

Saltash net Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112040
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	325515
Inspection dates	1–2 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Anne Looney HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1337
Sixth form	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Waghorn
Headteacher	Isobel Bryce
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
School address	Wearde Road Saltash PL12 4AY
Telephone number	01752 843715
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Age group	11–19
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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

Saltash.net Community School is a larger than average comprehensive school. It serves a mix of rural and urban communities with a diverse social and economic background. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is close to the national average but there are twice as many students with statements of special educational needs. This is partly due to the Area Resource Base (Trematon Unit) for students with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities but also to the provision for students with specific physical disabilities in the main school. There is a below average number of students from minority ethnic groups and very few whose first language is not English. The number known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has had specialist school status in 'Science and Mathematics and Computing with a rural dimension' since 2004 and has attracted an increasing number of students over the years both into the main school and into the sixth form.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Saltash.net is a good and inclusive school. The quality of care, support and guidance it provides to all its students is outstanding and the students' own outstanding personal development is recognised and celebrated not just by the school but also in the many letters the school receives from those with whom students come into contact. The overwhelming majority of students behave sensibly and respectfully. They show maturity and empathy by organising fund raising events to support charities which have moved them. Students recognise that there is a high level of commitment by the staff to the care of each individual and respond accordingly. Staff in the Trematon Unit provide excellent support, encouragement and challenge and as a result, these students grow in confidence. Students throughout the school trust the staff to support them. They thoroughly enjoy what the school offers. One student stated that the best thing about the school was the teachers as they, 'listen to youthey'll do whatever they can to help you'.

As well as promoting personal development, the headteacher has been dynamic in the manner she has spearheaded the drive to improve teaching and learning, raise standards and improve achievement. In this, she has been very well supported by the senior leadership team, subject leaders and an outstanding governing body. The leadership team has tackled head-on teaching which did not lead to good learning and has insisted that subject leaders address underachievement. There has been very effective use of learning mentors to support students to stay on task and the progress tracker system introduced since the last inspection has had a big impact on improving the rigour with which students' progress is monitored. Students are very aware of this focus on improvement and feel that there has been real change in the last three years. As a Year 10 student said, 'This school has got better every year'. This drive has led to a rise in standards since 2005 for all students, more slowly at first with a particularly marked improvement in 2008. National tests and examination results from last summer indicate that standards are now clearly above average. The school's own data analysis shows convincingly that students now make good progress over both key stages. Significantly, an analysis of the progress trackers of those students now in Years 9 and 11 indicate that this upward trend can be sustained and students in those groups are on track to reach realistic and challenging targets.

The curriculum is good throughout the school. Students in Years 7 to 9 enjoy a varied and balanced programme of learning. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has been well enhanced by vocational courses which ensure that the choice better meets the diversity of students' needs. The specialist school status has been significant in extending curricular opportunities to students. This is particularly evident in the enhanced use of new computer technology across the curriculum and in the development of the livestock area. The curriculum enrichment the school provides is outstanding. Teaching and learning are good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. Lessons are planned well with clear learning objectives. In most lessons, teachers engage, inspire and challenge students. Students respond less well when teachers provide them with little opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning. A small minority of parents expressed concern about bad behaviour disrupting lessons. Inspectors also saw a little low-level disruption mostly in lower attaining groups.

The school is well led and has a good capacity to improve. Its development planning is based on secure self-evaluation. Areas for improvement, such as those from the last inspection, are clearly identified and rigorously addressed. The school is very open to feedback. It consults regularly with parents and carers and evaluates initiatives. The high response to the parental

questionnaire for the inspection is a good indicator of the interest parents and carers have in their children's education. There are excellent links with the local, national and international communities and the school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Standards rose sharply in 2008 from 2007 when the average points score was below the national average. Following the 2007 results, the school quickly intervened in the weakest subject areas and the overall pass rate at A and B grades rose from 27.4% to 40.2%. Value added analysis shows progress to be good overall although progress in some of the school's specialist subjects is not as good as in other subjects, and it is too early to confirm that improvements are secure. The good curriculum attracts a wide range of students and retention is good. The attitudes of sixth form students are exemplary. They willingly take on leadership roles and also act as volunteers to help younger students with their work. Teaching is good overall; although academic monitoring by teachers is good, the use of assessment data to set targets is not of a consistently high standard in all lessons. The sixth form is well managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching to that of the best by: reducing the occasional low-level disruption involving students more fully in their learning ensuring all teachers in the sixth form make the best use of assessment data to set targets for the students.
- Improve achievement in the specialist subjects in the sixth form.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students' attainment on entry is slightly above average. Over the past four years there has been a rise in students' standards at the end of Key Stage 3 with the average point score rising from a position in 2005 where it was low, to one where it was average in 2007. The school's own monitoring data and the unvalidated data from the end of key stage tests both indicate that in 2008 standards rose again. The progress students thus make over Years 7 to 9 is now good. Improvement in English has been particularly pronounced throughout the school. The standards attained by the end of Year 11 rose even more sharply from 2007 to 2008 with a significant increase in the percentage of students attaining five A* to C grades. The detailed analysis done by the school shows that the progress made by the 2008 cohort was good and that progress continues to be good for students currently at the school. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well at the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding overall. They are receptive to music, stories or images which stir their emotions. They have a well-developed sense of justice and often students will help resolve arguments without having to go to a member of staff. Residential visits, projects and challenges where students have to live or work together help to develop their social skills. They also take on a wide variety of responsibilities within the school and carry them out conscientiously. The school plans to extend students'

appreciation of their own and other cultures even further. Behaviour is good overall in lessons and also around school.

Students feel safe in the school and increasingly learn how to avoid or deal with dangerous situations for themselves. They demonstrate their ability to choose healthy lifestyles by their commitment to the school canteen, their understanding of exercise and their involvement in the wide range of sports offered by the school. Students develop their understanding of finance and business very well through the many enterprise activities and projects, and the school makes extra efforts to ensure that students master the basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers know their students well and relationships are good. Assessment for learning is embedded well in lessons. Teachers make students aware of what they are going to learn at the beginning of lessons and monitor progress at the end. As a result, students have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and know what they need to do to improve their work. Typically in lessons there is an emphasis on active learning that captures and sustains interest. Students say they enjoy lessons where activities are varied and when they are able to participate fully. They are less enthusiastic about lessons which are too teacher directed and contain a limited range of learning activities, and say they would welcome greater opportunity for independent learning. Gifted and talented students are identified and then challenged through a programme of enhancement activities. Some parents feel that, whilst this was good, they would also like this challenge to be more apparent in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Students in Year 7 enjoy being able to study drama and appreciate the extra facilities in design technology. Some go on to study German from Year 8 and their enjoyment and success have led to an above average rise in students choosing languages in Key Stage 4. Saltash.net has redesigned its curriculum so that, at the end of Year 9, students can now choose GCSE subjects and vocational courses which will build a good foundation for their post-16 plans. The curriculum has been altered to accommodate students' aspirations and is continually under review to ensure it matches their needs and abilities. Mathematics, statistics, media studies and science GCSEs can be taken in Year 10. Extra GCSEs and accreditation are available through after-school clubs. The number and variety of clubs, sporting activities and competitions offered by the school is very extensive with something for every taste. Students also have opportunities to go on trips, spend time abroad and correspond with students from around the world. Students in the Trematon Unit benefit from specialist teaching in information and communication technology (ICT), science, physical education (PE), music, drama and design technology and some enjoy helping out in the livestock area.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's care for its students is excellent. All necessary safeguarding requirements are in place and their efficacy is reviewed periodically. The procedures for monitoring attendance are first rate. Students recognise that staff know them well and have commented on how the staff

make them feel valued as part of the wider community. School policies on health and safety are strictly adhered to and there is a comprehensive system for support and intervention for those with behavioural problems. There are strong and effective partnerships with a wide range of outside agencies and the high level of pastoral and academic support on offer is well publicised to the students via wall displays and in personal development lessons. There are excellent links to local primary schools which, the students say, ease the transition at the end of Year 6. A large number of the parents and carers of students in Year 7 who responded to the questionnaire were equally positive about the move from primary to secondary school. The move to the next stage in the students' lives is equally well managed. The progress tracker and review day systems are very effective vehicles by which the school can monitor progress and the systems are well liked by the students. The leading role the students play in the review process is a real strength.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher has communicated a clear vision, shared by all staff, that values every child and is focused on raising achievement and standards. Her outstanding leadership is complemented by a strong senior leadership team and they work well together assuring the quality of all aspects of the school's work. This commitment to continuous improvement is supported by good structures for line management and monitoring. Middle managers play an important part in driving forward school improvement. They have had a major influence in improving teaching and learning. However, the impact on standards has yet to be fully felt, with significant improvements evident only in 2008 results and tracking. The role of middle managers is clearly defined and they feel valued and listened to. There is good support for professional development and staff welcome opportunities to extend their skills, to learn from others and to support colleagues. Because of this, there is a real sense of community in the school. The school has used its specialist school status particularly well in developing curriculum links with primary feeder schools. However, as yet, the school leadership has not succeeded in creating a model of excellence in its specialisms in the sixth form. The governing body provides an outstanding balance of support and challenge for the school and as a result it is highly effective in its role as a critical friend. The chair of governors knows the school well and all governing body members are proactive in monitoring and evaluating. Financial governance is good and resources are well deployed throughout the school.

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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	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
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	1	2

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

3 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Saltash.net Community School, Saltash, PL12 4AY

As you know, five inspectors recently visited your school and I am writing to tell you what we found. Thank you very much for talking to us and for making us feel so welcome.

We believe that yours is a good school. We were particularly impressed with the way the school cares for you as individuals but also pushes you hard to achieve as much as you can. You told us that you appreciated the support teachers gave you and we saw how well you responded to that support. In fact, we thought that you are developing incredibly well as young people who give willingly of your time to help others both in the school and in the wider community. We thought your behaviour was good although we did see a small number of students whose behaviour was getting in the way of others learning.

We thought that the school had worked hard over the last three or four years to improve the teaching, learning and assessment and to extend the range of courses you can take. This effort was rewarded by much improved test and examination results in 2008. We found that you now make good progress throughout the school. Teaching is good but you told us that you liked it when there was more opportunity for you to be actively involved in lessons. You also told us that you liked the benefits such as the improved technology that your school's specialist status brought with it. We thought that your headteacher gives a superb steer to the work of the school, that she is well supported by other staff with responsibilities and that the governing body gives the school excellent support as well as asking difficult questions. The school has really good links with the community both in Saltash and with the wider world.

We have asked the school to make all teaching as good as the best by teachers involving you more in lessons and by dealing with the occasional low-level disruption in lessons. We have also asked all sixth form teachers to make the best use of data when they set targets and to raise standards in the subjects which are linked to your specialism. You can help by continuing to respond well and work hard.

With best wishes

Anne Looney HMI Lead inspector