

Salt Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107395
Local Authority	Bradford
Inspection number	309394
Inspection dates	6–7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Katrina Gueli 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1367
6th form	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Shirley Craven
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Mansfield
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2005
School address	Higher Coach Road Baildon Shipley West Yorkshire BD17 5RH
Telephone number	01274 415551
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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

Salt Grammar School is a larger than average 11 to 18 comprehensive school. It was designated as a specialist school in mathematics and computing in September 2003. Standards on entry are broadly average but vary from year to year. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is also broadly average and increasing. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school is a School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) provider for the subject of information and communication technology (ICT). Salt Grammar has been awarded several quality marks including most recently SportsMark, Investors in People status, the Healthy Schools Award, the Safemark travel award and the International School award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Salt Grammar School is a good school. Good teaching and learning, a curriculum which is carefully tailored to meet individual needs and effective care, guidance and support ensures most students achieve well. Students consider this to be a friendly school where staff are highly committed to their personal and academic development. This is supported by the overwhelming majority of parents who believe that the school provides a safe and caring environment.

There is a clear, shared vision for continued improvement led effectively by the headteacher and other leaders. Strong leadership combined with the hard work of all the staff has ensured that disruption caused by the building of the new school has not had an adverse impact on student outcomes. Governors are knowledgeable and well placed to hold the school to account. Monitoring and evaluation are thorough and effective, ensuring development priorities are accurately identified. Most of these priorities are being addressed successfully using well thought-out solutions. However, although much work is being done to improve attendance, the absence rate of a small minority of students remains a concern.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 increased significantly in 2007 and are broadly average. All Key Stage 4 students left with at least one GCSE qualification in 2007. However, the proportion of students gaining five passes at GCSE remains below average. There has also been a steady trend of improvement at Key Stage 3 since 2004.

Rates of progress are increasing for most groups of learners because a large majority of teaching is now good or better. Tracking to identify underperformance is rigorous and extra help to get learners back on track is effective. A whole-school focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning has been central to raising standards. The use of students' views to inform the development of teaching demonstrates how the school values and responds to the student voice. Teachers also view themselves as learners. They are reflective and committed to continuously developing their practice to improve student outcomes.

The good curriculum also contributes well to improving outcomes. Flexibility, partnership working and the regular reviewing of impact ensures that the individual learning needs of students are well met.

Students receive good quality care and support which promotes good progress in their personal development. For students with the most complex needs who are most at risk of underachievement or disaffection, the level of care and support is outstanding. These students speak very highly of the placements and adults the school has provided to support their learning and personal development. Consistent application of key policies, such as the positive approach to behaviour management, has succeeded in significantly reducing the number of exclusions and in improving the climate for learning across the school. Students respond well and are motivated by rewards for good work and behaviour and, as a result, their attitudes to learning are good.

The mathematics and computing specialism permeates all aspects of the school's work and both subjects have successfully driven improvements in outcomes for students and supported leadership development across the school. The impact of sharing good practice from the mathematics faculty can be seen, for example, in the rigorous systems used to track student progress which are now used effectively across all faculties. Students also benefit greatly from the improved use of ICT. This is both enhancing learning in the classroom and ensuring students develop skills that will contribute to their economic well-being in the future. The specialist

subjects also have a wide-ranging impact through community activity, including support for the family of nine primary schools and the work of the advanced skills teacher for mathematics with secondary partners. In addition, the school trains up to 10 new ICT teachers a year as a SCITT and senior leadership colleagues are involved in steering the development of ICT provision for the three schools in phase one of the Bradford Building Schools for the Future project. All targets for the specialist subjects have been met or exceeded.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory, with a good capacity to improve. Students make satisfactory progress to achieve average standards. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly strengthened leadership team has developed a clear vision for the future development of the sixth form and is now focused on working with colleagues to improve achievement.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They develop into articulate and self-confident young adults who enjoy life in the sixth form. Students particularly appreciate the way in which teachers support them with their work as well as the opportunities provided to take part in subject competitions and visits. They make a significant contribution to the community through mentoring younger students and working with local organisations to promote crime prevention, providing very good role models in terms of attitudes towards learning and behaviour. Students are well prepared for the future through developing their leadership skills and participating in financial awareness days.

Teaching and learning are good. Most sixth form lessons have similar features to those found in the main school and teachers actively encourage student involvement and independent learning. This, together with the introduction of rigorous monitoring of academic performance, has led to improving progress for students currently in the school. The curriculum is satisfactory. While students can choose from the range of courses on offer through collaborative arrangements with other providers, the school is aware that scope exists to further develop the range of courses taught on site to ensure that the curriculum meets more closely the full range of student needs. The support and guidance provided for all students are good, including for those making university applications. Students entering the sixth form benefit from the well-planned induction programme run in conjunction with a local university.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further by increasing the proportion of students who gain five pass grades at GCSE.
- Improve the curriculum post-16 to ensure the needs of all students are fully met.
- Improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students' achievement is good as a result of the good quality of provision for their academic and personal development. Standards are rising because the majority of teaching is good and teachers are using the rigorous and accurate tracking information available to inform their planning. This enables most students to make good progress in their lessons.

Standards have shown an improving trend at Key Stage 3 and 4 and are broadly average. The proportion of students gaining five GCSEs at A* to C grades rose by 11 percentage points in 2007, the highest level of attainment reached by students in the school to date. The number of students gaining five GCSEs at A* to C grades including English and mathematics has also risen significantly and is now above average. This represents good progress for most students. Students make consistently good progress in the specialist subject of mathematics at both key stages relative to their starting points.

There has been strong emphasis on raising boys' achievement and, consequently, the gap between the progress of girls and boys narrowed in 2007. The school recognises that the percentage of students gaining five A* to G grades at GCSE is too low. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress at a similar rate to their peers. Those at the greatest risk of underachievement benefit from a high degree of personalised support which helps them to succeed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development is good and this makes a significant contribution to their progress. Relationships are positive ensuring that this is a happy school. Behaviour is good and bullying is rare. Students are confident that if bullying does occur it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Building work has made the outside spaces cramped and difficult to negotiate. Despite this, students move around the site, which is well supervised, in an orderly and safe manner.

The school is becoming increasingly effective in the way it seeks students' views and acts upon a range of important issues identified, including teaching and learning. As a result students say that they are learning faster because of the more interesting activities in lessons.

Students report that they value the rewards they get for choosing healthy food at lunch-time and that they eat more healthily out of school as a result. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for students to participate in community activities and a significant number of students are involved in these. Students develop a solid understanding of moral and social issues including learning to manage money and issues relating to living in a British multicultural society. Students benefit from the enrichment and activity days and these make a positive contribution to their understanding of other cultures. However, their spiritual development is less well established.

Despite determined efforts by the school, attendance remains, stubbornly, slightly below average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they have high expectations for students. In the majority of lessons, teachers use a variety of learning activities that motivate and sustain the interest of students and develop their learning. Work and resources are well matched to

individual students' needs, the pace of learning is brisk and plenary sessions are used well to reflect on learning. Effective questioning and higher order thinking challenge the more able students. Consequently, students enjoy their learning and their progress is good. New technologies such as interactive whiteboards and e-learning successfully promote student understanding and consolidate prior learning. The vast majority of students are aware of their targets and the level of their current work but some are not always sure exactly what they need to do to move to the next level. Where present, additional adults support learning effectively in most lessons.

Where teaching is less effective, planning for students with additional needs does not always support their learning clearly enough. Students also make slower progress when work and questioning is not well matched to their starting points.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum makes a positive contribution to students' achievement and personal development. At both key stages the curriculum is broad, balanced and flexible so that it effectively meets individual needs. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum has been well adapted to meet students' needs through different pathways. Provision incorporates good use of local colleges to deliver specialised vocational courses for targeted Key Stage 4 students: both gifted and talented students and those with specific additional learning needs.

Opportunities that enhance the experiences of learners are many and varied at both lunchtime and after school. Participation rates are high and activities make a good contribution to students' enjoyment and progress. Activity days and the taught curriculum ensure students develop a good understanding of citizenship and enterprise. The specialist subjects also contribute well to enriching the curriculum. A good example was the 'mathematics extravaganza' observed during the inspection that promoted student progress and was enjoyed by all involved.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

This is a caring school and the quality of support and guidance is good. Child protection systems are in place and safeguarding checks meet statutory requirements.

Student needs are well understood and effective measures are put in place to deal with any concerns or issues affecting underachievement. This is particularly the case for the students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or complex emotional or social problems. As a result, students grow in self-confidence and self-belief. The school is having a very positive impact on the life chances of these students.

The school places great emphasis on the importance of regular attendance. Staff make strenuous efforts to improve the attendance of the minority of students who have high rates of absence.

Rigorous systems enable staff to check up on how students are progressing and effective strategies bring most underachieving students back on track. Through these systems the school has correctly identified that further development is needed to support the progress of those aiming to achieve five passes at GCSE.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The headteacher, senior leaders, governors and staff are committed to raising achievement and support this by setting challenging targets for all students. Leadership responsibility is shared widely and staff work together confidently in teams. This has ensured that even under the adverse circumstances of the large scale building development the focus on improvement has been successfully sustained.

Systems to check how well the school is doing are rigorous and involve both senior and middle leaders. The regular parents' focus group provides an effective method of involving parents in consultation activity and also helps to inform school development plan priorities. The majority of areas identified for improvement are being effectively tackled with sustainable solutions.

Links between senior and middle leaders ensure a good balance between challenge and support and promote coherence and consistency between different faculties. Similar links between senior leadership team colleagues and governors mean that governors are very knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are, therefore, well placed to act as a critical friend and do so effectively through committees and the full governing body meetings. The school has a good capacity to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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	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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
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	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	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

You may remember I recently visited your school with a team of inspectors. Thank you for sharing your views with me and the team. We found that Salt Grammar is a good school.

The school is a friendly and safe environment and the headteacher, senior leaders and staff are all highly committed to ensuring your good personal development and academic progress. The specialist subjects of mathematics and computing are making a strong contribution to your individual success.

Your behaviour and attitudes are good and you appreciate the support that is provided when you need help. You also recognise that the school is increasingly valuing and responding to your opinions.

Most of you are making good progress because the quality of teaching is good and you have access to a good curriculum that can be closely matched to your learning needs. Many of you also make good use of the enrichment opportunities that the school provides which further enhances your development and progress.

There are a few things that we have suggested that the school could do to improve further. These include:

- increasing the number of you who gain five GCSE grades at A* to G
- offering additional courses in the sixth form so that the post-16 curriculum more closely meets your needs
- helping some of you to attend more regularly.

I am sure you will all do your part to support the school in its continued improvement.

I wish you all the best for the future in your new school.