



# West Exe Technology College

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 113505  
**LEA** Devon  
**Inspection number** 285597  
**Inspection dates** 21 June 2006 to 22 June 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Anne Taylor HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Hatherleigh Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Exeter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Devon EX2 9JU
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01392 660100
<b>Number on roll</b>	1185	<b>Fax number</b>	01392 275134
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Councillor Paul Smith
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10 January 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Steve Maddern

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11 to 16	21 June 2006 - 22 June 2006	285597

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

West Exe Technology College is a large school situated in an outer area of the city of Exeter. In September 2005 the school enrolled Year 7 students for the first time. The school is managed by an acting headteacher. The substantive headteacher, who is seconded to a nearby secondary school in difficulties, maintains an executive role at the school. Most students are White British and very few come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is low and the percentage of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly in line with that in other schools. Attainment of students on entry is slightly below that of other schools. The school has an off-site inclusion unit which provides a learning centre for students with extra needs. The school has specialist technology status. In June 2006 it was designated a high performing specialist school by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). It has achieved a number of external awards, most recently the award of Investors in Enterprise and Work Related Learning.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Inspectors judge the overall effectiveness of West Exe Technology College to be satisfactory because, although many aspects of the school are good, the overall progress made by students is satisfactory. The school, however, judged itself to be good. Standards at the school are now broadly in line with those in other schools and this is an improved situation. Students' progress to Year 9 is good but to Year 11 it is satisfactory overall. However, there is too much variation in progress in core subjects and it is especially weak in science. Higher attaining students do not always make the progress expected of them and the numbers achieving the very highest grades in GCSE are very low. Students' personal development and well-being are good and students feel safe and well supported. They generally enjoy school. The quality of lessons is good in many subjects and the school monitors classroom practice very well. There is significant variation in the quality of feedback to students on marked work, which needs to be improved. The setting and monitoring of targets is also inconsistent and these need to be more challenging for some students, especially the more able. The curriculum is good and students in Years 10 and 11 benefit from a broad vocational programme, often offered in partnership with Exeter College. The school has used its technology college status effectively to broaden the curriculum and increase the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Care, guidance and support are good, including specialist support for students with emotional and behavioural needs. Leaders set a clear direction for the school with a strong focus on raising standards. Systems have been put in place and have already had an effect on standards, although they have yet to fully impact on all groups of students or subjects. The school has good capacity to improve further. It is waiting to move into a new building and has made sensible financial decisions in the meantime. It is innovative in its use of resources, is financially sound and overall, because of the good outcomes in personal development and the strong curriculum, it provides good value for money. However, from the point of view of standards and progress, it could do better.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater challenge for more able students.
- Ensure that the quality of marking is consistent across all subjects so that students know how to improve their work.
- Set all students challenging targets and regularly monitor achievement with them across all subjects.
- Further improve achievement and standards in core subjects, especially science.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Students' achievement is satisfactory, and they reach broadly average standards overall. In 2005 standards in the Year 9 national tests, for the school as a whole and in English and mathematics, were broadly in line with national averages. Standards were below the national average in science and students with high prior attainment did not achieve

the high grades expected of them. In Year 11 standards are rising and were close to the national average in 2005. On academic GCSE courses, the number of students achieving the very highest grades is low in most subjects because they are not sufficiently challenged. The proportion of students gaining five A\*–C grades on these courses is also low although pass rates on equivalent vocational courses such as General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) and vocational GCSEs are higher. The vocational curriculum is enabling a wider range of students to achieve and pass rates on entry level qualifications is high. Standards in GCSE science and mathematics are below the national average. The proportion of students achieving five A\*–C grades including mathematics and English is well below the national average. Attainment on entry to the school is slightly below average. In 2005 students in Year 9 made good progress overall based on results of tests when they joined the school in Year 8. Students who left Year 11 in 2005 made satisfactory progress overall from Year 8. However, some students made less progress to Year 11 than expected in some core subjects and satisfactory progress in others. Progress was especially poor in science. A few students make very poor progress and achieve very little, but the school tries hard to engage them in learning and offers them additional support. The school has met some of its specialist school targets including those for the whole school and in mathematics, but not in science or in technology. Targets in technology were particularly challenging.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Most students enjoy school and agree with the student who said, 'There is a good atmosphere and we get on with staff.' Students get on well with each other, helping those who find some work difficult. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall and through good pastoral education and tutorial time students develop responsible attitudes towards completing tasks and working together. Behaviour around the school is good. Eager to move into their new school premises, they patiently manage well with little social space during breaks. Most students treat the 'West Exe Code of Conduct' with respect and mention that fewer students are now removed from lessons for disruptive behaviour, because good conduct is celebrated. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality has improved because of new initiatives and careful checking procedures. Students who compromise the safety and learning of others are excluded. The exclusion rate is high, although it has recently reduced. Students feel safe, learn to be safety conscious and are confident about discussing sensitive problems with student services staff or their tutor. The few incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Well aware of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle, they take advantage of a host of clubs and physical activities. The school council meets regularly and gives students an influential voice in the life the school. Members develop good leadership qualities and take on several responsibilities, although students who are not members are not clear about the council's role. Students are aware of those less fortunate than themselves, and raise funds, for instance with the local police for the 'Coppers for Coppers' appeal for disabled people. Through the school's technology status students have good contact with the business world.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with the use of assessment information and feedback to students needing particular improvement. Students generally enjoy their lessons and behave well, with sound relationships between teachers and students. Teachers use a variety of teaching styles and include ICT effectively to promote learning. Their subject knowledge is good. The three-period day has reduced movement around the school and has efficiently increased the teaching time available. The school has an outstanding system of monitoring teaching that is applied effectively across the school and has led to positive improvements in the quality of lessons by sharing good practice. Joint observations with inspectors confirm that this system is working well. Good use is made of teaching assistants, who are attached to subject areas and effectively support students with learning difficulties. The quality of marking is satisfactory overall but varies considerably across the school. Some students seen during the inspection, across all year groups, had not received homework on a regular basis. The school's systems to monitor academic progress are not consistently implemented, as not all students have individual or small group meetings with their tutor regularly. The recording of targets in contact books is monitored by tutors and subject teachers. Students do not take enough responsibility for completing these targets, ensuring they are kept up to date or recording progress against them regularly. Significant variation was observed in both the monitoring of targets and in the quality of feedback to students on marked work. This lack of consistency means not all students know what they have to do to improve. In particular, more able students do not receive enough challenging work.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. In particular, since the last inspection the school has broadened and improved the curriculum in Years 10 and 11, and a choice of vocational and academic routes is available to all students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Better coordination with Exeter College and with other local secondary schools has enabled the school to meet students' needs much more effectively. The school's close partnership with local business has further contributed to the development of innovative and personalised vocational pathways. The school has also improved its curriculum by putting all schemes of work on a modular basis. Each module lasts for four weeks giving the opportunity for more regular feedback to students, though the quality of this is variable. Students who are about to move to Year 10 state that they particularly value the range of choice that allows them to construct a personalised programme, with a balance of vocational and academic subjects. Such flexibility of provision, students say, motivates them to learn. The school has also extended the curriculum for gifted and talented students in two subjects, art and history, and in these subjects AS-level courses stretch such students and accelerate

their progress. Negotiations with Exeter College enable successful students to progress on to the A2 programme if they join the college in Year 12. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities with a high level of participation by students. The school records rates of attendance but lacks a policy of entitlement or a way of tracking individual students' level of involvement. The school has used its technology college status effectively to focus on developments in mathematics, science, technology and ICT. These subjects have developed new approaches and increased the use of ICT. Successful links have been made with the local business community, and other areas in the school have benefited from the specialist status, for example music technology.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good care, which contributes well to students' enjoyment. There is good support for those with emotional and behavioural needs and with learning difficulties. Specialist support has increased and is attached to subjects. The student support programme makes good provision for those who need extra help in making friends and feeling safe. A parent commented, 'Our three children have different learning needs and all have been catered for. We have great confidence in the school doing the best for the children at all times.' Safety checks are regular; proper attention is given to risk assessment and child protection. Arrangements are clear, up to date and widely understood. Students at risk or vulnerable are sensitively supported by the student services team and firm links with a range of agencies give them good access to specialist support. The off-site learning centre provides a safe haven for those with extra needs so learning can flourish. A range of good quality advice and guidance helps students plan the next stages in their lives. The range of options for further study is good and access to individual, flexible programmes of study increases their chances of future economic well-being. Together with opportunities for personal development, students are well prepared for adult life and the workplace. They understand where they are but do not all have sufficient guidance on how they can improve to make progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The acting headteacher, who has been in post since March 2006, continues to set clear direction for the school and she is well supported by the substantive headteacher. The small senior leadership team is strong and has been very flexible in responding well to both the building of a new private finance initiative (PFI) school on the same site and to the secondment of the substantive headteacher to a local secondary school. The senior leadership team has a firm grasp of data on the school's performance and has strengthened the analysis and use of data this year. It monitors well and is continuing to establish structures and processes which enable middle managers to contribute throughout the school and to build their capacity to use data more consistently. Intervention strategies have been developed and the school is now better at identifying students at risk of underachieving

in order to offer support. Self-evaluation is good. This process is enhanced by the systems that are in place to collect the views of parents and students. The majority of parents are very supportive of the school, but a few expressed concerns to inspectors on aspects of behaviour and on the level of challenge and support given to students. A comprehensive programme of lesson observation is well used in departmental self-review. Middle managers have been trained in lesson observation and all staff have been observed a few times this year. The monitoring of classroom practice is outstanding. However, the inspection identified inconsistency in target-setting and marking, impacting on learning, which had not been identified through quality assurance processes. The governing body discharges its duties well, despite having recent problems with recruitment. The chair of governors has a good knowledge of the school, is very supportive of actions the school takes, but also questions and challenges senior staff. Financial planning is prudent and there is good deployment of staff and resources. The changes implemented by senior management have brought about improvements but these have not yet fully impacted on all groups of students or subjects. Standards and progress have risen to Year 9, the quality of teaching is higher, punctuality has improved and attendance has risen and is now around the national average. Managers recognise that there is much still to do and a comprehensive school improvement plan is in place. Since the last inspection the school has made progress in all areas for improvement and its effective leadership and management give it good capacity to improve further.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

22 June 2006 Dear Students As you know, we recently inspected your school and some of you may have met the inspection team in classes, or had a discussion with us during the two days we spent in the school. Thank you for your contributions to the inspection. It is always important for us to listen to your views. In the inspection you told us that you enjoy school, that there is a good atmosphere and that you get on with staff. We also saw you get on well together and help each other. Behaviour in school is good, you feel safe and you told us that the few incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. We found that your school is well led. You have many opportunities for after-school activities, especially in sport and in Years 10 and 11 you have the opportunity to do different vocational courses. Many of you have told us that you make good use of the extensive information and communication technology (ICT) facilities that the school has gained through the technology status. We have suggested to your school a number of improvements to raise standards and achievement further. The inspection team feels that the quality of feedback on some of your marked work could be improved so that you all know what you have to do to improve your work. Many students have appropriate targets and we feel that for some of you even more challenging targets could be set. Additionally, we suggest that if you monitor your own academic progress more regularly with your tutor, this will help you achieve even more. I wish all of you success in the school as it develops. Yours faithfully  
Mrs Anne Taylor HMI Lead Inspector Alexandra House 33 Kingsway London WC2B 6SE T 0207 421 6800 F 0207 421 6707 [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)