

Westcroft Sports and Applied Learning College

Greenacres Avenue, Underhill, Wolverhampton, WV10 8NZ

Inspection dates 12–13 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils of all ages, abilities and backgrounds make good progress thanks to teaching that is typically good and occasionally outstanding.
- Senior leaders know their college well. Their effective leadership and management has already led to good improvements, and their planning is based on the right things to move the college further forward.
- The relationships between staff and pupils are excellent, and successes are richly celebrated.
- The college makes very good use of physical education activities to help pupils make choices and express themselves.
- Pupils behave extremely well and feel very safe. They help one another, are polite to adults and take part enthusiastically in lessons.
- Strong partnerships with very supportive parents and carers contribute well to pupils' achievement.
- The governors provide good support and challenge. They are well informed and work hard to make sure pupils are given the best opportunities for success.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Excellent teaching and a wide range of opportunities ensure that students' achievement is outstanding. They receive strong individual help and guidance for later life.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to allow pupils to make exceptional progress.
- Not all teachers plan activities that cater for the full range of abilities in the class, or make sure pupils know how to improve their work through clear and detailed feedback.
- Leaders, managers and governors do not yet have a full picture of the progress pupils are making over time, and this limits how well they can measure and improve the overall effectiveness of the college.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons across all key stages, including seven joint observations with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils, staff and governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Many informal opportunities were taken to talk with pupils, for example in the library, at lunchtime, at the beginning and end of the day, and during extended activities.
- Pupils' work and teachers' planning were examined. This included records relating to pupils' progress and accreditation.
- During the inspection, inspectors observed the daily arrival and departure of pupils and students from transport and heard pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- A range of documentation was examined, including the college's self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- There were very few responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) but inspectors spoke with parents and carers at the beginning and end of the day and reviewed the college's evaluation of its own recent parental questionnaires. The inspectors took account of the 43 questionnaires returned by the college's staff.

Inspection team

Lynda Morgan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Peter Lawley	Additional Inspector
Kate Robertson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Westcroft Sports and Applied Learning College is a special school for pupils and students who have complex cognitive needs. It is larger than most special schools.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The majority have moderate learning difficulties. Some have severe learning difficulties and many have additional needs including medical, speech, language and communication difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and behavioural difficulties.
- Most pupils are of white British heritage with a few from other ethnic heritage backgrounds. The vast majority speak English as their first language.
- Approximately two thirds of pupils are boys. The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, the additional funding provided by the government to help particular groups such as those known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above average.
- There have been no pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage since the last inspection.
- The college carries out much of its work in relation to its sports and applied learning specialisms within the community. It provides an outreach service to schools in Wolverhampton to support inclusion. Its applied learning centre, Timken, caters for students in Key Stages 4 and 5.
- The local community also uses the college's sports facilities on a regular basis.
- Building work is currently underway to provide 12 new classrooms, a calming room, a four-court sports hall linking to the swimming pool, extensions to the existing primary classrooms and a speech, language and communication area. The first phase is due to be completed in the autumn term 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching outstanding by ensuring that:
 - all activities are planned with the right level of challenge and support, so they are demanding but not too hard for pupils at all ability levels
 - feedback always shows pupils clearly how to improve their work.
- Improve leaders, managers and governors' awareness of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - evaluations are based on the impact teaching has on pupils' progress, and not just the teaching itself.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress overall across all subjects and key stages, often from very low starting points. College data show that pupils across the range of learning needs all make similarly good progress.
- Pupils make good progress in developing their reading skills across the college. This is because reading is given a high priority and pupils have access to a wide range of reading materials. They use the college library and read to adults regularly, and many have additional help to support build their skills and confidence.
- The youngest pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn about letters and sounds within a nurturing environment that allows them to flourish. By the time they reach secondary and the sixth form they are able to use their literacy and communication skills well. For example, in food technology they use recipes to make pancakes and in design technology they discuss how to arrange the patches they have made on their Mother's Day bags.
- The practical curriculum covering a wide variety of themes is really enjoyed by pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, who make good progress as a result.
- Pupils in the sixth form make especially good progress in college and at Timken, where they gain qualifications in a good range of work-related subjects.
- Pupils make good progress in their personal and social development. Staff make sure that they have many opportunities to develop their communication skills in a wide variety of situations, both in and out of college. This has a positive impact on their good achievement.
- Pupils achieve well in a variety of sports within the curriculum and after-school activities, including tennis, table tennis and Zumba.
- Pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make equally good progress as others. This is because of additional help and guidance provided by teaching and support staff, based on the increasingly detailed information recorded about individuals' progress. For example, where they are able to work in smaller groups, their literacy and numeracy has improved due to their increased self-esteem and confidence.

The quality of teaching is good

- As a result of good monitoring by senior leaders and well-chosen training, all teaching is at least good and some is outstanding. This brings about good or better achievement for all.
- All pupils benefit positively from their excellent relationships with staff, who encourage them to be as independent as possible. They learn to work cooperatively through practical activities.
- Teachers ask searching questions to check how much pupils have understood and make sure the next activities are at an appropriate level of difficulty. They record pupils' achievements regularly, and mostly use the resulting information well to decide what to teach next. However, feedback to pupils does not consistently show them what level they are working at, or what their

next steps in learning should be.

- An outstanding music lesson illustrated teaching at its best. Key Stage 3 pupils were composing and playing music. The work was adapted and resources specifically identified to support pupils' differing individual needs. All pupils were clear of the next steps in their learning and were able to refer to their individual targets when performing their pieces.
- Teachers and support staff know pupils well and mostly work together to make the best use of lesson time. Occasionally, teachers do not make the best use of support staff to help pupils to learn as well as they could, for example when planning to ensure that all groups are fully catered for. For example, the most able pupils with moderate learning difficulties are not always given fully demanding work, and those with the most severe learning difficulties do not always have the right level of resources to support their learning.
- Teaching makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Staff provide good role models, and pupils learn to respect each other and their differences.
- Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding, and students are very well supported in gaining a wide variety of relevant qualifications. Students are prepared very well for the next stage of their lives.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons, at break and lunchtimes, around the college and when off site, for example at Timken. Every opportunity is taken to help them shape their attitudes to work and personal development exceptionally well.
 - Pupils are polite to each other and to adults, and welcome visitors, helping inspectors find their way around on several occasions. They are very engaging and keen to show their work and enterprise. For example, pupils running the college tuck shop came to find inspectors to show a variety of healthy snacks and drinks they had made. They were appropriately persuasive in tempting a purchase of a warm scone and a hot drink, showing they could add up the cost of the items and give the appropriate change.
 - The level of fixed-term exclusions has reduced over time, as the college only uses exclusions to ensure the health and safety of pupils and staff. Positive reinforcement and rewards developed and adapted last year to incorporate the Olympic values have had a considerably positive impact on behaviour, as have measures taken to reduce class sizes in a specific year group to help pupils who have particular behavioural needs.
 - Pupils say they feel safe and know who to go to if they have a problem. This is supported by the parents and carers spoken to, who were very positive about the care and support given to their children.
 - There are few incidents of bullying, and these have been addressed with individuals and through the curriculum and personal support and guidance. Pupils spoke about anti-bullying work they had done in class, and especially the recent work on cyber-bullying on e-safety about how to stay safe on social networking sites.
 - The college gives careful attention to detail to ensure all pupils can move around safely and independently. The impact of the building work has been carefully thought through to ensure
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there are no risks to pupils, and to enable safe movement around the site. Safeguarding practices meet current national requirements, and governors play an active role in ensuring the correct procedures are followed.

- Attendance is good in the context of a college where pupils have complex needs, including medical conditions which means they are absent through illness or hospital appointments.
- The college works very closely in partnership with external support agencies. The work of the home college liaison manager is instrumental in supporting parents and families, ensuring an all-round approach to pupils' education.

The leadership and management are good

- The enthusiastic and committed headteacher is ably supported by her skilled deputy and senior leadership team. They have a shared vision and are resolute in their determination to continue improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Leaders use effective procedures to improve teachers' performance. They tackle identified weaknesses with appropriate training, and their sharp focus on monitoring the quality of teaching has led to teaching being consistently good or better across the college. However, they have not yet made sure that their monitoring of lessons takes full account of how well teaching improves pupils' progress.
- Leaders analyse pupil progress information to ensure that any pupils in danger of falling behind can quickly be given the help and guidance they need to achieve their targets. This includes extra support, where appropriate, for pupils who attract pupil premium funding. They are not yet fully measuring the impact of these decisions.
- The school works exceptionally well with parents and carers, who told inspectors they would recommend the college to others.
- The interesting and stimulating range of taught subjects, and particularly the way they are taught through themes that link subjects together in meaningful ways, helps to ensure that pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning. The effective provision at Timken prepares students well for moving on to further education and the world of work.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is built into all learning opportunities, including visits and visitors. Recent examples include work on the Olympics, the Black History theme and a visiting theatre group. Sporting activities such as bowls, tennis and table tennis also make a good contribution, as observed during the inspection.
- Middle leaders such as subject leaders monitor the quality of planning in the areas of the college they are responsible for, and have started to be more involved in monitoring the quality of teaching. Like senior staff and governors, they do not yet fully evaluate the impact this has on pupils' progress.
- The local authority knows the college well and has been effective in supporting improvements since the last inspection.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body has applied training and provides good support and challenge to the leadership team. Governors visit and help in the school regularly in a variety of ways, and have a good working knowledge of the college's strengths and weaknesses. They have a good understanding of the needs of the pupils and the progress they make. They are clear about the quality of teaching and learning, and have worked closely with the headteacher to secure the new buildings. They manage the college budget well, and have a good grasp of the link between the teachers' performance and their pay rises and promotion. They make sure that the pupil premium is spent wisely on appropriate staffing and resources to improve the achievement of eligible pupils. They are beginning to measure the impact through the termly reports from the headteacher as well as their governor link visits.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good college, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the schools leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104413
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	400713

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

Type of school	Special
College category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	167
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maria Dunbar
Headteacher	Ann Brown
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2009
Telephone number	01902 558350
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