



Saltash.net Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112040
LEA Cornwall
Inspection number 278833
Inspection dates 9 November 2005 to 10 November 2005
Reporting inspector Peter Way HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Wearde Road
School category	Community		Saltash
Age range of pupils	11 to 19		Cornwall PL12 4AY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01752 843715
Number on roll	1361	Fax number	01752 842825
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Ken Martin
Date of previous inspection	13 March 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Isobel Bryce

Age group 11 to 19	Inspection dates 9 November 2005 - 10 November 2005	Inspection number 278833
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of five inspectors: one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Saltash.net Community School is a larger than average comprehensive school serving a mix of rural and urban communities with a diverse social and economic background. The percentage of students with special educational needs is slightly above the national average but there are twice as many students with statements on account of the special unit for students with severe learning difficulties and disabilities. There is a below average number of students from minority ethnic groups and there are very few whose first language is not English. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average and the school is over-subscribed. Specialist school status has recently been acquired for 'Science and mathematics & computing with a rural dimension'. A new sixth form centre opened earlier this year. The area is also served by grammar schools in Plymouth.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of this school is good. It judges itself to be so and the inspection team agrees. This is because there are a number of significant strengths and the school is clearly focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and student achievement. The students' standards of attainment are often well above the national average. Although there is some variability in student progress, it is good overall. Recent improvements, such as quality assurance procedures and redefined leadership responsibilities, are already having a beneficial impact. It was a clear expectation that specialist school status would improve opportunities, ethos and attitudes. The inspection team agrees that these have consequently improved. The school plays an important role in the life of the community, in preparing students for their place in society and in developing links with the outside world. Above all, the school pays great attention to the needs of all its students, gives them every opportunity for excellent personal development and enables them to attain good standards.

The school has very good capacity for further improvement. It has made good progress since the last inspection and especially in the last two academic years. The leadership group and all the staff are clear about raising student achievement. Better performance analysis, greater involvement of students in their learning targets and more departmental accountability are current examples of effective strategic development. A significant majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire are very supportive of the school.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school has an effective sixth form which has grown in size and popularity. The new sixth form centre has improved students' attitudes and they feel valued. They enjoy being in the sixth form and are well supported. Attainment in recent years has been above average, although unconfirmed data indicates this may not be so for 2005. The sixth form is well led and managed. The department has put strategies in place to raise students' standards and aspirations, including closer communication with subject teachers, regular meetings with mentors and rigorous monitoring of performance. Sixth formers are good role models for younger students. Specialist school status has enabled a wider range of A level subjects to be offered such as psychology and environmental science. External links are being developed with other partners to improve further this range.

What the school should do to improve further

- raise student achievement by ensuring that they know exactly what it is they need to do to improve
- use performance data to raise teachers' expectations of what students can achieve and to monitor the progress they are making.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students' attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average. Standards at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11 have frequently shown attainment to be significantly higher than national averages. Sixth form results have also been good. The school sets itself challenging targets and does well to meet some of these.

In Key Stage 3, in recent years, students have usually attained standards well above average in English and science, and their progress, though variable, is generally good. Progress is better through Key Stage 4 with some groups significantly exceeding national expectations. In 2004, the proportion of students gaining five or more grades A*-C was significantly above the national average. Performance in the sixth form compares very favourably with other schools with particularly good improvement from 2003 to 2004 in the percentage of students gaining A and B grades.

The school is aware that there is some variation in student progress between subjects, between key stages and from year to year. There is no particular pattern although there are more examples of limited progress in Key Stage 3. The leadership team is now investigating such issues more effectively.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Very good attendance and the high level of retention in the sixth form shows that students enjoy being in the school. Attitudes in class are good and students say they feel safe at school. Although there has been some resistance, mainly by a few of the older students, to the changes in ethos brought about by the school's specialist status, behaviour and attitudes have clearly improved. Behaviour in lessons is good and the school's new approach to behaviour management is well understood and effective. A recent parent survey highlighted the need for behaviour to improve and a significant proportion of parents raised the issue in the parent questionnaire for this inspection. The inspection team found that there has been a significant improvement.

Personal, social and health education lessons play an important part in students' development and the school places great importance on the way in which students demonstrate the values they have learnt. The school's high profile and positive role in the community is greatly valued by local people. Students hold successful charity fund-raising events and are involved in a wide range of local activities. Sixth formers show outstanding leadership qualities in the community service programme where they assist younger students in after-school activities, undertake duties around the school and organise other events.

Students enjoy their lessons and many participate in the very wide range of additional activities which are available. Workplace skills are well developed through the curriculum and other extra events. Enjoyment is extended through opportunities to travel abroad, take part in sporting activities and competitions in a variety of spheres. The school

has made many efforts to encourage the adoption of healthy lifestyles and students have responded positively, for example, the school council has established healthy options in the dining hall and water outlets around the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good because teachers plan and deliver their lessons well, using a variety of approaches to interest and inform students. Where lesson objectives are shared with students, there is a higher level of challenge and better learning outcomes. Students are not always sufficiently clear about how to improve their work and this needs to be made more explicit. There is some variability in the quality of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 3 where teachers' expectations are not always high enough. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, teaching is good; there is more focus on what students learn and on setting targets for improvement, and consequently, students make better progress. The school has an inclusive approach towards students of all abilities and those with special educational needs are well supported by effective classroom assistants, and they make good progress.

The school has recently set up better systems to monitor pupil progress. Planners have been introduced to give students greater responsibility for their own learning. Teachers are being given better quality assessment data to identify how students can improve. Good practice is being shared between teachers. The new styles of lesson observation are improving the quality of teaching and learning for students.

Specialist school status has increased ICT facilities for teachers to use in classrooms to vary the range of learning approaches. There is a good library which is well used by students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. In Years 7 to 9, it provides a broad and balanced range of courses that meet students' needs. There is a wide choice of subjects for students of all capabilities in Years 10 and 11. The introduction of vocational courses has successfully improved the motivation of students and provided an alternative course of study. The school has made effective use of its specialist status by providing GCSE separate sciences, rural science and, for the more able in Year 10, 'fast track' mathematics. There have also been improvements in curriculum provision for gifted and talented students. The school pays particular attention to regular curriculum review.

Excellent links have been developed with other schools and especially the local primary schools with evident benefits for students before and after transfer to secondary education. Links are developing with local colleges to extend the range of courses available to the sixth form. This collaboration is at a relatively early stage. The school

works effectively with local businesses to develop students' understanding of, and preparation for, the world of work.

The school provides an outstanding range of enrichment activities in which students participate enthusiastically.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support procedures are good with effective systems in place for providing advice throughout students' school life. Personal development and well-being are very successfully promoted. Students who need advice at key points feel well supported and, for example, can have individual interviews with specialist careers staff. Key Stage 4 students and students in the sixth form feel that with this support and advice from their subject teachers they have all the information needed on which to base their decisions. Personal development programmes for all students include key information in each year's programme, and students are aware of how they can find further information and advice. The quality of the advice which the school provides is good.

Child protection is fully covered and meets statutory requirements. There are good relationships with external agencies. The school provides a good model in supporting looked-after and vulnerable children. This includes those with specific learning needs and disabilities such as the students in the special unit who are fully integrated into the life of the school and by the end of Key Stage 4 achieve standards well above those expected of them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's view is that leadership and management are good and the inspection team agrees because of the strong focus on raising achievement and the steps taken recently to bring this about. Very clear guidance has been given by the headteacher and leadership group to ensure that all departments are more carefully considering their performance. The shared commitment and focus towards whole school improvement, underpinned by robust monitoring, is particularly noteworthy. This is an area in which the new leadership group has been very effective.

Strong departmental leadership is now more clearly focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning. A significant amount of work has been done to remodel the school workforce, which has been handled in an open and sensitive manner. At the same time, quality assurance procedures have been more rigorously established and pursued. Clear expectations and responsibilities have been placed on teachers, line managers and department heads. This is a significant development and correctly emphasises student progress as the main improvement issue.

The monitoring of performance is much improved. It has recently become more evaluative in setting clear and challenging targets for each department. The new

departmental review procedures are effective in ensuring the consideration of performance analysis which has not previously been available.

Equality of opportunity is well promoted and there are many good examples of access for all students. Resources are well deployed, including additional resources resulting from specialist school status. The school provides good value for money. The governing body is effective and continues to develop its interaction with school leadership. It knows about the school's strengths and weaknesses and has become much more involved in holding the school to account for its performance.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
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	1	
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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	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 are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Saltash.net Community School Wearde Road Saltash Cornwall PL12 4AY

11 November 2005

Dear Students

As you will remember, we recently visited your school to carry out an Ofsted inspection. We were impressed with many things at Saltash.net Community School, not the least being, you, the students. Thank you for your cooperation and for expressing your views so clearly to the inspectors.

There have been many changes at your school over the last couple of years. Improvements include things like the greater amount of choice in the Key Stage 4 curriculum, the new sixth form block and the acquisition of specialist school status, which has brought many benefits.

The new style of inspection report is very much shorter and there is no reason why you should not read the entire report; in fact, we hope you will because it will explain how we have come to our judgements.

We judged the greatest strength of the school to be the way in which it secures significant progress in your own personal development and the opportunities which the school offers you to develop a wide range of interests. Your attendance is very good and you enjoy most of your lessons. The school is well led and managed and the quality of teaching is mostly good.

Attainment in SATs and national examinations in Years 9, 11 and 13 have often been well above the national average.

We have given the school two things to improve. Firstly, about feedback on your performance, and secondly, about teachers' expectations of what you should be achieving. You, too, have a major part to play in school improvement by pressing the teachers to tell you exactly how to improve your work, whether it is orally in the lessons or in written comments on your work. More importantly, you need to find ways with your teachers of letting them know when you have made these improvements. This is just as much your responsibility as the teachers'. Please read the full report to find out more.

Yours sincerely

Peter Way HM Inspector of Schools