

# Hilltop School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106972
<b>Local Authority</b>	Rotherham
<b>Inspection number</b>	336780
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 February 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kath Halifax

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	98
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	23
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr P Scholey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Peter Leach
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 March 2007
<b>School address</b>	Larch Road Maltby Rotherham S66 8AZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01709 813386
<b>Fax number</b>	01709 798383
<b>Email address</b>	hilltop.special@rotherham.gov.uk

---

<b>Age group</b>	2–19
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 February 2010
<b>Inspection number</b>	336780

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2010

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons taught by 11 different teachers. Further time was spent looking at pupils' records of achievement, work books, and information about pupils' progress, so almost half of the inspection time was spent looking at learning. Inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, and other professionals and looked at the school's review of its work, the current development plan, minutes of governors' meetings and documentation to ensure that pupils are safe. The responses to 47 parental questionnaires were analysed.

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

- whether or not pupils achieve equally well in all subjects
- how successful the school is in maintaining quality provision for pupils with degenerative and life-limiting conditions
- how well the school meets the needs of pupils in mixed-age classes
- how effectively the school promotes pupils' awareness of cultural diversity.

## Information about the school

This larger-than-average special school caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with autism. A growing number has profound communication difficulties and/or complex medical needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational need. A small proportion is from ethnic minority backgrounds, or in the care of the local authority.

At the start of the year, the school was awarded specialist status for its expertise and work with other schools in communication and interaction. In addition, it has achieved other national awards including the Sports Mark, Activemark and Advanced Healthy School's Award. It was the first special school in the country to be awarded the Excellence in Enterprise Education Platinum Award.

**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?**

**1**

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

**1**

### Main findings

This is an outstanding school that provides excellent value for money, not just for the pupils on role, but for pupils in other establishments, through the professional advice provided for staff working with those with communication and complex needs. Since the last inspection, the school has built upon its excellent provision, particularly its work to promote pupils' learning and well-being. As a result of a continuing first-rate education, pupils in all age groups make remarkable progress in their learning and personal development from their very low starting points on entry to the school. Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment has improved very strongly year-on-year despite an increase in the complexity of their needs, and the severity of their medical conditions.

Inspirational, visionary leadership is at the heart of this flourishing school. Leaders have very successfully created a school that embraces all learners. Through exceptional training for all staff, the quality of teaching is outstanding. Pupils make excellent gains in their personal growth because of the notable provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They receive tremendous care, guidance and support. Pupils are exceptionally well-prepared for life after school. An excellent example of this is the skills pupils have gained during the consultation with them and work regarding the building of a new school in the future. Pupils contribute considerably to the school, local and wider community. They have an impressive awareness of many cultures and religions, but formal planning to promote pupils' understanding more about community cohesion is less well developed.

Pupils and staff thrive under the influential leadership of the headteacher, who together with the deputy and assistant headteachers, form an impressive team. Leaders have worked with determination and imagination to expand and improve the provision since the last inspection. For example, the improved use and resulting achievement of information and communication technology (ICT) has added significantly to pupils' opportunities for life in and out of school. Through very good self-review, the school knows itself extremely well and has exceptional capacity to maintain its high quality provision.

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

- Formalise the programme to promote pupils' understanding of community cohesion.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**1**

Pupils show immense enthusiasm for their lessons and all that the school offers. They

**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

delight in their learning, with even those with the most complex needs grinning broadly as they achieve their targets. Pupils display remarkable levels of concentration. Equally, they demonstrate great determination. This was evident as those with limited mobility splashed their way across the swimming pool. While pupils' successes are often in very small steps, taking account of individual starting points, their progress is striking, especially in communication, in their social development and toward targets in their individual education plans. The achievement of pupils with degenerative and life limiting conditions is comparable to that of their peers. As a result of adults' in-depth knowledge of their circumstances, these pupils continue to enjoy learning and maintain their skills for longer than would be expected. Achievement in ICT has improved tremendously since the last inspection. Pupils use the technology effectively for communication and to support their learning in all subjects. They are especially proud of their achievements in the ROSCARs (the Rotherham Oscars) where they beat off competition from mainstream schools to win both the podcasting and 'short video' categories.

The comprehensive curriculum and excellent teaching means that pupils achieve equally well in all subjects. Furthermore, they acquire the skills necessary for learning and for life through very well thought-out activities. For example, when considering what it would be like to be homeless, following the Haitian earthquake, pupils understood the need to negotiate with, and persuade, their classmates of the pros and cons for their ideas when constructing shelters. Pupils are justifiably proud of their achievements guiding inspectors to the display of 'PROUD' certificates. Through their daily actions and discussions they demonstrate a clear understanding of keeping safe and healthy. Pupils' behaviour is admirable. As a result of very good behaviour plans, those with complex behavioural needs are more aware of consequences and respond exceptionally well to the expectations and role models provided by adults. Attendance is above average with almost all absences due to illness.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	<b>1</b>
	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Staff have a very good understanding of the subjects they teach and how pupils with profound and complex needs learn. Exceptionally close teamwork between teachers and support assistants allows learning to be accelerated by precisely targeted adult support. Support staff are very skilled in many areas, including managing complex behaviour, communication and personal care. Teachers succeed in making lessons interesting and meaningful. Such was the case in a science lesson about materials. Pupils had enormous fun as they donned cowboy hats and 'ye hawed' whilst panning for gold. An extensive range of assessment methods is used effectively to record pupils' learning and to plan further work. In addition, regular on-going assessment triggers intervention programmes for pupils who require more support, or for those who learn more quickly. The introduction of 'thinking skills' assessment has picked up the pace of learning.

The curriculum is innovative, exciting, and sufficiently flexible to meet the individual needs of all pupils. While pupils of differing ages are sometimes educated in the same groups, this does not affect their progress, as each pupil has their own challenging programme. Pupils say they especially enjoy the 'special' weeks such as the science week, when they work with their peers from the local high school. Another firm favourite was the building and decorating project, when pupils of all ages worked together as teams, solving problems such as how to reach the top of a wall, and, for once being allowed to eat food that was not quite so healthy in the 'Greasy Spoon Cafe'. Very good provision for the creative arts and sport, including after-school clubs, contribute greatly to pupils' skills and enjoyment.

Adults provide excellent care, support and guidance for all pupils, the vast majority of whom are vulnerable. Targeted training has enabled staff to provide first-rate support for the very wide range of medical conditions allowing all to take a full part in school life. Links with health professionals and other agencies are exceptionally efficient and effective. Tailored guidance and information for parents has resulted in very good support from parents, including those who in the past have found working with schools difficult.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
---	--

<b>The quality of teaching</b> Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	<b>1</b>
	1
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Pupils and staff benefit from a stable, far-sighted leadership team who continue to engender a sense of purpose and the pursuit of excellence. The careful analysis of the pupils', staff and the school's performance, alongside ambitious targets has enabled the high quality provision to be sustained. The 'Developing Excellence' plan and termly subject evaluations contribute particularly well to the school's effectiveness. Leaders' commitment to working with other establishments, for example spearheading the Maltby Learning Community, is a key factor in the school's numerous successes.

Governors are active and influential in determining the school's direction, and know what they need to do to become outstanding. Their support for significant financial investment needed to overcome the challenges presented by the layout of the building in meeting the changing needs of pupils has been beneficial, especially for pupils with autism. At the time of the inspection, arrangements for safeguarding pupils were excellent. Leaders and managers work conscientiously to ensure that appropriate measures are in place and that statutory duties are reviewed regularly and meet requirements. The comprehensive on-going training for all staff ensures they are fully alert, reporting any concerns immediately.

Equality of opportunity for pupils, parents, carers and staff is at the heart of the school's values. Substantial work has been undertaken to ensure that all pupils have a voice. The school is a unified organisation with its members making a sizeable contribution to the local and wider community. However, plans to engage with groups beyond the immediate community to promote community cohesion are impressive, but at an early stage in formal planning.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b> Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	<b>1</b>
	1
<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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>

**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

<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make exceptionally good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage through very well-planned activities and excellent welfare arrangements. Children's personal development and well-being are at the centre of all that goes on, and the high quality indoor and outdoor environments enable children to maximise their learning. Children quickly build up trusting relationships with adults and their classmates. Their eyes light up as they enter the classroom, focussing on the stimulating environment and try to decide which day it is through the colours displayed. Adults work very hard to ensure that children's experiences are exciting and of the highest quality. This was evident as children beamed when they moved to the exceedingly well-equipped outdoor area to experience the coloured fountain. The leadership and management of the unit are of the highest quality. The excellent interactions with numerous medical and professional agencies ensure children's welfare. In addition, exceptional advice and support provided for parents allows them to be part of their child's learning, as well as helping them to deal with the challenges presented by life limiting conditions.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Sixth form

Students' progress is outstanding because of the excellent provision in the sixth form. The school is leading the local authority, and other authorities, in many sixth form initiatives, particularly Enterprise experiences. Programmes such as the 'Fruit and Veg' scheme and the production of healthy picnic baskets enable students to acquire a range of skills, as well as raising funds. Outstanding, creative leadership and management coupled with first-rate teaching have built upon the already very successful provision. The decision to work collaboratively with another special school has extended the



**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

facilities. For example, awards in horticulture are now offered, and joint funding has resulted in the lease of a 'learning house' in the centre of town, giving students meaningful real-life experiences. Students are especially well prepared for their life after school. Regular sessions considering personal qualities, important people in their lives, and likes and dislikes in their 'Listen to Me' books, prepare students well and help them gain maximum benefit from their reviews and in interviews. Practical work and 'skills for living' activities enable all to leave with nationally recognised awards and, since the last inspection, all have moved on to further education. Students' aspirations are further raised by the school by employing past pupils, for example as a sports technician.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

## Views of parents and carers

Responses to the inspection questionnaire demonstrate that parents hold the school in high esteem. Parents are especially happy with the quality and dedication of staff, the imaginative range of activities and the links with health professionals. A considerable number of parents commented that their child is unhappy if they are too ill to attend school. A very small number of parents had individual concerns, but when followed through, these have been suitably remedied by the school.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hilltop 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 47 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 98 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	38	81	6	13	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	40	85	5	11	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	34	72	11	23	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	70	12	26	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	74	10	21	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	34	72	11	23	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	74	11	23	1	2	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)	36	77	8	17	0	0	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	68	12	26	1	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	72	12	26	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	72	12	26	0	0	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	37	79	9	19	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	81	7	15	1	2	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 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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 pupil's 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.**



26 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Hilltop School, Rotherham, S66 8AZ

What a wonderful time my colleague and I had at your school. We really enjoyed being in your company. Thank you for taking the time to show us round, and for talking to us about your colourful displays, photographs and work. It is remarkable that all the pupils replying to the questionnaire say they like school.

We agree with your views, you are very fortunate to attend a school that is providing you with an outstanding education. As well as working hard, you have huge fun in lessons, in sport, in clubs, and on the many visits out of school. You are very well behaved and work very hard. This means all of you make remarkable progress. All this happens because you have first-rate leaders, teachers and support staff, and an amazing curriculum. As well as helping you to make progress, your school provides excellent support for other schools by training teachers to help pupils who need assistance with their communication.

There is just one area that would make it even more spectacular.

- Your teachers provide you with many opportunities to learn about yourselves, your school community and different cultures and religions. Now there need to be more formal plans to increase your awareness of community cohesion.

We know you will do all you can to help your teachers and wish you every success in your future.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Katharine Halifax

Lead Inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**