



Westfield Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113960
LEA Dorset
Inspection number 279284
Inspection dates 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006
Reporting inspector Terry Elston AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Littlemoor Road
School category	Foundation		Weymouth
Age range of pupils	3 to 16		Dorset DT3 6AA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01305 833518
Number on roll	172	Fax number	01305 835414
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs K Gould
Date of previous inspection	20 September 1999	Headteacher	Mr P Silvester

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Westfield is a large specialist Technology College on the outskirts of Weymouth. The school takes pupils with autism, as well as those with moderate and complex learning difficulties, from a wide area of Dorset. Nearly all pupils are white and none speaks English as an additional language. The school supports a wide range of pupils with learning difficulties in an Outreach capacity in over 30 mainstream schools. There is extensive building work being done to accommodate students up to the age of 19 from this year and provide better areas for practical subjects. All of the pupils have a statement of their special educational needs. There are 23% of pupils eligible for free school meals, which is higher than average. Children enter the Early Years class with skills that are well below average. The school achieved the first of four Investor in People awards in 1996 and was the first special school to be designated a Training School to train teachers and support staff. The school was awarded Beacon status in 2000 for the high quality of its provision and gained successive Achievement awards in 2002 and 2003. Westfield is one of very few special schools to join the Leading Edge Partnership programme and have the opportunity to share expertise with others.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that leads the way in the education of pupils with autism and moderate learning difficulties within Dorset and beyond. Pupils make excellent progress as a result of outstanding teaching and very high expectations of what they can achieve. This is made possible by excellent leadership and management, not least by the headteacher. The school's good awareness of its strengths and weaknesses means that it goes from strength to strength. However, the leaders' constant striving for yet higher standards means that they sometimes undervalue just how good the school is. In this respect, the school recognises the need to track pupils' progress more systematically. The good curriculum has benefited greatly from the school's Technology status in terms of funding and the excellent links it has established with other schools. The excellent care, guidance and support help to account for pupils' outstanding behaviour and great enjoyment of school. The funds are managed impeccably and, in view of the school's many strengths, it not only provides excellent value for money but also has an excellent capacity to improve still further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop better systems to track and evaluate pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Throughout the school, pupils make excellent progress towards their very challenging targets. They make an outstanding start in the Early Years class where they make rapid progress in all areas of their development. Their speaking and listening skills improve particularly well because of the strong focus on these skills in all lessons. Compared with similar types of school, standards by the age of 11 are well above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' reading progresses particularly well because they learn important word building skills from an early age. By the age of 16, their achievements are excellent. Their rate of progress in English, mathematics and science is in the top 5% of similar schools and their external examination results show very high achievement across a wide range of subjects. Pupils achieve very well in courses preparing them for further education and all gained places at Weymouth college last year. Pupils' achievements in subjects such as mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology are outstanding and show how much they gain from being part of a Technology College.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. In particular, the way pupils behave and respect others' views is excellent. Relationships are excellent throughout the school and do much to ensure pupils' well-being.

Attendance is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school where they feel completely safe. Their attitudes to learning are very positive and make a big contribution to their progress in lessons. Pupils are proud of their school and take a real interest in how it is run. The school councils meet regularly and do a good job at allowing pupils to have their say. For example, at pupils' request, only healthy snacks are now sold at breaks, and a shady area has been provided in the playground. Pupils are very keen to accept responsibility by taking assemblies, for example, or showing visitors round the school. Pupils make a very good contribution to the life of the community. For example, Year 10 pupils teach others in a local primary school about first aid, and all pupils participate in the Christmas entertainment that is enjoyed by appreciative audiences. Year 11 pupils respond very well to work experience, and speak enthusiastically of what they have learnt about the world of work and about themselves.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The teaching and learning are excellent. The benefits of excellent staff training opportunities are evident in the high levels of expertise shown by all staff. This ensures that pupils learn very quickly in all subjects. The teaching of basic reading, speaking and number skills is exemplary and explains why pupils make such rapid progress in these areas. In the many outstanding lessons observed, the key strengths were:

- teachers' very high expectations of pupils' achievements;
- the support that they and the highly skilled teaching assistants provided to ensure that pupils met their targets; and
- adults' thorough knowledge of pupils' specific needs.

These ensure that all groups of pupils work towards challenging but achievable goals and are given every chance to succeed. Teachers are very skilled at making learning fun, which is why so many pupils say that the best thing about school is the lessons. Teachers provide an excellent mix of class teaching, small group work and opportunities for pupils to work independently. This enables pupils to gain knowledge very quickly, put their new learning into practice and learn how to find things out for themselves. Assessment is good. Teachers' assessments of pupils are very thorough and provide a clear picture of their levels of attainment. The school accepts that the tracking of these data lacks the necessary rigour to measure pupils' progress over time.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, and planned carefully to meet all pupils' needs. The teachers place strong emphasis on planning work for pupils of different abilities, so that all groups achieve equally well. Pupils have very good opportunities to study for a wide range of external qualifications, including GCSE. The curriculum has a very good focus on basic reading, number and ICT skills that prepares pupils very well for life after school. In addition, pupils in Year 11 benefit from two weeks of work experience.

Funding for the school's Technology College status is used very well to enhance the curriculum in mathematics, science, ICT and design and technology. Pupils take part enthusiastically in a wide variety of lunchtime activities ranging from instrumental lessons to darts, and there is a popular drama club after school. The curriculum is enriched further by visits from artists, storytellers and acting groups. The very good personal, social and health curriculum helps pupils to appreciate the need for healthy eating and safe behaviour around the school. The cramped accommodation places some limitations on provision for indoor sports and drama but the new buildings will rectify this.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support are excellent. Teachers are very thorough in their recording of pupils' personal development and use this detailed knowledge very well in their teaching and support of pupils. The school is a secure and happy place in which pupils love learning. All staff have had good recent training in child protection procedures and are always there to listen to pupils' concerns. Pupils are very glad that classrooms are open at lunchtimes for when they need peace and quiet. The dining hall is very well supervised to ensure pupils' safety. The school does much to encourage healthy eating, as has been recognised by a recent Healthy Schools award. Teachers are very careful to emphasise safe practices in lessons, such as science and design and technology. Links with other professionals, such as educational psychologists and health staff are excellent and provide outstanding support for the school. Provision for careers education is very good. For example, Year 11 pupils enjoy two weeks' work experience, carefully planned to suit their individual needs, and a 'taster' week that prepares them very well for entry to Weymouth College.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The outstanding leadership and management are the keys to the school's success. The headteacher inspires staff and pupils by his vision for the school's future. He has the highest expectations of what everyone can achieve and leads the constant drive for further improvement. Importantly, the headteacher does all this while considering very carefully the workload of staff. A highly skilled management team shares the headteacher's commitment to high standards in all the school's work and supports him very well. This has helped the school make excellent improvement since the last inspection and shows why it will continue to do so. The school plays an outstanding role in helping other schools to improve, particularly by its involvement in the Leading Edge Partnership programme, the support for pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools and the sharing of its technology facilities and expertise. The EarlyBird Project, which provides valuable pre-school experiences for very young children with autism, is another innovative way that the school uses its expertise to support others in the community. The leaders have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses but their continual drive for even higher standards means that they

sometimes undervalue the provision. Management is excellent, particularly in the way the school's finances are run. The school is supported and guided well by a good governing body. Governors know their school very well and are not afraid to hold it to account. These many strengths in the leadership and management and the impact they have on pupils' all-round development can be summed up in one parent's letter to the inspectors. It reads,

'The school has totally transformed my son into a confident and well-adjusted boy, which at the time of his admission seemed like a distant dream.'

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	1	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils

Thank you for letting us visit your school. We both really enjoyed seeing you work so hard in lessons and play so energetically in the playground. Those of you who were kind enough to speak to us told us a lot about your school.

What we liked most about your school

- You are very friendly and helpful to visitors.
- Your work is outstanding.
- You work very hard in lessons and your behaviour is excellent.
- Your headteacher and other leaders run the school extremely well and know how to improve things.
- Your teachers are doing an excellent job. They work very hard and make your lessons fun.
- All staff at the school take excellent care of you and keep you safe.

What we would like the school to do now

- Make better checks on your progress so that they know just how well you are doing.

Yours faithfully

Terry Elston Lead inspector