

Westfield Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113960
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	378774
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Bob Pugh

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation Special
Age range of pupils	3–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	173
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	8
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bruce Bonwell
Headteacher	Andrew Penman
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 June 2009
School address	Littlemoor Road Preston Weymouth DT3 6AA
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 23 lessons and observed 22 teachers, including one lesson which was taught in the college's radio station. They held meetings with members of the governing body and with staff and pupils and they evaluated the 72 questionnaires returned by parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work, met pupils and looked at their work files and books with them, and viewed displays and art work.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the college's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effect to which information gained from assessment about pupils' and students' learning is used by teachers to ensure that progress is outstanding for all pupils in all key stages.
- The impact of improvement since the last inspection, to ensure that the proportion of outstanding teaching is increasing in all classes and key stages, including the sixth form.
- How well pupils and students do, especially those with autistic spectrum disorders and students in the sixth form. The effectiveness of the college's specialism and partnerships with others.

Information about the school

Westfield Arts College is a large special school which provides education for pupils and students who have moderate and complex learning difficulties. Governors and college leaders believe that the needs of learners admitted to the college are becoming more complex as each year goes by. For example, the number of pupils attending the school who have an autistic spectrum disorder has increased sharply in the last few years. The college's 173 pupils are organised into 18 classes, mostly in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. School leaders have taken the decision to include the very small number of Key Stage 1 pupils in Key Stage 2 classes. At the time of the inspection there were no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The eight students on roll in the sixth form follow personalised learning programmes; during the week they have timetabled activities on site and in the wider community. The overwhelming majority of pupils are of White British origin. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The college was granted specialist status for Arts in 2010, having previously gained specialist status in technology.

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: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Westfield Arts College provides an outstanding quality of education for its pupils and students. The college's excellent leaders and managers have worked hard to raise standards in all areas since the last inspection, so that their achievement is outstanding. In almost all aspects of the college's work, leaders can point to marked improvement. Pupils say they feel very safe at the college, and their parents and carers agree. The college's safeguarding arrangements are exceptionally rigorous. Pupils' consistently positive behaviour in lessons and around the college campus is a key factor in their outstanding progress and makes a huge contribution to the welcoming ethos at Westfield. Pupils make a superb contribution to the life of the community.

Staff are highly ambitious for everyone in the college community to do as well as possible. In particular, they have a very clear view of what their pupils need to achieve to prepare them for adult life because assessment procedures are excellent. Leaders have effectively deployed the college's high quality resources to ensure that the very best is on offer for all. As a result, the college provides outstanding value for money. Leaders' very high expectations are evident in the fact that second best is never good enough at Westfield. This is well demonstrated by the sophisticated pupil tracking and assessment programmes, which clearly show that each individual makes rapid progress. When leaders and staff identify that pupils and students need additional support, staff ensure that personalised teaching programmes are put into place so that progress can be accelerated. These programmes have a very positive effect. The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support enables pupils and students to thrive.

Leaders and managers are conspicuously successful at transmitting their ambition to all staff through regular team meetings where improvement planning is debated. They rigorously monitor teaching and learning and provide teachers with opportunities to observe successful colleagues at other schools. This has enhanced the quality of teaching and learning, so that the proportion of outstanding lessons has risen considerably since the last inspection. Teachers contribute to highly respected training for colleagues in other schools by means of effective outreach programmes. The college's training and support programmes for parents and carers are popular and lead to real improvements in families' quality of life. One parent commented, 'I would not have managed my child's behaviour without the constant help and support from staff. I cannot speak too highly of the school.' Overall, the

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links with parents, carers and other professionals are outstanding. The school also promotes community cohesion at this exemplary level.

Teaching and learning are particular strengths at the college. The majority of lessons observed by inspectors were judged to be outstanding. As a result, the vast majority of pupils make at least good progress and often outstanding progress from their very low starting points on entry to Westfield.

The exciting and rich curriculum provides a very wide range of activities which inspires pupils and captivates their attention. The recent award of specialist arts status underlines the college's particularly successful provision in these subjects. The young adults make great strides towards becoming responsible citizens as they move into adult life. Pupils participate with enthusiasm in physical activities at college; they understand the importance of healthy eating and the need to take regular exercise.

The college's sixth form is going through a period of reorganisation, following the recent appointment of a new lead teacher for the department. Good teaching in the sixth form means that students make good progress; they enjoy the relevant learning and life skills development programmes.

Governors make very regular visits to the college and are closely involved in its evaluation and improvement planning. They offer challenge and help. College leaders at all levels have worked diligently to improve standards since the last inspection, when the college was judged to be good. As a result of their very effective self-evaluation programmes they have remarkably clear insight into what is working well. Their detailed plans for the future and effective measures to monitor performance mean that the college has an outstanding capacity for further and sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate planning to improve the sixth form so that its provision matches the very high standards which are to be found elsewhere in the college.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils work hard in lessons and do well in English and mathematics and in the areas which the college considers to be its core teaching and learning subjects, information and communication technology, science and art. Very many pupils gain Entry Level qualifications and other nationally accredited awards, and some gain GCSE passes in these subjects and in other curriculum areas. However, their overall attainment is not judged against the national average in this inspection because a high proportion have complex needs and because of this are unlikely to reach this level. Nonetheless, when measured against their level of need on joining the school, this represents

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outstanding progress and achievement in their learning.

Different groups of pupils do equally well at the college; there are no variations in the achievements of boys and girls, for example, and those who have autism generally do as well as others and occasionally better still. All pupils are rigorously challenged and exceptionally well supported to do their very best. They show their enjoyment of lessons by their very high levels of concentration and engagement; they are often absorbed in their work. Pupils discuss their ideas with others and their learning is accelerated very well when teachers remind them of where to look for learning clues in and around their well-organised classrooms. In a Year 10 English lesson, pupils talked confidently in small groups about their personal ambitions and reflected on the importance of getting ‘a good job’. Pupils and students are often asked if they are ready for the next challenge and most are clear about the level at which they are working and what they need to do to improve.

Pupils talk with real enthusiasm about the college’s radio station and the opportunities they have for developing useful technical skills. Impressive use of facilities is made by staff to promote pupils’ language skills; a real transformation in one pupil’s communication abilities was noted when he moved from a lesson in a classroom to the presenter’s chair in the studio.

It is clear that pupils value their college community. They readily take on responsibilities such as representing others on the School Council and they contribute to decision making with assurance. Some pupils take on community service roles, including working in a local care home, and they have shared in project work on their town’s history with their peers from local schools. Pupils at Westfield successfully apply their basic skills in real-life situations, such as shopping at local supermarkets. Older pupils spend time in the college’s caravan, in one of the town’s holiday parks, where they successfully meet the challenge of using independent living skills. Attendance rates have improved and are now above average. In class and in assemblies, pupils are encouraged to think about their own and others’ experiences and to be open to new ideas. They are keen to take up many opportunities to take part in cultural, artistic and sporting activities, and their work has often been prominently displayed in county wide exhibitions such as the Dorset Big Weave. This reflects their specialist status for arts. Their social, moral and cultural development is especially strong, and elements of spiritual awareness are developing securely, and this is why spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall rather than outstanding.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
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¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is outstanding. This represents a real improvement since the last inspection, when it was judged to be good. Teachers carefully plan lessons using their expert knowledge of their pupils to capture and retain their interest. They outline how the needs of individual pupils will be met and use assessment very well to support learning. Books and files are well marked and excellent advice is offered to pupils about how they can do even better, in ways which are meaningful to each individual. Teaching assistants are very effective at supporting pupils' learning in lessons. Teachers are confident about changing course during a lesson should a learning opportunity occur. For example, in the science room, binoculars are ready for immediate use near the observation area ready for the appearance of an interesting bird or animal in the fields around the college. The well-equipped fitness suite is used to promote exercise and productive use is made of the school's coastal location, with pupils encouraged to take part in sailing events. Specialist techniques are skilfully employed in many classes, such as visual timetables and individual work stations.

Westfield has gained numerous awards for its curriculum, in particular for technology, sport and art. Since gaining specialist status, the college is said by staff to be 'more outward facing' which leads to enhanced opportunities for pupils to participate successfully in community activities. Teachers are skilled at promoting literacy and numeracy in all areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils in a science lesson were encouraged to write reports using 'descriptive' language. Enrichment weeks enable pupils and students to learn more about the wider world, which contributes superbly to the strength of community cohesion. For example, pupils enjoyed tasting Kenyan food, learning about the language and learning about the culture of that country, with which the college has very close links. There are regular

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science and art weeks and events where pupils learn about their environment, conservation and the importance of recycling.

Pupils are exceptionally well supported and guided in class, especially when making decisions about their futures. Very effective links with a wide range of other professionals ensure that pupils’ personal needs are extremely well met. Because of the excellent preparation carried out by college staff, older students transfer smoothly to their next placements, and new pupils are made to feel very welcome by all in the college community when they first arrive at Westfield.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

A strong sense of shared purpose permeates all aspects of life at Westfield. Morale is very high and all staff are united in their belief that they can, and should, do their very best to ensure successful outcomes for their pupils. The excellent leadership provided by the headteacher and his outstanding team ensures that everyone knows exactly what their contribution must be to raise standards and meet challenging targets. The college uses data very intelligently to plan for improvements and rigorously monitors performance at every level. Its aspirations for its pupils are underlined by its successful attainment of specialist status in more than one curriculum area and by its willingness to share its undoubted expertise with others. As a result of the actions of school leaders, outcomes for pupils are outstanding and they leave well prepared to take their place in the world as confident, responsible citizens.

Governors are rigorous in ensuring that pupils are well taught in a safe learning environment and that all of the college’s facilities are equally available to all members of its community. They tackle any form of discrimination quickly and ensure all pupils are able to succeed academically and personally whatever their needs, ability or background. The college has an exceptionally clear understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic features of its own community, and strives to improve pupils’ understanding of the characteristics of communities elsewhere in the United Kingdom and overseas. It has formed productive links with schools in urban settings. Each class is learning about the cultures and beliefs of countries competing in the Olympic Games, evidence of which can be seen in the attractive and informative displays in classrooms.

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Excellent systems for safeguarding children are in place, including rigorous checking of all who work or volunteer at the school. High quality links are in place with other agencies so that any concerns about pupils’ well-being are quickly and decisively followed up. Highly effective teaching in personal, social, health education lessons helps to develop pupils’ understanding of how to respond in situations which they find distressing.

Governors are fully and systematically involved in evaluating the work of the college and are continually growing in confidence in challenging and supporting the college. The college has highly positive relationships with all groups of parents and carers and works hard to support them by means of effective training programmes and to engage them in the life of the college. The parent support workers are particularly effective in ensuring that parents are well informed and that their ideas and concerns are listened to and acted upon. College leaders are highly committed to working in partnership with others and can provide many case studies of how pupils’ life experiences have improved as a result of this work.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Students make good progress in their learning in the sixth form and they develop good independent living skills. Teachers assess students’ work effectively and plan lessons which capture their interest and enable them to grow in confidence. A good range of accreditation is available to students and all have the opportunity to participate in courses on a weekly basis at a local further education college. Recent

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improvements in curriculum planning in the sixth form mean that learning programmes are better matched to students’ individual needs, including high quality arrangements for care, guidance and support.

The lead teacher for the sixth form has very recently moved into post. Areas of strengths and weakness in provision have been clearly identified and ambitious plans for improvement have been shared with staff. This has already led to signs that outcomes for students, which are already good, are becoming even better. Engagement is strong with students, with parents and carers and with other partners. Improvements have yet to be fully embedded in this area of the college; however, resources for learning are well organised and managed.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

A high proportion of parents and carers returned the questionnaires. The very large majority of parents and carers are extremely positive about their child’s experiences at Westfield. A typical comment is, ‘Westfield is an excellent school. Since my son has been there he has changed so much for the better. They have supported him through his problems and he is a totally different boy.’ Another parent simply wrote, ‘Best school ever.’ The college regularly surveys parents’ and carers’ opinions and governors and senior staff make themselves available for meetings at consultation evenings and other events. Although a few parents disagree, inspectors found that the school takes account of their views. A very good example of this is the efforts made by teachers to consult and reassure parents of children who have autism when making changes to teaching arrangements for these pupils.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Westfield College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 72 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 173 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	55	76	16	22	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	82	10	14	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	51	71	16	22	3	4	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	64	20	28	3	4	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	57	72	12	17	0	0	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	67	18	25	3	4	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	69	19	26	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	52	72	15	21	1	1	3	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	76	14	19	1	1	2	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	75	15	21	0	0	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	52	72	13	18	4	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	55	76	10	14	2	3	3	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	85	8	11	2	3	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



28 September 2011

Dear Pupils and Students,

Inspection of Westfield Arts College, Littlemoor Road, Weymouth DT3 6AA

Thank you very much for being so friendly and helpful when we came to inspect your school recently. A special thank you to the pupils who met inspectors and showed us your work and told us about how much progress you are making. Thank you, too, to those of you who came to the School Council meeting to give us your views about your experiences at Westfield Arts College. We think that Westfield is an outstanding school. There are many reasons why this is so and here are some of them:

- Your headteacher and his team of committed staff and governors run your school extremely well.
- The teaching you receive is excellent and the care, support and guidance offered to you by all staff is of the highest quality, all of which helps you to make outstanding progress in your learning.
- Westfield provides you with a huge range of interesting and exciting things to do and to learn about, both in classrooms and in the wider community.
- You develop good work-related and life skills which will help you take your place as responsible adults in society.
- All of the staff work hard to make your school as safe a place as possible in which everyone can learn and do well.
- Your behaviour in class and outside is outstanding. You do much for the community and clearly feel extremely safe and happy.
- The school works very closely with your parents, carers and other adults.

To help your outstanding school get even better, we have asked your headteacher and the staff to make sure that the sixth form keeps on improving so that the good things that are already happening there get even better in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Pugh
Lead inspector

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