

# Weston Favell School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122075
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	292311
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Graham Sims

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1386
6th form	169
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Roger Webb
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tracey Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 November 2002
<b>School address</b>	Booth Lane South Northampton NN3 3EZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01604 402121
<b>Fax number</b>	01604 773211

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 May 2007
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

### Description of the school

Weston Favell School is a larger than average comprehensive school. It has specialist technology college status. The school operates on a split site. The main school site caters for students in Years 9 to 11 and the sixth form. Students in Years 7 and 8 are taught at the former Junior High School site, which was formerly a middle school. There is some interchange of staff between the two sites. The level of attainment on entry to the school is exceptionally low. A significant number of students come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and over a quarter of the students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Around 10% of the students speak English as an additional language, although only a small proportion of these are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties is well above the national average. The proportion of students joining or leaving the school after the start of Year 7 is well above average. These include an increasing number of students for whom this school is their first experience of education in the United Kingdom.

The school has been through a turbulent period since its previous inspection. In 2004, it was subject to reorganisation, changing from an upper school for students aged 13 to 18, to cater for the more typical secondary age range of 11 to 18. A period of significant instability followed the reorganisation in terms of student numbers, staffing and leadership. After four terms in which the school was run by an acting headteacher, the arrival of a new headteacher in September 2006, the formation of a new leadership team and a full complement of staff have brought greater stability. For the last year, however, the school has had to contend with disruption and the loss of facilities as a new school building is constructed alongside the current buildings. Part of the school is due to move into these new premises in October 2007, followed by the rest of the school in September 2008.

### Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The last few terms have seen a sea change at Weston Favell School. In 2004, shortly after the school's previous inspection, the school entered a period of significant instability caused by the restructuring of the school and the reorganisation of schools in the area. These circumstances led to plummeting standards, significant behavioural problems and discontentment amongst staff and students. Because of good leadership and management, initially by the previous acting headteacher but especially by the new headteacher and her new leadership team, the school's situation has improved dramatically. Good care, guidance and support have resulted in a much calmer and more positive ethos on both school sites, and the quality of teaching and learning has improved to a satisfactory level. Although some subject leaders do not yet have sufficient experience of managing change and ensuring consistently high performance amongst their team, staff are now pulling in the same direction and show a strong desire to make the school even better. There is still much to do, but the leaders have a very realistic view of what they need to do to transform the school's overall effectiveness from satisfactory to good. The changes instigated by the current leadership team show that there is good capacity for further improvement.

Standards are still exceptionally low in most year groups, a legacy of inadequate achievement in previous years and a reflection of the very low standards of attainment on entry in recent years. However, students of all abilities and from different backgrounds are now making much better progress than before and their achievement is currently satisfactory. This is largely due to the rigorous systems which have been introduced to set individual targets for each student, to track their progress at frequent intervals and to provide additional support for any who are falling behind. There has also been a concerted drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning which has significantly reduced the amount of unsatisfactory teaching and made staff very aware of the school's expectations.

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Because of a much more consistent approach to managing students and an effective system of sanctions and rewards, standards of behaviour have improved significantly and are now satisfactory. As a result, students feel much safer within school than before. Students comment appreciatively on how much the school has improved this year. This has led to much more positive attitudes towards school. Some students, however, are compliant without having a real desire to learn, as their interest is not stimulated sufficiently by some of the teaching or the range of courses on offer in an otherwise satisfactory curriculum. The well below average level of attendance also shows that too many students are hindering their chances of reaching higher standards, despite the school's best efforts to encourage good attendance.

Acquisition of specialist technology college status has brought benefits to the school in terms of additional resources, but has not yet given a distinctive flavour to the curriculum or had sufficient impact on the quality of students' learning. Now that the school's situation has stabilised and good management systems have been implemented, the school's leaders recognise the need to make greater use of its specialist status and to take greater account of the ways in which its students learn best. Green shoots are seen in the successful introduction of a small number of vocational courses and the students' enthusiastic response to the innovative cross-curricular weeks in Years 7 and 8. The many positive changes over the last year and the imminent resolution of the school's accommodation problems herald a brighter future for the school.

## Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and students' academic achievement are satisfactory. Although still below average, standards have risen during this academic year as a result of much closer tracking of students' achievement. This has resulted in additional support being given at a much earlier stage to those who need it and much clearer guidance on whether students will benefit from continuing with courses of study, especially at the end of Year 12. Students' personal development is satisfactory. Students gain a great deal more confidence in their academic abilities by the time they leave and make a good contribution to supporting younger students. However, their learning is often rather passive. This is because, whilst teaching is satisfactory overall, teachers do not provide enough challenging opportunities for students to develop their ideas through in-depth discussion and independent research. The satisfactory curriculum offers a wide choice of academic subjects, enhanced by partnerships with other schools and colleges, but there is a fairly narrow range of vocational courses on offer. Care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Students appreciate the good quality advice and support they receive, especially when applying to university.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise academic standards across the school.
- Eliminate the remaining unsatisfactory teaching and ensure that all teaching is of a consistently high quality which motivates students to want to learn.
- Ensure that the curriculum takes greater account of students' preferred learning styles, makes more effective use of its specialist technology college status and provides more courses which stimulate students' interest.
- Enable all subject leaders to develop their expertise in managing the performance of their staff and leading improvements within their subjects.
- Improve the level of attendance. 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

#### Grade for sixth form: 3

Following the school's restructuring, the sharp decline in its results at the end of Years 9 and 11 in 2005 signalled a period of inadequate achievement, which has left students with a significant backlog to address. Standards are still exceptionally low, but there are positive indications that students of all abilities are making much better progress now and that their overall achievement is satisfactory. The number of students who are on track to reach the targets set for them has increased throughout the year, and the school's assessment data indicates that results in 2007 are likely to be significantly better than those in 2006.

At the end of Year 9, standards rose in mathematics in 2006 and they have risen significantly in English this year. Although well below the national average, the proportion of students gaining 5 GCSE passes at grades A\* to C improved in 2006 and is set for further improvement from a lower starting base in 2007. Standards are stronger in English than in mathematics and science. The school is setting itself challenging targets. Although it is unlikely to meet them this year, the difference between results achieved and targets set is narrowing considerably.

In the sixth form, students' achievement is satisfactory. Although they are still below average, standards have risen because of sound teaching and closer monitoring of students' work. In art, where teachers encourage students to be independent and to make decisions for themselves, students' achievement is good.

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

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Relationships between staff and students, and behaviour in lessons and around the school, have seen a dramatic improvement, although where teaching is weaker, poor behaviour still causes some disruption to learning. Most students are proud of their school and feel that there has been significant improvement over the past year.

The school has made a concerted effort to encourage students to lead healthier lifestyles through the provision of healthier food choices at lunchtime and a wide range of opportunities to participate in physical activities. Students' response is somewhat variable; although most are fully aware of the choices available to them, there is still some way to go for them all to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

The students' more positive attitudes in lesson, the active participation of many in music and drama events, and the discussions and resulting action of the school council, such as the installation of more benches in the social areas of the school, indicate a satisfactory contribution of students to the life of the school community. The developing house system contributes increasingly to the community spirit and also provides opportunities for students to raise money for various charities. Students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds provide a good opportunity for all students to learn about other cultures, and this cultural mix helps students to be respectful of each other's views.

Students are adequately prepared for life beyond school. Good guidance and helpful work experience develop their understanding of the world of work. They value their relationships with teachers and the support and care that they offer, enabling them to gain self-confidence as they go through the school. Despite the school's best efforts, attendance rates remain well below the national average.

The personal development of students in the sixth form is sound and supports their satisfactory achievement. The students work hard and try to do well. They make a good contribution to the work of the school, especially in supporting younger students, for example with reading or by accompanying them on university visits. They develop confidence in their academic abilities. However, students do not develop enough independent learning skills, because these are not given prominence in much of the teaching.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It has improved markedly over the last year, although there is still a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching and some of the satisfactory

teaching does not instil in students a desire to learn. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use accurate assessment of students' achievement to ensure lessons are well matched to their needs. Teachers use questioning appropriately to check students' understanding and, on occasions, to stimulate further thought. In the best lessons, as in a good drama lesson and an excellent German lesson in Year 9, the teachers skilfully divide the work into smaller bite-sized activities. This enables the students to enjoy their lessons, learn more effectively and make good progress.

In some lessons, there is too much teacher-led activity, which limits the opportunities for group work and results in a passive response from the students. Whilst the behaviour of the majority of students is satisfactory in these situations, a small minority find it difficult to concentrate, and this impedes their learning and progress. In some lessons, an over-emphasis on informing students what level they are working at takes the focus away from learning and prevents more exciting, stimulating and creative methods of teaching.

The teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory and contributes to the sound progress students make. However, all too frequently, students have to spend too much time listening to the teacher and have insufficient opportunity to make decisions, take the initiative and develop their ideas through discussion.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The satisfactory curriculum offered by the school meets statutory requirements. As part of its drive to improve the curriculum, the school has introduced a themed week each term for students in Years 7 and 8. These cross-curricular weeks provide stimulating and exciting activities which engage the students' curiosity and help them to develop their skills effectively. Curricular provision in Years 10 and 11 has also improved with the introduction of a few vocational courses. These initiatives are a useful start, but there is scope for broadening the approach to ensure that the needs, interest and desires of all students are met as fully as possible. Many courses do not yet take sufficient account of students' preferred learning styles, particularly those who learn best by engaging in practical, hands-on activities.

A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities and trips enhances the formal curriculum. There are good opportunities for students to engage in sports activities and the performing arts. These are much appreciated and enjoyed. The school's status as a specialist technology college has not yet had a great deal of impact on the curriculum.

The satisfactory curriculum provided for the sixth form effectively meets the academic and personal needs of most students. The school provides a wide range of advanced (A) level courses, some of them in collaboration with other schools. However, only a limited range of vocational courses is offered for students of all abilities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The school provides good care, guidance and support. There are good arrangements to support vulnerable students and those who have recently arrived from overseas. Counselling and referral to other agencies are available to those experiencing personal health and emotional problems,

and students are confident that they can rely on staff if they experience personal difficulties. Appropriate arrangements to safeguard all students' safety are in place.

The school has made considerable strides in supporting students who find it difficult to behave appropriately. Rewards and sanctions are applied consistently. As a result, behaviour has improved and the number of exclusions has dramatically reduced. The school works hard at encouraging students, with their families, to work towards better attendance. However, these measures are not yet having the desired effect as attendance figures remain well below the national average.

Staff check the pastoral and academic progress of all students closely and there is a clear understanding of the levels reached and those which should be expected. Underachieving students are encouraged to get up to speed. Support is carefully targeted at those with learning difficulties and this enables them to progress at least at a similar rate to other students. Students who have special ability or talent are also identified and encouraged to reach their potential. Good advice is given when students have to choose what subjects to study in Year 10, and later when they are considering whether to go into the sixth form.

In the sixth form, sound care, guidance and support ensure that most students are adequately prepared for the next stage in their education. Careers education and guidance are good and students appreciate the support in applying for university places. Monitoring of students' progress is much improved, but a small minority of teachers still do not evaluate students' progress accurately.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The last few years have not been easy for the school. However, good leadership and management have seen the school improve over the last twelve months. The new headteacher has shown clear-sighted, determined leadership and has been supported well by her team of deputy and assistant headteachers. Governors, too, have given a very clear mandate to the school's leaders and have provided good support and challenge as staff have sought to improve the quality of education provided by the school. The school development plan for the current year outlines four pertinent priorities, and good progress has been made on each of these. There is an equally clear vision for the future development of the school. Most importantly, there is a good team spirit and staff are all pulling together. There is also a strong commitment to the principles of inclusion, which is seen in the thorough tracking of students' progress and the action taken to help every student who is not making sufficient progress, the good support systems for those who have learning difficulties and the care provided for vulnerable students. The rigorous monitoring programme, which includes frequent checks on the quality of teaching, curricular planning and students' work, gives leaders an accurate picture of how well each area of the school is performing. Some subject leaders, however, do not yet have sufficient experience of managing the performance of their staff or of leading change, and the school acknowledges the need to strengthen expertise in these areas so that concerted action can be taken when weaknesses are identified. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory, and improving. Closer tracking of students' work and better teaching are leading to higher standards, but there is further to go.

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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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	4	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
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	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	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	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

25 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Weston Favell School, Northampton, NN3 3EZ

My colleagues and I enjoyed our visit to your school, and we would like to thank those of you who took the time to talk to us. The school has been through some difficult times, but it has improved markedly over the last few terms. Many of you commented on the improvements when you talked to us. The school's overall effectiveness is now satisfactory and some aspects are good. Our main findings are:

- the great majority of you are making much better progress now in your work, so that your achievement is satisfactory
- results of the Key Stage 3 tests, GCSE and A level exams were very low in 2006, but recent assessments show that standards are rising, particularly in English
- your behaviour and attitudes are satisfactory, although some of you do not show a great deal of enthusiasm or enjoyment for your work
- the level of attendance is well below that in most schools, and the frequent absence of some of you is still a cause for concern
- the quality of teaching is satisfactory but improving; there is some good teaching, but some lessons do not do enough to motivate you to learn to your full potential
- the school provides a satisfactory curriculum, but does not offer enough vocational courses or make enough use of its specialist technology college status
- staff provide a good standard of care, keep careful track of your progress, and provide good guidance and support for those who need extra help
- the school's leaders have a good understanding of how to continue the recent improvements and make the school even better.

In order to help the school to become better, we have asked the leaders to:

- improve the standards you achieve in your work
- ensure that all of the teaching is of a consistently high quality and that it motivates you to learn
- take greater account of your preferred learning styles and provide more courses which stimulate your interest
- enable subject leaders to develop their expertise in leading improvements
- improve the level of attendance.

We would like you to realise how important your education is for your future and trust that you will respond by attending regularly, developing a greater desire to learn, cooperating with your teachers and trying your hardest. We hope that the move into your new school buildings goes smoothly next year and that the new facilities prove to be as good as everyone expects them to be.

Yours sincerely

Mr Graham Sims Lead Inspector