

Calder High School, The Calder Learning Trust

Brier Hey Lane, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, HX7 5QN

Inspection dates

27–28 January 2015; 6 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Require improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough students make good progress from their starting points, especially disadvantaged students and those in Key Stage 3. Achievement across subjects and between groups of students is too variable. The school does not track the progress of different groups keenly enough at Key Stage 3.
- Teaching is improving, but is not consistently good in all subjects. Activities do not always provide students of varying abilities, including the most able, with the right level of challenge.
- Teachers mark work regularly, but the quality of feedback is not consistently good and does not always have an impact on students' progress. Errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation are not always corrected frequently enough. Students' literacy skills do not develop quickly enough.
- Opportunities to develop students' reading skills are not routinely provided across a range of subjects.
- Teachers' assessment of students' work, particularly at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, is not consistently accurate.
- Students in the sixth form do not make consistently good progress in academic subjects, because the quality of teaching is variable. Plans to improve the sixth form are in the early stages of development.
- The quality of middle leadership is variable. The school does not make enough use of the strongest leaders to share best practice with those who are less effective.
- Improvement plans are in place and focus on the right things. However, plans do not identify precisely how improvements will be achieved or how and when success will be measured.

The school has the following strengths

- The determination and vision of the headteacher and his senior team are driving standards up, especially at Key Stage 4.
- More effective training means that the quality of teaching is improving.
- Students' achievement in mathematics and English is improving swiftly because of strong leadership in these subjects.
- Students on vocational courses and attending alternative provision make good progress.
- Students behave well and show good attitudes to learning. They are polite and courteous.
- Students have a good understanding of life in modern Britain and make a good contribution to school and community life.
- Governance has improved. Governors are now holding senior leaders to account with more rigour.
- The school keeps students safe. Students feel safe and know how to adopt safe practices.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors first visited the school in January 2015. Through no fault of the school, the inspection was deemed to be incomplete. Two of Her Majesty’s Inspectors visited the school in May 2015 to gather more evidence about the school’s overall effectiveness.
- Inspectors visited a wide range of lessons or parts of lessons, five of which were observed jointly with leaders from the school. In addition, Her Majesty’s Inspectors carried out 16 shorter visits to lessons with senior leaders to scrutinise students’ work in their books and to look briefly at teaching.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at records and supporting documents, including those relating to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors considered senior leaders’ views of the school’s own performance and the performance of teachers. The school’s tracking and evaluation of students’ progress were reviewed. Inspectors also considered senior leaders’ monitoring of the quality of teaching in lessons. Minutes of meetings of the governing body were scrutinised.
- Formal meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, and members of the governing body, including the vice-chair. In addition, inspectors met with middle leaders, groups of students from a range of year groups and a member of the local authority. An inspector held a conversation with the school’s improvement partner.
- Inspectors also held informal discussions with students during lessons and at break and lunchtime in order to gather their views about learning and behaviour across the school.
- A scrutiny of students’ work was carried out during inspectors’ observations of lessons. Inspectors looked in detail at students’ achievement in English, mathematics and science. Furthermore, Her Majesty’s Inspectors looked at a range of students’ work in exercise books and folders.
- Inspectors analysed 100 responses to staff questionnaires and 225 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View). Inspectors considered 179 parents’ views during the additional visit to the school in May 2015.

Inspection team

Keith Worrall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Cornally	Additional Inspector
Pamela Hemphill	Additional Inspector
Rebecca Lawton	Additional Inspector
Stephen Wall	Additional Inspector
Catherine Anwar, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
John Mitcheson	Her Majesty’s Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Calder High School became a Cooperative Learning Trust School in April 2014, working in partnership with another local school.
- The school is larger than most other secondary schools.
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, those supported by the pupil premium funding, is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The school makes use of Calderdale College, Myerscough College and Mixenden Activity Centre for alternative provision for a very small minority of students in Years 10 and 11 on a part-time basis to access some vocational courses.
- The school has links with the Brooksbank School through the Calder Learning Trust and undertakes a variety of partnership activities linked to professional development and training for staff.
- The school is supported by an independent improvement partner who provides advice, guidance and challenge for leaders.
- The local authority has provided support for senior leaders through a consultant headteacher. This support ended in January 2015.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- Recently, there has been a high turnover of teachers and a large proportion of staff is new to the school. Some middle leaders are new to their roles. A new head of sixth form has been appointed and will start in June. Temporary leadership arrangements are currently in place in the sixth form.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that students, particularly disadvantaged students, make good progress by:
 - improving the effectiveness of the teaching of literacy skills, including reading, across the curriculum
 - making sure teachers use information about students' achievement to plan lessons that challenge students of all abilities, including the most able
 - ensuring that teachers' marking and feedback have an effective impact on students' achievement.
- Strengthen leadership by:
 - ensuring that the new sixth form leader has a tangible impact on teaching and students' achievement in Key Stage 5
 - making sure that all subject leaders are as effective as the best by sharing the strongest practice across the school
 - sharpening the school improvement plan, so that it focuses on the most important areas for improvement, identifies precisely what actions will be taken and by whom, and shows clearly how success will be measured
 - making sure that leaders routinely and effectively check on the accuracy of teachers' assessments, particularly at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The determination of the headteacher has secured considerable improvements at Calder High since his arrival. His unflinching drive for the highest standards mean that he now has a good senior team around him and actions are beginning to improve students' achievement at Key Stage 4.
- Nevertheless, leadership and management require improvement because the impact on teaching and achievement over time has not secured consistently good outcomes for students. Although the school is improving steadily, students do not yet make consistently good progress between Years 7 and 11. Students do not achieve well enough in academic subjects in the sixth form.
- Senior leaders have a clear vision and ethos, which is shared with governors and staff. Leaders understand the school's overall strengths and areas for development. Plans are in place for improvement, but these do not identify sharply enough precisely what needs to be done, when success will be achieved and how it will be measured. Leaders are successfully ensuring that students' achievement in mathematics is improving rapidly. Students' achievement in English has been slower to improve, but is now good in Year 11. However, students' achievement in other subjects, such as science and modern foreign languages, is not improving quickly enough.
- The headteacher's uncompromising drive for excellence has resulted in a high turnover of teachers. The resulting combination of new and temporary staff and more established teachers has complicated leaders' efforts to ensure that approaches to teaching are consistent across the school. Even so, teachers are better supported by a range of training opportunities. Activities undertaken in partnership with the Brooksbank School and Calder Learning Trust, for example, provide good opportunities for professional development and training.
- Teachers are set appropriate targets for improving their teaching. Although the teaching of several teachers has been developed and improved, teaching is not yet consistently good within and across different subjects.
- Arrangements to check on the consistency of the quality of teaching have improved, but are not yet having consistently good impact on students' progress in all areas. This is particularly so in the sixth form. As a result, inconsistencies in teaching are not identified and remedied swiftly enough.
- Temporary arrangements for sixth form leadership have had a limiting impact on developing this aspect of the school's provision. Although leaders' monitoring of attendance, punctuality and progress in the sixth form is improving, it remains a weakness. A new sixth form leader has now been appointed.
- Leaders ensure that students' skills and abilities are assessed regularly. Assessment is accurate at Key Stage 4 because of rigorous internal and external checks. As a result, leaders have extensive data about how well students and groups of students are doing. At Key Stage 3, however, assessment and tracking of student progress is less secure. Work in students' books does not match the levels given in some subjects, such as science and humanities.
- Senior leaders acknowledge that information is not used sharply enough to review and analyse students' progress effectively, particularly in Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form. As a result, leaders do not measure accurately whether actions aimed at bringing about improvement are effective. The quality of middle leadership is inconsistent across subjects. Senior leaders are now strengthening middle leaders' skills, especially those new to their roles. Middle leaders are keen and enthusiastic, and there are some significant strengths in the leadership of mathematics and English.
- The pupil premium funding is used increasingly well. Leaders' spending plans are well targeted and students that are falling behind are catching up, particularly in mathematics. Specific support from programmes targeted at groups and individual students are effective. Even so, the gaps that exist in the attainment of disadvantaged students compared to others nationally have not yet closed sufficiently. This is because the quality of day-to-day teaching of disadvantaged students remains too variable.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. There is an extensive and varied range of extra-curricular activities, particularly those based on the performing arts and sports, which broaden students' experience. Participation in such activities is high. 'Learning for Life' is delivered weekly and provides opportunities to develop students' knowledge and understanding of personal, social and health issues.
- The curriculum makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are provided with opportunities to reflect on moral issues and develop a good understanding of life in modern Britain. Students experience visits to the theatre and other cultural events, and learn about the similarities and differences between cultures, faiths and religious communities. The school promotes good relations and tackles discrimination effectively.
- Leaders have ensured that adaptations to the curriculum in mathematics are helping to raise achievement

in this subject successfully. However, students' literacy skills are not improving as quickly, because there is not yet a strategic, consistent approach to making sure that students' literacy skills are promoted effectively across a wide range of subjects.

- Leaders check effectively on the quality and delivery of alternative provision to ensure that the needs of students are met and that students behave well and are kept safe.
- Students receive appropriate careers education, advice and guidance, so that they are prepared to progress on to the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements and are effective.
- The local authority has provided a range of external support, including the secondment of a consultant leader. This has now ended. Its impact is not yet evident.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is more effective than at the last inspection. It is led by an experienced and committed Chair of the Governing Body. Governance has been refreshed with the re-structuring of committees and governors' responsibilities. In addition, governors have benefited from a wide range of training, for example on improving their understanding of data. This means that governors are in a much stronger position to hold senior leaders to account, and to challenge and support school improvement.
- As a result of recent training, governors have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching. They ensure that performance management systems are fully in place and that appraisal is used effectively to tackle teachers' underperformance. Governors have a good understanding of how the pupil premium funding is spent. They know that, as a result, gaps in achievement are closing in some areas, but that these students do not always do well in day-to-day lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students demonstrate consistently good standards of behaviour in lessons and around the school. This is a result of effective leadership of behaviour by senior leaders.
- Students enjoy positive relationships with staff. Around the school site and in lessons, staff manage behaviour well. A very supportive and engaging learning environment pervades and therefore, students feel safe, are happy and are eager to learn. Sometimes, especially when work lacks challenge, a few students lose focus.
- Students take pride in their appearance, are smartly dressed, well-prepared for lessons and come with the necessary equipment. Students are very courteous and polite to each other and to adults. Students take pride in their school. There is little evidence of litter and classrooms are bright and welcoming.
- Attendance is rising and is broadly average. Rates of persistent absence have reduced and permanent exclusions are rare. Equally, the number of fixed-term exclusions is low. The school's work to promote better attendance is effective and contributing to an improved picture. For example, differences in rates of attendance of groups of students, such as disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs, compared to others in the school, are narrowing.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students say they feel safe; parents and staff support this view. Procedures are fully in place to ensure students are kept safe and students are fully aware of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. Students' awareness of potential risks makes a positive difference to their safety and well-being.
- Procedures to check on and record the credentials of staff are thorough and well maintained. Visitors to the school undergo appropriate checks prior to entering the school.
- Risk assessments, such as for theatre trips and sporting fixtures, are thorough, accurately assessed and well managed.
- Internal systems to record and review bullying, in order to identify patterns or trends of bullying that may emerge over time, are secure. Bullying of any kind is extremely rare.
- The safety of students attending alternative provision is checked on appropriately by the school's leaders. Regular meetings and communication with alternative providers ensure that the attendance and behaviour of students is monitored carefully.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement, because over time it has not enabled all students to make good progress. The quality of teaching varies within and between subjects and year groups, including in the sixth form. The high turnover of teachers and the appointment of new and temporary staff have limited the impact of leaders' efforts to ensure a consistent approach to teaching across the school.
- Nevertheless, the provision of well-targeted training is having a positive effect on the quality of teaching for current students, for example in English.
- Activities in lessons are not always pitched at the right level of challenge for the different abilities of students. The most able students sometimes find the work too easy, while some lower attaining students find it too hard. Teachers' expectations of what more able students can achieve are sometimes too low to lead to good progress. Given students' starting points, too few reach the higher levels of attainment in GCSEs results at the end of Year 11.
- The teaching of literacy is patchy. Errors in students' written work, particularly in spelling, grammar and punctuation, are not corrected regularly. Opportunities to develop students' reading skills vary across the subjects. The school has not adopted a common approach to making sure that students' literacy skills are promoted effectively across all subjects. Students' literacy skills are not improving quickly enough.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving and, as a result, a higher proportion of students in 2014 made the expected rate of progress. Students have better opportunities to develop their mathematical understanding, including across the curriculum subjects. However, opportunities for students to apply their knowledge to solving real-life mathematical problems in some subjects, such as geography and science, are sometimes overlooked.
- The quality of teachers' marking and feedback is variable. Many teachers follow the school's agreed marking and feedback policy, making sure that students are given appropriate time to respond to their comments. Some students provide feedback to one another, offering suggestions as to how their peers can improve their work. While these approaches are improving the progress of some students, for others the impact is more limited. This is because, in some cases, teachers' marking and feedback is too general. Consequently, students are not always clear about what they need to do to improve, which hampers their progress.
- Students and parents are generally positive about the quality of teaching. Inspection evidence supports the view that the quality of teaching is generally improving. Teachers know their subjects well, which is improving students' enthusiasm to learn. In the best lessons, teachers ask challenging questions of students to encourage deep thinking and clear explanations.
- Support staff are deployed carefully and thoughtfully within classrooms to ensure that students receive the support needed. The 'Progress Pad' provides effective support for vulnerable students. The Learning Support Centre, which is well regarded by students and parents, provides effective support for individual students in needs of additional pastoral support.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- When students join the school in Year 7, their attainment is broadly average. A minority of students join with weaker skills in aspects of literacy, including their ability to spell and to use grammar and punctuation appropriately.
- In 2014, the proportion of students achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including in English and mathematics, was broadly average. Too few students make good progress between Years 7 and 11, and, as a result, achievement requires improvement.
- Achievement in mathematics is improving at a good rate, but still requires further improvement. Students develop a good understanding of mathematical processes and the concepts that underpin them.
- While the proportion of students making the expected rate of progress or better in English is lower than in mathematics, it is improving as a result of strong leadership and better teaching.
- Students in the sixth form achieve well in vocational qualifications, but not in academic subjects.
- Although students say that they enjoy reading, there are not yet enough opportunities for students to read or to write in lessons to ensure that their literacy skills develop consistently well. Some students lack confidence in using specialised vocabulary and reading technical language.
- The achievement of the most able students is not yet good enough. In 2014, not enough of the brightest students reached the highest grades at GCSE in some subjects, such as English language, mathematics, humanities, languages and some sciences. Activities in lessons often lack the necessary challenge to stretch these students so they reach their full potential. There are exceptions. For example, Year 10

students were observed undertaking a very challenging activity in an art lesson, planning a piece of art work on a celebrity-based theme using a particular artistic style.

- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs requires improvement, particularly in English. In Year 11 in 2014, too few made expected progress from their previous starting points. However, the school's information about students' achievement indicates that more students are now making better progress.
- The achievement of disadvantaged students is not strong enough in some subjects. Disadvantaged students who sat their GCSE examinations in 2014 attained about two thirds of a grade lower in English and one grade lower in mathematics than other students in the school. Moreover, the attainment of disadvantaged students was just over a grade lower in both English and mathematics than their more affluent peers nationally. Too few disadvantaged students made expected progress from their starting points, particularly in English. School data and inspection evidence show, however, that gaps in the rate of progress between disadvantaged students and others in the school in 2014 narrowed in mathematics and English. However, leaders' sharp focus on the achievement of disadvantaged students is now bearing fruit and gaps between the achievement of current students and other students are narrowing.
- As a result of better teaching, achievement is improving in some subjects, such as media studies and the performing arts. However, achievement is not improving quickly enough in other subjects, for example modern foreign languages and science.
- Students who attend alternative provision achieve well. For example, the group of students who attend Calderdale College undertake a range of BTEC courses and make good progress. They are taught well and supported effectively by the school. Links with the providers are clear and well organised.
- The teaching of vocational subjects in the school, such as sport and hospitality, is good.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- The sixth form requires improvement because there is too much variation in students' performance. Although students achieve well in vocational subjects, the rates of progress made by students undertaking academic subjects are not consistently good.
- Students enter the sixth form with levels of attainment that are in line with or slightly lower than the national average. Most students have previously achieved a grade C or above in both GCSE English and mathematics. Appropriate provision is made for those students that have not achieved these qualifications.
- Most students complete their sixth form courses. Students are appropriately prepared for the next stage in work or education. The large majority go on to train or study at higher education institutions.
- Teachers have appropriate qualifications and secure subject knowledge. However, teaching is not consistently good, because expectations of what students can achieve are not always high enough to enable students to reach the highest standards.
- Students' work is not always assessed accurately. While some teachers ensure that students know how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve, this approach is not consistent across all subjects.
- Students' attitudes to learning are good. They take great pride in their work and in the school, behave well and are keen to learn. They appreciate the wide variety of extra-curricular activities available to them and participate with great enthusiasm.
- Students make appropriate use of study time; they often work collaboratively to help each other assess and improve their work. They contribute well to the school community by mentoring younger students and are involved in community-based activities beyond the school. They are proud of the school's international link with another school to promote wider cultural awareness and collaboration.
- Temporary leadership arrangements have hindered improvement in the sixth form. Leaders are taking appropriate action to ensure that leadership and management of the sixth form are more robust. Expectations of what students are capable of achieving are rising. Strategic plans to improve the sixth form are in the early stages of development, but have yet to make a significant difference to standards. Arrangements to check on the consistency of the quality of teaching are in place, but are not rigorous enough. Leaders are now beginning to track how well students are doing more robustly so that appropriate interventions are in place to improve students' achievement.
- Leaders ensure that students are kept safe.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	107562
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	442179

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	1,198
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jean Bradbury
Headteacher	Anthony Guise
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2013
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