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1150
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Chris Miller
Headteacher	Ms Emma Aylesbury
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2006
School address	Tolpits Lane Watford Hertfordshire
Telephone number	01923 231560
Fax number	01923 210568
Email address	admin@westfield.herts.sch.uk.

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2010
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**Number of children on roll in the registered
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors. HMI spent two days reviewing all aspects of the available data prior to visiting the school. The inspection team observed 47 lessons, all taught by different staff and this brought the total of direct classroom observation to 23.5 hours. Senior staff were invited to conduct a number of joint observations of teaching with HMI. Professional feedback was provided to all staff who were observed teaching. Inspectors spent four hours looking at learning support, conducted 17 hours of meetings with nominated staff, governors, and groups of students in both formal and informal settings. The inspection team observed all aspects of the school's work, looked at attendance records, student progress data and reviewed all safeguarding procedures. HMI reviewed the 195 parental questionnaires returned in addition to the three email and one postal submission returned. A total of 142 student and 80 staff questionnaires were evaluated. Formal feedback on the inspection outcomes was provided to governors, senior staff and a representative of the local authority.

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

- safeguarding procedures
- the rising trend in standards and achievement
- the quality of teaching and the use of assessment to enhance learning
- outcomes in the core subjects
- the impact of curriculum provision
- the accuracy of the school's self evaluation.

Information about the school

The school is larger than average and draws pupils from Watford. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is just above the national average. The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is more than twice the national figure and the proportion of those whose first language is not English is three times the national average. The proportion of girls and boys in different year groups has varied in recent years.

The proportion of students registered by the school as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is nearly twice the national figure, although the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average. There are a small number of looked after children in the school. The school has a fully comprehensive intake.

The school has been granted technology college specialist status and is the hub school for the local authority extended school network. The school has received the following national accreditations: Investors in People and Sports Mark.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its students. It has a clear track record of improvement over the last 18 months; behaviour is good and the numbers of students staying on into the sixth form has doubled. Outcomes for individuals and groups are satisfactory and show a rising trend. Attainment has improved in the last two years and overall, students are currently making above average progress; 74% of students gained five higher grades at GCSE in 2009. Examination results already secured in Year 11 are likely to continue this trend of improvement. Results in English and mathematics continue to fluctuate because of the high mobility of pupils transferring into Westfield at different points of their educational career. The proportion of students making the expected progress has improved significantly and those with a variety of additional learning needs make good progress because of the variety of curriculum opportunities provided. Equality of opportunity is good; students from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds do as well or better than their peers.

Overall, teaching is satisfactory; there are no significant inadequacies in particular subjects or across year groups. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are satisfactory. The accurate evaluations of teaching and learning provided by senior staff when working alongside HMI are a real strength of the work of the leadership team. The impact of effective teaching is evident in the students' current work; senior staff are correct to focus on enhancing the proportion of good teaching that exists. Marking is generally satisfactory and the new facility for student feedback is a positive development. The most effective teaching secures high level oral responses from students and has a consistent focus on developing the students' subject specific literacy and numeracy skills. Opportunities to enhance engagement in this way are missed in some lessons. Learning support staff are well meaning and often work hard but the organisation and deployment of these colleagues is not effective. The important role of special needs coordinator is purely administrative and does not provide any engagement with students.

The quality and range of curriculum opportunities is good and is a key factor in the improvement evident in students' outcomes. However, as attainment on entry remains well below average, senior staff have correctly identified the need to revise the curriculum in Year 8 and 9 to reflect the good provision in Key Stage 4 and beyond. The college's technology specialist status has been instrumental in the improvements to teaching facilities available. The large numbers of students entered for the new vocational courses developed within this context are having a positive impact on standards.

Inspectors found behaviour to be good overall; three-quarters of the parental and

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student responses to the inspection questionnaire agreed. During the inspection, outside influences triggered the fire alarm on two occasions and the students' behaviour under considerable stress was outstanding. The school has worked hard and to considerable effect, to improve attendance. The most recent figures are above the national average; in the last year, persistent absence has been reduced considerably.

The care, guidance and support provided are good; parents and students spoke positively about the nature of the personal support available and students spoke of 'staff going out of their way for you'. Appropriate academic guidance based on satisfactory assessment for learning is helping to raise standards. Governance is good; the minutes of the governing body meetings provide clear evidence of effective support and challenge for senior staff and of a governing body with a clear focus. The governing body has followed local authority guidance carefully throughout a number of difficult staffing issues.

The leadership team has done well to bring about the improvements in standards, curriculum, behaviour and attendance, which have been secured in the last two years; self-evaluation is good. The school's capacity to improve further is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and achievement further by improving the proportion of good teaching available.
 - Reorganise the provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities to provide;
 - clear management direction of support staff,
 - the consistent engagement of the special needs coordinator with students.
 - Pursue cross curricular development of literacy and numeracy proposed by staff.
 - Extend the successful curriculum pathways approach to Key Stage 3.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Attainment on entry has been well below average for some time; however, this is beginning to rise. In the last two years, standards at the end of Year 11 have improved notably. The proportion of students obtaining five higher grades at GCSE has risen by 30%. However, the proportion of students who gain such qualifications that include English and mathematics remains well below the national average. Many of the students who join the school part way through their education struggle to secure higher grade passes in these subjects. Outcomes in science and in modern foreign languages are above the national average. The examination results secured by the girls have been

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above those obtained by the boys for the past two years. The performance of students from minority ethnic backgrounds has been above the national average. There is evidence that outcomes in English and mathematics have begun to improve. The results secured in the school's specialist technology area continue to improve and outcomes from the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) courses are positive.

The students' current learning and performance in the classroom mirror the improvements established in the most recent examination results. In the large majority of lessons, students make satisfactory progress. Lesson outcomes are strongest where there is a clear focus on what the students are expected to learn and students respond well to this challenge. In a particularly strong science lesson on electrical circuits, tasks were engaging, questioning was skilful, resources were of high quality and learning was driven forward at a brisk pace. Enjoyment and achievement are satisfactory, with strengths evident in the progress of the least able, attendance and behaviour.

Inspectors found parents' and students' opinions to be very positive about 'feeling safe' and observed good procedures to support this view.

A good range of popular healthy school meals are available, and the proportion of students engaged in sport is high. Overall, the range of workplace and other skills the students develop towards their future economic well-being are satisfactory. Significant improvement has been secured in the students' key skills from their low starting points and the proportion of students who leave school to secure places in employment, further education and/or training is above average.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
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	3

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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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The best teaching was challenging and provided appropriately paced and engaging tasks. Many staff provided an effective, nurturing approach which overcame the students' often limited confidence in their own learning skills. The majority of lessons could have provided greater challenge; the least effective lessons were characterised by extended periods of the teacher talking to the class which resulted in students becoming passive learners. The deployment of support staff was rarely a strength of the lesson.

A full and rich curriculum offers three learning pathways each of which incorporates a broad core of compulsory studies including business, a technology subject and a wide choice of other options of GCSE subjects or of vocational courses. There is good provision for sport and extra curricular activities. The curriculum continues to evolve with senior staff rightly focussed on the personalisation of provision. School specialist status requires that all students study either a technology or hospitality related subject. Business studies and vocational subjects have a high profile with frequent opportunities for students to experience enterprise related activities.

Good care, guidance and support are provided for all students. The impact of the effective pastoral support system is evident in the student's good behaviour, the improvement in attendance and their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Representatives of minority ethnic groups noted how well students got on with one another. Support clearly targets individuals and vulnerable groups. Good careers guidance has helped improve the proportion of students who go on to further education, employment or training. Students respond very well to the school's successful behaviour management policies and appreciate seeing senior staff around the school on a regular basis.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	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?

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Senior leaders have embedded ambition and are driving improvement with a sharp focus on improving teaching and assessment. The principal has clear expectations of the effective classroom practice required. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by senior staff are accurate. As a result, standards are improving and students make appropriate and often good progress towards challenging targets. Staff and governors go to considerable lengths to ensure equality of opportunity is good.

Governance is good with a clear focus on school improvement and effective management of limited resources. Staffing policies and procedures are carefully aligned with local authority guidance; safeguarding procedures are good. Community cohesion is good. Student relationships are positive and the school's partnership support for the extended schools network and the education support centre on site are strengths. Sixth form students have been consistently engaged in charitable work with a global reach. Senior staff and governors deploy resources effectively and the college provides satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
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	3

Sixth form

- students have been consistently engaged in charitable work with a global reach. Senior staff and governors deploy resources effectively and the college provides satisfactory value for money. These are the grades for leadership and management
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement

Taking into account:

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

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The leadership and management of teaching and learning 2 3 The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met 2 The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers 3 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 3

Sixth form Students generally enter the sixth form with lower than average prior attainment and make satisfactory progress; vocational A level results are average and those secured at AS level are rising. Students enjoy their learning and experience in the sixth form and greatly value the opportunity of studying at Westfield. Last year, all students leaving the sixth form were able to pursue their chosen career path to university or into training/ employment.

A high proportion of sixth formers make a contribution to the school and wider community. Students report that their multicultural community gives them a good insight into other cultures and faiths, which develops open mindedness and tolerance among all their members.

Teaching and learning in the sixth form is satisfactory. However, in an effective advanced level mathematics lesson, students made good progress with parametric equations and applied calculus techniques. Similarly, in an outstanding beauty studies vocational lesson, students worked to professional standards under expert tuition.

The school offers a growing range of advanced level courses and partnership with other establishments extends these opportunities. The care, guidance and support provided by senior staff has developed a culture of mature behaviour and serious learning among sixth form students.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The parental responses expressed a positive view of the school. For example, 89% felt the school was led and managed effectively; 88% stated their child enjoyed school and 90% felt the school kept their child safe; inspectors found solid evidence to support this positive parental view. Some parents expressed concerns about behaviour, but inspectors were impressed with the behaviour of over 1100 teenagers in difficult

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circumstances that were not of their own or the school's making. The views of students and staff supported the positive commentary offered by parents and over 90% of these groups felt the leadership of the school was good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Westfield Community Technology College 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. The inspection team received 168 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1150 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	55	28	113	58	21	11	5	3
The school keeps my child safe	58	30	119	61	10	5	3	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	57	29	106	54	22	11	6	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	25	111	57	20	10	8	4
The teaching is good at this school	37	19	124	64	18	9	4	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	14	114	58	38	19	4	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	14	131	67	22	11	3	2
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)	45	23	100	51	18	9	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	37	19	115	59	21	11	4	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	23	90	46	30	15	17	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	18	102	52	31	16	6	3
The school is led and managed effectively	40	21	123	63	18	9	5	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	25	110	56	22	11	8	4

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



Thursday 4 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Westfield Community Technology College, Hertfordshire, WD18 6NS

As you know, your college was inspected recently and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. I would like to thank you for your openness, friendliness and courtesy during our visit. The inspectors enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your comments and opinions. Westfield is a friendly place where staff know you well and many of you noted in the pupil questionnaire how staff care and support you. Inspectors judged this care, guidance and support to be good. We were also impressed by your behaviour and your above average rate of attendance. Well done.

The inspectors found that teaching and learning are satisfactory and we agree with you that the vocational courses in the technology specialist area are developing well and that physical education lessons are impressive. We believe that the range of curriculum opportunities provided is good and this has helped to improve your academic progress. The standard of your work has improved in the last two years and your current progress is satisfactory and often good.

I have asked the principal and governors to:

Raise standards and achievement further by improving the proportion of good teaching available.

Reorganise the provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make it more effective

Provide more literacy and numeracy opportunities for you in other subjects

Start some of the vocational courses in Years 8 and 9.

I shall look forward to hearing about your future successes.

Yours sincerely

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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