

Siddal Moor Sports College

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 105834 |
| Local Authority | Rochdale |
| Inspection number | 308966 |
| Inspection dates | 7–8 November 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Jane Austin 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 category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 1004 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | |
| Headteacher | Mr Clive Rotheram |
| Date of previous school inspection | 31 January 2005 |
| School address | Newhouse Road Heywood Lancashire OL10 2NT |
| Telephone number | 01706 369436 |
| Fax number | 01706 362250 |

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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

Siddal Moor is well established as a sports college having held this status since 1997. It is a school of average size with considerably more boys than girls on roll. Almost all pupils are White British, with the small number of minority ethnic heritage coming mainly from Pakistani backgrounds. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language. Pupils come from a broad range of socio-economic circumstances but, overall, these are less advantaged than average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average although there is a lower than average number with statements of special educational need. The school holds a number of awards including Investors in People, Sportsmark Gold and for being a Healthy School.

The school is currently being led by an acting headteacher following the retirement of the previous headteacher and the appointment of a new post holder from January 2008.

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: 2

This is a good school whose provision is enhanced considerably by the extensive range of opportunities for students to pursue sport within the curriculum, as a leisure pursuit and, for some, as elite athletes. Its specialist sports status has had a marked impact on raising standards and improving achievement, broadening approaches to learning and pursuing a wider range of accreditation routes. It has also extended opportunities for students to develop leadership skills and take responsibility in school, contributing significantly to their self-confidence and well-being. Students' personal development is good: generally they behave well and have positive attitudes to learning.

Standards and achievement are improving. Standards are broadly average. They rose markedly at Key Stage 3 this year to reach the national averages. At Key Stage 4 standards in science remain below average. However, the percentage of students gaining five good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, increased substantially and is in line with the national figure. Notably, there was a significant rise in the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C from 55% in 2006 to 70% in 2007, well above the national average. These are the school's best ever results. They represent good achievement and signal an improving trend in students' progress. Students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress in lessons leading to good achievement overall. This is a consequence of teaching and learning that is good overall. However, the more able students do not always make as much progress as they could because, in too many lessons, tasks lack sufficient challenge to develop their understanding enough to accelerate their learning.

The curriculum is good because the school works hard to meet the aspirations of individual students through flexible pathways at Key Stage 4. There is a growing focus on ensuring that students progress successfully to the next stage of their education. A very high proportion of students take advantage of the extensive range of extra-curricular activities offered. The care and support for students are strengths of the schools' provision. The school works hard to ensure that all are included by resolutely tackling the barriers to learning and personal development experienced by vulnerable students. Despite the school's best efforts, attendance remains slightly below the national average. Too many students also fail to arrive at school on time. Academic guidance is improving with the introduction of a clear, accessible system for regularly checking students' progress towards their targets. However, the overall effectiveness of this is restricted by inconsistent marking of students' work.

Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders are committed to continued progress on the plans for major future developments and are working hard to ensure no time is lost during a period of transition in leadership. Middle leaders play their part in assuring the quality of the school's provision. Governors work effectively for the school's success. Issues raised at the last inspection have been addressed successfully and the school has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the achievement of the more able students.
- Raise standards in science at Key Stage 4.
- Strengthen assessment procedures by implementing a consistent marking policy.
- Raise levels of attendance and improve punctuality at the start of the school day.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The majority of students enter the school in Year 7 having attained standards that are broadly average. During the period since the last inspection there has been a consistent pattern of improving standards. The school's tracking system shows that achievement is also improving over time and that students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress. This is the consequence of the improved quality of teaching and learning. In 2007, Year 9 students obtained results in English, mathematics and science tests that were broadly in line with the national averages. At GCSE level there has been a rising trend in the proportion of students gaining five or more grades A* to C. In 2006, 55% of students met this standard and progress was broadly in line with national averages. In 2007 the proportion rose to 70%: students achieved well. The proportion of students gaining five higher grades that include English and mathematics is now broadly in line with the national figure. In science, however, standards reached by the end of Year 11 are below average. Very few students leave the school without any qualification.

The school has identified where there are areas of underachievement. For example, some of the most able students are not being sufficiently challenged to reach the standards of which they are capable. The introduction of more vocational courses, together with the advantages of specialist college status, have had a very positive impact as is evident in the high standards reached in BTEC Sports, GCSE physical education and dance.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good. As befits a sports college, much good work is done to promote healthy lifestyle choices. All students have at least two hours of physical education each week and more than half enjoy the extensive opportunities to participate in extra-curricular sporting clubs and events. 'Healthy Schools Status', awarded in 2006, recognizes the school's efforts to promote healthy living. In addition, there has been considerable success in helping students to stop smoking.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. These aspects are fostered through the strong ethos built around the school's statement of values. They are further supported by the house system that students say gives them a real sense of belonging. Students wear their uniforms with pride: they respect their environment, keeping it free of litter and graffiti. Students take advantage of the good opportunities to make a contribution to the community. They are very well prepared for this by leadership training, a feature of the school's specialist work. Through house councils they have a say in the development of policies on issues such as anti-bullying and behaviour. In addition, the prefect system is very effective in developing students' sense of responsibility, as is clear from the enthusiasm with which Year 11 are embracing it. Other opportunities include a friendship club run by peer mentors and a range of fund-raising activities for charities.

Most students enjoy school and behave well, both in and out of lessons. However, on occasion learning is disrupted by the poor behaviour of a small minority of students. There are robust systems to improve attendance but, despite the school's best efforts, levels of attendance remain slightly below the national average. Too many students fail to arrive at school on time. A number of factors such as the work-related learning programme, well structured careers

education and enterprise activities, which involve whole year groups, ensure that students are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall. In the many successful lessons seen during the inspection, teachers were enthusiastic, had good subject knowledge and were competent in the use of interactive whiteboards as a resource for learning. The brisk pace of lessons and well directed praise by teachers were effective in motivating students. Interesting tasks engaged students, enabling good progress in learning. Behaviour in lessons is generally good, although there are small pockets of unacceptable conduct that prevent successful learning taking place for all. In the main, students show good attitudes to their work and are motivated when they are fully engaged in active learning. The effectiveness of some teaching allows students to work both independently and with others when required, sharing their ideas and opinions in a safe and secure environment. However, in lessons that are dominated by the teacher, the development of students' independent learning skills is limited and the pace of learning slows. Better learning is secured when teachers plan thoroughly and provide appropriate levels of challenge for students of all abilities. At times, insufficient challenge is provided for the more able students and this hinders their progress.

Not all students are aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. There is some good practice in the school, for instance in English, but overall marking is too variable in quality and frequency to contribute well to learning. This reduces the effectiveness of the school's tracking system.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good, inclusive curriculum that ensures the good development of all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The courses offered meet the range of students' needs enabling them to make appropriate and informed choices at the end of Year 9. These choices include subjects such as engineering, health and social care, and child development. The school has established a strong collaborative partnership with the local further education college and two local secondary schools through which it is able to provide good learning experiences in courses including construction, hairdressing and public services. The knowledge gained during Year 10 and Year 11 in these work-related subjects equips students very well for further education and to make well-informed career choices for later life. As a consequence of the sports specialism, extra-curricular provision is very wide ranging: it offers equality of opportunity to all and includes sporting activities such as hockey, judo and girls football. In addition, performing arts activities are very popular with students and enrich their learning. A very high proportion of students take advantage of out-of-school activities and enjoyment of these is high.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The very high standard of care provided for students ensures their health, safety and well-being. Students say there is always a range of staff they can turn to for help. As a result, the

relationships between teachers and students and between students are very positive. Parents and students are very appreciative of the work of the heads of house and form tutors. Personal problems are dealt with quickly and effectively. The arrangements for helping new pupils settle into the school, including those who join during the school year, work well. A comment by one Year 7 pupil is typical, 'I was scared about coming here, but it's great. Our form teacher has really helped us to settle in.' 'Removing the barriers' lies at the heart of the school's work. Robust procedures are used to identify and monitor students who may be at risk: they are sensitively supported so they achieve well. Where required, liaison with outside agencies is effective. Procedures for child protection procedures are secure.

All students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are guided effectively to reach their personal and academic targets. A strong feature of the guidance programme is the regular review of progress illustrated by clear 'traffic light' charts. While most students know their targets, how well they are doing and how to improve, inconsistencies in marking reduce the accuracy of the feedback to them and the school's overall tracking of progress. The school knows that it needs to do more to raise the attainment of its more able learners. Older students receive good guidance when choosing options and are well supported in making decisions about their future.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. In this period of interim leadership arrangements the acting headteacher, well supported by the senior team, is continuing to work towards the shared aspirations for the school's development within the national programme for Building Schools for the Future. While marked gains in GCSE results this year are being celebrated, the challenge for continuous improvement is being sustained. Staff share the commitment to this. It is exemplified in the current whole-school focus on embedding effective assessment for learning. In this, and a range of other areas such as vocational accreditation, good use is made of expertise developed through the school's specialist work.

The school's self-evaluation is effective, accurately identifying areas for development. Suitable systems for quality assurance promote improvement and hold staff at all levels to account. Regular evaluations by departments and responsive planning arrangements contribute to this. A new, manageable system for the regular monitoring of students' progress is enhancing existing processes. Revised roles for heads of house and the appointment of behaviour managers are, together, reinforcing the focus on raising standards and improving achievement. This year's examination results show that this is paying dividends.

Governors are knowledgeable about, and supportive of, the school's work. They provide a suitable level of challenge to the school's leadership and are assiduous in their stewardship of the school's resources. The school gives good value for money.

The school regularly canvasses parents on various aspects of its work. A very high proportion of parents returned questionnaires circulated as part of the inspection: most have positive views of the school's provision. However, a significant minority expressed concerns about students' behaviour. Evidence gathered by inspectors indicates that behaviour overall is good, although there are occasional pockets of unacceptable conduct that have a negative impact on learning for a small minority of students.

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Annex A

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 |
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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? | 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

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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 |

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 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 | 3 |
| 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

Inspection of Siddal Moor Sports College, Heywood, OL10 2NT

Thank you for making us welcome during the recent inspection. I would particularly like to thank those who shared their views of the school with us. It was very helpful in enabling us to make our judgements. We think you attend a good school.

These are the main strengths of the school.

- Rising standards: in 2007 the school had its best ever GCSE results with 70% of the previous Year 11 gaining five or more A* to C grades.
- Good teaching and learning are enabling you to make good progress. Most of you have positive attitudes to learning and apply yourselves well in class.
- There is a good choice of courses at Key Stage 4 that prepare you well for the decisions you have to make when you leave school. You get good guidance on making appropriate choices to enable you to succeed.
- The good range of opportunities you have to take responsibility and make a difference both in school and beyond.
- Sports college status: you have a good range of courses to choose from and the range of extra-curricular sports activities is very wide. Those of you with exceptional talents are well supported to gain a balance between the demands of training and learning.

Just as there are always things you can do to improve your work, so there are always ways of making a school even better. We have asked the school to:

- ensure that those of you who are more able make the progress of which you are capable
- raise standards in science at Key Stage 4
- improve assessment by making sure work is marked thoroughly and consistently
- raise levels of attendance and punctuality at the beginning of the school day.

You all have an important part to play by working as hard as you can, coming to school, except when you have a very good reason not to, and making sure you arrive on time. Many of your parents commented in their questionnaires on the small number of students who behave badly at times and disrupt learning. Every one of you is responsible for behaving well so that you can make the most of the good opportunities you have to learn.

We wish you all much success in the future.