

Inspection of Calder House School

Thickwood Lane, Colerne, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN14 8BN

Inspection dates:

31 January to 2 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Calder House School display exemplary behaviour. They have high expectations of themselves and others. Pupils agree that they are a 'no bullying school'. They welcome and celebrate each other's differences. Kindness and manners are commonplace. Pupils feel safe and want to attend school regularly.

Pupils' self-esteem and confidence grow as a result of the nurture, precise support and care they receive from staff. They overcome the difficulties they have with reading, writing and mathematics. However, the high expectations for pupils are not fully realised across some subjects within the wider curriculum. The teaching of important knowledge is not effective. As a result, pupils' do not learn well enough over time.

Some parents and carers raise concerns that the proprietary body, along with senior leaders, do not engage effectively with them. They have little confidence that concerns would be dealt with.

Some pupils have wider responsibilities, including house captains, school councillors and 'keeper of the books'. They take these roles seriously. Pupils value the range of extra-curricular opportunities they receive. For example, they enjoy visits to the theatre and their spoken language examinations. Pupils meet every challenge with a smile and have the determination to succeed.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for pupils. They are passionate about supporting them with the significant barriers to learning they arrive with. However, these are not yet fully realised in all subjects. Also, the proprietary body and senior leaders have failed to ensure that they have sufficient oversight to meet all of the independent school standards (the standards).

Reading is given the highest priority. Pupils receive precise, daily support to teach them the letters and sounds that they need to know to be able to read. This supports them to build in fluency and accuracy. As a result, pupils become confident readers. They love books. Pupils use these newly acquired reading skills to ably present poems, book extracts and presentations to an audience. Parents agree that the support their children receive with reading has been transformational.

Leaders have designed ambitious curriculums in the subjects they teach. In English, mathematics and subskills, teachers adapt this learning to meet the needs of pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff check what pupils know and remember in these subjects. This enables pupils to build their knowledge and skills over time towards more challenging goals. For example, pupils successfully recall their knowledge of place value to order a range of measurements. Pupils now choose to participate in extra-curricular writing opportunities. They attend 'inklings' each Friday, where 'ideas grow'.

However, in some subjects, teaching does not allow pupils to secure their knowledge and skills sufficiently well. This is because the core components of knowledge that are set out in curriculum plans are not implemented as intended. Some subject leaders do not yet have oversight of how well teaching supports pupils to learn well.

Staff have created a highly positive and respectful environment. Pupils learn and play together in harmony. Neither staff nor pupils tolerate bullying or violence. Moreover, pupils are highly resilient and motivated to succeed, regardless of the difficulties they may face. Pupils understand the needs of others and kindly offer support to their peers.

Pupils learn the statutory curriculum for relationships and sex education. Leaders include this learning within personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) sessions. Pupils can recall key information about different families and relationships. They understand how everyone should be treated equally. Pupils are well prepared to transition to their next school. They are supported with routines, as well as how to manage their feelings and emotions.

However, leaders are yet to systematically consider how they actively promote fundamental British values and knowledge of public institutions to its pupils. The curriculum to learn about religions and cultures is not designed well. This means that pupils do not gain an appreciation of how religious beliefs and British values impact on daily life.

There is a common, agreed vision that is unwavering with all staff. However, leadership responsibilities are not fully developed. As a result, the standards which require effectively implemented health and safety, fire and risk assessment plans are not fully met. Furthermore, some parents and carers feel unable to raise concerns and complaints because they do not believe these would be dealt with appropriately.

Staff are highly supportive of school leaders. Parents comment that teachers take the time to get to know their children. They feel that staff are dedicated to making a difference. Despite this, staff report that workload is high. Some assessment and reporting are burdensome. Leaders have not yet considered workload and well-being for their staff well enough.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders responsible for safeguarding ensure that all staff and governors have the knowledge they need to protect pupils from harm. Staff report concerns in a timely way. Leaders are quick to follow up on any concerns. They engage with external agencies effectively. Leaders make the appropriate checks when new staff join the school.

Staff teach pupils how to keep safe through the curriculum and an annual safety week. For example, pupils welcomed visitors from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution to learn about water safety.

Relevant safeguarding policies are published on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The proprietary body and senior leaders do not demonstrate a secure understanding of the independent school standards. As a result, not all of these standards are met. Leaders must take swift and appropriate action to ensure that all independent school standards are fully met.
- Some parents feel that they are unable to submit complaints or raise significant concerns. They do not have confidence that these issues will be dealt with appropriately. Leaders, including those responsible for governance, must ensure that they engage proactively and effectively with parents in a way that supports them to have confidence in raising concerns and that these will be dealt with quickly and professionally.
- Some leaders do not have sufficient oversight to evaluate the effectiveness of the areas that they lead. This leads to inconsistencies in curriculum implementation and expectations. Senior leaders should ensure that middle leaders have the knowledge, expertise and professional development to have an accurate view of the curriculum's effectiveness in helping pupils to know and remember more.
- Leaders have not yet taken appropriate actions to consider the pressures on staff workload and well-being. Therefore, staff do not have the time to sufficiently complete what is expected of them. Staff say that some assessment and reporting is burdensome. Leaders should ensure that workload is realistic for staff to fully complete their duties and responsibilities.
- In some foundation subjects, pupils do not learn the core components of knowledge set out in curriculum plans in sufficient depth. Consequently, the knowledge pupils remember in these subjects is superficial. Leaders should ensure that the depth published in their schemes of work is implemented consistently well.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	126542
DfE registration number	865/6024
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10254642
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent School
Age range of pupils	7 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Calder House Ltd
Chair of the governing body	Dr Karen Prees
Headteacher	Julie Delahay
Annual fees (day pupils)	£20,475
Telephone number	01225 743566
Website	www.calderhouseschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@calderhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 to 29 November 2018

Information about this school

- The school was last inspected from 27 to 29 November 2018.
- The school is a registered school for up to 48 pupils, between the ages of seven and 13, who have specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- Since the last inspection, the school has reduced the age range of pupils it admits.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with members of the proprietary board and the governing body. They also held meetings with the head of school, the assistant headteacher, the director of studies and the managing director.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector spoke with the designated safeguarding leader and the deputy designated safeguarding leader to discuss the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe. She considered the school's recruitment procedures, staff induction and training, records of concern, and engagement with external agencies. The inspectors spoke with staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- The inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also considered responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Donna Briggs, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Philippa Darley

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor-
 - 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which-
 - 5(b)(ii) enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
 - 5(b)(iv) enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
 - 5(b)(vii) encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England;
 - 5(d) takes such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils-
 - 5(d)(i) while they are in attendance at the school,
 - 5(d)(ii) while they are taking part in extra-curricular activities which are provided or organised by or on behalf of the school, or
 - 5(d)(iii) in the promotion at the school, including through the distribution of promotional material, of extra-curricular activities taking place at the school or elsewhere, they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views;

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005[12].
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
 - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which-

- 33(f) where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e), makes provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint;

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently;

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