

Calthorpe Academy

Darwin Street, Highgate, Birmingham B12 0TJ

Inspection dates

27–28 April 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Safeguarding is ineffective. In the past, the school has not followed proper procedures. Not enough attention has been paid to making sure that staff were properly recruited and well trained.
- There is no clear strategy for developing pupils' communication skills. This affects behaviour.
- The building has been modified badly. Some of the spaces severely inhibit teaching and learning.
- There are too few specialist facilities and resources for pupils with autism and with complex needs. Many teaching resources are outdated.
- Pupils with the most complex needs, including in post-16, have very limited opportunities to socialise with their peers.
- Outdoor learning in the early years provision is not good enough.
- Teachers across the school have previously been asked to teach topics which mean little to the pupils. Some of this approach still remains, which hampers the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. However, most pupils make reasonable progress with their basic skills.
- Leaders have not monitored the quality of teaching well enough. There is too much reliance on brief lesson observations. Too many weaknesses have gone unnoticed.
- Governors have failed to challenge the poor practice in the school. They do not know enough about safeguarding, financial management or how well pupils are achieving. They have been too accepting of what they have been told by leaders. Some school money has been badly spent.

The school has the following strengths

- The new principal has quickly and accurately identified the weaknesses that exist in the school. He has taken swift action to start to put the most serious of these problems right. His vision for the school's future is clear and ambitious. Senior leaders are working well with him.
- Many staff thoroughly support the changes that the new principal has made. They know that these changes are making the school better.
- There is some good teaching across the school.
- Attendance is monitored well and poor attendance is challenged by leaders.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- As a matter of urgency, ensure that all aspects of safeguarding are effective by:
 - clarifying the extent to which staff appointments have followed safer recruitment procedures and taking swift action where any issues come to light
 - carrying out a full scrutiny of child protection case files to ensure that action has always been taken where necessary
 - fully embedding the new processes for recording and acting on child protection concerns
 - making sure that all staff have received the safeguarding training they need, that this is fully and accurately recorded, and that staff consistently put this training into action.

- Improve behaviour and personal development, including at lunchtimes by:
 - establishing a clear and consistent approach to communication, including any use of signing, symbols, pictures and communication strategies using technology
 - ensuring that all staff, including lunchtime supervisors, only use any form of physical intervention with pupils where it is absolutely necessary
 - explaining to pupils, where physical prompts are needed, the reasons for this
 - allowing pupils to manage their own behaviour with as much independence as possible and teaching them strategies to do so when needed
 - linking records and analysis of different aspects of behaviour in order to establish causes of challenging behaviour and any patterns that exist
 - extending the opportunities that pupils with complex needs have to socialise with their peers of the same age.

- Improve the leadership of teaching and learning and thereby their quality by:
 - ensuring that, at all key stages and for all groups of pupils, the curriculum is relevant and suitable
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels lead by example by consistently teaching well and demonstrating and developing best practice for all groups of pupils
 - accurately identifying where weaknesses in teaching lie and ensuring that these are quickly eradicated
 - establishing where strengths lie in different aspects of teaching and ensuring that this good practice is spread
 - enabling staff, including subject leaders and heads of department, to see good and outstanding practice in other schools in order to consider how to improve practice at Calthorpe
 - improving the resources to support pupils' learning, particularly for those with the most complex needs and those with autistic spectrum disorder
 - ensuring that staffing in each class is allocated according to the needs of the pupils
 - developing a properly resourced outdoor learning area for children in the early years foundation stage and ensuring that this is used well to promote pupils' progress.

- Ensure that leaders and managers, including governors, monitor and evaluate thoroughly all aspects of the school's work, in particular:
 - safeguarding
 - the appropriate use of resources including deployment of staff

- the management of finances
- value for money, including whether the way in which money is spent assists pupils with different needs to have equal opportunities to succeed.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- When the new principal took up his post in January 2016 he identified a range of weaknesses in safeguarding procedures. Inspection evidence confirms that these weaknesses have previously been widespread. The principal is tackling the issues strongly and systematically. Improvements have already been made to the way in which staff are recruited and checked and the way in which child protection cases are handled. However, because of the depth and breadth of these issues, much work remains to be done.
- In the recent past, systems for recording the actions taken on child protection issues have been weak and inconsistent. It is not always possible to tell what actions were taken, when or by whom. Procedures and record keeping have recently improved.
- The school has no record of the training staff received on safeguarding prior to September 2015. Staff have received a range of training since, although records of who has attended what, and whether some staff have gaps in training, are still not entirely clear. During discussions with inspectors, staff demonstrated that they were clear about what to do if there was a child protection issue. They felt that recent training had been informative.
- The principal has drive, vision and ambition for the school. His analysis of the issues in the school is accurate. He knows what needs to change to ensure that a better quality of education for the pupils and is determined to make these changes. Senior leaders feel empowered to implement changes in the areas for which they are responsible, and are supportive of the principal's vision for the school's future.
- Nearly a third of staff filled in and returned the Ofsted questionnaire. They were thoroughly supportive of the school, the direction of travel and of all the work the new principal has done so far. A number commented that since January there was a better ethos and improved staff morale.
- Until recently, physical intervention has been over-used. The school's records show that its use has decreased this term and this finding was supported by the practice seen during the inspection. Nevertheless, staff still physically move pupils too much when it is not necessary to do so.
- The school keeps records of behaviour incidents, accidents, assaults and physical intervention. Some of this information is analysed to show patterns and trends. However, the information from all these records is not considered together in order to gain the full picture of a pupil's behaviour and work out why issues may be occurring.
- Teaching has not been monitored or evaluated well enough and weak teaching has not been tackled effectively. The information on the school's website about the quality of teaching is inaccurate. Leaders have relied solely on short visits to a lesson to judge the overall quality of a teacher's work. The deputy headteachers who are now in charge of achievement and teaching have developed and begun to implement a much more wide-ranging way of evaluating the quality of teaching.
- Staff do not have enough opportunity to see teaching at other schools. Some have only ever taught at Calthorpe and they have no points of comparison to be able to develop their practice. Many leaders do not have a teaching commitment so are not able to model good practice to other staff.
- The curriculum is inadequate because it does not meet the needs of the pupils. Staff have felt constrained by the topics that they have been asked to teach, many of which are too abstract or obscure for their pupils. For example, during the inspection pupils were learning about recycling. This was appropriate for many pupils, but meant little to those with more complex needs. Previous topics have included the Trans-Siberian Railway. The curriculum does not prepare pupils well enough for life in modern Britain or for the next stage of their life after school.
- The curriculum for pupils with autism and with complex needs is also poorly resourced. There are no specialist areas to support the learning of autistic pupils and those with complex needs, such as soft play or sensory rooms.
- The way in which the school building has been developed as the numbers on roll have grown has resulted in some poorly designed classrooms. Some are tiny and have no windows. Others can only be accessed by going through other classrooms, resulting in frequent disruption to learning for pupils. The outdoor areas for pupils in the early years foundation stage are poor.
- Some classrooms have a large number of pupils and others far fewer, which is not always based on the needs of the pupils. Likewise, some are well staffed and others less so. The rationale for grouping and staffing is not well thought out.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is too variable. Assemblies, such as the one seen during the inspection, celebrate pupils' achievements. During the inspection, some pupils enjoyed singing

familiar songs together and others responded well to music, a parachute game, and attractive Chinese artefacts. However, a lack of focus on communication limits pupils' ability to respond to experiences and express their views. Some pupils are socially isolated within the school.

- Pupil premium funding and other additional funding through the primary sports fund and Year 7 catch up has been used to improve the progress of individual pupils through a range of interventions. The school has evidence of reasonable impact of these interventions.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governance of the school is inadequate.
 - Governors have an inaccurate view of the school's effectiveness. Governors have taken too much on trust. They have, too often, failed to challenge the former leadership of the school where such challenge was needed. They have not sought sufficient evidence that crucial aspects of the school's work, such as safeguarding, were being carried out properly.
 - Finances have been badly managed. Governors have agreed to school money being spent on facilities that do not benefit the pupils. An extensive gym facility is used by the most able-bodied pupils but is unsuitable for most pupils in the school. There are no equivalent leisure or relaxation facilities for pupils with more complex needs, who comprise the majority of the school population. The youngest pupils have a poor outdoor learning environment. In this, governors have not been sufficiently aware of the inequalities that exist in the access to suitable facilities for some pupils. Governors say that building a sauna and steam room for community use was intended to raise money for the school. However, it has not proved to be profitable.
 - Governors have received inaccurate information about the quality of teaching. They have little understanding of how leaders reach their judgements on teaching. They have not sought suitable external challenge or advice for leaders or for themselves.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- It is strongly recommended that newly qualified teachers are not appointed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. Some teaching is carefully planned to meet pupils' individual needs and focused on the skills they most need to learn, as well as on knowledge and enjoyment. At other times, the tasks given do not meet the needs of the majority of those in the class, despite the high numbers of staff and small numbers of pupils.
- The quality of teaching is sometimes hampered by the curriculum. Teachers do their best to make some inappropriate topics fit for their pupils, as they have previously been expected to do by leaders, but this is not always successful. As a result, pupils are sometimes asked to learn things that are not suitable for their stage of development and level of understanding.
- Conversely, work is occasionally planned creatively and thoughtfully to meet pupils' needs. During the inspection, for example, a group of autistic pupils were doing work based on the topic of Chinese temples. Light and sound created an engaging atmosphere, and pupils were visibly relaxed while they looked at and touched Chinese artefacts, painted Chinese symbols or used instruments. Their fine motor skills, eye contact and concentration were being developed well. In a science lesson, autistic pupils were successfully learning about melting by holding pieces of chocolate in their hands and seeing the result. Again, there was great enjoyment and evident learning.
- Some learning resources are dated and shabby. Others are not age-appropriate for the older pupils, for example plastic teddy bears being used for counting activities.
- Routines in classrooms are clear and help pupils to make a smooth transition from one activity to another. However, changes in focus are not always communicated well to pupils with the more complex needs. There is little use of visual cues for pupils with autism. Overall, despite some examples of good practice, communication skills are not developed well enough in lessons.
- Many teaching assistants make a positive contribution to pupils' learning in lessons. They know the pupils well and form close teams in the different classrooms.
- The assessment of pupils' learning has recently been developed well by senior leaders. Assessments are moderated with other schools. Where pupils are not making progress, particularly with their English or mathematics skills, a range of interventions help them to catch up. New assessment systems are being

trialled to see if they are more suitable than the school's current system. The school is developing a clear and accurate picture of the progress pupils are making, although leaders know there is still work to be done.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. Safeguarding processes have not been good enough to ensure their welfare.
- There is no clear strategy for developing pupils' communication skills. This limits the extent to which they can become independent, or communicate to others what they want or are feeling.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their independence. Too often, staff speed things up by doing a task for the pupil, such as fastening their shoes or cutting up their food, when they are capable of doing this for themselves, given time.
- Pupils are taught in classes of pupils with similar learning difficulties. At times this is helpful to enable them to learn. However, pupils with the most complex needs, most of whom cannot speak, are socially isolated. For most of each week, the only people who speak to them are adults. This limits their personal development.
- The start and end of the school day is managed well. School and local authority staff closely supervise the arrival and departure of around 50 minibuses. There is a calm and orderly atmosphere which reassures pupils despite the large number of people and vehicles involved.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Behaviour in classrooms and around corridors was generally calm and pleasant. Many pupils are keen to learn, and cooperate well with their peers.
- Until recently, there has been little emphasis on teaching pupils strategies to manage their own behaviour. Staff tended to physically intervene if pupils did not cooperate. The new principal has introduced a new approach to managing behaviour, and this is starting to be successful. However, this is not yet applied consistently. Pupils are often not given enough time or opportunity to think about what is expected of them and to respond. Staff were observed physically moving pupils where this was not necessary.
- Where staff do need to move pupils, they do not always explain why this is necessary and what the pupil should actually be doing. There are not enough strategies to help pupils to manage their own behaviour.
- At lunchtime, pupils knew the routines and were agreeable and cooperative. The older most-able pupils lined up and those who could, chatted to staff and each other. Younger pupils waited patiently for their lunch. However, the atmosphere in some of the dining areas was oppressive. Lunchtime supervisors were too quick to tell pupils off, try to make the older pupils stand in a rigidly straight line when they were fine as they were, and physically move pupils who did not immediately do as they were asked.
- Some unacceptable behaviours that pupils display are a form of communication. The principal has accurately identified that this has not been understood well by staff and is taking steps to put this right.
- Behaviour in the off-site sixth-form lesson and at the work placement observed was mature and sensible. The school's records suggest this is typical.
- Many pupils attend very well. Among those with the most complex needs, absence rates are high. The school's information indicates that this is often because of genuine medical needs. Where this is not the case, the school challenges well.

Outcomes for pupils require improvement

- Many pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, make positive progress with their communication, physical, literacy and numeracy skills during their time at the school. Assessment information from leaders indicates that more pupils are now making good progress than they have done in the past. However, there are classes in different parts of the school where few pupils are on track to meet their targets.

- Where pupils fall behind with crucial aspects of their learning, they benefit from a range of interventions to help them to catch up, for example with their literacy or numeracy skills. The school's information shows that these interventions often have a positive impact on progress.
- Too many pupils lose learning time because many families take extended holidays in term time. This has an adverse impact on their progress.
- The development of physical skills for pupils with the most complex needs and physical disabilities is somewhat hampered by the lack of facilities that suit their needs. They benefit from the hydrotherapy pool, and the principal rightly intends to increase the access that they have to it. There is no soft play area where they can relax or make progress with free movement.
- There is a lack of sensory development opportunity for pupils with complex needs or those with autism.

Early years provision

is inadequate

- The early years provision is inadequate as safeguarding in the school is ineffective.
- Early years children have little opportunity to learn effectively outside. There is an outdoor space, but it is spartan and is not conducive to learning.
- The learning environment in the open-plan classroom is quite untidy, with resources piled up in corners. This does not help children to be independent, for example by knowing where to find things. The number of children in the space makes it noisy, and sometimes children find it difficult to concentrate because there are too many distractions.
- Pictures of children on whiteboards help children to greet each other in the mornings, creating a positive start to the day. There are clear routines throughout the day, which help children to know what to expect.
- Staff work well as a team. Many support children closely where they need to, but allow them to be more independent where appropriate. However, at times, as in the rest of the school, staff are too quick to move children rather than give them time to respond to requests themselves.
- When children join the school, leaders carefully gather information about what they can already do, and their interests, likes and dislikes. They use this initial information to plan learning activities for the first few weeks, then assess children and set targets for them.
- Teaching is generally well planned to meet children's needs and to allow them to make progress. Children are encouraged to communicate about what they are doing and to 'have a go'.

16 to 19 study programmes

are inadequate

- The 16 to 19 provision is inadequate as safeguarding in the school is ineffective.
- The 16 to 19 provision is relatively new. It was set up in September 2015 and is led by an assistant headteacher and a post-16 manager. Prior to this, pupils aged 14 to 19 were taught together.
- All pupils from the main school stay at the school for their post-16 education. However, they are not all included within the 16 to 19 provision. Students with complex needs are taught as a separate class and their curriculum varies little from that they have followed earlier in their school life. These students have little opportunity to interact socially with their peers, which limits their personal development.
- Students in the 16 to 19 provision follow one of two distinct pathways. One pathway focuses upon employment and work-based learning and the other upon independent living and community engagement. Students on both pathways continue to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Some of the most able students gain useful skills from their work placements and a few have gone on to gain employment. Most go on to college courses.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. At its best, it interests the young people and has a relevance to life outside school. For example, students in an art lesson were producing good-quality work for an external exhibition. At other times, students make less progress as the learning does not develop their understanding, skills and knowledge at the appropriate level. The impact of teaching assistants is inconsistent.
- Students generally behave well and many show mature attitudes. However, in line with the rest of the

school, students in the 16 to 19 provision do not have enough opportunities to develop their independence. Communication strategies are inconsistent.

- Leaders of the post-16 provision are aware of the strengths and weaknesses within the provision and are working with the new principal and other senior leaders to remedy the weaker aspects.

School details

Unique reference number	141252
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10018905

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	400
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nargis Rashid
Principal	Richard Chapman
Telephone number	0121 7734637
Website	www.calthorpe.bham.sch.uk
Email address	enquiry@calthorpe.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Calthorpe is a very large special school in the centre of Birmingham which caters for pupils with severe and profound multiple learning difficulties and those with autistic spectrum disorder. Numbers on roll have grown considerably in recent years. Around 300 staff are employed at the school.
- Calthorpe converted to become an academy in 2014. When the predecessor school was inspected in November 2013, it was judged to be outstanding. Calthorpe is a teaching school.
- The principal took up his post at the beginning of January. The previous principal left at the end of the summer term 2015 and an acting principal was in post for the autumn term 2015.
- Around 60% of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium.
- The majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. A large percentage of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school groups pupils according to their learning difficulties and disabilities. Pupils with autism are grouped together, those with profound multiple learning difficulties (which the school refers to as complex needs) are together, and those with severe learning difficulties are in classes together.
- The majority of pupils are transported to and from school by minibus. Around 50 minibuses arrive at school each morning and collect pupils in the afternoon.
- A post-16 class spends part of each week at a 16 to 19 centre, about four miles from the school. At various points in the school year, post-16 pupils attend supported work experience placements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with no notice following a complaint made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns about aspects of safeguarding and leadership. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection of a police investigation into serious allegations made against a former member of staff. While Ofsted does not have power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the allegations were considered (where appropriate) alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection, to inform the inspectors' judgements.
- Inspectors evaluated a wide range of evidence about the school's safeguarding processes, including the processes for checking and appointing staff, the way in which child protection cases are managed, training for staff about safeguarding, and the way that pupils learn to keep themselves safe. Policies and practice related to behaviour, attendance, personal care and physical intervention were scrutinised.
- Inspectors held discussions about safeguarding with six groups of staff, including leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, medical staff and lunchtime supervisors, and with two groups of pupils. Informal discussions took place with pupils throughout the inspection.
- Responses from 88 staff questionnaires were considered.
- Governing body minutes were scrutinised and a discussion was held with the chair and four members of the governing body.
- Inspectors visited parts of 40 lessons, where they looked at pupils' work and talked to them about their learning. They looked at the school's assessment information and discussed this with senior leaders.
- An inspector visited the post-16 class that was learning off-site during the inspection, and a group of post-16 students who were on a work placement at Birmingham Children's Hospital.

Inspection team

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Linda McGill	Her Majesty's Inspector
Simon Mosley	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Best	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Tyrer	Ofsted Inspector

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