

Inspection report  
Calder House School  
Independent special school  
DfES ref no: 865/6024

Inspection under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002

Dates of inspection: 26 – 27 September 2006

# Introduction

## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 as part of pilot inspection arrangements in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

Calder House School is approved by the Department of Education and Skills to provide education for pupils with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. Currently 33 pupils attend who are between 6 and 12 years of age, approximately one third of whom are girls. Almost all pupils have their places funded by their parents and six have a statement of special educational need (SEN). The school aims to provide an environment where pupils enjoy learning and improve their self-esteem. Individual programmes are designed to tackle the learning difficulties of each pupil whilst also offering them access to the full National Curriculum. It is intended that pupils will return to mainstream school once they have made sufficient progress.

## Overall evaluation of the school

The school provides a good quality of education which meets all the educational regulations. The carefully planned curriculum, supported by effective teaching, enables pupils to make good progress. Staff provide a high standard of care, although some of the school's policies and procedures need updating to reflect recent guidance. The school is aware of these deficiencies and has appropriate plans to remedy them.

The quality of the curriculum is good. The school is successful in providing all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education (RE). There is a strong focus on using literacy and numeracy strategies designed to meet the needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties. Appropriate support from a speech and language therapist, occupational therapist and specialist reading teacher ensure the requirements of pupils' statements of SEN are met in full. All pupils have their progress regularly monitored and reviewed. This information is then used to target support, either individually or in small groups. Numeracy and literacy are taught in groups which are based on pupils' skill-levels, whilst other subjects are taught in classes which broadly correspond to pupils' ages. These arrangements generally work well, although occasionally, limited time allocated for some lessons results in pressure on teachers to cover topics too quickly. Planning is at least adequate for all subjects and some plans are currently being updated to take closer account of the National Curriculum programmes of study. Games and swimming are provided by using the school tennis court and football pitch, and the sports facilities at a nearby army base. There is a good range of day trips and lunchtime clubs which enhances the curriculum.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are well planned and teachers have clear expectations. Teachers form good relationships with pupils, giving praise and encouragement to recognise effort and achievement whilst managing any misbehaviour sensitively yet firmly. This encourages pupils to feel valued, settle quickly and develop good work habits. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to develop their own ideas and discuss what they have learnt. This occurred in a science lesson when pupils tested their own hypothesis that people with longer leg bones could jump further. Also, stimulating resources and practical activities are used to capture pupils' interest. Examples of this were seen in a mathematics lesson when pupils positioned themselves along a length of rope to decide whether a number should be 'rounded up' or 'rounded down'; and in a history lesson when clothes from the Stuart period were used to prompt discussion. In a small number of lessons, assessment information is not used sufficiently to inform lesson planning. This results in some pupils not finishing the set work and others not receiving enough challenge. Also there are few opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and discuss their ideas with each other, which limits the development of their listening skills.

Teachers have a very good understanding of the methods required to teach successfully, pupils with specific learning difficulties. Their subject knowledge is satisfactory and has improved since individual members of staff have taken responsibility for particular subjects. Resources to support the teaching of literacy are good and satisfactory for other subjects. ICT programmes are used effectively to help pupils improve their basic skills. There is thorough assessment of each pupil's literacy and numeracy skills on entry. Assessment information is used effectively to identify areas of difficulty and to set targets for improvement. Due to carefully targeted support, pupils develop greater confidence in their ability to learn and make good academic progress. As a result, most pupils return to a mainstream school having narrowed the gap between their own performance and that of their peers.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils improve their self-esteem through experiencing success and engaging in the life of the school. Cups and merit marks are awarded for effort and achievement and there are attractive displays of pupils' work. As one pupil commented who had just finished writing a story, *'I feel I've done something here'*. Pupils enjoy coming to school, behave well, and form good relationships with staff and with each other. They learn to consider moral issues and the duties of a responsible citizen through the personal, social and health education programme. Pupils also show care for each other, such as when they act as 'buddies' in the playground and befriend pupils who feel left out. Pupils learn to take responsibility; for example, when acting as head boy or girl, running the school tuck shop or serving on the school council. Pupils also learn how to put forward their views, although some are less skilled at listening to the views of others. Pupils develop their cultural awareness through studying topics in RE, geography and Italian. They also visit the local church, a Hindu temple and places of historical interest. The school celebrates pupils' successes in weekly assemblies. However, opportunities are missed to use these occasions to provide time for reflection and to celebrate different religious and cultural festivals.

The school gives high priority to pupils' welfare, although some policies relating to the health and safety of pupils need updating to meet requirements. Procedures are effective in keeping pupils and adults safe because all staff are clear about the arrangements. Pupils report they feel safe and that they can approach an adult if they have a problem. They appreciate the 'worry box' where they can place their thoughts anonymously, should they wish. In recognition of its promotion of healthy lifestyles, the school has received the Healthy Schools Award; exercise is encouraged and healthy snacks are sold at the school tuck shop. The child protection policy does not meet recent guidance and some staff have not had appropriate training. The school is aware of this and has arranged for a comprehensive programme of staff training and advice. The policy for First Aid lacks detail and does not take account of most recent guidelines and requirements. The school keeps an admission register, although details of pupils' previous schools are not recorded. All staff have been subject to satisfactory clearance at an enhanced level with the Criminal Records Bureau. Suitable procedures are in place to check evidence of identity, qualifications and previous employment history. Procedures have recently been improved to include confirmation of an applicant's medical fitness.

The accommodation is well maintained and provides an attractive environment for learning. A former coach house, barn and stables have been thoughtfully converted and extended to include individual study rooms, a hall, a library and specialist rooms for art and ICT. The rooms are of adequate size for the number of pupils using them and different floor colours are used to help pupils identify each class. There is very good provision for outside play which includes a sheltered activity area, football pitch and all-weather tennis court. There is wheelchair access to most of the site and a disabled toilet has been installed. However, the school does not have a plan to show how the accommodation might be further modified to meet the needs of disabled users.

Parents are extremely positive about the work of the school. One parent reported, that after failing to thrive in another school, their child *'had never been so happy since attending Calder House'*. Parents feel well-informed and receive a report each term on their child's progress. The school has a clear policy which sets out how informal and formal complaints can be made to the school. Parents report that they feel comfortable about approaching the school if they have a concern. Some of the information the school provides to parents is contained in different documents and could usefully be presented in a more concise form.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the welfare, health and safety of pupils (standard 3) and must:

- ensure that staff receive up-to-date training in child protection and prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of

children in compliance with Department for Education and Skills (DfES) guidance; 'Safeguarding Children in Education' (paragraph 3(2)(b));

- produce a satisfactory written policy on First Aid and ensure it is implemented (paragraph 3(6)); and
- ensure the admission register contains the name and address of the school last attended (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standard 6) and must:

- provide to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils the address for correspondence of the proprietors, during both term time and holidays, and a telephone number or numbers on which they may be contacted at all times (paragraph 6(2)(b)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

## School details

Name of school:	Calder House School		
DfES Number:	865/6024		
Type of school:	Special (day)		
Status:	Independent		
Date school opened:	September 1995		
Age range of pupils:	6 - 12		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll :	Boys: 23	Girls: 10	Total: 33
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys: 3	Girls: 3	Total: 6
Annual fees (day pupils):	£11,850		
Address of school:	Thickwood Lane Colerne Wiltshire SN14 8BN		
Telephone number:	01225 742329		
Fax number:	01225 742329		
Email address:	headmistress@calderhouseschool.co.uk		
Headteacher:	Mrs Katherine Walling		
Proprietor:	Calder House Ltd		
Reporting Inspector:	Andrew Redpath HMI		
Dates of inspection:	26 – 27 September 2006		

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