



Southern Cross School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105623
Local Authority Manchester
Inspection number 287279
Inspection date 6 March 2007
Reporting inspector Susan Preece HMI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Barlow Hall Road
School category	Community special		Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester
Age range of pupils	11–16		Lancashire M21 7JJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 8812695
Number on roll (school)	56	Fax number	0161 8617190
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr A Weinberg
		Headteacher	Mr J Law
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2005		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–16	6 March 2007	287279

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools.

Description of the school

Southern Cross is a special school providing 45 placements for secondary age pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties (ESBD). At the time of the inspection, there were 56 children on roll including 5 female pupils. Pupils come mainly from the south and central areas of Manchester. The school operates on three sites. Southern Cross School is the main site and provides education for a total of 37 pupils. Over half of the Key Stage 4 pupils attend provision away from the main site. There are eight pupils at Key Stage 4 accessing an alternative curriculum at the Castlefield Centre, a self-contained community facility five miles away in Hulme. The remaining 11 Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils attend the recently established Southfields annex, in Northenden, which is three miles from the school. All the children on roll have a statement of special educational need and three quarters are entitled to free school meals. There are 7 looked after children and 12 pupils are of minority ethnic heritage. For the past three years, the school has been a member of the Manchester Federation of ESBD Schools. This partnership involves three local authority special schools for children with similar emotional, social and behavioural needs.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Southern Cross is a good school and this judgement supports the school's self-evaluation. However, it was not possible to visit either of the other off-site centres during the inspection. As the Southfields annex has only recently opened to pupils, and is at an early stage of development, it is not possible to evaluate the quality of this provision. There are arrangements being put in place by the local authority to extend Southfields to cater for up to 20 pupils.

Southern Cross cares very well for its pupils and provides a good and improving standard of education. Overall, pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. They are proud of their school and are happy to attend. Pupils' personal development is good with some outstanding features. Teaching and learning are good, although staff do not always make effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons. The progress that pupils make in their learning is boosted by the exceptional ethos of the school and rigorous attention to successful behaviour management. The curriculum is good, well taught and enriched by a range of extra activities. Staff make best use of accommodation, but it is not fit for purpose. The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Staff provide very good pastoral welfare which creates a calm and reassuring place to learn. Leadership and management are good with continual improvement at the heart of the school's ethos. Effective self evaluation enables staff to have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school is aware that it needs to share better the good practice that exists in teaching and learning with all staff to enhance pupils learning. The headteacher provides clear and strong leadership and a robust determination to raise standards. He is well supported by the senior management team and staff. They have been successful in sustaining improvements since the last inspection. These include the raising of standards across the school, significant improvement in pupils' attendance and behaviour and increasingly effective senior managers. The school is well regarded by parents who are rightly proud of their children's achievements. Southern Cross School has a good capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share the good practice that exists in teaching and learning with all staff so that pupils learn even better.
- Assist staff to use ICT more effectively in lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievements are good overall. As a result of their learning and behavioural needs, all pupils enter the school with standards that are well below what is expected for youngsters of their age. However, given their abilities and starting points they make good progress over time and across all areas of the curriculum. There has been

a significant increase in the number of pupils being entered for national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and for external examinations at the end of Key Stage 4. Last year all Year 11 pupils, including those at Castlefield, left school with at least entry level or a GCSE qualification. Some pupils find it difficult to transfer their knowledge and skills learned in school to learning off-site, for example, in work placements.

The range of accreditation is increasing. The arrangements for managing pupils' behaviour, including the setting of personal behavioural targets and reward systems, are good and are consistently applied. These have transformed the pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Improved behaviour and success in learning are developing the pupils' self-esteem and helping them to take pride in their work and their school. Consequently, a positive climate for learning has been established well and this is reinforced through frequent celebration of pupils' progress and achievements. These include high quality displays of children's work around the school and well run assemblies. Assessment processes are effective and well used: they successfully identify ability levels of each pupil and form a good basis for setting clear learning targets which are shared by all staff, pupils, parents and carers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good with some outstanding features. The attendance of pupils throughout the school has improved significantly since the last inspection when it was 67%. This year it is 80%. Pupils at the Southern Cross site show a strong desire to learn and succeed, they enjoy coming to school and their behaviour is very good. Incidents of exclusion are low and continue to reduce each year. Consistent responses and very good communication between staff mean that pupils' inappropriate behaviours are dealt with swiftly and effectively. The relationship between pupils and staff is outstanding and is underpinned by mutual respect. This results in pupils showing consideration and courtesy for others. Children say that they feel safe in the school and trust their teachers. Pupils' moral and social development is good. They make healthy dietary choices through having access to a range of healthy food, including fresh fruit, and to fresh drinking water. Pupils play an active role within the school community, for example, as members of the school council, where they have been able to bring about changes such as the colour of their school uniform and the creation of quiet areas in the playground. Pupils are effectively involved in the wider community through work related learning and links to other schools, further education colleges and in taking responsibility for fund-raising events for local charities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good as accurately identified in the self-evaluation report. The good progress that pupils make in their learning is boosted by the exceptional

ethos of the school and rigorous attention to successful behaviour management. There are examples of some exemplary teaching characterised by teachers' infectious enthusiasm and high expectations of pupils. Trusting relationships and mutual respect are the basis of the successful lessons enlivened by good natured interaction between pupils and staff. Teachers understand pupils' prior attainment well: in most cases they use a variety of attainment data effectively to set realistic targets. There has been substantial investment in ICT, including in inter-active whiteboards, but these are not always well used in lessons. In the best lessons, staff use their knowledge of pupils to plan relevant activities that capture their interest and motivate them to succeed. Teachers plan for the often wide range of abilities within the group and, through very effective teamwork with assistants, ensure pupils move from one activity to the next without losing attention. The school has accurately identified the features of teaching that need to be improved further such as the uneven quality of lesson plans. There is some variability in the quality of the pupils' individual learning plans but, overall, these are generally used well to focus on the most important aspects of learning. Staff make best use of the accommodation but it is not fit for purpose. There are plans to relocate the main school to another site in 2008.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall and provides wide-ranging and enjoyable learning opportunities. An effective programme of personal, social and health education and citizenship helps pupils to understand their rights and responsibilities and learn about healthy and safe lifestyles. The strong emphasis on developing pupils' emotional literacy, along with regular praise and celebration of achievements, permeates the whole life of the school. There is a good range of enrichment activities, such as sports and leisure choices, Duke of Edinburgh Award and local and European residential visits. Projects on topics such as the history of Chorlton and the survey of the local water park help pupils to develop self-confidence and become independent learners. The school works hard to make the curriculum as relevant as possible to pupils, and links with other schools and colleges widen the opportunities available. For example, the Key Stage 4 curriculum has been strengthened through the addition of several vocational and college 'taster' and accredited courses. At the Castlefield site, these include General National Vocational Qualification hairdressing at Level 1 and construction.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Staff provide very good pastoral welfare which creates a calm and reassuring place to learn. Education and teaching assistants work closely and effectively to meet the needs of individual children. Requirements for safeguarding and ensuring child protection are in place. Health and safety issues are carefully considered and risk assessments are comprehensive. Pupils are given clear information about how to improve their work. This helps them take

responsibility for their own learning and behaviour. Behaviour management is very good and has been effective in significantly reducing the number of incidents and exclusions. Transition planning for when pupils leave school is developing, although the school does not systematically gather information about leavers once they have left. Parents and carers value the work the school does highly and are included well in their children's programmes through reviews, open days, sharing of targets, newsletters, meetings and informal contacts. Links with the other two schools within the Federation and with local agencies are good. Although the number of girls on roll is small, the school does not always give sufficient attention to ensuring that they feel comfortable in all situations.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides vision, drive and clear direction. He is ably assisted by the strong senior management team and highly committed staff. Clarity of purpose among staff is reinforced by daily briefing events and regular staff meetings. Self-evaluation is mainly accurate and effective in bringing about improvement. The systematic monitoring of teaching is robust and correctly identifies strengths and ways forward. There is insufficient sharing of best practice in teaching and learning among staff but the recently introduced peer coaching is beginning to bring about improvements. School development planning is effective, combining the personal and academic needs of the pupils. The school regularly seeks the views of parents and carers and responds very well to their needs. On the Southern Cross site, there is zero tolerance of any incidence of bullying or racism and pupils report feeling valued, safe and supported well in their learning. The governing body oversee the three schools in the Federation and support them well. There is one specific governor with responsibility for the needs of this school. Governors fulfil their statutory role but have yet to have training with regard to safeguarding. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. With the well established ethos of continuous improvement Southern Cross School has a good capacity to improve.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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
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

Thank you for making me welcome when I visited your school earlier this week. You were keen to tell me about all the great things that happen there and I agree with you, Southern Cross School is a good school. I was impressed by the displays of your work around the school.

These are the main findings from the inspection. I agree with you that the school is a happy and safe place to be and most of you take responsibility for your own safety and that of others around you. Your behaviour is good and you help each other. The staff support you well throughout the school day. There have been improvements in the range of programmes and examinations open to you.

Attendance across the school has improved a lot since the last inspection and there have been a lot less exclusions over the past two years. These successes need to continue and get even better. Your behaviour around school is good and most of you are keen to learn and do your best. The headteacher manages the school very well and you appreciate that he and the staff listen to your views. Staff are working hard to help you to achieve your best.

In order to improve further, the school should put into place the following suggestions;

- share the good practice that exists in teaching and learning with all staff
- assist staff to use ICT, especially the whiteboards, more effectively in lessons.

Once again, thank you for your support with this inspection. You and your staff can be proud of what you have achieved and I wish you every success for the future.