

# Southern Cross School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105623
<b>Local Authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection number</b>	363700
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Linda Clare

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>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	64
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Interim executive board
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Janis Triska
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Angela Schofield
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 February 2010
<b>School address</b>	200 Yew Tree Lane Northen Moor Manchester M23 0FF
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Ten lessons were observed involving nine teachers and one teaching assistant. Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the interim executive board, school staff and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including data on students' progress, attendance, teachers' planning, curriculum documents, student files and the school's self-evaluation. Questionnaires were received from 11 parents and carers, and the inspectors also read survey responses from the students and the school staff. Visits were made by inspectors to both sites of the school's provision.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- To what extent students are involved in monitoring and promoting their own learning.
- How well behaviour contributes to teaching and learning.
- Whether the school has raised its attendance levels since the last inspection.
- How successful the school's leaders have been in managing change and clearly directing improvement

## Information about the school

Southern Cross School provides for students with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and is part of the Manchester Federation of Emotional, Social and Behavioural Difficulties (ESBD) Schools. There are 34 students at Key Stage 3 and 28 at Key Stage 4. Key Stage 3 students attend the Southern Cross site in Northern Moor; students at Key Stage 4 attend the newer Castlefield Campus in Hulme, which also serves as the Key Stage 4 provision for the other day special school in the federation. A significant proportion of students has a Child and Mental Health Services (CAMHS) key worker or support. Almost all students have a statement of special educational needs. Most of those on roll are boys. The majority of students are of White British origin. There is a small number of looked-after students. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. The school has achieved Sportsmark status.

Reorganisation of the federation's accommodation has been taking place for the last three years. The new Castlefield site opened in January 2010 and Southern Cross moved this year to its current, temporary location. The local authority suspended the governing body in 2009 and set up an interim executive board which oversees the work of all schools in the federation. A shadow governing body is in place which runs in parallel to the interim executive board with a view to taking over governance of the school in 2011. The school was given a notice to improve at its previous inspection in February 2010.

**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?**

**4**

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

**4**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Students make inadequate progress overall from their below-average starting points and leave Year 11 with low attainment. As a result, their achievement is inadequate. While there is evidence that more of the current Year 11 are on course to reach broadly average levels this year as a result of targeted short-term additional support, the majority of Key Stage 4 students continue to make inadequate progress in English and mathematics due to the insufficient provision of specialist teaching in these areas. Progress at Key Stage 3 is not secure as the school has not implemented coordinated procedures to assess the level of students' work or track the rate of their learning. Teaching at both key stages relies significantly on temporary appointments and this has a negative impact on the continuity of students' learning. The use of assessment data to plan lessons that build step-by-step on students' learning is inadequate. Pockets of better tracking of students' progress are in place as the result of individual teacher's systems.

At Key Stage 4, attendance has not improved sufficiently since the previous inspection and remains too low. At Key Stage 3, attendance has improved marginally but remains low overall with unacceptable levels of persistent absence and exclusion. The monitoring of these students, who are potentially at risk as a result of their absence, is not robust and consequently safeguarding is inadequate. Progress in raising attendance has been very limited and this contributes to the inadequate care, guidance and support.

The school's curriculum does not sufficiently meet the needs of the majority of pupils, including those with poor attendance. Communication with some groups of parents and carers is poor and the progress of different groups of students is not monitored. Together, these seriously limit how effectively the school is able to promote equality of opportunity, which is therefore judged to be inadequate.

School leaders and members of the interim executive board are aware of the areas which require improvement but their evaluation of the school's performance is not sufficiently accurate. They have been considerably hampered in their quest to raise attainment and students' attendance by significant relocation and restructuring, particularly at Key Stage 3. However, their focus on these logistical issues and matters relating to the development of the federation, has prevented them from paying sufficient attention to tackling the school's weaknesses. Actions to achieve improvement have been limited in both scope and effectiveness and have had insufficient impact on improving outcomes for students. As a

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result leadership, management and governance are inadequate as is the school's capacity to improve. The school provides inadequate value for money.

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

- Improve students' achievement by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what students can achieve
  - ensuring assessment systems are comprehensive, focus on learning and provide continuity in learning between key stages
  - extending the good practice of the new Key Stage 4 performance tracking system to the whole school
  - ensuring the school monitors the performance of different groups of students accurately and takes effective action to secure improvements where necessary
  - ensuring realistic and challenging targets are set for individual students.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
  - ensuring all teaching staff have the necessary subject skills and training
  - focusing more closely in lesson plans on what students are to learn
  - assessing students' previous learning to build progress more effectively.
- Raise attendance by:
  - improving tracking and monitoring systems to include those groups and their parents and carers that are hardest to reach
  - tailoring the curriculum to provide individual programmes which engage the interests, needs and aspirations of all students
  - using information from the analysis of trends and patterns in attendance to ensure an attendance rate at both Key Stages of at least 85%.
- Strengthen the school's leadership, management and capacity for sustained improvement by:
  - developing leaders' skills of monitoring and evaluating all aspects of school performance so that they are able to manage school improvement successfully
  - ensuring members of the interim executive board rigorously challenge senior managers and leaders and hold them to account for improving students' outcomes
  - taking prompt action to ensure that identified priorities are tackled.
- Improve the school's safeguarding practices by:
  - ensuring robust monitoring and care for the welfare of students who are not attending school, those who are excluded and those most at risk.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**4**

Not all students agree that they enjoy school. However, many show some interest in their learning and in one lesson willingly participated in practical activities to illustrate

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combustion through the launching of rockets. In another lesson a student demonstrated creativity of thought in his description of the moon over a graveyard as 'like a giant's eye peering through a keyhole'.

By the end of Year 11, most students achieve at least one qualification but the majority does not reach high enough levels at either key stage given their starting points. A small number of more-able students leave with good passes at GCSE level. Information and communication technology (ICT) is popular and students study both GCSE and entry-level awards. However, less-able students have few opportunities to work towards accreditation which matches their needs and abilities. At Key Stage 3, literacy has been identified as a target area and students in the new reintegration group are starting to benefit from individual tuition. Improved speaking and listening skills and individual support in tutorial time help students to make gains in their emotional development and social communication skills.

Girls and boys make the same inadequate levels of progress. The progress of some students looked after by the local authority is not sufficient due to the non-engagement of a number of students in this group. Those not attending school are offered off-site provision but re-engagement levels are relatively low and the school recognises that some placements are not geared to meet the needs of the students.

There were very few students on either site during the inspection, reflecting both the absence of Year 11 on study leave and the high levels of non-attendance. Behaviour is satisfactory. Older students say they feel safe in school and incidents are dealt with quickly. As one older student commented, 'Everyone gets on with everyone'. A points system appropriately rewards behaviour, achievement and punctuality. Students were consulted on its design. Some students are willing to ask for help and feel that, in the main, staff listen. They are aware of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and almost all opt for football or sport at lunchtimes. The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme supports the satisfactory progress students make in applying consequences to actions and understanding moral responsibilities. However, students have limited opportunities to practise business, enterprise, and work-related skills or for vocational learning off-site. This, together with inadequate progress in English and mathematics, means that preparation for their future economic well-being is also inadequate.

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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>4</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</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>4</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<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?

Teachers do not focus sufficiently in their lesson planning on what students are to learn. In addition, information about students' prior learning is not taken into account in planning so lessons do not build sufficiently on what students know and understand. Expectations are not high enough to raise levels of achievement and to ensure good and better progress. In some lessons students are presented with little challenge whilst in others all are expected to complete the same work regardless of their ability. The high proportion of temporary staff impacts negatively on the continuity and consistency of learning at both key stages. Not all staff have the necessary skills and experience to work with those students who have behavioural needs. Too much teacher talk and too little work that focuses on individual needs result in insufficient time on task, which impedes students' progress. In the more successful lessons, learning objectives are displayed and referred to throughout the session, learning is tailored to need and a points system negotiated to reinforce behaviour strategies.

The curriculum does not meet the needs and abilities of the majority of students sufficiently well. There is little continuity between key stages to ensure that work is matched to need or learning style as students progress through the school. Curricular development appropriate to the less-able and to those not engaged with school is inadequate. Vocational and alternative provisions are developing but most do not lead to accreditation. There are few college links through which students may extend their

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vocational, social and cultural development. The Key Stage 3 curriculum has recently been revised and now meets National Curriculum requirements but the school recognises that its schemes of work also need revising to match these requirements. Work experience and mini-enterprise activities – such as making and selling hot chocolate at break - are evident but limited. The current focus on more-able students and raising GCSE levels is positive. Extra-curricular activities include the Duke of Edinburgh awards and courses linked to the Prince's Trust. Satisfactory cultural, sports and arts links are developing and are linked to the curriculum.

Support staff provide effective classroom input and relationships are generally satisfactory. A home-link worker supports a number of students who receive off-site tuition. The school provides satisfactory advice and guidance about future choices for those who attend. However, support for potentially vulnerable students is less well monitored and a number of looked-after children are persistently absent. The school does not give sufficiently high priority to securing the welfare of excluded pupils or those who are persistently absent. Consequently care, guidance and support are inadequate overall.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>4</b>

## **How effective are leadership and management?**

The school's extended period of change has impacted negatively on its progress and ethos. Staff morale is low, absence rates high and there are too many long-term staff absences. Not all adults have the necessary subject skills and training they need and very few permanent teaching staff remain in either school. Opportunities for professional development have been limited. Development plans are insufficiently detailed to guide and direct improvement. Continuity of management between the two sites is poor. The management of the Southern Cross site has been fragmented and weakened by having successive interim leaders. Constructive changes to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning have been introduced at Castlefield but these have yet to secure improved outcomes for students. External reports highlighted that the school was not making adequate progress during its period with a notice to improve. At Key Stage 4 very new assessment and tracking systems are proving useful but currently the school does not track the progress of different groups and so does not have a comprehensive picture of where intervention and support would be best placed. As a result, it cannot adequately promote equality of opportunity for its students.

Despite extensive involvement with the school, the interim executive board provides inadequate governance as it has had too little impact on the direction and work of the school. Staff are checked, risks are assessed and there is a clear and published structure



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for child protection. However, the monitoring of absent and excluded students is not robust and the school does not give sufficient priority to safeguarding their welfare. Relationships with parents and carers are inadequate, with communications between the school and a small number of parents and carers being poor. The school has satisfactory partnerships with a range of social, medical and justice services which enhance its provision and the links with the Zion Centre promote the arts. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. The school places high emphasis on the social aspects of community cohesion and, although both centres have relocated, it has broadened its cultural links since the last inspection.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
<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>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>4</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>4</b>

**Views of parents and carers**

Less than a quarter of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. The 11 questionnaires received by the inspection team were positive about Southern Cross School with one or two concerns noted regarding behaviour. A small number of parents and carers telephoned inspectors to record their wider concerns. Inspection evidence found some of the outcomes for learners to be satisfactory but students' achievement and attendance to be inadequate. Inspectors judged behaviour to be satisfactory.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southern 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 11 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 64 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	3	27	7	64	1	9	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	6	55	5	45	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	7	64	4	36	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	4	36	6	55	1	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	6	55	5	45	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	55	5	45	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	36	6	55	0	0	0	0
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)	4	36	6	55	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	4	36	6	55	1	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	36	6	55	1	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	55	5	45	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	6	55	5	45	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	6	55	5	45	0	0	0	0

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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.**



17 June 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Southern Cross School, Manchester, M23 0FF**

Thank you for the help you gave us when we inspected your school. We were very interested to hear what you had to say and in your responses to the questionnaire. Your views were very useful and we have taken them into account in our findings. Most of you who replied said that you feel safe in school and that it helps you to understand how to keep healthy: we agree. We also saw how well you are beginning to contribute to the school as school council members.

However, our visit raised a number of serious concerns about how much progress you are making in lessons and during your time at school. We saw that if lessons did not challenge you enough you could lose interest and sometimes others in the lesson were disturbed. This may help explain why a number of you say that you do not enjoy school and you think behaviour could be better. We have judged your school to need 'special measures' which means that inspectors will visit regularly to check how well things are improving. We have asked the school leaders and interim executive board members to:

-improve how well you learn and achieve

- improve the quality of teaching to ensure that more of you reach challenging targets and build on what you already know
- encourage everyone to attend every day and be part of the school community
- make sure school leaders take prompt action when needed to improve the school, your safety and how well it works for everyone, including your parents and carers.

You can help too by all attending school regularly and letting your teachers know if work is too easy or too hard for you.

Yours sincerely,

Linda Clare

Lead Inspector

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