

# Saddleworth School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 105736                 |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Oldham                 |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 308939                 |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 12–13 September 2007   |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Caroline Broomhead 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                                    | 1295  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body  |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Cllr B Lord   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mrs Patricia Cornish  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 7 February 2005   |
| <b>School address</b>                     | High Street<br>Uppermill<br>Oldham<br>Lancashire<br>OL3 6BU |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01457 872072  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01457 870190  |

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|--------------------------|----------------------|
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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

Saddleworth School is a larger than average comprehensive school. The vast majority of the students are White British and the proportion for whom English is not their first language is lower than average. Fewer than usual come from disadvantaged backgrounds and have free school meals. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low. The students' standards of attainment on entry to the school are broadly in line with national averages. The school has been a specialist language college since 2002.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Saddleworth is a good school which cares well for its students and provides a good standard of education. The students make good progress in their learning and personal development and achieve above average standards by the time they leave school. Most of the teaching in the school is good and promotes a positive attitude to learning. The majority of students enjoy school and their attendance is good. They are generally polite and courteous to others around school.

As a specialist language college, the school effectively promotes the study of modern languages and this enhances the good curriculum. It also works successfully in supporting other schools. The pupils enjoy taking part in the extensive range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities offered. These contribute significantly to their outstanding awareness of their own and other cultures. Other improvements to the curriculum have resulted in students successfully completing a broader range of courses both at the school and in the local area. Active collaboration with other schools, colleges and training providers underpins this success.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior managers set clear direction for the school and ensure that its work is kept under review. As a result the school's priorities for improvement are well known by the staff. Senior managers took effective action to reverse the sudden drop in standards which occurred in 2005. Although most students are aware of their individual targets, some are not given adequate guidance on how to achieve them. Not all staff make the best use of the data available to them to raise standards.

Parents speak highly of the school and the education it provides, but some parents would like more contact from the school. Governors are very supportive of the school and aware of its strengths and plans for improvement. The school has good capacity to improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that data on students' progress is regularly updated and used consistently and effectively by all staff to raise standards further.
- Provide more opportunities for students to be involved in setting and reviewing their academic targets and provide better guidance on what they need to do to improve.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

When students join the school their standards of attainment are broadly in line with national averages. During their time at the school they make good progress and by the time they leave they achieve standards which are above the national average. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive very effective support and make good progress.

The overall standards achieved are above average at both key stages. There was a significant drop in standards in mathematics and science in both key stages in 2005. Standards in English at Key Stage 3 fell in 2006 and were more in line with the national average. Senior managers took swift action and effectively halted this decline. Recent results in 2007 show that standards have almost returned to the good 2004 levels at both key stages. In 2007 there was an improvement in the proportion of students achieving the higher levels in English, mathematics and science in their end of Year 9 tests, reflecting the good progress they have made since starting at the school. Seven in ten students achieved the higher grades at GCSE and the

proportion achieving five or more higher grades, including English and mathematics, was just over half. Particular improvements have been made to the standards achieved at GCSE in religious education and information and communication technology (ICT) since the last inspection. Achievement and standards in modern languages are good and broadly in line with other subjects. Standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 3, and, by the end of Key Stage 4, they are comparable to those achieved by specialist language colleges with similar student intakes.

Students who may be at risk of not achieving their expected grades at the end of Year 11 are now being identified earlier and they are receiving additional coaching and support. The impact of this earlier intervention is evident in the increased proportion of students achieving the higher grades at GCSE in 2007. However, some pupils failed to achieve their targets in 2007, particularly in English Language and mathematics. Systems for routinely identifying potential underachievement are not yet fully in place across the school.

Those students who study alternative courses at the school, in the further education college or with local training providers, have achieved a range of qualifications such as adult literacy and numeracy, BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) Engineering and Young Enterprise. These represent good achievement for some students who may otherwise have left school with few or no qualifications.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The personal development and well-being of students is good. They enjoy school and attend regularly. The school helps students to develop into confident young people, with the appropriate range of academic, work-related and social skills to ensure they are well prepared for the future. The vast majority of students go on to further education.

The spiritual, moral, and social development of students is good. Their cultural development is outstanding. Students display a readiness to engage with others from different cultural groups in the United Kingdom and abroad. For example, they thoroughly enjoy and participate well in international exchanges and visits which help them to develop language skills, as well as to understand and appreciate other cultures in Europe. They also took part in the Peace Maker project. They enjoy sports, musical events and visits to other schools.

Students are well-informed about how to keep safe. The importance of a healthy lifestyle is reinforced through their high involvement in a wide range of sporting activities and eating healthily at school. Students take up opportunities to be more involved in school life and in the community, such as through the various councils and forums to make their views known.

The behaviour of a minority of students is a cause for concern for a small number of parents. Whilst inspectors observed occasional incidents of inconsiderate behaviour during the inspection, they found that behaviour was good overall, both in and around the school.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The school is investing energy and resources in further developing teaching and learning styles, and this is having a positive impact on

lessons overall. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are being used well to identify any areas in need of further improvement. Arrangements are in place to share examples of good practice and these support teachers' professional development. Teachers have good subject expertise and lesson plans take account of national strategies. A particular strength is the use of ICT across the curriculum to support learning. In almost all lessons relationships are positive and characterised by mutual respect. As a result, learning takes place in a harmonious atmosphere. Students make the greatest progress in lessons where they are engaged by a range of activities and, because there is not too much teacher talk and direction, they are required to think for themselves. In these good lessons the students are aware of what they are to learn, are fully involved in the development of ideas and share in the assessment of their learning. Consequently, their interest is sustained and they enjoy the lessons. In outstanding lessons, these features are enhanced by the teachers' infectious enthusiasm for the subject. In less effective lessons there is limited dialogue and challenge and students' learning is passive.

Students are aware of their targets and generally know how well they are doing. However, there is some inconsistency in the quality and frequency of marking. This inhibits the effective use of data and the extent to which students know what they have to do to improve.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides its students with a good quality curriculum which is continuously reviewed and adapted to meet changing needs. Effective collaborative arrangements with neighbouring institutions and providers help the school to tailor the curriculum to match the individual needs of all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is good provision for gifted and talented students. For example, students can study the three separate sciences by attending additional lessons after school. There is an extensive range of academic and vocational courses and due importance is attached to work-related learning and enterprise. The specialist school status has broadened the range of languages offered and the proportion of students studying a modern foreign language is significantly greater than that seen nationally. There are particularly good curriculum arrangements in physical education and modern languages that assist students' transition from primary to secondary school. The very high proportion of students who continue with their education after leaving Saddleworth reflects well on the quality of the curriculum.

Teachers give generously of their time and provide students with an extensive and varied range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. This is a significant strength of the school and has a major impact on students' personal development and well-being. The high number of students who take advantage of these opportunities reflects well on students' levels of enjoyment.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support for students are good and make a strong contribution to their sense of well-being. For example, the learning base provides excellent support for all students, but particularly for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at risk of disaffection. The staff provide students with individual support and counselling and link well with outside agencies. They also provide extra-curricular activities in school and outside term time to promote students' enjoyment and safety.

There is also good support for students coming into school. Parents said that their children settle well into school and feel supported. Students speak highly of the post-16 guidance and the encouragement it gives them to go onto college. However, some students do not always meet the targets of which they are capable and the guidance they receive on how to improve needs to be better. Students said that the time for, and the quality of, guidance on how to reach targets is variable and not regular enough. Arrangements for safeguarding students' welfare, health and safety are in place and meet current government requirements.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school evaluates leadership and management to be good and inspectors agree. Able leadership provides clear direction and a thrust for improvement. Following a dip in performance in 2005 and 2006 senior managers took effective action to tackle areas of weaknesses in English, science and, especially, mathematics. This has resulted in a restoring of standards in English and science to above average levels and a reversing of the decline in mathematics. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the school's work have improved markedly and are now good. Managers know the school's strengths and areas for development. They are using that information purposefully to promote inclusion, for example, in successfully widening the range of accreditation and courses in Key Stage 4. Some initiatives and revised policies are at an early stage of implementation and their effectiveness in eliminating inconsistencies in practice have still to be fully evaluated. Targets, including those for the school's specialism, are used effectively to raise standards for the majority of pupils, but subject targets are not yet used consistently sharply to provide all students with effective guidance. Managers have solved nearly all the key issues from the previous inspection and, in the case of religious education, transformed it into a real asset to the school. Learning resources are good and ICT is used well to support pupils' learning and achievement. Improvements have been made to the school's sports facilities and to the general environment, but the accommodation remains cramped for the number of students on roll. The school operates with an acceptable budget surplus and ensures that best value principles are maintained. Governors have worked well with managers to improve priority areas and remodel the workforce successfully. The school provides good value for money.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

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

### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve?  | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 2 |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?                                  | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 2 |
| The attendance of learners  | 2 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 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 | 2 |

### The quality of provision

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

<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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards  | 2   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 2   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 2   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 2   |
| 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 welcoming the Ofsted inspection team into your school earlier this week. Many of you gave your time to talk with us and let us know your views and this was appreciated.

These are our main findings from the inspection.

- Saddleworth is a good school which cares well for you and provides a good standard of education. As a specialist language college it offers a broad range of modern languages and achieves good results in most of these.
- The standards you are now achieving are good. Standards in mathematics and science fell in 2005 and English standards fell in 2006. The senior managers in the school took swift action to deal with this and the results in 2007 show that standards are returning to the school's previously above average levels.
- Most of you know your 'Grade to Beat' targets but you tell us that you are not always sure what you need to do to improve. This may partly explain why some of you fail to reach those targets.
- The school collects a great deal of information about your levels of attainment but this is not always used as effectively as it could be, by all staff, to raise standards in subjects.
- The programme of extra-curricular activities, such as international exchanges, is very popular and you told us how much you enjoy taking part. We found that your awareness of different cultures is outstanding.
- You told us that you generally feel safe at school and are well cared for and we found this to be accurate. We agree with you and your parents that there are occasional incidents of inconsiderate behaviour in school, but generally students' behaviour is good.
- Parents are supportive of the school and appreciate the time taken by staff to help you to settle in. Some parents would like more contact from the school.
- Most of the teaching is good and helps you to achieve good standards. We know that you appreciate the extra time teachers give after school to help you when you need it.
- The headteacher and senior managers provide clear direction for the school and are well aware of what it needs to do to improve. They receive good support from the governors.

Our recommendations for what the school should do to improve further are:

- to ensure that data on students' progress is regularly updated and used consistently and effectively by all staff to raise standards further
- to provide more opportunities for students to be involved in setting and reviewing their academic targets and provide better guidance on what they need to do to improve.

Once again, thank you for your support with this inspection. We wish you every success for the future.