

# Hall Cross School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106808
<b>Local Authority</b>	Doncaster
<b>Inspection number</b>	356030
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 September 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Clive Moss HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	2160
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	570
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr P Marshall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Pippa Dodgshon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Thorne Road Doncaster South Yorkshire DN1 2HY
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. They observed 35 lessons taught by 35 teachers and other activities in which students were learning, held meetings with groups of students, representatives of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at school plans and policies, records relating to the support provided for students, analyses of students' progress, analyses of monitoring and evaluation work carried out by the school and external agencies, questionnaires completed by students and members of staff, and 277 returned by parents and carers.

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

- The extent to which the school focuses on improving students' progress.
- The effectiveness of work to improve students' attendance.
- The effectiveness of work to improve the quality of teaching.
- The effectiveness with which the school identifies students at risk of underachieving and takes action to support them.
- The effectiveness of the school's support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

## Information about the school

Hall Cross is much larger than the average sized secondary school and is situated on two sites approximately 2.5 miles apart. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is average. The proportion of students whose first language is not, or is believed not to be English, is average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average overall, but is average for those with statements of special educational needs. The proportion of students who enter and leave the school other than at the usual times is well above average. The school has specialist status for science and mathematics.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Hall Cross provides a satisfactory education for its students. It is improving well. Generally, comments from parents and carers reflect the improvement seen by the inspectors. For example, one parent/carer wrote, 'The whole ethos of the school has changed – children are starting to be stretched and challenged – Any issues we have as parents are quickly dealt with, from the attendance secretary to the Head.' Comments from students matched those of parents and carers.

The proportion of teaching that is good or better has increased, but not yet sufficiently for teaching to be better than satisfactory overall. The improvement is the result of an unequivocal focus by leaders and managers at all levels on using good quality data and information about students' progress to identify where teaching needs to be better, and successful action to eliminate consistently unsatisfactory practice. Teachers do not yet ensure, however, that the work they plan for different groups of students is followed within the lessons. Similarly, students are not always provided with advice on how to improve their work that is linked clearly to how they can meet their targets, either in lessons or through marking. Lessons in the sixth form provide students with insufficient opportunities to interact with the subject matter and each other and to think for themselves.

The additional support provided to students with special educational needs and/or disabilities enables this group to make good progress and achieve examination results much better than similar students nationally. Students who speak English as an additional language, who often join the school at other than the usual times, make rapid progress. Work carried out by the school, in partnership with support agencies, has significantly improved the attendance of individual students whose attendance was low. Other students experiencing difficulties with school and who receive additional support go on to do well in examinations at the end of Key Stage 4.

The school monitors its work systematically and thoroughly. It evaluates the quality and effectiveness of provision accurately and candidly. As a result initiatives to improve attainment, attendance, the quality of teaching, and the curriculum have been focused and successful. Attainment has risen steadily since the last inspection and the extent to which indicators are much better than average has increased, although not yet sufficiently to make attainment better than satisfactory overall. Early results from the summer of 2010 suggest the trend has continued. The school demonstrates good capacity to improve further.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, by;

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- making better use of data on students' progress to ensure activities in lessons are targeted carefully at the needs of different groups of students
  - making sure that the activities planned for the different groups are used in lessons
  - providing students with more focused advice on how to improve their work, linked to the targets they have been set
  - marking students' work consistently in ways that enable them to see clearly what they have done well and how it could be improved.
- Improve the quality of provision in the sixth form through more interactive lessons with more opportunities for students to think and work independently.
  - About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Generally, the students enjoy school and often struggled in conversations with the inspectors to identify anything very significant that they would change. There are no significant variations in the progress made by different groups. Students from minority ethnic groups make similar progress to their peers. In 2009, students of Pakistani heritage performed better than the school average.

The students responded well in the lessons observed during the inspection, even when the teaching required them to listen extensively rather than take part actively. They settled into lessons quickly. They demonstrated positive attitudes to learning that ensured they made satisfactory progress in lessons that might otherwise have been less successful. They were aware of their target grades, but not always as clear about the necessary next steps in their learning needed to achieve them.

Both sites of the school are generally calm and orderly. Students move around the difficult sites sensibly and considerately. All the students with whom the inspectors spoke said that they feel safe at school and only a very small minority disagreed with this in the questionnaires completed for the inspection. The inspectors witnessed predominantly good behaviour throughout the inspection. They found the students to be polite and well mannered, approachable and willing to engage in conversations. The students told them that lessons are sometimes disrupted by students who do not do as they are told. Most parents and carers, however, think that the school deals with unacceptable behaviour well. Instances of bullying and racism are relatively few and the number of permanent exclusions is very low.

Students arriving at the school at other than the usual times settle quickly and integrate rapidly with those already at the school. This was notably the case, for example, for students who speak English as an additional language. The students take advantage willingly of the opportunities with which they are provided to be involved in the work of the school, from staffing reception areas to being involved in the school's programme for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Their contributions to the latter have resulted in changes to schemes of work. There is little evidence of litter at the aging facilities and much evidence that students use the bins provided.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

In the lessons observed during the inspection, the teachers created a productive learning environment and made effective use of good subject knowledge. They explained the purposes of the lessons to the students and what was expected to be learned. They worked to stretch students' thinking by using open-ended questions. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson about the senses, students were asked to explain the connection between an ear, a radio and a torch. The students are generally satisfied with lessons and consider the work they are given to be reasonably challenging, but describe the quality as inconsistent. Much of the teaching observed by inspectors involved a high proportion of teachers talking and students listening.

Improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection are contributing to improving outcomes for students and the students' views of the school. The school plays a full role in local partnerships and has used these successfully to increase the range of courses and experiences available to students, for example, by working with other local schools, colleges and providers. The students are very happy with the range of courses on offer and the quality of the support and guidance they receive in making their choices. Courses and activities to promote students' awareness of how to stay safe and healthy, form good relationships and that contribute to their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development

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are integrated into the curriculum, but not always reflected across the full range of lessons. There is a wide range of popular extra-curricular activities.

'I don't think I'd be here now, if it wasn't for that support.' This was how one sixth-form student described the efforts of the school during her time at the school before joining the sixth form, when she had experienced considerable difficulty in making the most of her education. Other students explained similarly how the support they received had improved their behaviour and enabled them to spend increasing amounts of time in lessons. Students who speak English as an additional language spoke highly of the way in which the school had supported them in lessons and enabled them to make rapid progress. They said that the quality of the support they received had also improved significantly in the period since the last inspection. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities described how the support they were given helped them to become confident as learners and people. Child protection work is led by very committed members of staff. The school's policies provide clear advice and guidance to other staff, for whom training is thorough and varied.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher, members of the governing body and other leaders and managers have set a clear priority to increase the rate of progress made by students. In discussions with inspectors, members of staff understood and were enthusiastic about the school and the direction it is taking. Appropriately, they have focused their energies on improving the quality of teaching, based upon careful analysis of data about students' progress and making teaching more interactive and engaging for students. The school provided convincing evidence of examples where teaching has improved as a result. The governing body is well organised and has taken an increasingly strategic and active role in the leadership of the school, for example, commissioning and taking part in a thorough review of sixth-form provision. Safeguarding arrangements meet government requirements and are reviewed regularly. Action to promote equal opportunities has ensured no significant variations in the progress of different groups and that different groups of students relate well to each other. Relationships with the local community have been supported well through specialist school initiatives, including, for example, very good opportunities for students to work with others in primary schools on science and 'thinking skills' activities. The school has yet, however, to undertake a fully systematic approach to promoting community cohesion.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Sixth form

The students make satisfactory progress and achieve broadly average results in examinations. There are, however, marked variations in examination results in different subjects. There is a wide range of 'AS' and 'A' level courses available and the enrichment programme supports the students to feel well placed to move on after the sixth form. The students feel safe and well cared for. They receive regular information about their progress. They contribute well to the school and wider community through carefully planned activities, such as sports coaching and sponsored walks. For example, they raised approximately £2,000 by organising a fashion show with the help of a celebrity from the fashion industry, using the money to purchase equipment for the school's Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and to make other improvements. The substantial proportion of students who join from other schools are helped to settle at the sixth form quickly. They said that, rapidly, they felt fully a part of the student body. A high proportion of students complete the courses they start and a large majority goes onto higher education. Approaches to promoting good attendance in the sixth form have been improved recently and had a notable impact in a very short space of time, but the attendance of sixth-form students is below that of the main school.



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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

## Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers have positive views of the school and are happy with their children's experience there. Many wrote comments attesting to the overall improvement at the school and supporting particular improvements that have been made. A small minority thinks parents and carers do not have sufficient opportunities to support their children's learning. The inspectors concur that the school shows clear signs of improvement. They found that the school was increasingly aware of the need to enable parents and carers to be more engaged in their children's learning and that it had made improvements also in this aspect of its work, but did not always do so sufficiently.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Hall Cross 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 277 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 2,160 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	90	32	173	62	11	4	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	82	30	186	67	5	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	78	28	164	59	22	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	91	33	152	55	24	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	79	29	178	64	12	4	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	56	20	154	56	56	20	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	18	180	65	36	13	3	1
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)	73	26	178	64	10	4	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	69	25	184	66	18	6	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	68	25	164	59	25	9	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	45	16	180	65	32	12	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	84	30	169	61	11	4	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	96	35	160	58	12	4	4	1

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 all 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



27 September 2010

Dear Students

**Inspection of Hall Cross School, Doncaster, DN1 2HY**

Thank you for talking to my colleagues and me and making us welcome when we visited your school recently. The inspectors spoke with you in lessons, around the school and in groups, looked at your work, read the results of questionnaires filled in by you and your parents and carers, and spoke with some of your teachers. Here is a summary of the main findings, which I hope will be of interest to you.

- Hall Cross provides you with a satisfactory education.
- You make satisfactory progress from your starting points when you join the school. Your results in examinations are improving and increasingly well above average, although the extent to which this is so is not yet enough for your attainment to be better than average overall. Students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress also and their examination results are average.
- Your attendance is average and the school has taken effective action to improve the attendance of those students whose attendance is low.
- Most of you behave well. The inspectors found you to be friendly, well mannered and approachable. You said that the behaviour in some lessons is not good and gets in the way of learning.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory, both in the main school and the sixth form. The proportion of lessons that are good is increasing.
- You have a good range of courses and many interesting opportunities to learn and these are helping many of you to do better in examinations and get more out of school.
- The school provides you with good support, particularly those of you who need additional help.
- Most of your parents and carers support the school and think it is doing a good job.
- The headteacher and the staff at the school have a good understanding of what needs to be done to make things even better.

The school has improved well since the last inspection three years ago. I have asked the headteacher and the staff to make further improvements, however, so that teachers make sure that: the activities planned for the different groups are used in lessons; you are given more focused advice on how to improve your work, linked to the targets you have been set; marking enables you to see clearly what you have done well and how it could be improved. I have asked also that lessons in the sixth form are made more interactive, with more opportunities for students to think and work independently. Many of you, I know,

already make a very important contribution to the school and I am sure all of you will want to do everything you can to support the staff in making Hall Cross better still.

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss

Her Majesty's Inspector

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