

Westwood College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	124407
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	395322
Inspection dates	19–20 April 2012
Lead inspector	Charles Lowry

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	13–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	886
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	288
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mandy Bennett
Headteacher	Keith Hollins
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2007
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Age group	13–18
Inspection date(s)	19–20 April 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Charles Lowry	Additional Inspector
Neil Gillespie	Additional inspector
Bob Roberts	Additional inspector
Jackie Easter	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 40 lessons taught by 38 teachers, for a total of 19 hours. Meetings were held with four groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, school senior leaders, middle leaders, groups of teachers, and staff responsible for safeguarding students. The inspectors observed the college's work and considered a wide range of documents including the self-evaluation and strategic development plan, policies for safeguarding students and equality of opportunity, and minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and they analysed 188 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as 160 responses from students and 43 from staff.

Information about the school

The number of students on roll at the college is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs is below average. Almost all students are of White British heritage with few students from other backgrounds. The school has a very stable population; almost all students who join the school in Year 9 complete their compulsory period of education there. Since the previous inspection the college has entered into a formal partnership to work in collaboration with ten other local schools and is currently consulting on forming a hard federation with two of them. Currently the college has a formal collaboration with The Cheadle Academy; the two schools sharing an executive principal. The college has two specialisms, one in the visual arts and the other in modern languages. The college meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school where students achieve well. It is not yet outstanding because whilst the large majority of teaching is at least good, some satisfactory teaching remains.
- The sixth form is good. Attainment at A and AS level has risen over the last three years and the proportion of students attaining the highest grades has increased. Most students make good progress; teaching is carefully personalised to meet their needs.
- Teaching is good overall, with some lessons being outstanding and others satisfactory. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and there is a purposeful atmosphere for learning. However, opportunities to develop speaking and listening are not always taken, teachers use a limited range of questioning styles and activities are not always matched to the needs of the most-able students. In some lessons opportunities to further students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are missed.
- Behaviour around the college is good. Attendance is above average and relationships between students and staff are strong; the college is an orderly and safe community. Students are courteous, well-mannered and welcoming and there are few incidents of unacceptable behaviour.
- The leadership and management of the college are good. The executive principal and his committed team have a clear vision for the college's future and are fully supported by all staff. The college's self-evaluation is broadly accurate but targets for improvement in the development plan are not prioritised and not enough emphasis is given to the impact that initiatives have on students' outcomes. The management of teachers' performance is strong and there is a good balance between support and challenge. The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a good range of opportunities to enable students to progress to the next stage.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that students' literacy skills are developed consistently in all subjects
 - maximising opportunities, in all lessons, for students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding
 - developing teachers' questioning skills so that students are suitably challenged to deepen their understanding
 - matching activities more closely to the needs of more-able students.

- Improve the college's process of self-evaluation and development planning by:
 - ensuring that self-evaluation identifies, clearly, the impact of initiatives
 - ensuring development planning clearly prioritises areas for improvement and focuses on those that will have the greatest impact on students' outcomes.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students make good progress in most subjects. The proportion of students achieving five high grade GCSEs including English and mathematics has increased over the last three years and was significantly above the national average in 2011. Progress in English is exceptional and reflects the emphasis that the department puts on improving students' literacy skills. However, literacy is less-well developed in other subject areas. Progress in mathematics and science is now accelerating. The progress that students make in modern foreign languages and the visual arts from the time they enter the college to the end of Key Stage 4 is good. Attainment at A and AS level is good for all groups of students and retention of students in the sixth form is higher than the national figure. Students with disabilities and those who have special educational needs make better progress than their peers in the college. One parent commented 'We have been overwhelmed by the outstanding commitment of the SEN team to ensuring our child's needs are met.'

Most students who completed questionnaires indicated they enjoy coming to the college and learn a lot in lessons. Students say they particularly enjoy lessons that have a variety of activities and where they are allowed to work in groups. When learning is brisk they feel that they made good progress. They say their progress slows, however, when they have to sit and listen to their teachers for long periods or when the pace of the lesson is so rapid that they are not given enough time to develop their thinking.

Students are aware of their targets in each subject and their progress against these

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targets is monitored termly by staff using the college's rigorous tracking system. Any students that may struggle are identified quickly and swift action is taken to address any underachievement.

Almost all parents and carers, who completed questionnaires, agreed that their children are making good progress and most agreed that the college helps them support their children's learning.

Quality of teaching

The best teaching, in this college, challenges and stimulates students' thinking. Teachers engage and enthuse students successfully; they use a good variety of activities matched closely to the different ways that students learn. Teachers plan group work effectively; in a good Spanish lesson the teacher employed effective strategies to consolidate students' knowledge of vocabulary; students then worked in pairs, spoke confidently in Spanish to each other and clearly demonstrated their developing language skills. Teachers carefully plan their lessons to meet the needs of all students and are particularly successful with disabled students and those who have special educational needs. However, in a few lessons there is a lack of sufficient challenge for more-able students.

In some satisfactory lessons teachers talk for too long and this slows the learning of some students. The pace of learning is also slow when teachers direct questions to the whole class and only invite short answers.

Literacy is promoted extremely well in English and this has contributed to students' excellent progress in this subject. However, this good practice in English is not consistent across the school and opportunities are missed for students to develop, in particular, their speaking and listening skills.

Students' written work is marked regularly and shows that they make good progress over time. In the best examples marking is frequent, swiftly returned to students, makes clear to them what they have done well, and what they need to do to improve.

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agree that their children are taught well at the college. One parent said '(My children) are making excellent progress; they are listened to, encouraged and get lots of guidance about their futures. As a parent I could not ask for better.' A similar positive response was received from students; almost all agree that teaching is good at the college most of the time.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' attitudes to learning and their conduct in most lessons are good, contributing significantly to the strong progress they make. The college's code of conduct is clearly understood by students and they know what is expected of them.

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Their behaviour is sensible and courteous; students show respect for each other and their teachers; their cooperative, responsible and active participation is a strength in good lessons. For example, in one Year 12 media studies' lesson students were put into groups where they made collective decisions about group leadership and effectively delegated responsibilities. Their positive attitudes to each other ensured that learning progressed at a brisk pace. Students demonstrate respect for college buildings and grounds ensuring that they remain well presented and litter free.

Most parents and carers who returned the questionnaires agreed that their children's lessons were not disturbed by bad behaviour. Inspectors found that in the large majority of lessons behaviour is at least good. There are some instances of low level disruptive behaviour but these are rare and only very occasionally disturb learning.

Students say that they feel safe at college and their parents and carers would agree. The college's extension studies and personal development programmes ensure that students know what constitutes unsafe situations and how to keep themselves safe. Bullying is rare; students commented they can talk to staff if problems of this nature arise. The school responds effectively and proportionately to bullying incidents, when they do occur, and follows up immediate actions with the monitoring of behaviour over the longer term.

Attendance is above average for most groups of students and very few are persistently absent. Students' enjoy school and the effective pastoral care enables them to deal with any problems they may experience. School leaders and governors work hard to ensure the safety of the college's complex site and have sought and acted on advice received from external consultants in this respect. Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers communicate high expectations and ambition for the college's future development. The college has been acknowledged as a beacon of good practice and in recognition of this the executive principal has worked with a number of other schools to improve their performance

The work of the college is monitored and evaluated rigorously; this enables leaders and managers to hold staff to account and sustain improvements in teaching and learning. All teachers are observed regularly to assess their effectiveness; however the quality of feedback that teachers receive is variable and both staff and students recognise that there are some inconsistencies in how well lessons are taught. The college's self-evaluation is detailed but does not place sufficient emphasis on impact. The governing body and senior leaders have high expectations and ambition and their strategic development plan clearly identifies targets for improvement. However, these targets are often too many and are not prioritised.

The school staff are very supportive of the work of the senior leadership and share their vision. One member of staff stated 'I have taught here for a number of years. I

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would send my children to this school.'

The quality of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good; in the best examples, form time activities and lessons enable reflection, discussion of ethical issues and foster empathy. For example, in one outstanding history lesson Year 10 students were asked; to reflect on the opposing positions of two key civil rights leaders in America, take the position of one of them, write a letter criticising the opposing position and defend their own. This good practice is not consistent enough.

The school's policies and practice promote equality of opportunity. Sensitive support is provided to enable students with disabilities and those who have special educational needs to fully access the curriculum and this contributes significantly to the good progress they make; which is better than their peers.

The curriculum is of good quality and offers students a wide range of opportunities that equip them with the skills, knowledge and qualifications to progress to the next stage in their education. The large majority of students continue in education, employment or training when they leave school at the end of Year 11. Senior leaders are not complacent and a curriculum review has been undertaken to look at the structure and delivery of subjects in order to raise achievement.

Governors provide the college with a good balance of support and challenge and their work is greatly appreciated by college leaders. Governors are knowledgeable, clear about the college's strengths and areas for development and monitor its work closely. The college has continued to develop steadily since its previous inspection and has good capacity to improve in the future.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



23 April 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Westwood College, Leek, ST13 8NP

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your college. This letter is to explain our findings. We have judged Westwood College to be good. There are several reasons for this, including the good progress most of you make at GCSE and in the sixth form. The quality of teaching is good and you behave well and feel safe. The school is well led and managed.

We know that you and your parents and carers agree with us. The large majority of responses to the questionnaires were positive and when we talked to you, you told us you were happy at school.

Mr Hollins and his leadership team are very ambitious for the college to be outstanding by the time of the next inspection. We have left them with the following suggestions that we believe will help. They are to increase the number of lessons that are good or outstanding by:

- ensuring that teachers provide more opportunities for you to develop your speaking and listening skills
- improving the way that teachers question you in lessons so that you have to think more deeply about the subject. They will make sure that the needs of everyone are met in lessons and give you more opportunities to think about your place in the world and prepare you to live in a multicultural society.
- making the college's self-evaluation and development planning sharper so that staff concentrate on those strategies that will have the greatest impact on your achievement.

You can continue to play your part by working hard and attending regularly. We would like to send you our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry
Lead inspector

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