



Spen Valley Sports College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107778
Local Authority Kirklees
Inspection number 287913
Inspection dates 28 February –1 March 2007
Reporting inspector Marianne Young HMI

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Type of school | Secondary | School address | Roberttown Lane |
| School category | Community | | Liversedge |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 | | West Yorkshire WF15 7LX |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01924 325676 |
| Number on roll (school) | 886 | Fax number | 01924 325679 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Mrs Maxine Dunn |
| | | Headteacher | Mr Toby Eastaugh |
| Date of previous school inspection | 11 November 2002 | | |

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Spen Valley Sports College is a smaller than average sized comprehensive school situated in Liversedge, which is located between Dewsbury and Huddersfield. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have a statement of special educational needs exceeds the national average. The small numbers of students from minority ethnic backgrounds are predominately of Pakistani heritage. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is slightly above the national average. The school gained specialist status as a sports college in 2004. Artsmark and Sportsmark status are also held by the school and in 2006 they were re-accredited as Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Spen Valley is an improving school which provides its students with a satisfactory standard of education. The school is becoming a popular choice with many parents and students enjoy the range of activities offered to them by the school. The headteacher together with the senior leadership team has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. He provides a clear direction for the school and has implemented appropriate strategies to bring about improvements. Students' response is evident in the way many of them spoke to inspectors praising life at the school and especially the new rewards system. Several students in Year 11 told inspectors that they appreciated the way the school had changed for the better while they had been at Spen Valley. The senior leadership team is devolving more responsibility to middle leaders, including the monitoring and evaluation of performance. However, quality assurance procedures are used inconsistently and as a result there is variation in the quality of teaching and learning within and across different departments. This disparity adversely affects students' performance in some subjects.

Provision for the students' personal development is satisfactory. The effective implementation of the behaviour management policy has helped set a calm climate for learning. The headteacher and his leadership team have a high profile around the school which is appreciated by students. Inspectors were impressed by how polite and helpful students are to visitors. Students behave well in and around school. Attendance has improved; however, a few older students still do not attend regularly. Exclusions have reduced considerably, partly as a result of the establishment of an inclusion unit, The Lodge, which is re-engaging students with learning.

Since the last inspection in 2002, standards have risen. Students' standards of attainment when they start school are below average and they remain below average at the end of each key stage. Given the students' starting points on entry to Spen Valley, they all make satisfactory progress. Standards in English, especially for boys, remain a concern.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Sometimes work is not always well matched to the learning needs of all students. Where students experience good teaching they respond enthusiastically and are keen to learn. However, some of the teaching fails to challenge the more able students sufficiently well. The curriculum is satisfactory. The number of vocational and work-related courses offered to students in Years 10 and 11 has recently been increased, often linked to the varied sports subjects and available because of the schools' specialist status. More students are continuing to study beyond the age of 16. A significant proportion of students regularly enjoy the broad range of extra-curricular activities and revision classes on offer.

All students receive good pastoral support. The quality of academic guidance and assessment, including marking, is satisfactory overall but it varies between subjects. As a result, students are not always clear about what they need to do to improve the standard of their work.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors are staunch supporters of the school and ensure effective financial management and deployment of the school's resources. The school gives satisfactory value for money. There is a determination amongst managers and staff to maintain improvement. Managers are beginning to make use of the school's specialist status to make changes and improvements, for instance the range of subjects offered to students. Good systems and procedures have been established to identify where things could be done better in order to raise achievement further for all students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve student achievement and reduce the inconsistency in performance between subjects.
- Make sure that all teachers use assessment information to help them plan lessons which are matched to students' needs.
- Ensure that the whole-school quality assurance monitoring procedures and tracking systems are used consistently and effectively, by all staff, to secure further improvements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students' achievement throughout the school is satisfactory. Standards, although still below average, are improving. This was seen in the 2006 Key Stage 3 results for mathematics and science where standards exceeded the school's own challenging targets. However, students, especially boys, performed less well in English and fewer students than expected overall reached the higher levels. The proportion of students who gained five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, and those who gained five passes at A* to C level in GCSE or equivalent qualification, fell slightly compared to the previous year.

The progress made by all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or difficulties, is satisfactory overall. The rigour with which progress is monitored is too variable and this leads to variability between many subjects. The school recognises the need to continue to raise standards, especially in English and mathematics and to reduce the inconsistency in performance between subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Students are happy, friendly and enjoy good working relationships with all staff and each other. They are proud of their school and enjoy talking to visitors about the range of activities available to them. Several commented on how much they value the house system which encourages both competition and teamwork skills. As a group of students said, 'You'll often take part because you can't let your friends down.' The atmosphere in the school is calm and orderly especially at break and lunch times where students socialise happily

in small groups. Attendance continues to improve and is satisfactory. The school knows that a small number of older students still do not attend regularly and is implementing strategies to improve their attendance.

Students feel safe in the school and bullying is not an issue. Students know what to do if they need support and guidance. These positive aspects contribute well to students' social and moral development which is good. However, students' spiritual and cultural understanding is less well developed. Opportunities are sometimes missed to promote students' spiritual development. For instance, the amount of time given by some form tutors for students to reflect on the 'thought for the week' varies considerably. Students know how to work safely and have a well developed understanding of the way in which physical activity and diet contribute to a healthy lifestyle. The school council works effectively to improve the quality of school life on behalf of their fellow students. Literacy skills are promoted well in lessons in many subjects. Students' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developed satisfactorily.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and at its best teaching is outstanding. In lessons, and in discussion with students, it was confirmed that some teachers prepare lessons well to interest, motivate and challenge all students. However, not all teachers teach lessons that stretch students with different ability levels. Students in these lessons are not motivated to make the expected progress because activities are not varied or demanding enough. It is very clear that most teachers have good working relationships with students, the majority of whom come to lessons ready to learn. Students say that teachers and support staff help and encourage them when they find work difficult. Students in a few lessons are encouraged to learn by assessing their own work and that of others in the class, but this happens infrequently. The quality and setting of homework across all subjects is inconsistent. The quality of marking across subjects is too variable. A few examples were seen where work is marked assiduously and students were clear how well they are doing and how to improve. However, too often marking and assessment are cursory and give students little guidance on how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory, meets statutory requirements and provides appropriate opportunities for all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The recent links developed by the school with the North Kirklees Collegiate has increased the number and variety of courses offered to students in Years 10 and 11. These courses, most of which are vocational, have helped re-engage some students.

The lack of a range of work-related learning is still an acknowledged area for development by the school.

New courses, supported by the school's specialist status, include a 'fast track' GCSE physical education course for able students in Year 9. Currently the personal, social and health provision is inconsistently taught, giving students mixed experiences and awareness of personal development. The school offers a wide spectrum of extra-curricular activities and revision classes which are popular and well attended. Many students are involved in monitoring the energy produced by the school's wind turbine. This initiative is attracting positive publicity nationally and in the local community. Students described how they enjoy the chance to be involved in such an innovative project and how it raises their awareness of energy conservation.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support for students is satisfactory overall. Pastoral care and support are strengths of the school and are good. All requirements for child protection and safeguarding are met. Staff are very alert to early indications of need from students who are all treated as individuals and are all fully included in all aspects of the work of the school. The staff describe The Lodge as 'a school within a school'. Staff there cater well for vulnerable students and offer them an appropriate education relevant to their particular needs. Nevertheless, recording of the progress made by these students is insufficient. There are very good relationships between the school, external bodies and parents. Good arrangements exist for students to make sensible and informed choices for optional subjects. The good advice that students receive about career choices is leading to an increasing number continuing education or training when they leave school.

The school is not complacent and is tackling the inconsistencies that currently exist in the arrangements to track and record all students' progress. The systems are not used rigorously enough by all teachers to inform their future planning and to check that all students make the progress expected of them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school, including governance, are satisfactory. The headteacher, supported by an effective senior leadership team, is providing clear direction and priorities for the school community. The senior team is focusing its work on raising standards, improving behaviour and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Although many strategies are in the early stages of development and implementation, their impact is already emerging and new structures and policies provide a solid foundation for improvement.

The school's systems for monitoring its quality of education provide a realistic view of its strengths and areas for development. However, these systems are not applied

consistently enough across the school to be used fully effectively as a diagnostic tool to help raise achievement. Middle leaders are becoming more adept at monitoring and evaluating their department; nevertheless, the overall quality of their work is not equally effective. Links with other schools and colleges are developing especially through the recent changes to the curriculum.

The governing body is becoming more challenging and evaluative, helping to ensure that monies are spent wisely. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good. The senior team has good capacity to bring about further improvements.

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Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
|---|-----------------------|

Overall effectiveness

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 3 |
| 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

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ 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

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|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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.

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 3 |
| 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

Thank you for the courtesy and welcome you extended to us during our recent visit. We appreciated the time many of you gave to talk to us about your work. Many of you are enthusiastic about life at school and the various activities available to all of you.

We found Spen Valley to be an improving school where you receive a satisfactory standard of education. You all behave well and those of you who have responsibilities, such as prefects and members of the school and the year councils, take them seriously. Teachers and support staff provide a good deal of extra support and encouragement to help some of you overcome various difficulties that slow down your learning. There are now new courses to choose from; some of you are able to take a subject at GCSE level in Year 9. Several of the Year 11 students we spoke to told us they wished they had been able to choose some of them when they were in Year 9. The inspectors were pleased to see that fewer of you are being excluded from lessons. You all obviously enjoy the new praise and reward system; we noticed several of you checking the awards board.

We have asked the headteacher and staff to improve some aspects of your education and you all need to play your part in achieving them.

- Ensure that you all work as hard as possible and make the maximum progress in all subjects.
- Make sure that all school policies are used consistently by everyone.
- Use assessment regularly and make sure your books are marked so that you all know how to improve your work.

We wish success in the future to all of you at Spen Valley Sports College.