

Saddleworth School

High Street, Uppermill, Oldham, Greater Manchester, OL3 6BU

Inspection dates 10–11 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and the governors have a sharp focus on improvement and a clear vision for how the school should develop.
- Governors know the school well. They provide challenge and support leaders' pursuit of improvement.
- Students' behaviour is good. Students show courtesy, respect and a pride in their appearance.
- Students achieve significantly better than their peers nationally in English and mathematics.
- Good teaching has led to high attainment over time, particularly in English and mathematics. Students in Key Stage 3 make good progress.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural education is good and this prepares students well for life in modern Britain.
- Students receive good information, advice and guidance; they are well prepared for the next steps in their education or employment.
- Attendance is above average and exclusions are rare.
- Leaders ensure that students behave well and are safe.
- The quality of teaching is good. Senior and middle leaders continue to drive for improvement in teaching and achievement.
- The school has a good system of rewards and incentives which motivate students in their learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Leaders do not always check that their actions are making the difference expected to students' progress.
- The school does not rigorously promote good literacy across all the subjects, to strengthen students' skills.
- Teachers do not always expect students to pursue excellence; consequently, the most able students and those who are disadvantaged do not make as rapid progress as other students.
- Not all students achieve as well as they should because their work is not always challenging enough. This sometimes leads to low-level disruption to learning.
- Teachers do not always check students' understanding during lessons and their marking and feedback in students' books are not always consistently clear and relevant so students miss opportunities to learn more.
- Some teachers do not always assess students' work accurately and so there is sometimes a mismatch between levels or grades awarded for work and its actual standard.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the teaching and learning in a range of lessons. During visits to lessons, inspectors spoke to students about their work and progress and looked at students' work in books. Two lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- A further scrutiny of work was undertaken during which inspectors sampled students' work across a wide range of subjects and all year groups.
- Inspectors observed students' behaviour in lessons and around the school throughout the school day.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including information about self-evaluation and the achievement, attendance and behaviour of students. The school's policies, procedures and improvement plans were also examined.
- Inspectors took into account 148 responses to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) received in the last 365 days and 53 questionnaires completed by staff. Telephone discussions were held with four parents who contacted Ofsted about the inspection.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, senior leaders, middle leaders and lead teachers, pastoral staff, a representative of the local authority and 30 students representing all year groups. An inspector held a telephone conversation with representatives of Laticzone and The Well-Being Trust, which work with the school to provide a range of alternative provision.

Inspection team

Dawn Platt, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ros McMullen	Additional Inspector
Mark Williams	Her Majesty's Inspector
Claire Hollister	Additional Inspector
Jonathan Smart	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Saddleworth School is larger than the average-sized secondary school. It has slightly more boys than girls.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The majority of students speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students identified by the school as disabled or as having special educational needs is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is lower than the national average. (The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free schools meals or who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- A small number of students attend off-site provision at a number of providers including Laticzone, The Well-Being Trust and Works 4 U.
- The school is part of the Northern Alliance Partnership which supports the school with additional training and development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen and embed leadership further, building on actions that are being taken to improve the quality of teaching and students' achievement, by ensuring leaders at all levels:
 - evaluate and report on the difference their actions are making to students' progress
 - check students' work rigorously to ensure that information about their progress and achievement is secure.
- Further strengthen students' literacy skills across the curriculum by ensuring a consistent approach to promoting literacy is used by all staff.
- Raise students' good achievement even further, particularly for the most able and the disadvantaged, by:
 - ensuring that teachers provide high quality marking and feedback and that students' response to teachers' feedback is checked to make sure that the intended learning has taken place
 - ensuring that teachers regularly check students' work during lessons to ensure students' understanding
 - raising the expectation of all teachers so that challenging work is routinely set for all students
 - reducing any incidents of low-level disruption so learning time is not wasted.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and the leadership team have a sharp focus on improvement. The headteacher's vision is clear. The restructuring of leadership roles has speeded up improvement. Leaders model high standards and drive improvement; staff expectations of students are rising.
- Leaders know the school well. Their self-evaluation is accurate, and their plans identify appropriate areas for improvement.
- Leaders hold staff to account for their performance. Teachers' performance is closely linked to pay progression. Teachers have a clear understanding of their professional objectives and how these are linked to the school priorities of improving teaching and students' progress. Trainee teachers receive good support.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is good. The school provides a range of professional development opportunities, including 'Saddleworth Wednesdays', which provide blocks of time for training and meet the needs of staff well. Partnerships with the Northern Alliance and the local authority are used effectively to support the development of teachers and leaders. A strong culture of sharing good practice to improve teaching and learning is emerging.
- Middle leaders are committed to the school's ethos and have high aspirations for the school and its students. They are knowledgeable about school improvement and make a good contribution to it through their appropriate and timely actions to improve learning. However, their evaluation and recording of the impact of these actions is not always evident.
- The application of school policies by staff is generally effective although the policies regarding behaviour for learning, literacy and marking are not always used absolutely consistently.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum meets the needs of all students. A range of academic and work-related subjects is offered in close discussion and liaison with parents and students. Students particularly enjoy the cookery courses provided in conjunction with Tameside College. The alternative educational provision offered to the small group of students included meets their learning needs. Leaders monitor carefully students' attendance and achievement at alternative provision.
- Opportunities for students to develop skills and confidence in speaking and listening are enriched by the school's Key Stage 3 curriculum design. Cross-curricular work in English, religious education, drama, and personal, social and health education means that the skills developed in these subjects are effectively strengthened through application in different contexts. For example, Year 8 students considered whether death should be feared and this encouraged them to be reflective in expressing their views.
- The students who spoke with inspectors said that they are prepared well for their next stage of education. School leaders' development of the creative Key Stage 3 curriculum, which includes whole days focusing on different topics, helps students develop deeper knowledge and better personal learning and thinking skills ready for Key Stage 4.
- Students are prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, students in a Year 7 lesson enjoyed well-structured discussions on what the Hindu and Christian faiths say about being a good person. Students were able to apply their understanding and compare the knowledge gained to their own lives showing a respect for different people's faiths, feelings, and values.
- Careers advice and guidance is effective in supporting the ambitions of students and highlighting the opportunities for them at the age of 16. Students value the advice they receive. There is a good programme of after-school activities, which includes opportunities for students to work with the wider community.
- The school ensures that at Key Stage 4 information, advice and guidance for students steers them to make the right choice of course and career. For instance, Year 10 students experience taster days at sixth forms or colleges and all students experience a mock interview to support them in their applications. All students leave and move on to employment, training or further study.
- School assemblies promote equal opportunities and tackle discrimination alongside a wide range of topics, such as e-safety and child sexual exploitation. Assemblies encourage students to support national and community events and to become responsible citizens.
- Leaders have used the pupil premium funding for disadvantaged students to support their learning and raise their attendance. However, leaders do not record the impact of this funding with sufficient rigour, and so have not identified which aspects of their spending decisions have had most impact.
- The well-established safeguarding procedures protect and ensure the safety of students. These procedures meet government requirements.

- Parents are generally supportive of the school. The parent forum regularly discusses key aspects of the school's work. A few parents hold less positive views about the school's effectiveness. Leaders are seeking ways to communicate with parents more effectively and build stronger relationships, particularly concerning the planned new school site and buildings.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have an accurate view of the school and provide good challenge and support to leaders.
 - Governors have had appropriate training and receive the right information to ensure they can challenge school leaders and hold them to account. They have a clear understanding of how well the school is doing through their analysis of achievement data. They ask school leaders probing questions about the school's work and they work alongside leaders to support improvement.
 - Governors contribute fully to the performance management of teachers. They work with senior leaders to decide teachers' salary progression and so reward those who perform well. Governors support the leaders' actions in addressing underperformance.
 - Governors ensure that school resources and finances are well planned; they know how pupil premium funding is spent but do not know the impact that it has had in full detail.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- The building presents many challenges but, nonetheless, students move around school sensibly and show respect for others. Behaviour is good in most lessons, although there are rare instances of low-level disruption when students are not fully engaged in their learning. While movement around the site can be difficult, students show tolerance, and this contributes to the calm and orderly environment. Students do not push each other in restricted spaces. School leaders have reorganised the school day to reduce movement around the building and so support good behaviour. Students are proud to belong to the school.
- Students are considerate and respectful to one another and take pride in their appearance. Students say that homophobic and racist language is sometimes heard; however, the large majority of students regard such language as unacceptable and confirm that the school always deals well with such instances.
- Students arrive for lessons equipped for learning, which gives lessons a prompt, focused start. Students' attitudes to learning are generally good, although in a few instances this is not the case; for example, when teachers do not provide enough challenge or good enough teaching, students' enthusiasm dwindles. Not all staff consistently use the strategies set out in the school policy to ensure that students behave well in lessons.
- Students with special educational needs benefit from well-organised support within school. They are cared for well and the support available ensures that they make progress in their personal and academic development. The systems to look after students who are vulnerable work well.
- Students are rewarded for their work and for making the right choices. The school has created a well-organised credit system and students are keen to exchange their credits for rewards. The school ensures that good attitudes and behaviour are celebrated regularly.
- The school uses restorative approaches (whereby students hear about the impact of their actions from anyone who has been hurt by them) to encourage students to be more reflective and responsible for their behaviour. This approach has helped to reduce bullying. Students report few instances of bullying; the school has effective systems to deal with these types of concerns.
- Students make positive contributions to the school community. They have opportunities to develop leadership skills as prefects and ambassadors, and by supporting younger students as peer mentors. Charity work and other cultural opportunities develop learners as young citizens.
- Attendance is above the national average and exclusions are well below the national average. The school uses effective strategies to monitor attendance and rewards students for attending well. Students who are educated off site also attend and behave well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View said that their child felt safe at school. When questioned by inspectors, students also said that they felt safe.
- Safety and behaviour concerns expressed by parents are dealt with effectively by the school.

- The school's leaders provide clear systems and structures to ensure that students are safe in all activities. Risk assessments and regular monitoring are in place with regard to all key aspects of safety.
- Students understand how to keep themselves safe. Students are taught about safety in assemblies, form time and also through teaching in different subjects, such as English and philosophy, computing, and science, where emphasis is laid on the need for students to keep safe in different situations.
- At lunchtime, students use the areas available to them sensibly and there is little evidence of litter. Appropriate levels of supervision by adults keep students safe.

The quality of teaching is good

- In most classrooms, teachers establish a culture of success and good relationships with students. As a result, students are confident, respond to their teachers and collaborate well with each other. They want to learn and achieve well; these factors contribute to the good learning of students.
- The most able students are challenged well in subjects such as religious education and history, resulting in them making rapid progress; however, this challenge is not consistently evident across the curriculum.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and expectations of students are generally high. In the most effective lessons, teachers' questioning of students encourages well-thought-out responses which deepen students' understanding. In such lessons, teachers frequently check students' learning to ensure that students know how to improve their work. However, weaker questioning by teachers is apparent in some lessons and this limits students' deeper thinking and reflection. As a result, some teachers do not have an adequate check that all students have understood their learning.
- The quality of teaching has been enhanced by new middle leadership appointments. These new appointments have helped to drive improvements in students' learning. Disadvantaged students are now making good progress, gaps in the attainment are narrowing, and appropriate support is being used effectively to accelerate students' rates of progress.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge leads to good learning. This is further enhanced by the teaching assistants' effective support for students.
- Leaders have correctly identified that high quality marking, feedback and ongoing assessment to guide learning are not always evident across the school. As a result, students' progress sometimes slows. Actions to improve the quality of feedback are underway, including training and the sharing of good practice.
- School leaders check the progress of students in different ability groups regularly. They use an effective combination of pastoral and curriculum information about each student to ensure that appropriate support is available, particularly for disadvantaged students.
- Teachers in English and science are adept at checking the progress of different ability groups rigorously during lessons; however, this practice is not apparent in all lessons. Some teachers do not always assess students' work accurately and this leads, on occasions, to inaccurate information being recorded about the levels or grades that students are working at.
- Teachers of English provide good support for literacy, particularly at Key Stage 3, but this is not as rigorously applied across all other subjects. Reading opportunities and ways of dealing with spelling corrections are inconsistent across the school.
- The school supports students well when they make their transition from primary school. For example, student peer mentors in Year 7 ensure that students settle in. The modern foreign languages department provides support to eight primary schools to build and support transition for students starting in Year 7. This support ensures that students make good progress with modern foreign languages in Year 7.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students generally enter the school with attainment that is well above the national average. They make good progress in the vast majority of subjects; girls make even faster progress than boys. Progress has been slower in science and modern foreign languages. Leaders have taken action to improve teaching and learning, including through recent staffing appointments. Students' progress in science, modern foreign languages and humanities now shows improvement.
- Attainment in GCSE English and mathematics has been high in recent years. The school's own data show students are on track for this to continue.
- In their GCSE results in 2014, girls achieved a quarter of a grade better than boys on average. Boys do not make as much progress overall, particularly in English. Leaders have not been effective in building

stronger literacy skills for boys.

- The most able students do not make enough progress in a few subjects. Leaders recognise that a more rigorous level of whole-school challenge is needed to secure the highest possible levels of attainment.
- Students with lower starting points, disabled students and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with similar groups of students nationally. The school meets the needs of these students well.
- Students in Key Stage 3 learn well and make good progress.
- The rates of progress of disadvantaged students fell in 2014; gaps that had previously started to narrow widened in 2014. However, school data now show that the gap is closing as a result of closer tracking by leaders at all levels.
- In 2014, compared to other students in the school, disadvantaged students attained approximately one and a half GCSE grades lower in English and mathematics. In comparison to other students nationally, and were just over a grade behind in English and in mathematics.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students attaining five or more GCSEs at grade C and above, including English and mathematics, was below that of others within the school. However, school data now show the gap is shrinking.
- School data at Key Stage 4 show that students are making better progress in English and mathematics as well as across a broad range of subjects. Students at Key Stage 3 are making expected progress. The increased rigour with which students' progress is tracked is contributing to increasing rates of progress.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 are educated in off-site alternative provision. Senior leaders' monitoring shows that the students included are making expected progress. The school entered some students early for GCSE mathematics last year; this practice did not disadvantage those students. The school has now discontinued early entry.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training, or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training, or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105736
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	453313

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	1,350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Lord
Headteacher	Matthew Milburn
Date of previous school inspection	9 December 2010
Telephone number	01457 872072
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