

Dallam School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112432
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337933
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation School
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,027
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Watson
Headteacher	Steven Holdup
Date of previous school inspection	December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors, one of whom conducted the inspection of safeguarding. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors undertook the inspection of the school's boarding provision. The inspectors visited 35 lessons, observed 35 teachers and spent approximately 55% of inspection time looking at learning. They held meetings with the chair of governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including monitoring and assessment records, the school development plan, curriculum and lesson plans. 118 parental questionnaire returns were analysed.

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

- students' current progress in the main school and the sixth form
- the level of students' basic skills and their ability to work independently
- the extent to which students are well prepared for the next stage in their lives
- safeguarding arrangements to ensure students' well-being
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels to bring about improvements in students' personal and academic development.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized comprehensive school. Students are predominantly White British. The small minority of students who come from outside the United Kingdom are mainly in the sixth form and board at the school's Heversham site. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is low and the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. A small number of students join or leave the school part way through years 7 to 11. It has specialist status as a language college and holds the International Schools Award. Other notable awards included Healthy Schools, Sportsmark, Artsmark Gold, the Football Association Charter Mark, the Eco School Green Flag and Investors in People. It has designation as an extended school.

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.

Attainment is well above average. Provisional results indicate that the school exceeded its statutory and specialist college performance targets in 2009. Students' progress, given their average attainment on entry to the school, is outstanding. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who join the school at an early stage of learning English make excellent progress because of the effective support they receive. School records from the autumn term and inspection evidence show that students are well placed to match, and in some cases exceed, past attainment. Students in the sixth form make good progress and their levels of achievement are above average. To improve this even further the school recognises that it needs to increase the proportion of students who exceed their performance targets and so raise achievement in the sixth form from good to outstanding.

Students say they feel safe in school. There are effective and well-managed systems and procedures in place for safeguarding. Students have an excellent understanding of how to keep fit and well, and eat healthily and take full advantage of a wide range of extra-curricular physical activities. A large majority of students undertake responsibilities in school and the local community, for example helping younger students and those in the primary and special schools associated with Dallam. They contribute ideas for school improvement, suggestions which are often taken up. Their sensitivity to the needs of others is evident from their extensive charitable undertakings. Behaviour is excellent. Rare instances of bullying are dealt with effectively. Attendance rates are above average and punctuality to school and to lessons is excellent. Students receive exceptional preparation for the next stage in their lives because of the qualifications they get, their excellent basic skills and their impressive personal qualities. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Teaching is outstanding. Much contributes to students' exceptional progress of learning including: teachers' subject knowledge, their use of challenging targets to raise aspirations and use of assessment information. Relationships between students and with their teachers are excellent as are the facilities for learning. The curriculum is excellent because it is structured to meet the needs of all. The school's status as a specialist language college has broadened students' knowledge and contributed to the rise in attainment. Care, guidance and support are outstanding allowing all,

including vulnerable students, to make rapid progress in their work and develop in confidence and maturity.

Leadership and management at all levels, including governance, are outstanding. The significant rise in attainment since the previous inspection and the drive to do even better demonstrates the schools' excellent capacity to improve further. Self-evaluation is accurate and appropriate priorities are in place to take the school forward. The school gives excellent value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in the sixth form from good to outstanding by increasing the proportion of students who exceed their performance targets.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of students

1

Students enjoy their work and find learning fun. Large numbers participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Overall, students' achievement is outstanding. There has been an improving trend in attainment over the last three years. Accurate assessment information shows that to be continuing, for example in English and mathematics where students are likely to surpass the 2009 performance. All groups secure well-above-average attainment when compared nationally. Boys, for example, whose achievement was satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, now make outstanding progress. Students who join the school with a limited command of English make excellent progress and exceed their academic targets.

Students have excellent literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. These are used well across the curriculum. Their social skills and sensitivity to the needs of others are highly developed. They are confident and articulate young people who concentrate for extended periods and listen respectfully to the contributions of others during discussions. They have an excellent understanding of cultural and religious diversity within different societies. Students understand right from wrong and are aware of the consequences of their actions. The quality of their art work is exceptional and high quality school productions are frequent, varied and involve many students. Spiritual development is good, with students reflecting on their relationships with others and the world around them, including the intangible.

These are the grades for students' outcomes

Students' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Students' attainment ¹	1
The quality of students' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which students feel safe	1
Students' behaviour	1

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

The extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which students contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which students develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Students' attendance	2
The extent of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching overall is outstanding. The monitoring of progress is highly effective, allowing teachers a clear understanding of students' capabilities. Teachers plan challenging learning activities which are varied and interesting. Students know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve further. Partnerships with other schools and community groups are used to broaden and enrich students' education and develop their collaborative and independent learning skills. For example, initiative and self-reliance were demanded of Year 9 when working with students from other schools on environmental and land based projects. Teachers enthusiasm for learning is infectious inspiring students to be independent and creative in their work.

The curriculum is outstanding. It is relevant to students' needs and provides a wide range of high quality activities for all beyond normal lessons. The skills based aspects of the International Baccalaureate qualifications with the language specialism are equipping students well for working in multi-cultural Britain and countries abroad. The school is a safe place for staff and students. Effective links with a wide range of outside agencies support the work of the school. Students make confident and well-informed choices about their future because of the quality of the guidance they receive.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has provided the ambition and drive behind the significant improvements in provision and outcomes over recent years. The head of school is rigorous and effective in translating that vision into well-managed practices and procedures. There are able and committed senior and middle leaders, teachers and other adults who are successful in eliminating any barriers to students' learning. As a result, every boy and girl has an equal chance. Governors and staff have a clear understanding of the religious, ethnic and social characteristics of the community they serve and make an outstanding contribution to its cohesion. The school is a calm and harmonious place of learning and local people take full advantage of its extensive community education programme. The international

dimension of the school's work involves students and staff in the social, cultural and educational life of other countries.

Effective systems are in place to monitor performance and evaluate accurately how well the school is doing. Governors are closely involved in the life of the school, providing support and encouragement. They ensure the students get the best education possible because they provide high levels of challenge. There is no complacency. Challenging targets are used effectively to ensure that students exceed expectations, and many do. Safeguarding procedures, including those for child protection, are good and meet current guidelines at this time. Safe working is evident in daily routines. There are extensive partnership arrangements with other schools, universities and local community groups which have a major impact on students' personal and academic development.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Attainment has risen because of improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, guidance and support provided by tutors and the leadership of the head of sixth form. Most students' attainment on entry to Year 12 is broadly similar to that found nationally. However, the school's open admissions policy means that a minority of students are below average on entry. All make good progress resulting in achievement being above average. Students meet and some exceed their performance targets by the end of Year 13. The school's improvement priority is to increase the proportion that excels. Progression rates from Year 11 through to Year 13 are good. Most Year 13 students continue onto higher education whilst others secure employment. Teaching and learning are consistently good and often outstanding, particularly when students work independently. The curriculum is excellent: it is structured to meet the needs of all students, including those from other countries who board at the school. The introduction of the International Baccalaureate is having a significant impact on the breadth of students' education and on the development of their learning skills. There are no examination results yet but accurate assessment information shows that students are making good progress. Extensive opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills and become involved in the life of the school and the wider community are taken up by all.

Students support primary and special school pupils in a range of activities and take on responsibilities in school to help care for the younger students. The educational, sporting, cultural and recreational facilities for sixth form students are excellent.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Boarding provision

The quality of boarding at Dallam School is outstanding. The management structure and strong sense of community within the school contribute effectively to the protection and promotion of boarding pupils' welfare. The school has made a number of improvements since the last inspection relating to the medical provision and, significantly, to the standard of boarding provision.

The systems in place promoting the good health and well-being of boarding pupils are outstanding. They are encouraged to be healthy and have good opportunities to be active. Personal health and social educational input from staff provides age-appropriate advice concerning matters such as health, sex education and relationships.

Boarding pupils receive regular dental and general health care from local sources and there are good working relationships with the local health services. Clear procedures are followed for the management and administration of medication and appropriate records are maintained. However, some aspects linked to the system for recording prescribed medication and the training around administering it are outdated. Medication is stored securely.

When boarding pupils are unwell they are cared for by boarding staff. However, due to recent changes and developments within the boarding areas, the potential for gaps to appear regarding the level of cover provided during the school day has been identified.

Boarding pupils have a good, healthy, balanced and nutritious diet which promotes their health and physical well-being. The school has maintained its healthy schools status in recognition of the steps it has taken to develop healthy lifestyles. Menus are well planned in conjunction with the boarding pupils, with a number of choices available. This includes a vegetarian option alongside dishes that reflect the cultural mix of boarding pupils. Any special dietary needs are well catered for. Boarding pupils speak positively about the quality and quantity of food served and the catering arrangements in general.

Boarding pupils feel safe at the school and are fully supportive of one another. The strong sense of community and comradeship amongst them is viewed as a particular strength of the school. There is an effective anti-bullying policy, and information given to parents and boarding pupils explains how concerns or complaints will be

resolved. There is a designated person with overall responsibility for safeguarding matters who provides guidance to all staff.

Comprehensive systems are in place to record, monitor and prevent risks to health and safety. Fire and safety equipment is regularly checked, with fire drills held at different times of the day and night. The frequency of drills is monitored by the site manager. Boarding pupils understand the procedures in place.

Members of staff receive appropriate safeguarding training and are aware of the relevant policies and reporting procedures. All staff working at the school have been recruited in full accordance with the relevant regulations and this confidential information is maintained securely.

The boarding house staff team work closely with parents and other staff to ensure that boarding pupils are given the help and support they need. Boarding pupils say they all get on well together and they are treated fairly and equally.

Boarding pupils feel they are able to influence certain decisions made regarding the boarding areas and feel well informed by staff. They confirm they are consulted regularly about relevant matters affecting boarding and are confident that staff would be supportive should they have a worry or problem.

Telephones are supplied in the boarding houses, allowing for contact with family and friends. Boarders also use their personal mobile phones or their own email addresses.

Great care and attention is given to supporting boarding pupils when they first arrive, with a well-established programme of induction. Boarding staff ensure there is a friendly welcome and a careful eye is kept upon new boarders so that homesickness does not become a problem.

Significant improvements have been made to boarding accommodation, with boarding pupils now residing in two houses. This is due to the opening in January 2010, of a new residential block providing 50 single occupancy, en-suite study bedrooms. The standards of accommodation achieved in this block are outstanding. This is just one phase completed of an ongoing, rolling programme of investment into accommodation and facilities for boarding pupils.

The old boarding house remains occupied, with investment having taken place to improve and maintain the quality of repair, décor, fixtures, fittings and furnishings to a good standard. There are appropriate levels of security, privacy, toileting and bathing in all boarding areas.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. This is underpinned by appropriate policies and procedures. All of the boarding pupils are encouraged to be supportive of each other and many of them commented positively about this. The boarding community is multicultural and boarders say they are treated with understanding, respect and dignity at all times by staff.

Throughout the inspection, boarders and staff were observed mixing together and actively enjoying each other's company. Relationships were observed as being outstanding, with a warm, friendly, relaxed atmosphere prevailing throughout the inspection.

The school provides an easy to understand statement of its boarding principles and practices for parents, boarders and staff. The organisation and management of the boarding houses is outstanding, with a safe, non-discriminatory and supportive atmosphere created for boarders.

There are good recording systems and up-to-date risk assessments in place to ensure the health and safety of boarders.

Staffing levels both during the day and at night are commensurate with the current needs and numbers of boarders residing at the school.

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- ensure all boarding staff receive updated training in the safe administering of medication (NMS 15)
- introduce a more robust method of recording the administering of prescribed medication which includes stock control (NMS 15.12)
- formalise the arrangements for providing care and supervision to boarders in sick bay areas during school hours (NMS 16)

These are the grades for the boarding provision

The effectiveness of the boarding provision	1
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Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are supportive of the school and testify to the significant improvements in provision and attainment over recent years. A few expressed concerns about the school's rigorous approach to enforcing the uniform code. Inspectors were impressed with the students' smart appearance and the self-respect that revealed. There were also a few concerns about the lack of frequency and perceived difficulties regarding communication between school and home. These have been conveyed to the senior management team.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Dallam 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 118 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,027 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	42	55	47	7	6	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	47	40	63	53	3	3	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	43	36	58	49	7	6	3	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	31	61	52	11	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	33	28	68	58	6	5	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	23	64	54	16	14	3	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	26	71	60	7	6	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	32	27	57	48	6	5	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	25	67	57	9	8	4	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	30	58	49	11	9	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	20	60	51	15	13	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	31	26	59	50	9	8	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	38	53	45	9	8	2	2

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 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>the following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



29 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Dallam School, Milnthorpe, LA7 7DD

Thank you for the warm welcome we received when we visited your school. We had an interesting two days with you and were impressed by your courtesy, good humour and your willingness to talk openly about your work and your involvement in activities outside of lessons.

We found your school to be outstanding. This is because you make excellent progress in your learning and attain well above average standards. Your basic skills are highly developed and you use these flexibly and well in all subjects. You have the personal qualities to be successful in your future lives, particularly your self-discipline and your ability to work independently without constant guidance from your teachers.

The excellent progress you make is down to your responsible attitudes to learning, the overall outstanding teaching you receive and the level of care and support you get to overcome difficulties. The breadth of the education you receive is exceptional because of the wide choices available to you through the outstanding curriculum.

The school has a development plan which details how the school is to build on what has already been achieved. The inspection found that the priorities recorded there are appropriate to bring about further improvements.

You can play your part in the school's development by having the self-confidence to work towards challenging academic targets and being open-minded and involved in the new experiences provided by the school's extensive programme of extra-curricular activities.

Please thank those parents and carers who returned the questionnaire. Thank you for contributing so well to the inspection. All such views were helpful in enabling us to understand your school.

Yours sincerely

Mr Brian Dower
Lead inspector

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