

Westlands School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111782
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	356979
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Alastair Younger

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Colin Whittaker
Headteacher	Mr Eddie Fearnside
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2007
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Age group	5–16
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Boarding provision	Westlands School
Social care Unique Reference Number	SC030110
Social care inspector	Michael McCleave

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors and a social care inspector. Ten lessons were observed, each taught by a different teacher. A meeting was held with a group of parents and carers whose children occupy the residence. Informal discussions were held with pupils. A discussion took place with representatives of the governing body. Discussions were also held with senior staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation, including that relating to school self-evaluation, the progress of pupils and the safeguarding of pupils. Four parent/carer questionnaires were analysed, along with many more from pupils and staff.

- Whether learning and progress are improving sufficiently quickly to compensate for past underachievement.
- The impact of low attendance on pupils' future well-being.
- Whether the leadership and management of teaching and learning is sufficiently effective in bringing about necessary improvements.
- How well the curriculum is adapted to meet the needs and interests of all pupils.

Information about the school

This is an average sized school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Each pupil has a statement of special educational needs recognising the severity of his or her difficulty. Nearly all pupils are White British boys. Most pupils are of secondary school age. The school provides for up to 15 residential placements. There are currently 14 residents, all of primary school age. The majority of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals.

Westlands is a partner school in the Stockton Borough First Federation. It has been partnered with another school, recognised by Ofsted as a higher performing school. The federation has a single governing body. Each school has a Head of School and an Executive headteacher oversees both.

There have been many changes at senior management level in recent years. The current Head of School has been in post for two terms and the Executive Headteacher for a year.

The school is significantly smaller than when last inspected. Pupils with autistic spectrum conditions have transferred to the partner school within the federation. Over the same period, staffing has been broadly maintained at previous levels, allowing for flexibility in the deployment of teachers between the two schools.

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

This is a satisfactory school. It is improving as a result of the good leadership and management of teaching and learning that is leading to better teaching and rapidly improving learning and progress. This is helping to overcome the legacy of pupils' low attainment.

Residential provision is outstanding. Its impact on the rest of the school is limited by the fact that there are limited places, all of them taken by primary age pupils. This impact is evident in that outcomes for pupils of this age group are better than in the rest of the school.

The school is well placed to improve. The considerable benefits of federation are already being seen, with improvements in governance and the rising morale and confidence shared by staff. A further impact of federation is the sharing of expertise and staffing between the two schools. Plans are in place for the further promotion of leadership and management skills, especially for middle managers. Senior leaders share a common sense of purpose to improve educational opportunities for pupils rather than merely manage their behaviour. Senior leaders also have a very good understanding of barriers to further improvement and address them systematically rather than making excuses about the difficulties they face. This contributes well to accurate self-evaluation.

Teaching is satisfactory overall, though much of the teaching observed during the inspection was predominantly good or better. In areas where teaching is less effective, the federation is supporting improvement. The curriculum is satisfactory, strengthened by teachers' awareness of the importance of recognising how every lesson can contribute to pupils' acquisition of basic skills but weakened by the lack of vocational opportunities for older pupils. Behaviour is satisfactory. The incidence of exclusions is rapidly declining, as is the number of confrontational incidents. There is though, inconsistency in the tolerance of bad language and anti-social behaviour, neither of which are tolerated in the residence, but both of which are seen too often in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of good and better teaching, by:
 - ensuring that improved use of assessment leads to better variation of work to meet individual pupils' needs
 - ensuring that teachers understand the value of classroom assistants as supporters of learning as well as of behaviour
 - ensuring that the same, consistent approach is taken to behaviour management

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and the promotion of social skills as is seen in the residence.

- Extend the curriculum to ensure that older pupils gain greater access to work based and vocational experiences.
- Extend the programme of staff interchange between the two federated schools to further improve leadership and management in the same way as it is benefiting teaching.
- 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**

Pupils usually settle down quickly to work. They listen attentively to their teachers and most concentrate well. They ask sensible questions that show they have been listening and are interested in what is being taught. Most pupils try hard to behave well but lessons are occasionally punctuated by the bad behaviour of individuals. This is usually well managed so as to stop it interfering with the learning of other pupils.

The nature of pupils' learning difficulties means that attainment on entry to the school is nearly always low. Although learning and progress are currently satisfactory, they are improving securely and quickly. This is in line with improvements in teaching that have resulted from the good leadership and management of teaching and learning and the refocusing of the school's purpose to educate pupils as a means to help them overcome their difficulties. The effectiveness of these measures is abundantly clear. Improvements in pupils' scores at the end of Key Stage 4 have risen significantly in nearly all subjects and doubled in English. Levels of accreditation show a very positive move to more challenging courses. In 2009, only 3.5% of pupils gained five GCSE passes (including English and mathematics); in 2010 the figure was 65%.

Improvements in behaviour are notable. The need for exclusion has plummeted. The number of learning days lost through exclusion has fallen by more than two-thirds over the course of the past year. The need for physical intervention has similarly fallen. Where there has been lesser impact is in the incidence of lower level forms of misbehaviour, especially in terms of pupils' occasionally unpleasant language, an occurrence that is overly tolerated in classrooms but not at all in the residence.

Attendance is low but it is improving rapidly. Overall figures are hit hard by the persistent non-attendance of a few Year 9 and 10 pupils. The incidence of this is decreasing rapidly because of the increasingly effective links that are being made with parents and carers. The attendance of primary pupils is above average.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory but improving rapidly. It is good for primary age pupils. Teaching observed during the inspection was predominantly good and occasionally outstanding. The judgement on teaching is moderated by the fact that a few teachers employed by the school were not present during the inspection.

Pupils are increasingly expecting to be taught well. This is evident in their improving attitude to learning. Where teaching is at its best, accurate assessment leads to good planning, which recognises the differing needs of each pupil and adapts learning opportunities to meet these needs. Weaknesses creep in when teachers, despite realising that the lesson they have planned contains insufficient challenge, are not adaptable or flexible enough to quickly respond and make adjustments during the lesson. There is variable use of teaching assistants. At best, they are fully informed of their responsibilities and well briefed as to how they can contribute to pupils' learning as well as their behaviour. At worst they are overly concerned with the maintenance of order over the promotion of learning. Occasionally, teachers are over-tolerant of lower level misbehaviour, such as swearing.

The curriculum meets requirements and serves most pupils well. The curriculum for primary aged pupils is good. It benefits greatly from the enrichment opportunities provided through the residence. The curriculum for secondary aged pupils is strengthened through the awareness of teachers to promote the learning of basic skills, whatever the subject being taught, but weakened by limitations in the pathways through which pupils can further their ambitions. There has been a good expansion in the range of accredited courses pupils can follow to increase their future prospects but

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this has not been sufficiently balanced with a similar increase in opportunities for older pupils to gain more experience of the workplace and develop vocational skills.

Pupils are well cared for and are kept safe in school. Considerable care is taken to support pupils at times when their circumstances are changing. Inroads are being made to improve attendance and reduce misbehaviour. At present these are proving very positive but it is too early to prove their sustainable impact and until attendance rises above low and behaviour becomes better than satisfactory it would be injudicious to judge the quality of guidance and support other than satisfactory.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The key to the school's rapid improvement and capacity to improve further has been the acute awareness shown by senior leaders and managers that the best way to help pupils is to teach them well and encourage their learning. To this end, a concerted drive has been implemented to improve teaching and this is quickly paying dividends. Virtually every member of staff reports that they feel increasingly valued and is proud to be associated with the school.

A step behind comes curriculum development; plans are well developed, but not yet fully implemented. Leadership and management responsibilities are increasingly being shared and expertise is being promoted through federation with a strong partner school. This arrangement has worked well to improve teaching and the school has clear proposals to extend the partnership to improve middle leadership and management skills.

The governing body has been very effective in helping the school to improve. Little that happens in school goes unnoticed and members of the governing body are forthright in the way they hold leaders and managers to account. Their contribution to school improvement is much appreciated by leaders, managers and staff.

Within its boundaries, the school promotes equal opportunities. Pupils who have access to the residence accrue many benefits but accommodation is limited and prudently allocated. The benefits of residential care are clear in the fact that it currently extends only to primary aged pupils and these pupils do better than their secondary counterparts. Care is taken to ensure that pupils are adequately safeguarded. There is an acute awareness that all of the school's pupils are vulnerable.

The school has only limited success in promoting community cohesion. In itself it is

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becoming an increasingly harmonious and cohesive community but there is limited evidence of its success in promoting community cohesion beyond the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Boarding provision

The school has a robust approach to ensuring that the health care needs of residents are met. Excellent links have been established with a range of health professionals. Records are very well maintained and procedures for the administration of medicines are sound.

Staff have an excellent working knowledge of those children who have special diets or eating disorders. There is an excellent understanding about the need for diversity to be considered when planning meals. Healthy eating is positively promoted.

The pupils say that they feel safe living at the school and staff have all been appropriately trained in safeguarding procedures. Strong links have been developed with the local authority safeguarding service. There is an excellent child-friendly complaints procedure in place and pupils can additionally make contact with an adult, independent of the school, if they have any concerns. This promotes their safety and well-being. The school has a clear procedure if a pupil is absent without authority. In addition, each pupil has a risk assessment to ensure that staff are aware of the likelihood of a particular pupil going missing. This is good practice. The pupils confirm that bullying in the residential unit is not an issue and they are confident that staff would deal with any bullying or safeguarding incidents quickly.

Pupils are actively encouraged to be respectful to each other and to behave

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appropriately within the school and in the community. Although trained in physical intervention, staff work positively to engage with the pupils in dialogue to reduce tense situations. Each pupil has a written assessment that informs staff how to deal with individual pupils. This is known as a positive handling strategy. There is a friendly and warm relationship between the pupils and the staff. Sanctions for misdemeanours are regarded as being very fair by the pupils.

The safety of the pupils and staff is enhanced through the commitment by staff and management to high health and safety standards. Environmental risk assessments are detailed and comprehensive, including fire safety.

The school has robust recruitment and selection procedures. These ensure that staff can only be appointed after rigorous checks have been carried out. These measures positively promote the safeguarding of the pupils.

The education and care of the pupils is actively supported and encouraged by the strong joint working relationships existing at the school. The support for the pupils to achieve their potential is excellent. Residential care is seen as complementing the educational provision at the school. The residential unit staff are positive about their strong links with the teachers. They ensure that the required support to the pupils enables them to gain maximum benefit from their education. The pupils are encouraged to see education as an integral part of their daily routines. During the school day, residential unit staff provide active practical and emotional support to pupils, who may have difficulty in settling into school routines. The pupils' case records clearly indicate how their care and educational needs are to be met. It is very evident, that residential unit staff and the teachers work together as a joined up team. This is commendable.

The placement plan for each child explicitly identifies the support required to meet their individual needs. Staff use the plan to address disability, race, culture, communication difficulties and physical needs. There are well-established links with a range of agencies to provide extra support for pupils as required. Parents and carers are fully informed about their children's progress and they are encouraged to participate in all reviews about their child. In addition to the statutory reviews, the head of care routinely monitors the progress and outcomes of the care plans as part of the overall quality monitoring process.

The residential unit offers the pupils a safe and comfortable place to stay during the week. It is well maintained and suitably furnished throughout. All the bedrooms have en suite showers and some include toilet facilities.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The pupils are encouraged to show respect for each other. The residential experience enriches the pupils' outlook on the wider community through an extensive range of activities. Some pupils said 'it's great in the residential unit as we get to do lots of nice things'.

The management of the residential unit is excellent with strong leadership provided by the management team. Staff are well trained and demonstrate a positive commitment to their work on behalf of the pupils. It is commendable that all the care staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People. All staff receive appropriate supervision and appraisal in order to monitor their

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professional development.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

The school meets or exceeds all National Minimal Standards.

This is the grade for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	1
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Views of parents and carers

Only four parents and carers returned questionnaires. This is a very low response. Three of the responses were overwhelmingly positive. The fourth was more critical. No parents or carers chose to add commentary to their questionnaires so the nature of any praise or criticism is not known.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

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.

The inspection team received 4 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 79 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	1	25	2	50	1	25	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	1	25	2	50	0	0	1	25
The school informs me about my child's progress	3	75	0	0	1	25	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	1	25	2	50	1	25	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	1	25	2	50	1	25	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	1	25	2	50	1	25	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	1	25	2	50	0	0	1	25
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)	1	25	2	50	1	25	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	1	25	2	50	1	25	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	50	1	25	0	0	1	25
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	50	1	25	0	0	1	25
The school is led and managed effectively	0	0	2	50	0	0	1	25
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	0	0	2	50	0	0	1	25

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



24 September 2010

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you for looking after us when we visited your school. Most of you were very welcoming and many of you spared us the time to tell us about your experiences of school. It was good to hear that most of you feel the school is improving and becoming more enjoyable.

After our two days in school we judged Westlands to be a satisfactory school. We also think it has a good potential to keep improving.

We were particularly impressed by the quality of boarding provision; you seem to agree with us on that. We also felt that through good leadership of teaching and learning both are improving and standards are rising. Good governance is contributing well to many aspects of school improvement.

As we left, we made some recommendations to help the school move forward even faster. We identified some ways in which teaching could be improved and suggested that the curriculum could be improved by including more opportunities for you to learn practical skills that could help you get jobs. Finally we suggested that even closer links could be made with your partner school to help with staff development.

One of the best ways you can help is to make every effort to behave as well as you can and to attend more regularly.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Alastair Younger

Lead inspector

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