

Calderstones School

Harthill Road, Liverpool, Merseyside L18 3HS

Inspection dates

15–16 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that pupils make good progress across the curriculum.
- The acting headteacher has motivated the staff in a short period of time. However, his input has not yet led to sustained improvements across the school.
- The rates of progress made by pupils by the end of Year 11 slowed after the last inspection. This decline has not yet been tackled in several subject areas, particularly English and science.
- Disadvantaged pupils, in particular, do not make strong enough progress from their starting points.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and teaching does not always meet the needs of pupils.
- Teachers do not consistently use assessment information to plan lessons that challenge all pupils.
- Teachers do not always apply the school's behaviour policy. This leads to some boisterous behaviour around the site and low-level misbehaviour in some lessons.
- Leaders do not use their checks on the quality of teaching effectively to ensure that staff have access to training opportunities to improve their practice.
- Governors have not held leaders to account with sufficient rigour since the last inspection. The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders are unclear.
- Too few students in Year 12 continue their studies into Year 13.

The school has the following strengths

- The personal development and welfare of pupils is good and they receive good-quality careers guidance and advice.
- The achievement of pupils is improving in some areas, most notably in mathematics and in the sixth form.
- Pupils are safe and enjoy positive relationships with staff.
- New leaders, such as those in mathematics and computing, are clearly raising standards within the subjects for which they are responsible.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching so that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make rapid progress from their starting points by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - teachers use assessment information to plan lessons that challenge pupils.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - revising the roles of leaders to ensure that responsibility for all aspects of the school's work is effectively distributed and lines of accountability are clear
 - developing the school's approach to performance management so that staff have access to training opportunities that improve their practice
 - ensuring that governors provide appropriate challenge to leaders and oversee the systematic updating of policies.
- Increase the numbers of students who complete their courses in the sixth form, by:
 - ensuring that students study courses in the sixth form that are well suited to their aptitudes and interests
 - developing transition arrangements for students joining Year 12.
- Improve the behaviour of pupils at the school, by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently apply the behaviour policy at all times.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of the leadership and management may be improved.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not done enough since the last inspection to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress across the curriculum and throughout the school.
- Leaders have not tackled issues that were raised during the last inspection with sufficient rigour. The quality of teaching remains inconsistent and the amount of progress made by pupils by the end of key stage 4 has declined in some key areas, such as English and science.
- Although leaders are clearly communicating a vision that every pupil can achieve well, irrespective of their background, they have not taken effective action to secure consistent improvements in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. In mathematics, where outcomes are improving, the differences in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 compared with other pupils nationally have begun to diminish. In other areas, most notably in English, differences in progress have widened. This pattern is also replicated in other year groups, with differences diminishing in some subject areas, but remaining wide in others.
- Leaders do not use extra funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils and those who need to catch up in Year 7. Strategies for accelerating the progress of these pupils are imprecise and leaders do not fully measure the impact of these actions. Although there is clear evidence that the school is having a positive impact on the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, the use of extra funding is doing little to improve the achievement of these pupils.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching have helped them gain an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching at the school. This knowledge, however, has not yet been used effectively to improve teaching. Consequently, not all pupils have access to high-quality teaching. Systems to manage the performance of teachers, although improved recently by the acting headteacher, have made little difference to the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The majority of training for teachers has been delivered within the school and leaders have only recently begun to share ideas with colleagues from high-performing schools.
- Middle leaders have not all had a positive impact on raising standards within their areas of responsibility. Some middle leaders, particularly those recently appointed, have driven improvements which have led to pupils making more rapid progress. This can clearly be seen in mathematics, computing and in the leadership of special educational needs.
- Leaders' work to develop literacy across the curriculum has had mixed results. Not all teachers focus closely on developing the spelling, punctuation and grammar of pupils and there is no consistent strategy for improving pupils' extended writing. In contrast, leaders have been more successful at fostering a culture of reading within the school, particularly among the most able pupils.
- Leaders do not yet have a broad and effective strategy in place to develop pupils' mathematical skills across the curriculum. Leaders recognise that the work of the recently appointed numeracy coordinators is not yet broad enough.

- The acting headteacher was appointed at the start of this academic year. He has made it a priority to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving and, along with other leaders, he consistently delivers the message that 'nobody rises to low expectations.' Teachers are now more aware of which pupils are disadvantaged and are beginning to support these pupils to make more rapid progress.
- Staff at the school have welcomed the appointment of the acting headteacher and say there has been a renewed determination to improve pupils' outcomes since his appointment. They cite improved behaviour among pupils and a greater clarity of purpose as evidence that the acting headteacher is having a positive impact on the culture of the school. The acting headteacher has also secured tangible improvements in staff morale in the short time since his appointment. Most members of staff completed the Ofsted questionnaire and the overwhelming majority of their responses were very positive about developments within the school.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs and aspirations of all. Leaders have decided to deliver a largely academic curriculum with a very small vocational element and their rationale for this is sound. There are plans to modify the curriculum further to improve pupils' achievement.
- The taught curriculum is well supplemented by a broad and impressive range of extra-curricular clubs, including sporting, academic and environmental groups. For example, pupils can choose to play handball, become an eco-leader or get involved in bee keeping to develop their experience beyond the classroom.
- Pastoral systems are effectively led and managed within the school. Pastoral leaders know their pupils well. They have effectively tackled the poor attendance of individuals and groups of pupils who have historically failed to attend school as regularly as they should.
- The school uses a number of strategies to communicate with parents, including the use of an online electronic system that provides parents with regular updates on their child's attendance and progress. Most parents are supportive of the school's work, although a few indicated some dissatisfaction during the inspection, particularly regarding how the school deals with bullying. Inspectors found that bullying is generally managed well, however, with very few repeated incidents.
- Leaders promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils well. Pupils benefit from a range of activities such as the 'cultural festival' and the provision of clubs such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) group. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not stringently held leaders to account in the period since the last inspection. This is because they have relied too heavily on information presented to them by leaders without questioning it to seek further assurance about the school's effectiveness. Governors have also taken strategic decisions that appear to have contributed to weaknesses in leadership at a senior level. The recent restructuring of the leadership team has placed additional responsibilities upon leaders and has diverted their attention and energy away from the necessary concerted focus on

improving the quality of teaching.

- Governors have not established a leadership structure with clear responsibilities for all areas of the school's work. Leadership of the sixth form is unclear and no one is directly accountable for evaluating the impact of additional funding. These uncertainties make it difficult for governors to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school in different areas. Consequently, they have been unable to hold leaders to account.
- Governors have not ensured that the school's website contains the information currently required on it. Information about the impact and plans for pupil premium spending and Year 7 catch-up funding does not meet requirements. Many policies are out of date and there are no meaningful equality objectives.
- Governors are committed and determined. They have supported leaders strongly in their efforts to improve the school's finances and have demonstrated strong governance in the way they have dealt with the financial challenges facing the school. The scale of this financial challenge has distracted governors from a sharper focus on improving teaching and pupils' achievement at the school.
- Governors have put into place additional measures to support the acting headteacher. The school improvement committee meets monthly, as does the school support board, which includes a representative of the local authority. Collaboration with the local authority is only recent and it is too early to judge its impact.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's work with external agencies is exemplary in supporting pupils with a range of social and emotional difficulties.
- Leaders have built a highly effective safeguarding team with clear roles and responsibilities. Pupils know who to speak to if they have concerns and have access to a useful online facility, where they can anonymously pass information to an appropriate adult.
- Staff receive regular training that helps them to keep pupils safe. They are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and there are clear systems for communicating concerns to the safeguarding team.
- Pupils are supported to keep themselves safe and they receive clear information through assemblies, tutor time and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education lessons about topics such as e-safety and drugs.
- Support for children looked after by the local authority is impressive and the school's work in this area has been praised by the leader of Liverpool's work in this area. As a result, these children are making good progress across the curriculum.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is not yet good. Despite improvements in the performance of some individual teachers and subjects, teaching is not yet consistently meeting the needs of all pupils.
- Too many teachers do not pay enough attention to assessment information about pupils' prior attainment when planning learning. Consequently, pupils are often given tasks to complete that lack challenge and fail to interest them. This is most evident in the learning of pupils with average starting points.
- Not all teachers have high expectations of pupils' capabilities. In particular, teachers have widely differing expectations of the depth and quality of extended writing that pupils should produce. Some teachers place a high priority on the development of extended writing skills and have high expectations for the use of spelling, punctuation and grammar; in contrast, others accept low standards of work and pay little attention to the technical accuracy of pupils' writing.
- Some pupils are not clear on what their academic targets are in different subjects or what they need to do to achieve them. Pupils in key stage 4 and in the sixth form are generally better informed about their progress than pupils in key stage 3.
- Not all pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning. Some pupils, particularly those of high ability, are focused and resilient in lessons. They are keen to do well and committed to improving their work. Others are less resilient and quickly become disengaged with their learning. When this is the case, low-level misbehaviour is evident in lessons.
- Where pupils are challenged and work they are set matches their needs, standards are improving. This is particularly evident in mathematics, history, geography, religious education, textiles and food technology.
- Some teachers use questioning skilfully to check pupils' understanding and challenge them to extend their thinking. These teachers follow the school's requirement for pupils to reflect and respond to teachers' written comments, and the priority they give to this is making a marked contribution to pupils improving their work.
- Teaching is most effective for pupils with high starting points. Teachers have high expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve and they use excellent subject knowledge to plan activities that match their abilities well.
- Teaching for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is rapidly improving. This is because teachers use the recommendations in individual educational plans to ensure that these pupils are well supported within the classroom. The deployment of teaching assistants is effective and ensures that these pupils make good progress.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils show respect for themselves, their fellow pupils and members of staff. Relationships within the school are harmonious and pupils feel well supported.
- Leaders' work to promote multiculturalism is exemplary. The bi-annual 'cultural festival' provides a focal point for celebrating different cultures, and pupils articulate a sound understanding of different cultures and faiths. The school's work to promote equality is also impressive, with a high-profile LGBT club and the provision of many opportunities for pupils to learn about the harmful effects of discrimination through assemblies, tutor time and the PSHE curriculum.
- The school has a strong focus on pupils' welfare and this ensures that pupils are well cared for. Staff are quick to identify concerns about the welfare of pupils, and referrals are made swiftly and with an appropriate level of detail.
- The school's work with external agencies is a real strength and members of the safeguarding team work with tenacity to ensure that pupils gain access to the services they need.
- Pupils receive high-quality impartial careers advice and guidance. Pupils benefit from an annual 'inspiring your future' day, which is attended by a large range of representatives from the world of work. All pupils in key stage 4 have a careers interview with one of the learning mentors and the school has received local awards for the quality of its careers guidance.
- Leaders have reduced the school's use of alternative providers and there are currently no pupils placed in alternative provision for behavioural reasons. The school has also been successful at reintegrating into full-time education pupils who have been excluded from other schools.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils do not show consistently positive attitudes to learning in their lessons, particularly pupils with broadly average prior attainment. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is more focused on learning in key stage 4 and in the sixth form than in key stage 3. It is also stronger among pupils in the higher sets.
- The pace of learning is sometimes slowed by low-level misbehaviour in lessons. This is especially the case in subjects where the quality of teaching is inconsistent, such as science and information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils told inspectors that more disruption happens in lessons that take place in the afternoon.
- Pupils also told inspectors that behaviour around the school site is not good. Teachers do not consistently enforce the school rules, such as rules that regulate the use of mobile phones and eating inside the school buildings. Staff do not always challenge

pupils for not following the school's uniform and appearance code. A few pupils engage in boisterous behaviour around the site and lack self-control.

- Leaders are having a strong impact on the pupils' attendance. It declined after the last inspection and there was a large rise in the number of pupils who were regularly absent from school. This has been tackled by an increased school-wide focus on attendance. Pupils who have suffered from poor attendance in the past are now monitored and supported closely. This work has led to a significant reduction in the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school. It has also increased pupils' attendance and improved the attendance of key groups such as disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils are rarely excluded from the school. The school effectively uses 'the lodge' as its on-site alternative to exclusion. Expectations and standards of behaviour in 'the lodge' are high and pupils are provided with clear academic support so they do not fall behind in their studies. The majority of pupils who spend time in 'the lodge' improve their behaviour over time.
- Middle leaders with responsibility for year groups are having a positive impact on improving the behaviour of pupils whose behaviour has historically caused concern. They monitor pupils' behaviour meticulously, and carefully evaluate the impact of strategies used to improve the attitudes and behaviours of targeted pupils.
- Pupils rarely use derogatory language at the school and they understand the harmful effects of using prejudicial language. Pupils say that bullying is rare at the school and, when it happens, they say it is dealt with fairly and effectively by staff.
- Pupils are rarely late to school or lessons. Pupils are all aware of the sanctions for regular lateness and most are keen to get to lessons on time. This helps to ensure a prompt and purposeful start to lessons.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Examination results at the end of key stage 4 dipped significantly in 2015. Pupils made poor progress in mathematics. Progress in English was stronger, but still declined in relation to previous years. Disadvantaged pupils were approximately half as likely to attain five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, as other pupils in the school. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were even less likely to reach this benchmark.
- The examination results from 2016 indicate little overall improvement on the previous year as the difference between the progress made by pupils at the school and the national average remains wide. Leaders' own analysis indicates that progress in mathematics has improved considerably, whereas progress in English has declined. Pupils performed considerably better in English literature than they did in English language, but standards overall remained low. Achievement in science continued to be poor and disadvantaged pupils made slower progress across the curriculum than other pupils.
- Leaders are having a varied impact on improving achievement in key stage 4. Pupils make good progress in subjects such as French, geography, ICT, computing and art. However, pupils make poor progress in science, English language, business studies,

graphic products, physical education and sociology. Leaders' current predictions for 2017 suggest considerable improvements on 2016, due mainly to big projected improvements in science and English.

- Pupils are making stronger progress in key stage 3. The school's own assessment information indicates that pupils currently in Year 9 are making good progress and disadvantaged pupils are making equally good progress compared with other pupils. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are also making much faster progress. Progress for pupils in the current Year 8 is less positive.
- Pupils with high prior attainment make the fastest progress in the school. Their rates of progress are broadly in line with average progress for all pupils nationally and many continue their studies in the sixth form and achieve the top grades at A level. Progress for the most able disadvantaged pupils is less positive and differences in progress begin to appear very soon after pupils join the school.
- The progress made by pupils who enter the school with low prior attainment is improving. These pupils now make progress as quickly as other pupils. Differences in achievement are consistently reducing.
- The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving rapidly. These pupils make progress as quickly as other pupils in key stage 3. This is due to the provision of sharply focused individual educational plans that provide teachers with clear direction about how best to support identified pupils.
- Leaders have developed a tangible reading culture within the school. All pupils in Year 7 are tested for their reading ages and leaders use a number of strategies to improve the reading of the weakest readers. Independent reading is a regular feature of tutor periods and a number of high-profile initiatives such as 'extreme reading' are used to strengthen further the emphasis on the importance of reading. Inspectors heard pupils read as part of the inspection and were impressed with their fluency. Pupils spoke confidently about the books they read for pleasure. It was evident that the most able pupils read more extensively.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Provision in the sixth form requires improvement because too few students in Year 12 continue their studies to Year 13. This loss is due to a range of reasons such as weak transition arrangements when joining the sixth form, particularly for students with low prior attainment, and poor performance in AS examinations leading students to seek other options elsewhere.
- The academic curriculum offered in the sixth form is broad and balanced. Leaders have withdrawn the option of a vocational curriculum because of historical poor performance. This removal has coincided with a significant drop in the number of Year 12 students continuing their studies to Year 13. This is because some students started courses that were unsuited to their aptitudes and interests.
- Teaching is now good across the sixth form. Teachers have high expectations of students and set work that is appropriately challenging. Students are motivated, engaged and demonstrate high levels of independence.
- Standards have steadily improved over the last three years and students' progress is

now closely in line with national averages. Disadvantaged students make more rapid progress than other students in the sixth form. The majority of students who enter the sixth form without a grade C in GCSE English or mathematics make good progress in their resit classes and improve their grade.

- Leaders have had a positive impact on improving results in the sixth form over a sustained period of time. Teachers in underperforming subjects have been challenged and many have improved, such as in English language, history and art. With the exception of applied ICT, progress in all subjects is broadly in line with or above national figures.
- Students' attendance has improved greatly and is now good. It compares favourably with the national average. Students receive relevant information on a range of topics that help them make informed decisions about their own safety. Students value the strong sense of community and the range of opportunities, such as university visits, that help prepare them for the next stage in their education.
- Students have access to an extensive range of enrichment opportunities that help them to gain wider experience and employability skills. For example, students can work towards the gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award or study Mandarin. Participation in these enrichment activities, however, is not effectively tracked so leaders are unaware of which students are making the most of the opportunities provided.
- Students leaving the sixth form move on to a diverse range of destinations. This is because they receive high-quality advice and guidance during their time in the sixth form.

School details

Unique reference number	104698
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10019786

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,433
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Woods
Headteacher	Lee Ratcliffe (acting)
Telephone number	0151 7242087
Website	www.calderstones.co.uk
Email address	admin@calderstones.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 November 2014

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication on its website of information about the use of the school's pupil premium grant and the school's use of Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium.
- The school is a much larger than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The acting headteacher was appointed on an interim basis at the start of this academic year.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is slightly above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils from ethnic groups is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- There are significantly more boys than girls at the school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school currently makes no use of alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, other senior leaders, middle leaders and members of the governing body.
- Telephone conversations were held with a representative of the local authority and the school's improvement partner.
- Meetings were held with teachers, including those who are newly qualified.
- Inspectors formally interviewed a large number of pupils and spoke with a range of pupils informally at break and lunchtime. Inspectors also observed pupils' conduct and behaviour throughout the day.
- Inspectors viewed registration periods and an assembly, and made visits to the school's internal exclusion unit.
- Inspectors observed learning across a range of subjects and year groups. Some observations of teaching and learning were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked closely at samples of pupils' written work across a range of subjects and year groups.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Many documents were scrutinised, including the school's policies, records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding records and information about teachers' performance. Development planning, self-evaluation documents, minutes of meetings, and records of teaching and learning were also considered. During the inspection, detailed consideration was given to policies and practices relating to safeguarding and how the school prepares its pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Inspectors considered 148 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 169 responses from parents on Ofsted's free text service. They considered the responses by the staff and pupils to an online questionnaire provided by Ofsted.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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