

Weston Point College

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	876/6013
Unique reference number	135749
Inspection number	342482
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Nigel Cromey-Hawke

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

Age group: 11-16

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Weston Point College is an independent, day special school for boys, aged 11-16 years, with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is part of the Bridge 4 Learning group. It was registered in September 2008 for 16 students, took its first intake of two students in January 2009 and two more each subsequent half term. There are currently 12 on roll, three of whom attend part-time. All students have statements of special educational needs and have been excluded from local authority maintained schools in the local area. It is housed in a refurbished office block in an area of light industry, on the outskirts of Runcorn. Its aim is to provide vulnerable and challenging students with the opportunity to re-engage with their learning.

Evaluation of the school

The overall quality of education at Weston Point College is good; the school fulfils its aims. It successfully re-engages many of its students with learning and the majority make good, sometimes very good progress in the short time they attend the college. The quality of teaching and assessment is good, though varied, and the curriculum is often highly personalised to meet students' changing needs; this enables them to make good progress. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their behaviour and attendance is also good. Procedures for safeguarding students are in place. All regulations are met.

Quality of education

The quality of education provided by the college is good; this is based around the provision of a good and appropriate curriculum. There are good planning frameworks in place for Key Stages 3 and 4 that follow National Curriculum guidelines. Students are often admitted to the college following a prolonged absence from education and with little information about their prior attainment. Staff work effectively to assess students' needs and interests and devise good personalised work programmes based upon these assessments. The majority of students find these programmes relevant and interesting, helped by the flexibility that staff often provide in supporting students to decide, during each day, when they will cover their core subject studies.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

There is a strong focus upon the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information communication technology (ICT), that helps them catch up lost ground and access other areas of learning. For example, the Key Stage 4 project linking art with ICT to develop animation sequences is enjoyed by students and seen by them as both interesting and relevant. Practical activities within science are, however, currently restricted. This is due to limited facilities within the specialist teaching room but the college has firm plans to utilise the resources of the local secondary school, with which it already has good links. Provision for work-related learning off-site is underdeveloped. Transition arrangements both into and out of the college are well established and careers education makes good use of both internet research and the local Connexions service. Education for personal, social and health education is good and tied in with presentations by various visiting speakers. There is a good provision for sport, involving swimming, ice-skating, archery and cycling as well as the use of the college's multi-gym. There is an extensive programme of extra curricular activities and visits, including residential outdoor pursuits in the Lake District, which students take advantage of with enthusiasm. The impact of this provision is seen in the good progress in their academic achievement and personal development that most students make during their time in the college.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Many lessons are planned well and taught with good humour and a positive attitude by teachers. The best lessons are matched well to students' individual needs through challenging but manageable activities and high expectations of student involvement. Good use is often made of ICT by teachers and students to demonstrate learning. In these lessons very positive attitudes are demonstrated by the majority of students. In some lessons, notably science, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Less well developed subject knowledge here leads to activities that are not as well matched to students' needs and, as a result, their interest sometimes weakens and progress slows. Teaching assistants and other adults provide good support within lessons, often successfully negotiating students out of potentially confrontational situations. The college makes good use of assessment data to inform planning, with half-termly data collection contributing to students' individual education plans. Marking in work books is helpful, with National Curriculum levels and good target setting giving a clear picture of what level students are working at and what they need to do to improve.

Students' progress overall and their achievement are good. They begin to see the value of education and how it can benefit them. They are gaining knowledge, understanding and skills at a good rate across both key stages. They pay attention in lessons, complete homework tasks and independent research projects and enjoy the challenges made of them. Assessment information indicates that the majority are making good progress and some very good progress from very low starting points. Some students are engaging with a programme of several full GCSEs and others in well-tailored programmes of Entry Level or Short Course qualifications. Students are proud of their achievements in the college, a factor reflected in the largely positive attitudes to learning evident within the college.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and substantially moderates the nature of their emotional and behaviour difficulties. The college enables them to build their confidence and self-esteem. They hold polite conversations and behave well in public. This is because they are taught the difference between right and wrong in situations within the college, and how this applies to life in general. This includes raising awareness of the role and functions of public institutions and services such as the police. Students' good attitudes are especially evident in the daily lunchtime gatherings, where a calm, positive and family-type atmosphere reigns, that encourages personal reflection and consideration of others.

Students cooperate well with each other, respect differences and their behaviour is good. The college has been praised by outside agencies for its role in promoting more positive attitudes and levels of social responsibility within its students. Planned activities with other faiths have expanded students' horizons and broadened their understanding of diversity, the impact of which has been noted in the highly successful sessions with a Muslim youth worker and African dance activities.

Exclusions are low, as are all other forms of anti-social incidents. Attendance is good and monitored well, reflecting the very positive ethos the college has established. No parents returned the inspection questionnaire but the college's own survey indicates that they are pleased with the stability and enjoyment the college has brought to their children's lives. College surveys also indicate that high proportions of students are happy with the care, guidance and support they receive. They take responsibility for the daily running of the college through planning and ordering food, by working on the school council, and with numerous projects that help upgrade the site facilities. They also record, in their personal development file, their own progress in areas such as personal safety, being healthy and life-skills. They increasingly engage with the local community through fundraising, local renovation projects, for example, for the beach and canal along with work to support the elderly. Together with the good programme for personal, social and health related learning, and focus upon key skills, this helps promote their future economic well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for ensuring students' welfare, health and safety is good. The college fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002, and has an appropriate development plan in place. All child protection requirements are met, with regular training of key personnel and up-dating of staff awareness, often on a weekly basis. Students have a good understanding of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle, helping plan meals and making choices about their sporting activities each week. Students' emotional health and well-being are a priority for the college. These are carefully monitored by all staff but especially by one of the proprietors who is a qualified educational psychologist. Staff have a good understanding of students'

needs and problems and act in their best interests regularly. Students say that bullying is low level and managed well and that they feel safe and valued. Arrangements to promote good behaviour are very effective and result in a generally calm environment for learning. Health and safety precautions are good, with students contributing to risk assessments for outdoor activities, such as camping trips. The college works well with parents and other agencies to ensure the welfare and well-being of all students.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All staff are thoroughly checked for their qualifications, experience and suitability to work within the college. The records are up to date and kept securely on a single register.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises are appropriate and enable students to learn effectively and safely. The classrooms are spacious and many have been upgraded recently, some with interactive whiteboards. There is a separate computer suite, workshop for design technology and arts provision. The outside areas provide opportunities for sport and various construction projects, such as a large pond. The limited resourcing and space of the science room mean that practical activities are restricted and this impacts upon students' learning.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The college provides clear, accurate and up-to-date information for parents and others. Frequent, detailed and high quality reports are compiled about students' progress and these are sent to parents and local authorities as required. The college maintains daily contact with some families for information sharing in times of difficulty.

Procedures for handling complaints

The college has a clear and fair complaints policy that meets requirements and is made known to parents and carers. There have been no formal complaints within the last 12 months.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- Improve the quality of teaching in science to that of the best in the college, by improving resources and the range of activities provided in lessons.
- As students increasingly re-engage with their learning, develop opportunities to extend their off-site work-related learning to help them prepare more fully for adult life.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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School details

Name of school	Weston Point College		
DCSF number	876/6013		
Unique reference number	135749		
Type of school	Day special school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	November 2008		
Age range of pupils	11-16		
Gender of pupils	Boys		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 9	Girls: 0	Total: 9
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls: 0	Total: 3
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 12	Girls: 0	Total: 12
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,200		
Address of school	Picow Farm Road Runcorn Cheshire WA7 4UN		
Telephone number	01928 574667		
Email address	mikesearle@fsmail.net		
Headteacher	Mr Timothy Whitwell		
Proprietors	Chris Brannan, Mike Searle, Allen Baynes, Tim Whitwell.		
Reporting inspector	Nigel Cromey-Hawke		
Dates of inspection	2–3 December 2009		