

Calder House School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Calder House School is a small independent special school in Colerne, Wiltshire. It educates pupils with specific learning difficulties, particularly dyslexia and dyspraxia. On admission, all pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is low. Pupils usually spend two or three years at the school before moving back into mainstream education. The school opened in September 1995 and is privately owned. It is registered to admit 48 pupils aged between five and twelve years. There are 47 pupils on roll aged between six and thirteen years. The school has been granted permission by the Department of Education, for a temporary material change, to retain three pupils above its registered age limit for the current academic year only.

Most pupils are White British. Fifteen have statements of special educational needs. The school aims to provide an environment where pupils enjoy learning and develop their self-esteem and confidence as learners. It was last inspected in July 2009.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education is outstanding and the school fully meets its aims, being particularly successful in reintegrating pupils back into mainstream education. Highly effective teaching, excellent care and a curriculum that is extremely well matched to individuals' specific needs ensure that pupils make outstanding progress in their academic and personal development. Welfare, health and safety procedures, including safeguarding arrangements, are outstanding. The school has improved the quality of its provision since its last inspection and outcomes for all aspects of the school's work are now outstanding. The school continues to meet all regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding. It is exceptionally broad and provides an excellent range of learning opportunities that prepares pupils very well for the future. The curriculum policy provides an accurate summary of the provision made.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Comprehensive schemes of work are in place for all subjects and for specialist therapy skills work.

During the morning, pupils are taught in ability groups and provision appropriately centres on literacy and numeracy. Individual remediation programmes are provided to improve individuals' listening, speaking, spelling, writing and numeracy skills. Dyslexia, occupational, and speech and language therapists work with individuals and groups on specific sub-skills that require improvement. Learning programmes are bespoke and are carefully tailored to each individual's specific needs, interest and ability.

In the afternoons, pupils are taught in year groups and all of the other required areas of learning are covered. Italian and Latin are taught and both subjects help to develop pupils' linguistic skills and their awareness of other cultures. The English Speaking Board work, in which all pupils are involved, is making a very positive impact on improving pupils' memory, listening skills and ability to speak aloud to an audience.

The last inspection identified that the use of information and communication technology (ICT) needed to be improved to extend pupils' research and independent learning skills further. This weakness has been remedied effectively. The school has steadily invested in computer technology over the years and good use is made of ICT across the curriculum to support learning and promote independent working. In 2009, inspectors also identified that planning was not always closely aligned to pupils' individual targets and a better check needed to be made on pupils' progress during lessons. This shortcoming has also been rectified. Learning is suitably matched to the objectives specified in pupils' statements of special educational needs and/or their individual educational plan. Pupils' progress towards any targets set is regularly evaluated to inform the next steps in learning.

An excellent range of enrichment activities broadens pupils' horizons. Pupils say that they love the Italian language work, the Second World War 'evacuation day' and World Book Day experiences, and especially enjoy the annual camp in the school grounds. They find the activities memorable and very worthwhile. They also enjoy trips to the farm, theatre, mosque, church and museums, and particularly like talking to visiting authors, police detectives and local farmers about their work. Pupils like participating in first-aid training, sports competitions and chess tournaments. They have achieved local and national success in these areas. A good range of clubs is provided during the school day, including football, tag rugby, gardening, choir, chess, cricket, netball and reading.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding. This enables pupils to make good or better progress in lessons and outstanding progress over time. The strengths in teaching lie in the excellent relationships between staff and pupils that ensure learning is carried out in a very positive climate. All staff, including therapists, are adept at helping pupils feel secure, reducing their anxieties and motivating them to learn. As a result, pupils trust their teachers and give of their best. Teachers use a

range of effective assessment methods to determine what pupils can and cannot do. The information gained from assessment is used expertly to match work closely to individuals' specific needs and capabilities. Therapists support learning extremely well, focusing on personal and academic aspects that pupils are struggling with or are barriers to learning. They successfully boost pupils' self-confidence and quickly identify and remedy gaps in learning. Staff have expert knowledge about dyslexia and dyspraxia. They put it to good use to ensure pupils are always suitably challenged, that teaching methods take account of individuals' preferred learning styles and activities are interesting, motivating and are well resourced. The quality and range of resources in school are very good. The vast majority of tasks are worthwhile and time is normally used wisely. This said, there are occasions, in class reading activities, when one or two individuals are not always engaged in productive learning tasks. For example, they copy extracts from books with no clear purpose and a small number of individuals choose books that are not suitable, so that their interest wanes. At times, in one-to-one reading sessions, the meaning of words being read is not explained to improve pupils' comprehension and on occasions not enough attention is paid to improving pupils' expression, stress and intonation to aid reading fluency. The school uses a good mix of standardised and teacher assessments to determine pupils' attainment on entry and to inform intervention. However, the tracking of pupils' progress over time, particularly for different groups, classes and subjects is insufficiently developed.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are extremely polite and courteous and show high levels of respect to adults and one another. They are happy and enjoy coming to school, as demonstrated by their regular attendance. Pupils show great self-discipline and this is reflected in their outstanding behaviour in class and around the school. Pupils' attitudes to learning are first rate and they give of their best at all times. They are keen to do well, show initiative and perseverance in all that they do and can think and learn for themselves. They participate fully in lessons and in the broader range of school activities.

Pupils are proud of their contribution to the school and wider community. The school council is making a difference by recommending the installation of solar panels to reduce energy costs. The school's 'eco warriors' are effectively recycling paper, card and plastics and have received a Silver Green Flag award for their efforts. Pupils raise funds for a number of good causes both locally and internationally. Provision is extremely effective in boosting pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. Numerous comments were made by parents, carers and pupils, in their Ofsted pre-inspection questionnaire responses, about how individuals' self-worth has been transformed since entering the school. Religious education lessons, links with schools in India, Kenya and Wales and being official Olympic sponsors for Kuwait and India help pupils gain a good understanding of their own and other cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The school has all of the required policies in place to ensure that pupils are very well cared for and are protected from harm. Guidance is regularly reviewed and is implemented very effectively. All pupils say that they feel safe and secure and are free from intimidation, including bullying. They have a very good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. For example, twice a week Year 8 pupils run a healthy snack shop to help encourage others to eat healthily. They have good opportunities for exercise through swimming, sports and Pilates exercise, which all help to build up pupils' core strength and improve their general coordination and movement. Pupils know the possible dangers of using the internet.

Safeguarding arrangements are robust. All staff, including the designated persons for child protection, have been trained at the appropriate level to fulfil their child protection duties effectively. High staffing levels ensure pupils' safety at all times. Fire safety procedures are good. Fire drills are held regularly and fire fighting and portable electrical appliances are subject to regular inspection to ensure equipment is fully operational. The effective implementation of good-quality risk assessments ensures that pupils are kept safe both on and away from the school site. The attendance register is kept in good order and the admission register is kept in accordance with requirements. The school has prepared an accessibility plan to improve provision in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All of the required recruitment and staff vetting checks are carried out on staff and the proprietors to confirm their suitability to work with children. The single central register contains all of the required information.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises and accommodation are of high quality. They enable highly effective learning and keep pupils safe and secure. The school grounds are extensive and are well used for play, recreation and outdoor learning. Classrooms vary in size but are suitable for the numbers using them. There is a range of additional teaching space including computer suites, art and therapy rooms, barns for covered play and school productions, a hall and a small library. The school is very well maintained and decorated to a very good standard. There are sufficient washrooms and toilets for staff, pupils and visitors. There are adequate facilities for those who are ill.

Provision of information

All of the required information is provided, or is made available, to parents, carers and others. The bursar submits the necessary financial information to local

authorities about the income received and expenditure incurred by the school, in respect of each pupil who is funded by a local authority. The school supplies comprehensive information to local authorities to inform the review of individuals' statements of special educational needs. Parents and carers receive detailed, informative termly reports about their children's attainment and progress in all of the subjects taught. They are invited to attend termly meetings with staff to discuss their children's education. Parents and carers hold the school's work in high regard. Comments on questionnaires, such as, 'My child has blossomed and flourished in the two years at this school,' and, 'The school has changed my child's life in the most positive ways possible,' confirm this.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints procedure meets regulatory requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Ensure that pupils are always engaged in productive learning tasks in class reading activities; that in one-to-one reading sessions the meaning of words is routinely reinforced to improve pupils' comprehension and good attention is paid to improving pupils' expression, stress and intonation to aid reading fluency.
- Improve the tracking of pupils' progress over time, particularly for different groups, classes and subjects.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special school for pupils with specific learning difficulties		
Date school opened	September 1995		
Age range of pupils	5–12 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 34	Girls: 13	Total: 47
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 11	Girls: 4	Total: 15
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£14,250		
Address of school	Thickwood Lane Coleme Chippenham Wiltshire SN14 8BN		
Telephone number	01225 742329		
Email address	head@calderhouseschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Andrew Day		
Proprietor	Calderhouse Limited		

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.

24 May 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Calder House School, Colerne, SN14 8BN

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when I came to inspect your school recently. A special thanks to the members of the school council who spoke about their work and told me all about school life. I enjoyed being in your lessons, looking at your work and talking to you about it. I am writing a letter to tell you what I found out.

Here are the school's main strengths.

- Your school gives you an outstanding education and all government requirements are met.
- You are happy, enjoy school and participate in all that the school has to offer.
- Teaching is outstanding and the curriculum is very well matched to your specific needs. It is, therefore, no surprise that you make exceptional progress.
- You, and your parents and carers, say that the school has made a real difference to improving your lives, and you are now acquiring the necessary basic skills for future life.
- You are extremely well cared for and you told me that you feel safe and secure.
- The atmosphere in the school is great and you all get along so well. Your school is in a great location and it is so well looked after.
- You thoroughly enjoy Italian, Evacuation Day and World Book Day and especially like the annual camp and roasting marshmallows over a fire. Yummy!
- You love the clubs, trips out and the visitors coming in to enrich learning. All of you are helping to make a difference in the school and wider community by raising money for good causes, being official Olympic sponsors for India and Kuwait and recommending installing solar panels to save energy.

I have asked the proprietors and headteacher to do two things to make your school even better by:

- ensuring that you are always engaged in productive learning tasks in class reading activities; that the meaning of words is always explained and teachers improve your reading expression
- improving the tracking of your progress over time.

Yours sincerely

David Rzeznik
Lead inspector