

Calderstones School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104698
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	355619
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Marguerite Murphy HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
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	1531
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Dave Woods
Headteacher	Mr Brian Davies
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2007
School address	Harthill Road Liverpool Merseyside L18 3HS
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. They observed 45 lessons and 45 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including development planning, monitoring information, an evidence portfolio on students' personal development outcomes, and data on their attainment, progress and targets. Questionnaires completed by 168 parents and carers were scrutinised, in addition to 192 student questionnaires and 94 from members of staff.

- The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. Inspectors looked in detail at the following.
- The quality and accuracy of the school's self-evaluation and the rigour with which this is used to drive further improvement.
- Whether teaching and the curriculum are of sufficiently high quality to ensure that all groups of learners, including the more-able students, girls, and students from minority ethnic backgrounds, make good or outstanding progress.
- Whether the school can demonstrate that it has made good progress since its last inspection, and whether there is sufficient evidence that its overall effectiveness has crossed the grade boundary from good to outstanding.

Information about the school

Calderstones is a larger-than-average secondary school with provision for post-16 students in the sixth form. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, and a just above average number of students speak English as an additional language. There are almost twice as many boys as girls in every year group across the school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. A below average proportion has special educational needs and/or disabilities, and very few have a statement of special educational needs.

The school has specialist status in science and has been recognised as an Investor in People. It has Healthy Schools status and has recently gained an award for its 'Every Child Matters' standard.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school that has maintained and further built upon the particular strengths noted at its last inspection. The school's true commitment to ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to reach their potential is at the heart of everything it does. Students are known as individuals and feel extremely safe because of the school's outstanding provision for their care, guidance and support. The school's recently-achieved 'Every Child Matters' standard reflects its success in promoting an orderly, caring and cohesive community in which all members are valued and respected. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students of all abilities, economic circumstances and cultural backgrounds make equally good progress and receive the same high levels of pastoral care and concern.

Teaching is good. Teachers know their subjects well and use a good range of well-planned resources to enhance their lessons and support students' learning. In the most successful lessons, teachers also use assessment well, for example through marking and target-setting, well-focused questioning and providing the right level of challenge for each individual's needs. Although this is generally planned for and expected in all lessons, it is not consistently applied by all teachers. The regularity and quality of written and oral feedback to students is too variable to be better than satisfactory overall.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior leadership team articulate the school's high expectations and a clear vision for sustaining and further improving students' achievement. They are well supported by middle leaders, who are involved in checking the work of subject departments. The school's self-evaluation is generally realistic and based on a range of monitoring activities. However, systems for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good because some inconsistencies remain. Observations of lessons are not routinely carried out by leaders at all levels to develop their skills in identifying exactly what students are learning as a result of the activities the teachers provide. Senior leaders successfully challenge and tackle any weak teaching where it has been identified, but monitoring has had less impact on improving the consistency of teaching and raising the proportion that is good or outstanding.

Students enjoy school and achieve well so that attainment is above average by the time they leave Year 11. From broadly average standards over the previous three years, the school's examination results in 2010 were in many respects its best ever. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C was significantly above average at 80%. This represented an improvement of almost 20% on 2009, mainly as a result of changes made to the science curriculum to better meet the needs of students from the full range of abilities. The proportion of students achieving five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics rose to almost 4% above the national average.

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For the school, this also showed a significant improvement on the previous two years' results and further demonstrates its good capacity to improve. One parent expressed the views of many when writing: Calderstones achieves well for children across all sections of the community' and several others gave particular praise to the school's 'very positive ethos and dedicated staff'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the sharpness and rigour with which leaders at all levels monitor and develop the quality of teaching and assessment in order to ensure that they are consistently good or better by:
 - providing further training for staff in observing lessons to evaluate the extent to which students' skills, knowledge and understanding are increased as a result of the teaching
 - building on existing good practice in the use of assessment for learning to ensure that effective policies are applied consistently throughout the school by all teachers in all lessons.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Relationships are excellent across the school and most students are keen and confident to ask for clarification in lessons if there is something they don't understand. Students particularly enjoy opportunities for engaging in discussion, enquiry and research and this promotes their good learning. An example was seen when a Year 10 group were observed using resources to access information on the products of crude oil. Students are supportive of each other and willing to share ideas, for instance in a business studies lesson when completing their coursework assignments. When learning is satisfactory, students are not sufficiently challenged and actively engaged from early on in the lesson, so their progress slows. Although a small minority of students who completed questionnaires did not agree that behaviour in the school is good, inspectors found that good behaviour and positive attitudes make an effective contribution to students' learning and progress.

Students' attainment on entry to the school is average and standards are above average when they leave. They enjoy school and make good progress in their learning. In 2009, there were apparent differences between the attainment of some groups of learners, for example boys performed better than girls and some minority ethnic groups did less well than their peers nationally. The improvements in 2010 examinations showed that the school had taken successful action to narrow gaps between particular groups. Similarly, the proportion of students gaining the highest grades A* and A in some subjects improved on the previous year, as did the achievement of grades A* to C in mathematics and English. Inspection evidence supports the school's view that there are no significant differences between the achievement of different groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Students have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy and the factors that have a positive or negative impact on this. Their participation in extra-curricular sports opportunities is impressive and they benefit from high quality facilities on the school site. Students make an outstanding contribution to their school and the wider

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community and readily take on a range of responsibilities, for example the Eco group, peer mentors and sports leaders. The school council ensures that students' views are represented in consultation and decision making on matters that affect them. The students' involvement in events and productions in the local area are held in high regard by members of the community.

Strengths in students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have been maintained. Visits from external theatre groups and speakers are used to raise issues, and areas of the curriculum provide excellent opportunities for challenging and thought-provoking work in these aspects of students' personal development. Students demonstrate good basic skills, especially in their use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance their learning across a range of subjects. This, along with the opportunities to develop enterprise skills and take part in well planned work experiences, helps to prepare them well for their future lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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

How effective is the provision?

Good or better teaching was seen in over half of the lessons observed during the inspection. Taking into account the evidence of students' rates of progress, teaching is good overall. Teachers plan their lessons well and are very knowledgeable about their subjects, schemes of work and examination requirements. The school recognises that there are areas of inconsistency to be ironed out before it can raise the proportion of

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teaching that is always good or outstanding. A key factor is teachers' use of assessment to support learning. Where this is very effective, it is clear that the teacher knows students' individual targets and capabilities very well and uses this information to focus lesson activities, questioning and marking precisely to move their learning on. Another feature of the most successful lessons is teachers' brisk pace, high expectations and effective use of time to maximise learning. Conversely, there are occasions when teacher input dominates the lesson and students have less time to complete tasks or demonstrate fully that they have achieved the expected learning outcomes. Some questioning is not sufficiently probing to get pupils to think more deeply or elaborate on their answers.

The school provides a good curriculum which is increasingly being reviewed and, as a result, is adjusted regularly to meet the needs of all students. This includes a range of intervention strategies and vocational courses within the three curriculum pathways at Key Stage 4. Students and their parents appreciate the very good range of enrichment and additional activities. Cross-curricular work is particularly good in ICT.

The school's 'virtual learning platform' continues to be a strength which contributes to the outstanding care, guidance and support it provides. Students can access this from home or the school's resource centre to check information on school work, homework and their academic or personal development targets, for example. The school is relentless in its focus on meeting students' needs and overcoming barriers to learning. Students and their families are confident that staff 'go the extra mile' to support them, particularly in times of difficulty or vulnerability. Students are given good advice and guidance as they move into and through the school and for their post-16 options. As a result, a high proportion of students go on to education, training or employment when they leave.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is firmly at the helm of a committed leadership team, communicating the high expectations and passionate commitment to equal opportunities for all students that is shared by staff and governors. The governing body is well organised and fully involved in the life of the school on a number of levels. The school's policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding are meticulous and carried out in an exemplary fashion, with excellent governing body representation on its safeguarding and health and safety committees.

The school carried out an audit of community cohesion across subject departments, although it has been slow to evaluate the impact of its provision across the school and the community. However, the school promotes community cohesion well and engages with a

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range of groups within and beyond the school and its local community and on a national and global level. The impact of this can be seen in students' excellent spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

Staff who completed inspection questionnaires were unanimous in agreeing that they feel proud to be associated with Calderstones and are fully aware of what the school is aiming to achieve. The vast majority feel that the school is well led and their contribution is valued. A very small minority did not agree that any unacceptable behaviour by students is consistently well managed. Inspectors did not observe poor behaviour during the inspection and the majority of staff applied the school's code of conduct effectively during lessons.

The school has an excellent relationship with parents and carers and there are well established procedures for keeping them informed about their children's development and progress. Many parents and carers attend the family workshops offered by the school, covering a wide range of subjects and topics. They can access the school's e-portal to see their children's progress and attendance records and other information about events, for example. The school's wide range of partnerships, some of which are linked to its science specialism, makes a strong contribution to students' good achievement and excellent well-being. These draw on expertise available beyond the school to help meet students' pastoral needs, and the school supports a large group of primary schools in delivering the science curriculum at Key Stage 2.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The sixth form is well established and popular with students, who value being part of what is a friendly and supportive community. Comments received from students were

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exceptionally complimentary and included, 'We are treated like adults', 'There is always someone to turn to' and 'I would unreservedly recommend this sixth form.'

Students who remain until the end of Year 13 achieve well and the great majority go onto enter higher education. Results at A level have been consistently above national expectations and in 2009 were outstanding. Results at AS level are less impressive, although not all students seek accreditation at this level. The school has also recognised that the attraction of the sixth form and a liberal admissions policy has previously led to some students being enrolled on courses which are not appropriate to their ability. There has been an increase in the number of vocational courses and this, together with collaborative arrangements, means that the curriculum provided is good.

Teaching at sixth form level is good. There is a good system established for setting targets and monitoring progress, although this does not appear to take account of national subject variations. Students say that the system works well and are very appreciative of the constructive feedback that they receive from their teachers and form tutors. Students receive excellent guidance from their tutors as they prepare for entry to higher education or the workplace.

Leadership of the sixth form is good. The head of sixth form is greatly respected and leads a team of experienced tutors. Some areas that he has identified for improvement are at an early stage of development and the full impact has yet to be seen. For example, the changes in admissions criteria are expected to reduce the number of students who leave before Year 13 and the improved registration arrangements are improving attendance figures.

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

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire say that their children enjoy school and that school keeps their children safe. Typical comments added to a number of responses include: 'Problems are dealt with quickly and well'; 'The school has done wonders for my child'; and 'I cannot praise the staff too highly'. A very small minority feel that the school does not do enough to help them support their child's learning. Inspectors found the school's virtual learning environment to be an effective way of enabling parents to keep track of their children's progress and of what courses or curriculum information is available to them. A few parents commented on inconsistencies in the setting of homework between different subjects and sets. Inspection evidence indicates that the school is open to discussion of any concerns with parents and would be keen to iron out inconsistencies. As the effective setting and

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marking of homework makes a positive contribution to teaching and assessment, this could helpfully be incorporated into the school's action plans for improvement.

A few parents do not feel that the school does enough to promote healthy lifestyles, and more than a quarter of students in their questionnaires expressed the same view. However, there were almost no additional written comments from parents to explain why they held this view. Taking into account inspection evidence, the school's provision in promoting healthy lifestyles and its recognised awards in this aspect of students' development, inspectors judged this to be outstanding.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Calderstones 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 168 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1531 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	72	43	89	53	7	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	71	42	91	54	2	1	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	93	55	67	40	5	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	69	41	88	52	3	2	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	70	42	86	51	4	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	51	30	92	55	14	8	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	31	90	54	19	11	3	2
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)	53	32	92	55	5	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	61	36	90	54	9	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	80	48	72	43	8	5	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	52	31	88	52	11	7	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	79	47	79	47	5	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	95	57	67	40	4	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 all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. 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">■ 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.



Dear Students

Inspection of Calderstones School, Liverpool, L18 3HS

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We judged your school to be good overall with quite a number of aspects that are already outstanding, such as:

- the care, guidance and support the school provides for your well-being
- how safe you feel in school as a result of high quality procedures and policies to safeguard each of you
- the way the school promotes equal opportunities and tackles any discrimination
- the school's relationships with you and your parents and carers, helped by excellent communication links through the virtual learning platform
- your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- your contribution to your school and the wider community, for example in the willingness to take on responsibilities and help others
- the school's work to ensure that you know a lot about how to keep yourself safe and healthy, both physically and emotionally.

In order to move the school forward to achieve its aim of being outstanding overall, the inspectors and the senior leadership team have agreed the following priority for improvement.

- Monitor more sharply the quality of teaching and improve the way teachers use assessment (including marking) to support students' learning, to make sure these are consistently good or outstanding.

Your part in this will be to make sure you ask your teachers to explain if you don't know how well you are doing. You should always know what your target levels and grades are, and how to reach these to achieve your full potential in all subjects.

We were impressed by how much you enjoy school and with your positive attitudes and behaviour, so we know that you have the capacity to help the school to achieve its aims – well done!

Yours sincerely

Mrs Marguerite Murphy

Her Majesty's Inspector

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