

Saddleworth School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105736
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	355830
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Bernard Campbell 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 of pupils on the school roll	1330
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr Brian Lord
Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Cornish
Date of previous school inspection	12 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 43 teachers and 43 lessons, and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement plans, monitoring records and safeguarding documentation. They also took account of questionnaires from 412 parents and carers, 151 students and 45 staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How well teaching and assessment enable students to learn and make progress.
- The particular features of the curriculum, and of care guidance and support, that may be outstanding.
- The impact of leaders at all levels in using self-evaluation and precisely targeted actions to drive improvement in teaching, learning and student outcomes.

Information about the school

Saddleworth School is a larger than average size secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of minority ethnic students is below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The school has a languages specialism. It holds the International, Artsmark, and Eco School awards and has achieved Healthy School and Confucius Classroom status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Saddleworth School is a good and inclusive school. It provides an outstanding curriculum and excellent care, guidance and support that ensure that all types of students make good progress. The school successfully plays a lead role locally and nationally in the provision of modern foreign languages. A very high proportion of students gain a qualification in a modern foreign language.

Achievement is outstanding. Attainment is high because a large majority of attainment indicators at GCSE have been significantly above average for the last three years. There was a dip in 2010 due to lower results in English and science. Current school assessments, including English and science, show the current Year 11 is on track for higher attainment. Students make better than expected progress when compared with their attainment at Key Stage 2. They also make good progress when compared with schools with a similar level of advantage, though this lacks consistency.

Students have many good opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community and many participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Students listen well, work cooperatively and are confident in making oral contributions to lessons. Punctuality is good and attendance is high. Students are self-reliant and able to take responsibility for their own learning. On some occasions, they lack sufficient opportunities to work actively and independently in lessons. Although there are opportunities for them to reflect and take part in peer and self-assessment, this practice is not sufficiently widespread.

The great majority of teaching is securing good progress and learning. In the best lessons, learning is challenging, students understand what they are trying to achieve and know how well they are doing. On occasion, lesson objectives are focused on the task rather than the learning outcome. Especially at Key Stage 3, there is inconsistency in the sharpness with which assessment criteria are used to set objectives and to plan the sequence of learning activities.

The outstanding curriculum is thoughtfully crafted and enables the overwhelming majority of students to achieve their potential. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Staff know the students very well and pay great attention to detail in ensuring that all students achieve well, especially the most vulnerable. Transition arrangements for joining and leaving the school are outstanding.

The headteacher provides a clear vision and a strong drive for improvement. Leaders have been rigorous in tackling aspects of identified under-performance. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is not sufficiently robust. The judgements from the annual, announced observation of teachers' lessons have resulted in an over-rosy picture of the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, strategies for further improving the quality of teaching lack sufficient rigour, do not operate within short enough timescales

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and do not draw systematically enough on best practice. Since the last inspection, the use of data and target setting has improved and attainment has risen. The school has a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that attainment is consistently high by:
 - improving the GCSE results in English and science
 - ensuring that students consistently make better progress than in similar schools.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
 - improving the use of assessment criteria to guide activities in lessons, especially at Key Stage 3
 - increasing opportunities for students to work independently and reflect on their learning.
- Strengthen the leadership and management of teaching and learning by:
 - increasing the rigour and frequency of lesson observations
 - making more systematic use of best practice, from within and beyond the school, to tackle identified areas for improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In 2010, Year 11 had broadly average attainment on entry to the school. They left the school with above average GCSE results. This represents good progress. Attainment and progress in mathematics has improved over the last three years as a result of effective leadership, improved teaching and an improved curriculum at Key Stage 3 that provides a higher level of challenge for more-able students. At Key Stage 4, the most-able students in mathematics are successful in gaining an additional GCSE in statistics and an increased number take mathematics at A-level. In 2010, students underachieved in English, partly due to staffing issues. The English subject leader has effectively revised the curriculum in order to focus the teaching on students' areas of weakness. As a result, school assessment is showing that Year 11 students are making better progress in English this year and a higher proportion are on track to reach A* and A grades. Students with a statement of special educational needs receive well tailored support which results in examination success that enables them to continue in post-16 education. Other students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make similar progress to other students.

Students are considerate to each other and their attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around school are good. They are very welcoming and polite. Although the corridors are crowded, students move around school in an orderly way. In a few lessons, students are inattentive because the lesson is not sufficiently engaging or challenging.

Students feel safe and are confident that the school will deal with any issues promptly. The take-up of healthy school meals is well above average. Students participate well in physical and adventure activities and many engage in sports at a local and national level. Students enjoy the developing programme of enterprise education which provides

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entrepreneurial opportunities such as the science garden in which students grow and sell their produce.

Students value their school and appreciate the many opportunities to make a positive contribution to their community. These include the sports leadership programme through which a significant proportion of students learn to manage others and develop their understanding of the principles of integrity and fair play. Many carry out volunteering in the community through the Duke of Edinburgh Award. The role of the prefects is well-regarded by students and they play an effective role in promoting the positive school ethos. The school council members contribute to decisions on issues such as uniform, food choices and senior staff appointments. Students' role in providing feedback on teaching and learning is developing.

Extra-curricular activities are popular. For example, many students participated in the music concert that took place during the inspection. Students also speak enthusiastically about the many cultural exchanges abroad. Students value the good opportunities to reflect on their own and others' beliefs in religious education. However, students do not yet engage in enough first-hand experiences of cultural and religious diversity in the area.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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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How effective is the provision?

Good classroom relationships provide a positive learning environment. Teachers use their subject knowledge expertly to frame questions that probe and extend understanding. Activities follow a logical development and move learning forward at a good pace. Resources, including the interactive whiteboard, are used well to enhance learning. Teachers use praise well to reinforce learning and they adjust their plans effectively when they identify the need to clarify a learning point. On occasion, teachers talk too much which slows the pace of learning. The school's assessment system provides students with frequent feedback on how well they are doing in all subjects which provides them with good direction and motivation. Opportunities for peer and self-assessment are sometimes missed.

The school provides a carefully tailored curriculum which meets the range of learners needs. For example, gifted and talented students have opportunities to do fast track courses in mathematics, French and German and to take courses in statistics or Chinese. Alternative courses, provided in partnership with other agencies, enable students to develop a wide range of skills, for example, through work with armed forces personnel. Other programmes meet individual interests such as equestrianism and fishing. Aspects of the modern languages curriculum are highly innovative. For example, the school makes provision for weekly language teaching in thirteen primary schools and supports post-16 provision. This successfully promotes continuity and progress in language learning within and beyond the school. Extra-curricular provision is wide-ranging and highly popular with students.

The pastoral staff work very effectively together and rigorously monitor the progress and attendance of all students. When exclusions have taken place, reintegration is managed very effectively. Close partnerships with external agencies and regular contact with the families enhances the quality of the support provided for students. The mentoring and support arrangements have a strong impact on students' achievement. For example, two boys spoke very highly about the quality of support they were receiving to help them catch-up with technology coursework. For students in particularly challenging circumstances, support and guidance have helped to develop their self-esteem and many achieve a good range of qualifications by the end of Year 11. Carefully planned sessions with primary schools are evaluated fully and student, parent and carer feedback is very positive. Strong links with further education ensure that students are well-prepared for their next stage in learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers use target setting effectively to communicate high expectations. Monitoring of the progress made by students is thorough and results in clear guidance for students on what they need to improve. Leaders have a good knowledge of the needs of individual students and the actions being taken to support them. Senior and middle leaders work closely together to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to maximise the progress of students, especially in Year 11. The school takes effective action in relation to any inadequate performance. Subject leaders make well-evidenced and accurate judgements about the quality of achievement in their subject with clear actions for improvement. At whole-school level, a few aspects of self-evaluation are over generous.

The governing body has a good range of expertise and experience. Members of the governing body are systematically involved in evaluating the school through their links with specific areas of school life and the reports they receive from senior and middle leaders. They have good informal links with groups of parents and carers and students. Governors play a strong role in the monitoring of safeguarding. Safeguarding is good. Responsibilities are well-defined, risk assessments are well developed, records are well-kept and work with other agencies is highly effective.

The specialism is well-led and the school has a highly effective strategy and strong partnerships for promoting languages which has increased take-up at primary schools and at post-16. Students benefit from a number of sporting partnerships including coaching from a rugby league international.

The school has a highly positive relationship with parents and carers, reflected in the high levels of attendance at parents' evenings. Parents and carers respond well to surveys and the school takes these views into account, for example, by creating a support group for parents and carers to guide their children during periods of difficulty. Parents and carers are regularly informed about school events through newsletters and increasingly through the website.

The school demonstrates its strong commitment to equal opportunities through the outstanding curriculum and pastoral support which promotes the achievement of all groups of students. Variations in performance have been tackled promptly. The school is a cohesive community with a clear awareness of its position in the immediate and wider locality. It provides excellent opportunities for students to understand and interact with cultures in other parts of the world. Discussion of religious and other beliefs is a positive feature of the school. A few students are involved in the Oldham Youth Forum and others engage with different minority ethnic groups through sport. The school has prioritised the need to involve more outside visitors to give more students first-hand experience of engaging with people from different British minority ethnic groups.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

A higher than average proportion of parents and carers responded to the parental questionnaire. Most parents and carers say that they are happy with their child's experience of the school. A higher proportion of parents and carers than average say their child enjoys school. Most believe that the school is led and managed well, teaching is good and that their children are making good progress and having their needs met. These positive views match the judgements of the inspectors. Compared with other secondary schools, slightly fewer than average feel well informed about their child's progress or feel that the school takes account of their suggestions or concerns. This may reflect the higher proportion of returns from Year 7 parents and carers, who may be relatively new to the school. Evidence from the inspection showed that there is effective communication with parents and carers. These survey results may indicate that new developments, such as access to on-line information, need to be further embedded in order to secure higher levels of parental satisfaction about communication.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Saddleworth School 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 412 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,330 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	116	28	270	66	17	4	6	1
The school keeps my child safe	106	26	281	68	18	4	3	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	89	22	257	62	47	11	6	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	93	23	275	67	28	7	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	89	22	284	69	20	5	2	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	65	16	265	64	60	15	4	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	11	288	70	63	15	5	1
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)	86	21	261	63	29	7	2	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	86	21	284	69	29	7	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	82	20	250	61	52	13	10	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	53	13	249	60	62	15	7	2
The school is led and managed effectively	87	21	285	69	20	5	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	122	30	261	63	14	3	5	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



13 December 2010

Inspection of Saddleworth School, Oldham, OL3 6BU

Dear Students

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much indeed. We judged that yours is a good school. In the questionnaire that some of you completed most of you said that you are well-prepared for the future, learn a lot and know how well you are doing.

These were the things we liked most about your school.

- Your school successfully plays a lead role in the provision of modern foreign languages and most of you gain a qualification in a modern foreign language.
- Your attainment is high and you achieve well in school.
- Your attendance is excellent and all aspects of your personal development are good.
- Teaching is good and you enjoy learning.
- The curriculum provides you with an excellent choice of courses and extra-curricular activities.
- Those of you with particular needs get outstanding support from staff.

To help the school to improve further, we have said that senior leaders should:

Ensure that attainment is consistently high by:

- improving your GCSE results in English and science
- ensuring that you consistently make better progress than students in similar schools.

Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:

- improving the use of assessment criteria to guide activities in lessons, especially at Key Stage 3
- increasing opportunities for you to work independently and reflect on your learning

Strengthen the leadership and management of teaching and learning by:

- increasing the rigour and frequency of lesson observation
- making more systematic use of best practice, from within and beyond the school, to tackle identified areas for improvement.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Bernard Campbell

Her Majesty's Inspector

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