

# Failsworth School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105735
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oldham
<b>Inspection number</b>	287318
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Angela Headon HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1468
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Cllr J Johnson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr D Johnson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 May 2002
<b>School address</b>	Brierley Avenue Failsworth Manchester M35 9HA
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 6813763
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<b>Age group</b>	11–16
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Failsworth School is a larger than average secondary school with sports college status, situated between Oldham and Manchester. It is based on two sites, which are approximately one third of a mile apart. A new school building is presently under construction.

The number of students eligible for free school meals is around the national average, as is the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The majority of students are White British. The school has achieved a number of awards including SportsMark Gold, ArtsMark Gold, Healthy Schools Award and Investors in People status. The school is also part of the local Excellence in Cities cluster.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Failsworth School is a popular and improving sports specialist school which provides a satisfactory education for its students, with some good features. The school's leadership and management are forward-looking and have a strong commitment to improvement. The school provides a good curriculum, particularly well considered at Key Stage 4, which ensures that all students have the opportunity to succeed. Specialist sports status further enhances students' wider curriculum experiences, promoting well-being and raising students' aspirations.

Standards at the end of both key stages are broadly average and students' progress is satisfactory. In 2006, examination results improved in all respects, with the exception of the number of students achieving five A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics. These results were significantly below national figures as were the examination results in English at the end of both key stages. There was also a significant difference in progress between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. However, the current picture is that underachievement between Years 7 and 9 and overall in English is being successfully challenged.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and improving. There are good relationships between students and staff and behaviour in lessons is generally satisfactory. Although assessment systems are in use and are strengthening, teachers' marking of books with information on how pupils can improve is variable.

Students' personal development and their care and support are satisfactory. Students generally enjoy school, feel safe and choose healthy food options and an active lifestyle. This is positively promoted by the school through wide-ranging access to competitive sports and physical exercise. Attendance, however, despite the school's best efforts, is too low. Improving attendance and punctuality to lessons, on a split-site facility, remains a challenge for the school.

The senior leadership team are fully aware of what is required to secure better outcomes for students. Working closely with middle leaders, they have worked energetically, using focused monitoring and intervention strategies to improve the quality of lessons and the tracking of pupils' progress to raise levels of attainment. The school also continues to provide its workforce with appropriate professional development. The school has successfully raised attainment levels in a number of key areas. It is now refocusing to secure better progress at Key Stage 3 and in English overall. In light of the good leadership, the school's capacity for improvement is good.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in both key stages, with a focus on English and mathematics.
- Make sure that all teaching and learning is consistently good or better, particularly in Key Stage 3.
- Improve levels of attendance, primarily at Key Stage 4 and the punctuality of all learners.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's judgements that overall achievement and standards are satisfactory. The standards of students when they enter the school are broadly average. Overall, students maintain these standards during their time at the school and progress is satisfactory.

In 2006, all key performance measures at Key Stage 4 improved, with the exception of the number of students achieving five A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics. This was significantly below national average. At the end of Key Stage 3, attainment in science and mathematics also improved. However, English results declined significantly and were below national figures. Overall, progress in English from Years 7 to 11 was below the expected rate.

The school is presently using focused intervention strategies to raise achievement levels. Evidence from lesson observations and the school's own assessment data indicate that the progress made by most students, particularly in Years 7 to 9 is improving, although it is too soon to judge the impact of this. The school is setting challenging targets for the future and progress towards them is promising. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are appropriately supported and make satisfactory progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Students feel safe and most enjoy school. Relationships between students and staff are largely positive. Students value highly the support provided by their teachers and others, particularly the pastoral managers. Students are responding well to the school's encouragement to adopt healthy lifestyles and the healthy eating options available are generally well received. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally satisfactory, although there remain pockets of low level disruption in some lessons. Students show good awareness of safety issues in the school. They are sensible when crossing the busy road that separates the two sites, particularly necessary now that the major new building programme is underway. Students have good opportunities to develop personally through extra-curricular activities which enjoy good attendance. Key skills lessons promote good opportunities to make a positive contribution to the community by developing leadership skills and respect for others. Provision for developing economic well-being is less well developed. The school's programme of 'Preparation for Adult Life' has a high profile in the school and contributes to students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, punctuality to classes is an issue for improvement, as is attendance. Although the school has worked hard, using a range of strategies, attendance remains stubbornly below the national average.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving and this judgement is in line with the school's own self-evaluation. The school has put a range of strategies in place to improve teaching and learning and indications are that these are beginning to have measurable impact. For example, in a Year 11 drama lesson, tasks and activities were well planned, peer assessment was evident and there was appropriate pace and challenge for all learners. These, together with skilled questioning from the teacher helped to clarify and develop students' understanding and promote their learning.

Generally, students try hard and enjoy their lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and class management skills and relationships between students and teachers are good. With the contribution of support assistants, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress as well as other students.

The school is constantly seeking new ways to improve teaching and learning: for example, a coaching support system is available to staff to improve elements of teaching. The policy for the monitoring, evaluation and review of teaching has been updated and there is now a stronger focus on targets for students and higher expectations to raise standards.

'Assessment for learning' is developing and the best practice is shared between subject departments. The marking of written work, however, is variable and does not always inform students how to improve. The use of homework to extend learning is also not consistent throughout the school.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a good curriculum which has excellent features at Key Stage 4. Students take the unusual but innovative step of starting their GCSE courses at the beginning of Year 9. They select from a very wide range of thoughtfully planned vocational and academic courses. These closely match learners' interests and aspirations and help them to achieve well during Key Stage 4. An extremely broad range of accredited sports-related courses are a notable strength. By the end of Year 11, all students gain qualifications that equip them to move onto the next stage of their education or training. Arrangements for the teaching of religious education fulfil statutory requirements. Such lessons are taught through imaginative and engaging programmes on the 'Significant Learning Days'. The new 'SHAPE' course in Year 7 provides suitable provision for those students who need to improve their learning and personal skills. Students comment positively on the relevant and helpful contribution made by the 'Preparation for Adult Life' course to their health and social education. A start is underway to ensure that lesson plans in all subjects make more explicit reference to raising the standards of the students' literacy. A very good and popular out-of-school enrichment programme is enjoyed by the students. It includes sport, the arts, educational and residential visits as well as extra classes to prepare for examinations.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The care, guidance and support given to students are satisfactory. Students, including those at risk of underachieving and those in public care, receive sensitive and responsive help from learning mentors and others. Students know who to turn to if they have concerns. Arrangements to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are satisfactory. Child protection arrangements are in place and understood by staff. Health and safety systems are monitored. The guidance that students receive at the end of Years 8 and 11 when making choices about the subjects they wish to study further is good. Students are well supported when they enter the school in Year 7 and transition arrangements are properly managed. Target-setting is effective and students know the grade or level they are working at and how well they are doing. However, although safeguarding procedures are in place, they are only latterly being fully reviewed in terms of all personnel at the school.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Senior and middle leaders have a clear vision for the school's future and this is widely shared by staff at all levels. The leadership team have developed a number of effective systems and procedures to raise standards and improve levels of attainment. The school's system for monitoring, evaluation and review of teaching policy is rigorously applied and used to improve the consistency of good teaching.

The school's improvement plan is appropriately focused and reflects the main areas for development. As a result, examination results in both key stages are generally improving, as is achievement overall. The school recognises the variation in performance during Key Stage 3 and in English and has used rigorous intervention, including staffing changes, to ensure future improvements.

Specialist school status in sport has also resulted in improvements in many areas: significantly raised attainment in physical education; improved community links; and the range and quality of resources for learning across the school. There is a strong commitment to teamwork and this is reflected in the work of the middle leaders and the subject groups within the school. Staff value the school's commitment to their professional development, which has enhanced the culture of continuous improvement.

The school has taken effective steps to promote improvement since the last inspection: all students leave the school with at least one qualification; teaching in Key Stage 3 has improved; and appropriate curriculum changes and management systems are in place. The school offers good curriculum provision, which is excellent in Key Stage 4. This provision also includes extended services. The experienced governing body is supportive and is kept well informed and consequently is able to support the school in its work. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Following our visit to your school, we would like to thank you for talking with us in lessons, around the school and in interviews about your experiences.

We are pleased to tell you that your school provides you with a satisfactory education. Here is a summary of our findings, which we hope will be of interest to you.

- Your school is well led and managed.
- The curriculum is good and it is strong at Key Stage 4. You particularly enjoy the full range of extra-curricular activities.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall and improving.
- Staff care about your personal development and are committed to supporting you during your time at school.

We have asked the school to improve in some areas. These are:

- to raise standards, especially in English and mathematics
- to ensure that all your lessons are good or better
- to keep working hard to improve attendance, particularly of older students, and to improve punctuality to lessons.

You have an important part to play in this by making sure you attend regularly, arriving on time for all lessons and continuing to work hard to ensure you make good progress.

We hope you continue to enjoy your time at the school and wish you every success in the future.