



# Hall Cross School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 106808  
**Local Authority** Doncaster  
**Inspection number** 287612  
**Inspection dates** 26–27 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Jan Bennett 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 address</b>	Thorne Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Doncaster
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		South Yorkshire DN1 2HY
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01302 320626
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	2147	<b>Fax number</b>	01302 322190
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	450		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr R Williams
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr K Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 October 2001		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	26–27 September 2006	287612

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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

Hall Cross is a very large school and its sixth form attracts students from across Doncaster. The school is on two sites which are 2.4 miles apart. The students come from both the affluent suburbs and some of the poorest parts of Doncaster. Fewer students than average are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. There are fewer than average students from minority ethnic backgrounds but the proportion of students coming from homes where the first language is not English is above average. The school has specialist science status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than, in all the circumstances, it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' achievement and standards and the curriculum.

The proportion of students achieving at least five GCSE passes at A\* to C grades increased in 2005 and was close to the national average. However, a significant minority of students at Key Stage 4, especially boys, make poor progress and have done so for the last three years. The number of students who achieve no qualifications at the end of Year 11 is too high. More positively, students from minority ethnic backgrounds and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Students also make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3.

The school offers a broad range of GCSE subjects but the curriculum at Key Stage 4 is not meeting the needs of all its students. The school is not offering enough attractive alternatives to the traditional GCSE courses that would enable lower ability students to gain useful qualifications. Specialist college funding for science is being used to build capacity across the school, its feeder schools and the local authority.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and there are good working relationships in lessons. Most students are keen to learn and work well. The teaching styles used in many of the lessons for lower ability students, however, are not always apt and are not helping students to learn effectively. The quality of the monitoring of students' progress is too varied between teachers and departments. Some teachers mark work carefully and write useful comments to help students to improve whilst others give little feedback. In some departments, students are set challenging targets and their progress is reviewed regularly but in others this does not happen.

Students' attitudes are good: they show consideration for others and most students behave well. The school does much to promote pupils' personal development and to ensure their health and well-being. Students receive good personal guidance and help and they are supported well in the transition from Year 6 to Year 7. The support given to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is especially good and is much appreciated and highly praised by parents.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. There are some very able managers at all levels but there has been a lack of clear leadership at a strategic level. Managers have tended to work within their own area and, although some good practice has been shared, work still needs to be done on its consistent application. The school has been slow to introduce systems for checking staff performance and for measuring students' progress. This has begun to change following the appointment of two new deputy headteachers and a number of new heads of department. Managers are aware of the key strengths and weaknesses of the school. The pace at which they are tackling the weaknesses is accelerating. A comprehensive system for observing

lessons has been introduced but it is too early to see any major improvements in the quality of teaching. Managers at all levels are using performance data to drive up standards and there are indications that achievement is improving as a result. The school has the capacity to improve. The budget is carefully managed but, given that achievement and standards and the curriculum are inadequate, the value for money provided by the school is currently unsatisfactory.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

Students in the sixth form are very positive about the school. They appreciate the good relationships they have with staff. Students feel that their opinions are welcomed and acted upon. Leadership and management are satisfactory and plans to bring about further improvement are in the early stages of implementation. Work has begun on improving monitoring and extending curricular opportunities. Links with other institutions are developing to increase the range of options available and to support provision in other establishments. There are a wide range of enrichment activities. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The students feel that they have more opportunities for discussion, group work and use of information and communication technology (ICT) than previously.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the progress of students at Key Stage 4, especially the less able students.
- Improve the Key Stage 4 curriculum to meet the needs of all students, especially the less academically able.
- Develop and use an effective and unified system for tracking students' progress across the school.
- Provide clear strategic leadership for the school's key priorities.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

The attainment of students entering the school is slightly above average and they make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, however, a significant minority of students are failing to make the progress expected of them. For the last few years, lower ability girls have made insufficient progress in Key Stage 4 and the lower ability boys have made exceptionally poor progress.

The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C was well below average in 2004, but the proportion increased in 2005 and was close to average. The indications are that there has been a slight improvement in 2006. However, there are too many students leaving the school without any GCSE passes.

In the sixth form, standards are satisfactory. There is variation between subjects and the girls do better than the boys. Students are gaining more passes than average but at lower grades. Progress is satisfactory overall.

Students from minority ethnic backgrounds and students with additional learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress at all levels.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The students are confident and able to express opinions well. The peer mentoring scheme and the school council are successfully enabling students to develop their personal qualities. Attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school are good for the majority of students. Students show consideration towards others and feel that they are safe from intimidation and bullying. Students' moral and social development is good and their spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Students are aware of healthy lifestyle issues and respond well to initiatives. Students have a good understanding of the world of work and what will be expected of them. Attendance is satisfactory.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The key strengths in teaching are: the good subject knowledge of teachers; the good relationships between teachers and students; and the good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including the effective deployment of teaching assistants. The good attitude to work of most students also makes an important contribution to learning.

There are areas for improvement. There is not always an effective review of learning at the end of the lesson and teachers in a number of subjects are not making full use of ICT to support learning despite the availability of the resources. Too often, teaching does not meet the needs of lower ability students. They are not sufficiently involved in the lesson and clear, simple explanations are not always provided.

There is too much inconsistency in the quality of marking and there is not a unified approach to recording and monitoring students' progress. Each department has its own system and some are more effective than others.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 4**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The curriculum is mainly traditional in all key stages. In Key Stage 3 there are some flexible pathways including early entry to annual national tests for high achievers. There is a broad range of GCSE and AS/A2 courses. The Key Stage 4 curriculum does not fully meet the needs of all students however, and this has been a factor in the poor progress made by some students at this level. The school recognises the need to provide alternatives to GCSE but the less able students do not have sufficient access to courses leading to achievable qualifications. Vocational subjects have been introduced in the sixth form, as well as some one-year courses that enable successful students to progress to AS level courses. There are also good links with other post-16 providers.

There is a range of extra-curricular activities, including music and drama, various clubs, trips, fundraising activities, and a wide variety of sports which are very successful.

Specialist science status has improved provision and links with partner primaries. Two advanced skills teachers are supporting learning in science and mathematics; specialist resources, such as data logging equipment have been bought for the field centre used by the schools in the local authority; and plans are well under way for a virtual learning environment that will be accessible to Hall Cross students and Year 6 pupils from its feeder schools.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The school provides good personal care and support despite being situated on a split-site but the quality of the academic support provided is too variable. Child protection systems are in place and working. Students are confident that they have a 'listening ear' when they need it. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with behavioural difficulties are supported well and benefit from the guidance they receive. The school has built up a working relationship with parents and most are pleased with the school's provision, but some are concerned that reports and the targets set for students lack precision and an individual flavour. The academic guidance provided through setting targets and involving students in checking their own progress lacks overall coherence although there are pockets of good practice within departments. The support for transition from Key Stage 2 to 3 is good. The learning support unit has advanced well in the last 18 months and vulnerable students are supported in a coherent way.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

#### Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although the pace of improvement since the last inspection has been slow, a restructuring of the senior team, including new appointments, has escalated the rate of development over the past few years. There are examples of good practice at both senior and middle levels and a range of actions and initiatives are under way to improve the school. A considerable amount of monitoring is taking place, such as an extensive programme of lesson observations and the analysis of data from examination results. As a consequence, strengths and key weaknesses are known. Actions are being taken to tackle the latter and more are planned. The impact of these demonstrates the school has capacity to improve. Nevertheless, there are areas where leadership and management are not strong enough. There is a lack of clear direction at a strategic level and the potential for change within the school is not being fully utilised. The school is behind where it should be with establishing a consistent and easy-to-use system for tracking students' progress. There has not been sufficient development of the curriculum at Key Stage 4. There is too much inconsistency across the school. The school has underestimated the significance of these when judging its effectiveness as satisfactory. However, the school knows these areas need to be improved and is tackling them. Governors support the school and ask questions of it. Their meetings are well-organised and recorded. They, too, are aware of the main weaknesses but although they take steps to try to ensure that they are informed about practice within the school, they are not fully aware of its overall effectiveness.



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	4	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	No

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	4	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3	3

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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?	Yes	

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for contributing to the recent inspection of the school. Here is a summary of our findings, which we hope will be of interest to you. We have decided that the school needs to improve. There are two reasons for this and they are closely linked.

- Many of you are working hard and making progress but there are a substantial number of boys, in particular, who are making very poor progress in Key Stage 4. The number of students at the school getting five or more GCSEs at A\* to C grades has increased over the last two years, which is good, but there are too many students who are getting no qualifications at all at the end of Year 11.

- Although the school offers a wide range of GCSEs, there are insufficient alternative courses that lead to useful qualifications.

We have seen a number of good things at the school and these include:

- your behaviour is good and you show respect and consideration to each other
- the school provides very good support to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

There are many aspects of the school that are satisfactory including the teaching that you receive, the sixth-form provision, the guidance and support that you are given and the leadership and management of the school.

We think that the headteacher and his team know what to do to make the school improve quickly and we hope that you will do all that you can to help.

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school.