

Westfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107135
Local Authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	287723
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Susan Bowles HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1304
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Briggs
Headteacher	Mr R Porter
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2005
School address	Eckington Road Sothall Sheffield South Yorkshire S20 1HQ
Telephone number	0114 2485221
Fax number	0114 240779

Age group	11–16
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2007
Inspection number	287723

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Westfield School very recently moved to a new purpose built site about two miles from its previous home. It serves an area on the south east edge of Sheffield where many people now work in service industries and where levels of prosperity range from above to below average. Few students have a minority ethnic heritage or are learning English as a second language. At the school's last inspection in 2005 it was judged to have serious weaknesses because students' standards and achievement, the behaviour of the significant minority and punctuality fell well short of expectations and there were concerns about the quality of education provided. A monitoring visit nine months later found satisfactory improvement. Changes had not at that point made much difference to outcomes for students and there were still some concerns about the quality of education provided.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's previous designation as having serious weaknesses no longer applies. Inspectors agree with the leadership's well evidenced self-evaluation that this is an improving school which provides a satisfactory education and value for money. The well considered changes introduced by the governors and school leaders have secured a satisfactory quality of provision, better behaviour and more positive attitudes to learning on the part of most pupils, though a few are persistently absent or disengage and are at risk of underachieving in Key Stage 4. Pupils' general personal development is sound. Though standards are below average, the gap is closing and achievement is rising steadily. However, the standards of more able students should be even higher. The curriculum meets the needs and interests of the broad range of students well, offering older students good choices, academic and vocational. Monitoring by senior staff has improved the quality of teaching, but it is not fully embedded. It is now more consistently satisfactory. Examples of good practice in the school are being used to develop others. However, both teaching and assessment need to have greater impact. Students are suitably cared for and supported and sound links with other services for young people work well for the more vulnerable. Monitoring of pupils' progress and intervention are helpful, but some students do not yet understand how to do better.

Tangible changes, in the form of the move into a new and better equipped building and the new student-influenced uniform, have improved the climate for learning to the delight of students and their families. The great majority support the direction the school is taking and those parents who gave their views to the inspection team offered more positive than negative comments. Much remains to be done before the school realises its ambitious vision, but progress to date demonstrates that it has the capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further raise achievement and standards, especially for more able students and in English, mathematics and science.
- Engage the interest of students at risk of underachievement in Key Stage 4.
- Ensure that all students understand what they need to do next to reach their targets.
- Ensure that monitoring of teaching leads to effective action and review.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is now satisfactory. The progress made by the students by the age of sixteen has improved steadily. In 2006 it was below average, but not exceptionally so. The school's own progress monitoring suggests that the current Year 11 continues the improving trend. Standards have risen too. In 2006, results in national tests at age fourteen were generally higher than results locally. The proportion of students gaining five or more higher GCSE grades improved significantly to 44%, 32% achieved this inclusive of English and mathematics, and 90% gained at least five basic GCSEs. Though results are still below national averages there is evidence of steady cumulative improvement. This is reflected in the quality of students' work and the progress made in lessons seen by inspectors, which are satisfactory overall.

The school is performing better in areas highlighted in previous reports as needing improvement. The proportion of students reaching Level 6 or higher at Key Stage 3 and A and A* grades at GCSE have risen. Performance in English, mathematics and science and several other subjects

has improved in significant respects. Students perform very well in business studies, where 72% gained higher grades.

Set against this, achievement needs to improve further, including in English, mathematics and science. Though results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were better in 2006, these students' starting point was higher, so their rate of progress in the core subjects was too low. Too few students reached Level 6 in English. Performance at GCSE in mathematics and science was only just adequate and a few subjects, including vocational engineering, did not perform well enough. About 7% achieved well below expectations, indicating a lack of engagement by a small minority. Girls do much better than boys and this is most apparent with more able pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students love their new school and the opportunities it offers for learning. Improved behaviour management systems had already led to a marked reduction in disruption and the new building has further contributed to improving attitudes and behaviour, especially in lessons. Behaviour around the site is satisfactory. Staff supervise the school well, dealing effectively with occasional poor behaviour at break times and the end of lunchtime. The site is attractive, with areas for sport and social seating, although younger students lack designated play areas. Students report that they feel much happier and safer in the new building.

Punctuality and attendance have improved. There is a small group of students who are still frequently absent, including some girls in Year 11, despite the efforts of the school. Most pupils move promptly to lessons, well supported by staff, although a minority, mainly boys, loiter around the back staircases. Exclusions, referrals and detentions have all significantly reduced. When bullying does occur, the school is quick to respond and take action, including the involvement of peer mentors.

The school has a clear focus on sport, health and fitness which includes working with external programmes and agencies, so that students have easy access to advice from, for example, the school nurse. School meals have improved to an extent, although few pupils were seen eating fresh fruit and vegetables. Students contribute to the community in practical ways, raising funds, collecting litter, campaigning to reduce 'Wicked Waste' and promoting fair trade. The school council is a positive example of how students are empowered to take decisions: they have their own budget and office and were very involved in designing the new school uniform. Students say they really like the formal blazer which has raised their self-esteem and made them feel special and proud of their school. The school is preparing students for the future through sports leaders awards, work experience and vocational courses. Moral and social education has an evident impact, but the signs of spiritual and cultural influence are more superficial.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some that is good or better.

The best lessons seen were characterised by careful, differentiated planning so that work is matched to the students' prior learning and specific needs. Students understand clearly what they have to do to meet the teacher's high expectations. Teachers confidently engage them

in varied and stimulating activities, including peer assessment, and they enjoy learning. Trusting relationships are founded on mutual respect for one another and behaviour is consistently satisfactory. In other lessons learning outcomes are unclear, the pace is slow-moving, teaching is not inspirational and noise levels can be high. Work is less suited to students' varying ability levels and the level of challenge is not sufficient to ensure progress. Homework packs for each key stage are issued, including additional intervention material, and provide a range of varied tasks to reinforce the teaching in lessons. Marking is usually regular but it is not made sufficiently clear to pupils how they can improve. There is a robust system for the monitoring of the quality of lessons undertaken by senior managers. However, it is not fully embedded and there is scope to refine the procedures to ensure better progress towards consistently good teaching and learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets the needs of students well. In Years 10 and 11 there is a wide choice of subjects, both academic and vocational, and students are well prepared for taking the necessary decisions through their personal, social and health education lessons in Year 9. Year 10 students told inspectors that one of the things they like best about the school is the choice of courses open to them. The timetable is very well planned so that those who spend a day a week in the local further education college do so without any disruption to their other subjects. All subjects lead to recognised qualifications. This includes short course GCSE qualifications for virtually all students in religious education and citizenship. The curriculum is flexible. For instance, a small group of Year 10 students is studying French in the evening so that they can take the examination a year early. The weakest aspect of the curriculum is information and communication technology, which is taught through other subjects in Year 10, where assessment is not rigorous. Additionally, some subjects, including science, mathematics and some humanities do not make sufficient use of computers. Extra-curricular activities, including trips and visits, are many and varied and much appreciated by students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Students are cared for and guided well, although academic guidance does not leave students with a clear idea of how to improve. Vulnerable students, who have a diverse range of needs, are supported well in a dedicated area by a team of adults and make good progress. Students at risk of underachievement are identified and receive additional support or intervention as required, although the impact varies across subjects. A distinctive feature is the regular after school Golden Hour, which is enabling some very poor attenders to work towards five or more GCSE passes. Accurate data and regular reviews of individuals are helping to ensure that students make the progress expected of them. Not all students are willing to accept help, but the position is improving. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding are in place and meet statutory requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some good features. The headteacher is a strong and determined leader who has successfully led the school in its move to a new site.

Students and parents clearly rate their new school much higher than the, 'cold, damp and miserable' old one and tellingly describe the ways it has improved as an environment for learning. The school knows itself well through effective self-evaluation and is very clear about its priorities for development. With the effective collaboration of his senior leadership team, a strategic vision has emerged which is firmly focussed on improving levels of achievement and raising the aspirations of students. Middle leaders are beginning to demonstrate effective support in the drive towards improvement as a result of training and empowerment to take on additional responsibilities very much linked to students' learning. There are some early signs of success in students' progress and the school's projections show the continuity of this progress in the current year.

Most of the key issues raised in the last inspection are being addressed through the school action plan whose success criteria are very closely monitored. However, the school does not provide a daily act of worship. Concern for the individual needs of every child is clearly evident in the school's aims, policies and actions. Governors are actively involved in the day to day life of the school. They have a developing awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are increasingly well informed and provide effective support and challenge to the headteacher and staff. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------

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?	3
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	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3

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?	3

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	3
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

Inspection of Westfield School, 13 and 14 March 2007.

I am writing to tell you about the outcomes of the recent inspection of your school. Thank you for the contribution you made to this by speaking to us and showing us your work. We enjoyed our discussions with you. I am also grateful to the parents who contributed their views.

We judged that the school has improved and provides a satisfactory standard of education. The progress you make has been getting better each year and more of you are reaching the higher levels and examination grades. Many of you have improved your attendance and punctuality, though a few of you still need to improve. Your school has some way to go before results are as good as they should be, but you are closing the gap.

You told us how much you like your new school's building and facilities and we can see why. We agree with your description of it as a good environment for learning, where teachers can enjoy teaching and you can enjoy learning and where you feel safe. You play an active part in making decisions about the school. When you reach Year 10, you have a good choice of courses which prepare you for adult life. Most of your lessons help you to make satisfactory or better progress, but some could do more to help you meet the high challenges you face. You have an important part to play in making lessons work well.

You headteacher and the rest of the staff are working hard to improve the school and a great many of you made clear that you trust and support them. The school is determined to raise standards and achievement and we agree this is the top priority. This will mean even more work to improve teaching and learning in lessons. It will mean helping every student to feel part of the school, even when things don't go well for them. Finally, we want every student to understand what they have got to do next to reach their targets - and this will definitely involve you.