



The Calder High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107562
LEA Calderdale
Inspection number 277776
Inspection dates 5 October 2005 to 6 October 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs Jane Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Brier Hey Lane
School category	Community		Mytholmroyd
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire HX7 5QN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01422 883213
Number on roll	1381	Fax number	01422 882684
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Bryan Mensforth
Date of previous inspection	15 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr Stephen Ball

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 5 October 2005 - 6 October 2005	Inspection number 277776
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) and Additional Inspectors as part of the national programme of school inspections. The school was previously inspected in November 1999.

Description of the school

Calder High School is a popular comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 19 years. It is large: there are 1381 students on roll, including 290 in the sixth form, many of whom come from other local schools. The school is situated in Mytholmroyd, between Hebden Bridge and Halifax. Much of the area it serves is socially and economically advantaged; there is a tradition of higher education, coupled with diversity of lifestyles. About nine per cent of the students are entitled to free school meals, which is below average. The school community is predominantly White British: the largest minority ethnic group is Pakistani. Of those who have home languages other than English, none are in the early stages of learning English. The students enter the school having achieved results at primary school that are above average overall. About 15 per cent of the students have been identified as having learning difficulties and / or disabilities, which is average. Few students join or leave the school at times other than in Year 7 and the sixth form.

The characteristics of the sixth form differ from the rest of the school. It is culturally more diverse: about 30 per cent of the students are of Asian heritage. A higher-than-average proportion is eligible for free school meals. Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form varies considerably.

The school has several distinctive features and partnerships that are integral to its work. It is a specialist technology college, a "leading edge" school, and a training school for new entrants to the teaching profession. It collaborates with others to provide several additional services to the community. The school holds a number of awards including Sports Mark and Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Calder High School provides a good education for its students: this judgement matches the school's own view. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. He is well supported by a team of loyal and hard-working managers and committed staff who know the students well and are proud of the school's reputation and achievements. The emerging culture of reflection augurs well. The school's evaluation assesses the quality of its work accurately, identifying what it does well and how it might be improved, although the use of data in gauging the impact of actions is underdeveloped. The capacity for further improvement is good. Standards are above average. Nearly all students achieve at least five A*-G grades at GCSE. The teaching is often good, and at times outstanding, and ensures that students generally progress well. Sometimes, teaching lacks vibrancy and learning is passive.

The school works hard to promote the development of the whole young person. The curriculum is good and is enriched by an exciting range of extracurricular activities and visits. Students' personal development is a strength; they contribute positively to the life of the school and the wider community. Students and their parents appreciate the good care provided by the school, particularly for those who are most vulnerable. Some accommodation is poor. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form is satisfactory overall: this agrees with the school's evaluation. Examination results are improving and students achieve satisfactorily overall, although some pockets of underachievement remain and the pass rate at AS level is too low in a minority of subjects. Teaching and learning are generally good. Students enjoy their studies. There are good aspects to guidance and support, particularly in the enhanced tutorial provision, and personal development is good. However, the current arrangements for recording attendance are inadequate. The new sixth-form building is spacious and well resourced. Management of the sixth form is satisfactory. In-depth academic monitoring is at an early stage of development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to raise achievement.
- Capitalise on good practice within the school to increase students' involvement in their learning.
- Improve the use of data in the day-to-day work of the school, particularly in monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions, and informing planning for improvement.
- Work with the local authority and other external partners to continue to improve the accommodation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that achievement and standards are good overall for students aged 11 to 16 years, and satisfactory in the sixth form. Analysis of the results of the 2005 national tests and examinations paints a picture of improvement across the school, consistent with the findings of the inspection. The school met its challenging targets at Key Stage 3 and GCSE.

Results of the 2004 national tests for 14-year-olds were broadly average overall but represented less progress than might have been expected when students' attainment at primary school is taken into consideration. In 2005, however, there were rises, most markedly in English but also in mathematics and science, in the proportions of students who reached the standard expected of their age, Level 5, and those reaching higher levels.

At GCSE, standards were above average in 2003 and 2004: the provisional results for 2005 are stronger again. Almost all students were awarded at least five A*-G grades: this is good, and reflects the school's inclusive approach. Sixty three per cent gained five or more A*-C grades, with a significant increase in those whose grades included English and mathematics. The gap between the performances of girls and boys was narrowed in 2005. Students who have learning difficulties and / or disabilities achieve well.

There is a similar pattern of improvement in the standards attained by sixth-form students, reversing the downward trend of the last three years. In 2005, the pass rate on advanced-level courses was 95 per cent, and the proportion of students receiving high grades was closer to the national average. In relation to their GCSE results, students' performance is significantly better than in 2004 and is satisfactory overall. The variation between subjects, however, has not been fully probed. Some pockets of underachievement remain and the pass rate at AS level is too low in a minority of subjects.

In lessons, students made good progress overall although it varied widely from outstanding to inadequate. They relished lively teaching, which helped them acquire new knowledge and skills, or deepen their understanding, at a rapid rate. Where teaching was staid, so was their progress.

The school's data analysis equips it to identify areas of relative strength and weakness, and to gauge the impact of actions taken; for example, the good progress made by a group of Year 9 students who were on the borderline of Level 5. Students identified as gifted and talented also made strong progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development is a strength of the school's work. Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that it is good.

Students' good behaviour, noted in the previous inspection report, has been maintained. Students respond well to the friendly atmosphere and they describe how much they value the help and support they get from their teachers. Students of all ages explained that they offer ideas about many aspects of school life because they know that their views will be taken seriously. The alternative curriculum and 'Care Takers' unit provide good additional help for students who have particular behavioural needs, giving them access to specialist teaching, mentoring and support.

Students' attitudes are good. They are keen to learn and work hard, taking pride in their work. Many students were able to explain how they assessed their own work in relation to their targets. It is clear from lessons and discussions with students that, when offered, they enjoy opportunities to learn independently.

Attendance has remained steady since 2003 and is satisfactory. The school has good systems for tracking attendance throughout the day, ensuring students attend lessons. Absent students are followed up through a system of first-day calling. Good attendance is recognised and rewarded. Analysis of data is effective: it shows that a principal reason for attendance not being better than average is that many families continue to take holidays during term-time. Sixth-form attendance is unsatisfactory at 84 per cent; the current arrangements for recording their attendance are inadequate and require urgent action.

The school pays close attention to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and personal, social and citizenship education help promote students' development. Healthy eating is actively promoted. However, the lack of a rota at lunchtime means that not all students benefit from varied choices: they feel this not an equitable system. The limited space in the dining room is an additional problem.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that teaching and learning are good. Teachers and students are enthusiastic and committed. The school's ethos is reflected in good relationships that help build students' confidence and self-esteem. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and have high expectations of the students, helping them to focus on good standards of work. Those who have additional needs are well supported and guided. The development of basic literacy skills is well planned and taught, whereas opportunities for promoting speaking are more uneven. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is a positive feature of many lessons. Although many students are clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve, a minority do not know their targets or how good their work was.

In the good and better lessons, students make strong progress because teaching matches their needs, motivates them, and prepares them to work independently. Teachers skilfully sequence the steps in learning. Shortcomings in satisfactory lessons

include a lack of variety in the pitch and nature of tasks. Teachers often dominate the discussions so that many students do not contribute actively to the lessons. Occasionally, students' understanding is not checked effectively so that errors go unnoticed, and the pace of learning is too slow. Some students find double lessons too long.

The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form varies but is good overall. The best is lively and challenging, and enables students to make rapid progress. Some are very confident learners who contribute thoughtfully. They take responsibility for their learning when given the opportunity.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is good; this agrees with the school's evaluation. All statutory requirements are met, except for the need to provide religious education in the sixth form. For students in Years 10 and 11, there is a good range of options, including traditional GCSEs and a widening vocational provision that will shortly also include qualifications in construction and computer-aided design. The 'Pathways' programme provides good support for vulnerable students. In the sixth form, students are offered a wide range of subjects at advanced level, including vocational and applied options. Some vocational qualifications at intermediate level have recently been introduced. Previous weaknesses in guidance have been addressed: students are generally following appropriate courses.

There is a good range of activities designed to challenge gifted and talented students across the curriculum, including a debating society, mock trial competitions and master-classes. Useful foundations have been laid in Years 7 to 9 where these students have made strong progress but, as yet, there is limited impact at the highest levels of GCSE performance.

There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, which are well attended. Learners are well prepared for life after school with many activities that ensure good links with the community. There is also effective careers guidance and provision for work-related learning. Many students opt for GCSE physical education in Years 10 and 11, but for those who do not, the time allocation is below that recommended.

Technology College status has had a significant positive impact on the school, which is now very well provided with the latest ICT resources and where good professional development is supporting more interesting teaching.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that the quality of care provided for students is good. Every individual is treated with respect and dignity: in this school, every student matters. Staff know students' personal circumstances well, sometimes involving parents

and carers in efforts to enhance students' learning. Students feel that the school provides a safe and supportive environment for learning. They have a trusted adult to turn to should they feel troubled. Child protection requirements and health and safety procedures are firmly established and understood by all staff. Students' achievements are celebrated thoughtfully and there are regular parents' evenings.

The arrangements for new students moving from primary school to Year 7 ensure they are well prepared for change; helpful information is exchanged. Students speak highly of the induction process. Older students receive appropriate advice when choosing options and making career choices. Students joining the sixth form from other schools are impressed with the sixth-form environment. They spoke very positively about their tutors and teachers, whom they find helpful and approachable. Students enjoy the sixth form, appreciating their independence and having responsibility for their learning. They would like more outside seating and social activities.

Support is good for vulnerable students, those with additional learning difficulties, and those who are in public care. Learning support assistants are used effectively to support these students and track their progress. The school actively promotes social inclusion and positively combats bullying: this is well supported through discussions with students. Links with parents, carers and outside agencies, such as Connexions and the education welfare service, are good.

Students' views are gathered and acted upon through questionnaires. They are represented on the governors' new committee: "students, parents and community". The school's interesting website is an innovative way of supporting parents and students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school evaluates the quality of leadership and management as good: inspectors agree.

The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. He has been in post for one year and in that time he has achieved much. He has won the commitment and respect of students, parents, staff, and governors. His aspirational and inclusive vision for the school is well understood and widely shared. Professional dialogue and critical reflection are hallmarks of his leadership and such a culture is developing at senior and middle management levels. He has taken a robust approach to issues that emerged last year, including personnel and finance. Day-to-day management is effective: the school operates smoothly and is a welcoming place.

The senior staff work hard on behalf of the school and its students. They have a sound grasp of their areas of responsibility but there is work to be done in sharpening the quality of monitoring and evaluation to gauge the impact of actions, including the interrelationship with other areas of the school's work, and in the strategic use of the outcomes. Middle managers vary in their effectiveness but the quality of their

leadership is good overall. Heads of faculty spoke with confidence and enthusiasm about their developing roles. They are, for example, involved in reviewing the process by which the effectiveness of their areas should be judged. At present, practice is inconsistent. Pastoral management is effective in supporting students' personal development and care. Sixth-form management is satisfactory but in-depth academic monitoring is in the early stages. A number of management structures have been developed, including assessment, but interpretation of data lacks sophistication and is unsystematic across the school's work.

The self-evaluation is of good quality and accurate. It captures clearly the breadth of the school's work and is unambiguous in identifying what it does well, and where improvements have been made. It sets current and planned developments in the context of its knowledge of what needs to be still better. The school improvement plan defines clear, appropriate priorities for the next three years. Senior staff hold responsibility for particular areas and, usefully, governors are to be more actively involved in evaluating the impact. The governing body provides enthusiastic and committed support to the school. Its revised committee structure is appropriate. Provided with accurate information by the school, governors are equipped to ask the necessary challenging questions to hold the school to account for its performance.

The school has good capacity to improve. There are influential practitioners in all areas of the school's work which, coupled with the staff's positive attitude, provides a strong basis for improvement. Distinctive features of its work, such as the training-school role, and other partnerships have had a positive impact. Since the inspection in 1999, however, progress on the identified key issues has been good in some areas such as raising standards in ICT but barely adequate in others. While the new sixth-form building is spacious and well resourced, some other accommodation is poor and potentially detrimental to students' personal development and achievement. Although well managed, the school's financial position is ill matched to the projected costs of repair and refurbishment.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing to tell you about the findings of our inspection but, first of all, I would like to thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to you about your experiences in school.

We think that yours is a good school and on its way to becoming even better. We found these are the best features of your school:

- You achieve good standards in tests and examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11. You build well on the good start you made at primary school. Sixth-form results are improving.
- Your behaviour is good. You are polite and often considerate to others and take responsibilities, like being on the school council, seriously. Most of you are involved in raising money for charities and events in the local community.
- In lessons, you often learn new facts and skills quickly and show understanding of your subjects. Many teachers are good at helping you learn: some lessons are very exciting.
- The enjoyment you get from the many extra opportunities you have at lunchtimes and after school, for example in sports, dance, drama, music and games, as well as visits and residential trips. All of these help you to develop a broad outlook on life.
- The way your teachers care for you and encourage you as you progress through the school and sixth form. 'Care Takers' gives some of you good help.
- The headteacher, helped by the staff, manages the school well.

What the school could do better:

- Help you get even better results in tests and examinations, especially in the sixth form.
- Sometimes, although you listen carefully to your teachers, you could join in lessons more fully by offering ideas and answering questions. More hands-on activities would be good.
- You do not have many opportunities to learn for yourselves. Some of you do not know exactly what you would need to do to achieve the grade or level you would like.
- You are keen to eat and live healthily, but the lack of a rota system and the cramped space in the dining room mean you do not always get a good choice at lunchtime.

There are many things about your school that you enjoy. We have identified what should be improved. Some of these are already in the school's plans and the headteacher is leading the way very well. We are sure that you will play your part in helping him, the staff and governors to develop the work of your school further.