

Westcroft Sports and Vocational College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104413
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	286934
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Frank Price

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Barrow
Headteacher	Ann Brown
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2001
School address	Greenacres Avenue Underhill Wolverhampton WV10 8NZ
Telephone number	01902 558350
Fax number	01902 558342

Age group	5–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school caters for pupils who have a range of learning difficulties, including those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, although the majority of pupils have moderate learning difficulties. A few pupils are on the autistic spectrum. The headteacher took up her post in January 2005, following a lengthy period when the school had an acting headteacher. The deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2005. The school gained specialist school status for sport in September 2000 and a vocational specialism in April 2006. Just over half the pupils are eligible for free school meals. There were no children in the Foundation Stage at the time of the inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Westcroft Sports and Vocational College is a satisfactory school with some good and outstanding features and is steadily improving. The new headteacher, along with senior staff, has brought security and stability to the school following a considerable period of uncertainty and transition. As a result of effective teamwork, a supportive and friendly environment where pupils are valued, respected and encouraged to develop their personal qualities has been established. Most pupils are mature and polite young people, who communicate with confidence. For example, they take delight in running the 'smoothie bar' at breaktime, making fruit drinks, serving staff and pupils and handling money. However, there is a high level of temporary exclusions, mostly involving a small number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The sports and vocational specialisms make an excellent contribution to pupils' good personal development as well as to their academic achievement. Many pupils participate enthusiastically in the outstanding sporting opportunities on offer and this has a beneficial impact in improving their concentration, fitness and maturity. The sports specialism has strengthened community links, especially pupils working with other schools in coaching activities. They are very well prepared for their next stage of life through the excellent vocational centre, which equips pupils with a wide variety of construction, team building and information technology skills.

Achievement is satisfactory overall, although standards are exceptionally low for most pupils due to the nature of their learning difficulties. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but teaching is good in sports and vocational subjects and pupils achieve particularly well in these. However, assessment information is not used consistently by all teachers to ensure that planned activities always provide pupils with sufficient challenge. The good curriculum, enhanced by the outstanding sports and vocational aspects, gives pupils a wide range of enjoyable activities. The care, support and guidance of pupils are good and the school has excellent links with a range of agencies so that barriers to learning can be overcome. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. School improvement planning lacks rigour and is not sufficiently focused on promoting pupils' progress strongly enough in all subjects.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching and learning through better use of assessment information to provide consistently greater challenge for pupils.
- Improve the rigour of school improvement planning so that it focuses more clearly on improving pupils' progress in all subjects.
- Reduce the number of temporary exclusions. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are exceptionally low for most pupils due to the nature of their learning difficulties but achievement is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics across all the key stages. Accurate tracking information indicates that pupils of different abilities, ethnicity or those who are in care achieve equally well. It also shows greater consistency in progress overall now that staffing is more stable. In Key Stage 4, pupils achieve satisfactorily in a range of courses with more able pupils achieving lower grades in GCSE mathematics and

English. Others gain Entry Level qualifications in a range of subjects such as art and design, French and information and communication technology. Less able pupils gain a wide range of appropriate vocational courses such as award scheme development and accreditation network (ASDAN), Duke of Edinburgh and leadership awards. Pupils achieve particularly well in physical education and in vocational studies due to consistently good and some excellent teaching. They also make good progress in developing their independence skills. The school has met fully its targets relating to its specialist status.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They behave well around school, are polite, friendly and cooperative. Lunchtimes are pleasant occasions, where it is evident that their social development is promoted very well. Occasionally, when the pace of lessons is too slow, pupils can become frustrated and uncooperative but good management by adults restores order quickly. Pupils are keen learners in most lessons and are very interested and enthusiastic about their school's excellent sports and vocational opportunities. They demonstrate an excellent appreciation of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle by their level of participation in sporting activities. They also show a good awareness of health risks such as drugs and the benefits of a healthy diet. Despite these positive attitudes, there is a high level of temporary exclusions. This is mostly caused by a small number of pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties, who have typically been admitted late in their school life and are not used to the standards of behaviour demanded of them.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The stronger elements of moral and social development are reflected in the pupils' good behaviour and positive relationships. They develop very strong relationships through the many opportunities they have to work in groups and teams. Whilst local culture is well reflected, pupils' spiritual development and their understanding of a multi-ethnic society are weaker. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through fundraising and work with other schools when they help with coaching sports and activity days. They are very well prepared for the future by their vocational studies and work experience and display a good awareness of the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Planning is not consistently detailed enough to ensure the wide range of needs of pupils in some classes is always met. Some teachers are new to the school and not all teachers are confident in using assessment information to inform their teaching, in order that everyone is challenged as well as they might be. Occasionally, the pace of some lessons is too slow and pupils lose interest and can become restless. Recent changes to the teaching of numeracy and literacy have led to greater consistency in the teaching of these subjects. Every opportunity is taken to promote pupils' success and boost their self-confidence. Information and communication technology, particularly the interactive whiteboards, is often used very effectively to make learning stimulating and interesting. The teaching of physical education and of vocational courses is particularly strong. Teachers have outstanding subject knowledge in these areas, work is carefully matched to pupils' needs,

expectations are extremely high and pupils respond well. The use of accredited courses gives pupils the opportunity to experience success and pride.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum, with a wide range of stimulating activities, strongly supported by its specialist status as a sports and vocational college. The sporting provision is outstanding in terms of the quality and breadth of opportunities for pupils throughout the school, for example, in dance, football, tennis and trampolining. Similarly, the vocational centre provides a wide range of excellent opportunities to develop a variety of key skills. The school makes good provision to support language development by employing additional staff. The school has an extended day once a week to allow all its pupils to take part in clubs. It also runs a successful number of lunchtime and after school activities as well as a breakfast club. These all support pupils' learning and enjoyment well. One pupil, commenting on the wealth of activities available, said, 'I just love it here.' The school has a good range of accreditation to reflect pupils' achievement in a wide range of experiences at school. Targets in individual education plans vary in quality and, as a result, planned provision does not consistently reflect the full range of needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school offers its pupils good care, guidance and support. Child protection arrangements are robust and are high on the school's agenda. Pupils feel safe and confident as a result of the strong pastoral arrangements. The school identifies pupils who may be at risk early and provides appropriate and effective support for them. The school's management of links with outside agencies to support the most vulnerable pupils and to support attendance is excellent. The school works closely with parents through the home liaison officer and other agencies so that pupils are well supported. Procedures for monitoring incidents of racist, bullying and other unacceptable behaviours are well documented and monitored so staff know what is happening in school. Health and safety procedures are good. Arrangements for academic guidance are satisfactory, although the use made of information about pupils' progress is currently inconsistent and pupils do not always have a clear idea of how to improve. Improved procedures to monitor progress and set targets have recently been introduced.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, although the headteacher provides good, secure and positive leadership. She has worked hard to bring stability to the school, after a lengthy period without a permanent headteacher. Staff, governors and parents have a clear, shared and understood vision for the school. The headteacher has initiated a rigorous programme of monitoring and provided feedback to improve teaching but this has not been in place long enough to be fully effective. Whilst the school has an accurate overall view of the strengths and areas for development, school improvement planning does not provide a strong enough focus on how to improve pupils' progress in individual subjects. For example, action plans focus on resources without setting out an overall strategy for improving pupils' progress. Subject

leaders are not yet confident in using assessment information to plan for improvement in their areas.

The headteacher has implemented more effective monitoring systems to give an overview of pupils' progress, and introduced the process for setting targets to provide greater challenge for pupils, although it is too early to judge the impact of this on improving pupils' progress.

The governing body provides both good levels of support and challenge. For example, they have been supportive in developing the vocational initiative and have challenged the school to develop the range of accreditation for pupils at Key Stage 4. Now that stability of staffing within the school has been firmly established, it has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westcroft Sports and Vocational College, Underhills, Wolverhampton WV10 8NZ

We very much enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for taking the time to meet with us.

Your school has had a lot of changes in the last 2-3 years. We think your head- teacher is doing a good job and she has made sure the school is much more settled, so that both staff and pupils like coming to school. It was clear to us how much you enjoy school, particularly the wide range of sporting activities and the vocational work that you are able to follow. You are able to take part in a good range of imaginative activities and you are taught soundly. Many of you are developing independent living skills very well and we were very impressed with your friendliness, politeness and maturity. You are well cared for and are prepared to face the future with confidence. We think you make steady progress in your subjects, particularly in English and mathematics, and good progress in physical education and vocational studies. The headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to make the school as good as it can be.

To help the school improve, we have made three suggestions.

- Teachers could make better use of assessment information about you, so that everyone receives the right level of work.
- The school's planning could be improved so that it helps you to make better progress in subjects.
- The school should look at how it can reduce the number of times it excludes pupils on a temporary basis. You can help the school with this by making sure you follow the school rules.

Best wishes

Frank Price Lead Inspector