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**SADDLEWORTH SCHOOL**

Science Department

The Science department at Saddleworth School is going in a very exciting direction!

The last OFSTED report (March 2015) in which the school was again graded as “good” indicated that; “students’ progress in science now shows improvement”. However, the department has experienced some difficulty over the last two years, with a number of long term absences covered by weak supply staff with a resulting negative impact on GCSE performance. In response to this a number of new colleagues were appointed for the current academic year, and the department has a good combination of youth and experience and has the potential to be great! Resilience has been built into staffing this year and any unforeseen absences have been covered by experienced specialists within the team. Clearly it takes time to recover from the damage caused by weak supply teaching, but the department has an exceptionally hard working and highly aspirational team, and this is now beginning to show in performance outcomes.

The vacancy has arisen because the current Curriculum Leader has decided to step down from the role due to personal and family reasons, but will continue to contribute to the department as an outstanding classroom teacher.

There is a good balance of experience within the teaching team with some outstanding and innovative practice; the team also contains staff with leadership responsibility in other areas of the school. There is a good balance of subject specialism, and although the majority of classes are taught with one teacher delivering all three disciplines, the classes for the increasingly popular Triple Science option are taught by well qualified specialists. There is a strong spirit of collaboration in the department with the new GCSE course being planned in this way; sharing good practice is a standing agenda item at science department meetings.

Science is taught in ability groups in at both KS3 & 4 and as whole year blocks to enable flexibility and creativity within this setting. Yr11 students currently take AQA Core and AQA Additional Science; gaining three separate science GCSE’s is possible if pupils ‘top up’ using the option block. This pathway has proved to be very popular again this year, with five groups opting for the course, adding to the four last year. This has increased year on year for the last three years. All Yr10 students started on the EDEXCEL GCSE in September 2016 and will take the externally set examination in May to benchmark standards.

The department is very well resourced and excellent technical support is provided by three technicians. The subject is taught in nine well equipped laboratories and the department also has use of an additional classroom. There is good access to ICT facilities; all subject labs are equipped with interactive whiteboards and mobile ICT provision is available and the department recently invested in a set of Kindles which are proving both popular and useful.