

Failsworth School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105735
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	336551
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael McIlroy HMI

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	1468
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Barbara Dawson
Headteacher	Mr John Meagher
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2007
School address	Brierley Avenue Failsworth Manchester M35 9HA
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 50 lessons and 49 teachers. Meetings were held with nominated staff, several of the school's partners, two groups of students and representatives of the governing body. A telephone conversation was also held with the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's policies, improvement planning and assessment data. Questionnaires returned from 58 parents and carers, as well as questionnaires from staff and students, were studied by inspectors. At the time of the inspection, students from Year 11 had left the school.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress made by students, including the more able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the quality of teaching
- the quality of the school's care, guidance and support for students
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in maintaining the school's improvement.

Information about the school

The school is a larger than average secondary school. Most students are of White British heritage and very few are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. An average proportion of students are known to be entitled to free school meals. The percentage of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average but the proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Since the last inspection the school has moved into a new building. A new headteacher has recently joined the school.

The school is a specialist sports college and holds a number of awards including the Artsmark Gold award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good and improving school with some outstanding features. Its chief strengths lie in the very effective partnerships that it has developed with a wide range of other agencies and its good leadership and management. The new headteacher leads the school well. He has quickly won the trust and support of staff and students and through an open, decisive and robust approach has maintained the school's improvement, reinvigorated staff and raised the school's aspirations for students. He is well supported by an effective team of senior and middle managers. Governance is satisfactory. Although supportive of the school, members of the governing body do not have effective means of gathering information on its work to provide sufficient challenge to managers. The achievement of students is good. Strong and sustained improvements in standards since the last inspection mean that their attainment is now average. Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in their learning. A key factor in the improvement in standards is the good curriculum which due to its range and diversity caters well for students' different academic and vocational needs. Also contributing to these improvements is the good care, support and guidance which students receive. These ensure that they make apt choices about the courses they opt to study both in Key Stage 4 and in further education. The quality of teaching is good. However, the use of assessment procedures by teachers is satisfactory as there are inconsistencies in the quality of marking.

Effective action by the school and its partners has improved students' attendance which is now above average. Students behave well and feel safe in school. They have a good appreciation of how to lead healthy lifestyles, partly due to the effective impact of the school's sports specialism which ensures that all receive good levels of physical education and have access to a wide range of other sporting activities. The contribution students make to the school and area is good, which reflects the school's close links with its local community. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Although their teamwork skills are well developed, students' average attainment means that they are adequately prepared for the future world of work and study.

The school's strong commitment to equal opportunities ensures that all groups of students, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are integrated well into the life of the school and make similar progress in their learning. Links with parents and carers are satisfactory and the school is beginning to develop these. The good leadership of the school, its accurate evaluation of its effectiveness and the track record of steady improvement in standards mean that the school has a good capacity to improve further. The school provides good value for money.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, including that in English and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that marking and assessment systems are consistently applied across the school so that all students know clearly what it is they have to do to improve
 - ensuring that planning for lessons takes greater account of the different levels of ability in classes so that all students are engaged and challenged by the work they are set.
- Strengthen governance so that governors can provide more challenge to school leaders by:
 - providing governors with appropriate training by December 2010 on analysing and interpreting attainment and financial data
 - enabling the governing body to set up effective systems, such as linking governors with key departments, so that governors can inform themselves about the school's work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The attainment of students is average. In 2009 the proportion of students who attained the equivalent of five or more A* to C grades at GCSE level matched the national average. The percentage of those gaining the key measure of five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics was broadly average, having risen strongly since 2007. Attainment in English in 2009 was stronger than that in mathematics. All students leave the school with at least one GCSE or its equivalent and the proportion of those gaining five or more GCSEs at A* to G grades is significantly above average. Inspection evidence and the school's data indicate that this trend of improvement is set to continue. The progress made by students is good. They enter the school with standards of learning that are often below average, particularly in literacy, and by the time they leave the school they have attained average standards. Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, also make good progress in vocational subjects. Students with a statement of special educational needs make very good progress.

Students' good appreciation of how to lead a healthy lifestyle is in a large part due to the school's specialism which enables them to enjoy good levels of physical education, dance and a good range of extra-curricular sporting activities. Students feel safe inside their new building. They are confident that they can approach staff with any issues of concern and that these are swiftly followed up. Students are well behaved, partly due to effective supervision by staff inside and around the building and good systems for monitoring behaviour. They get on well together and are polite and courteous to visitors. Students make a good contribution to their school and the wider community because of the many opportunities they have to exercise positions of responsibility, such

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as being house and school councillors. Others, who are sports and dance leaders, help in local primary and special schools. Students' moral and social development is good and their cultural and spiritual development is satisfactory. Attendance has improved due to robust procedures by the school to reduce absence and the effective partnership with the local education welfare service. Although students' teamwork skills are good, their average attainment means they are only satisfactorily prepared for the future world of work and study.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Learning objectives are routinely shared with students and resources such as interactive whiteboards are effectively used to introduce, explain and reinforce new concepts. Good relationships exist between staff and students and behaviour is usually managed well, partly through good use of the school's reward system. Teaching is lively and fast-paced. Planning is generally good, although some work is not always matched to the range of abilities that exist in each class. Additional adults are well used to support students with special educational needs

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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and/or disabilities. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of marking. While there are many examples of good marking, some does not give students enough guidance on what it is they must do in order to improve.

The broad and balanced curriculum has an appropriate focus on English and mathematics. It has a good mix of academic and vocational subjects. Four different pathways for learning in Key Stage 4, on which students are carefully advised, mean that students' individual learning needs are well catered for. The extra year allocated to learning in Key Stage 4 is well used to deepen students' understanding of their subjects and has helped improve results. The curriculum is also flexible. New subjects, such as triple science, have been introduced to meet the needs of the more able students. The curriculum is further enriched through the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer.

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are good. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are well integrated into school life and their progress is closely and regularly monitored. Good links with primary schools ensure that new students are well inducted into the school. This is built upon by the recent introduction of the effective 'family' system of tutorial groups. This provides opportunities for staff to get to know students well and time to discuss how attendance and behaviour can be improved. These sessions also provide opportunities for older students to act as 'peer mentors' to younger students which also aid their induction to the school. Students in Year 8 receive careful guidance on their study options for Key Stage 4. Older students are well informed about further education and careers. Students' pastoral needs are well catered for by the close links the school has with a wide range of external agencies.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's good leadership team has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and issues identified for improvement at the last inspection have been well addressed. The quality of teaching and learning is regularly and rigorously monitored. New staff are successfully inducted into the school and training is focused on improving weaker teaching. Since his arrival at the school, the headteacher has restructured staffing to improve accountability and oversight of the school's work, made academic targets more challenging and tackled weaknesses in the school's

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budget. New systems have been introduced to develop staff so that existing good practice within the school can be effectively drawn upon.

The outstanding partnerships with a very wide range of external agencies have a strong impact on students' well-being, attendance and their personal and academic development. The school is proactive in developing these partnerships. A good example of this is its collaboration with local organisations to stage the school's summer community activity programme. This has helped reduce significantly levels of local antisocial behaviour. Relationships with parents and carers are generally positive.

A strong commitment to equality means that discrimination is tackled effectively and the progress of different groups of students, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, is carefully monitored which helps all groups of students to make similar progress in their learning. Procedures for the safeguarding of students are satisfactory. The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. It has a clear understanding of its own community and the extensive and effective work of the school's specialism has been used to build up links with a wide range of different schools in the region. Members of the governing body provide support for the school's leaders and have contributed to the drive to improve attendance and behaviour. However, they do not have effective systems in place to gather their own information about the school's work, so that they can provide robust challenge to the school's leaders and hold them to account.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

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During the inspection 58 questionnaires were received. Almost all parents and carers who returned questionnaires were of the view that the school keeps them informed about their children's progress and most agree that their children enjoy school. However, a small minority felt that the school did not do enough to help them support their children's learning or deal with unacceptable behaviour well enough. Inspectors found that the school engages satisfactorily with parents and carers to help them promote their children's learning and deals well with unacceptable behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Failsworth School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 58 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1468 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	28	34	59	5	9	2	3
The school keeps my child safe	16	28	33	57	6	10	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	20	34	36	62	1	2	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	31	29	50	10	17	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	16	28	30	52	9	16	2	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	17	32	55	11	19	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	14	34	59	9	16	2	3
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	15	26	32	55	6	10	2	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	19	36	62	6	10	3	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	26	29	50	10	17	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	19	32	55	7	12	4	7
The school is led and managed effectively	11	19	39	67	5	9	3	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	28	32	55	5	9	4	7

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



25 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Failsworth School, Manchester, M35 9HA

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when we inspected your school recently. Your school is a good school. These are some of the best things we found.

- Your school has outstanding partnerships with other agencies.
- You achieve well at school.
- Your behaviour is good.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep safe and how to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- Your attendance has improved and is now above average.
- Your school is well led by the headteacher and his team.
- You have a good curriculum and you receive good care, support and guidance.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to make several improvements to your school. We have asked them to raise standards in all subjects by ensuring that all of you are fully challenged by the work you are given and by ensuring that marking informs all of you what you need to do in order to improve. We have also asked that governors receive training in order to help them learn more about the work of the school so that they can hold school leaders to account.

Once again, many thanks for being so polite and helpful when we inspected your school recently.

Yours sincerely

Mr Michael McIlroy

Her Majesty's Inspector

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