

# Calderstones School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104698
<b>Local Authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	308652
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mike McLachlan

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1531
6th form	263
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Professor Alfred Zack-Williams
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Brian Davies
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Harthill Road Liverpool Merseyside L18 3HS
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 724 2087
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 729 0093

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Calderstones School is a specialist science college. It is a larger than average comprehensive situated in the southern part of Liverpool. The school is popular and attracts students from a very large number of primary schools from across and outside the city. The intake includes students from a wide range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Overall the attainment on entry to the school is average. Due to the number of girls' schools in the vicinity, there are more boys than girls in most year groups. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is above the national average. The number of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average and a number of these speak English as an additional language. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the number of pupils with statements of educational needs. The school has achieved the Investors in People Award and the Liverpool Healthy Schools Award. Work by the students' school council has led to the school achieving the Fair Trade Award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school that provides an effective education for its students and enjoys the overwhelming support of their parents. The school gives good value for money. The leadership of the headteacher and the care and guidance provided for students are outstanding, as are a number of other features of the school. Consequently, staff and parents show exceptional loyalty to, and confidence in the school. This is evidenced by the high number of staff who send their children to the school, past students who now teach here and parents who support the school.

Calderstones rightly prides itself on being a truly comprehensive school where students from many different faiths, cultures, and social and economic backgrounds work and play well together. Students have very good relationships with staff and with each other. They are particularly proud of, as one student so aptly said, 'our multicultural harmony', which was very evident in and out of lessons. Students enjoy coming to school; behaviour is good as is attendance. As a result, the school has a warm, relaxed atmosphere in which all flourish and feel included.

Students make good progress given their initial starting points. Overall, standards reached by the end of Year 11 in GCSE examinations are average, although attainment in a good number of subjects is above average. While the overall progress by the end of Year 11 has been broadly average, inspection evidence indicates that standards are rising and that progress is good in most subjects. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Students from the many different minority ethnic groups achieve well, and expert teaching and outstanding care and guidance ensure that students whose first language is not English achieve very well.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are confident, have good subject knowledge, manage their classes well and have good relationships with their students. Students in all years say they enjoy lessons and make the best progress when they are expected to be active learners and the work is set in meaningful situations, rather than just completing exercises. There is some inconsistency in the planning of lessons and marking of work within and across subjects. Consequently, a minority of students are given work that does not meet their needs, and marking does not always inform them of what they need to do to improve.

The leadership, with the full support of parents, has placed a strong emphasis on developing a good range of academic courses. This has recently been supplemented in Years 10 and 11 by a very successful, and potentially more wide-reaching, vocational pathway, currently taken by a small number of students. This good curriculum enables virtually all students to make a successful transition to post-16 education or training. There are not enough opportunities in some curriculum areas for students to be active, independent learners and to study topics grounded in highly relevant settings.

The school provides outstanding quality care, support and guidance for students of all ages. This enables students to settle quickly into the school so that they make very good progress by the end of Year 9. Given the large and diverse site, particular attention is given to ensuring that the school is a safe place for students to work. An excellent computer based 'e-portal' system enables students, parents and teachers to access a wide range of information on attendance, rewards and sanctions, school work, and progress towards academic targets. This

exemplary information system ensures that students who are in danger of falling behind are quickly identified and both staff and parents are quickly alerted.

Leadership and management are good. Outstanding leadership of the school and the sixth form, combined with the good support of the governing body and the very able, loyal and committed senior management team, have led to continued development and improvement. This is despite the considerable disruption caused by the management of a complex and protracted refurbishment and rebuilding programme. The leadership knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school and is robustly challenging weaker performance. The school has used the specialist school funding very well to enhance its work and to support the wider community. The school has a good capacity to bring about further improvement as shown by the improving standards and the good response to the issues raised in the last inspection.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The sixth form is good and achieves good value for money. Students, including those with English as an additional language, make good progress so that all are able to move on to higher education or training. Standards are above average, and have been for a number of years, and students achieve well. Personal development is outstanding. Students have a good sense of responsibility and readily act as role models. Students attend well, are happy in the safe and caring environment and appreciate being treated as adults. Teaching and learning are good and delivery is enthusiastic. As a result, students develop independent study skills effectively, are confident and are motivated to work hard. Students appreciate the extremely wide choice of academic courses, which run alongside a single vocational alternative and are provided in conjunction with three other high schools. Improved provision through the school's specialist science college status enables rising numbers to study individual science courses. Similarly the take up of mathematics is good. Students appreciate that this widens the choice of courses available to them at university. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Students' progress is tracked very well and they are given all the support they need to make up ground if they slip behind. Students feel that they are encouraged to aim high and are given much guidance to help them to realise their ambitions. The sixth form is very well led and managed, with a focus on constantly improving provision and on ensuring every student's well-being.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure lessons are planned to meet the needs of the different abilities within each set and that pupils are given sufficient advice on how to improve their work.
- Ensure curriculum and lesson plans are more consistent in providing good opportunities for students to become independent and active learners.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students achieve well given their initial starting points. Progress across Years 7 to 9 is very good, particularly in English and science. Standards reached by the end of Year 11 have improved in recent years. For example, in the 2007 GCSE examinations, the proportion of students who achieved five good grades, including English and mathematics, rose sharply and was close to the national average. Progress by the end of Year 11, compared to other schools, has been

broadly satisfactory. This is in part due to the school's decision to focus on ensuring students gain a good grounding in a range of academic subjects. Work seen during the inspection indicates that current students are making good progress in the vast majority of subjects. For example, this year, the mathematics GCSE results were the best ever - above the national average - with a third of students achieving the highest grades of A\*, A or B. Specialist science college targets were exceeded and a good proportion of students achieved well in the separate science subjects of physics, chemistry and biology. This has led to an improved take up of these subjects in the sixth form.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Students respond well to all that the school provides, so that their personal development is good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. Students feel very secure and valued and enjoyment is high. They are friendly, show good consideration for others and collaborate well. The active and thoughtful school council represents the views of other students well. Students have a good understanding of what they need to do to stay safe and to maintain a healthy lifestyle and there is good take-up of after-school sports clubs and activities. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The very wide multicultural and social mix ensures students develop a very good understanding of and empathy with many cultures. Spiritual awareness is promoted effectively through a wide range of classroom activities, assemblies and extra-curricular themed days. The 'quotation wall' provides stimulating opportunity for reflection and individual response. All students are encouraged to make a good contribution to the school and wider community. Sixth form students very willingly and maturely help younger ones and become involved in community projects and local play schemes. Music groups regularly perform at local venues and the many sporting teams represent the school with pride. Work experience promotes independence and students gain confidence and learn to make their views known. These skills together with good progress in core subjects lead to well developed economic awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence which prepare students well for future life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Most lessons have clearly stated objectives which are shared with students so that they know what is expected of them. In the best lessons, teachers challenge students and provide opportunities for individuals, or groups of students, to contribute their own ideas and encourage them to assess their own and their fellow students' progress. In most subjects, in the main school, students are placed in ability sets to target their learning needs and examination requirements. However, in a minority of lessons, activities are not always matched to the needs of students of differing abilities within the set, and consequently their progress is limited. The school has made very good use of its science specialist school funding to provide high quality information and communication technology (ICT) resources. These are used well by teachers and students to make lessons more interesting and meaningful and to enhance learning. Students say that this has helped them to improve the quality of their work. Students know their targets

and teachers make good use of assessment data to keep them informed of the progress they are making. However, while books are marked regularly, students are not always given sufficient advice on what they need to do next to improve their work. Skilled teaching assistants know their students well and provide a good level of support, particularly for those whose first language is not English.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is broad, balanced, differentiated and contributes to the students' enjoyment in learning. A new 'pathways' system has been introduced in Year 10 and 11 which places a strong focus on academic subjects in two pathways and offers a good vocational alternative, with some time spent at a local college, for a small number of students. This vocational pathway has proved very successful for these students, partly due to the strong support provided by one of the school's learning mentors. The school is making very good use of its specialist status to enhance the curriculum, train new teachers and support students' economic awareness through work experience programmes, enterprise initiatives and the 'Science and Industry week'. This is having a positive effect on students' learning and level of motivation. The purchase of new ICT and other resources across the school, including an impressive sports science suite, has improved the facilities available to other curriculum areas. Given these excellent facilities and the quality of physical education programmes, the leadership rightly has aspirations to extend the school's specialist status to include sport. The curriculum is further enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, especially in music, performing arts, sport, field studies, Duke of Edinburgh Awards and outdoor pursuits. Students of all ages learn to be safe, healthy, empathetic and caring through the personal, social and health education programmes and the religious education lessons. Additional support for students whose first language is not English is outstanding and enables them to access the curriculum very well.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Arrangements for safeguarding are rigorous and frequently reviewed. Child protection and risk assessment procedures are fully in place and known by all staff. The school promotes exceptional harmony between its students. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. Information gathered on students' academic and personal development is used very successfully by progress leaders, form teachers and subject leaders to support those with behaviour problems, poor attendance or those at risk of underachievement. Parents are very well informed, and value highly the ability to access their child's targets, progress reports and past reports through the school's website. Transition arrangements from primary school and into sixth form or college provision are very effective. Sixth form mentors offer excellent care and support and are well thought of by all students. Students respond well to the way their achievements are actively celebrated by the school in assemblies, awards and certificates. Learning mentor support is extremely sensitive, well coordinated and very effective in promoting the well-being of students. As a result, all students, including the most vulnerable, make good progress in their personal and academic achievement.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The headteacher is an outstanding leader. He, together with the governors and able senior and middle management teams, has brought about substantial improvements since the last inspection. Leadership in the sixth form is outstanding. Consequently all students achieve well and enjoy outstanding care and guidance. The school has introduced thorough self-evaluation systems in recent years, and as a result weaker performance is now robustly challenged, which in turn has led to the improvement seen in standards and achievement. Innovative approaches to staff development have enabled all teachers to observe best practice. Good support for newly qualified and trainee teachers has helped the school to widen expertise, as have the school's outstanding links with local schools and colleges. Very good management of the school's science specialist college programmes has ensured improvements in resources and learning and has developed excellent links with the local community, including a very high level of support for science in the local primary schools.



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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2	1
The attendance of learners	2	2
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	1

### 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	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Calderstones School, Liverpool, L18 3HS

I would like to express my thanks on behalf of the inspection team for the way in which you greeted us while we were in your school and the way many of you represented your school so well when we met in our interviews and in and out of lessons. We think you go to a good school that provides you with a good education and a wide range of experiences. Consequently, you achieve well in your examinations but also become mature, confident young adults by the time you leave school in Year 11, or at the end of the sixth form. We were most impressed by what one of you described as 'our racial harmony'. It was delightful to watch how well you got on with each other and the obvious friendships between students of different races, faiths and backgrounds. You are an example to us all.

We think you are taught well, that you enjoy your lessons and that you have really good relationships with your teachers. We were impressed by your knowledge of your targets and what progress you are making. We thought it would be helpful if you were given a little more advice on how to improve your work and that in some lessons you were set work that more closely matched your individual needs. We think that you are given a good range of subjects to learn and that the new vocational pathway is working well and has the potential to be used by more of you. We agree with your evaluation that you make the best progress where you are active in lessons that are practical and are based in real life situations. We have suggested that the school should look to make this more consistent across subjects.

We were most impressed by the outstanding care, guidance and support systems that the school has in place. You told us that, as a result of this, you feel safe in school and that there is always someone to turn to for help if needed. We agree with your parents who said how pleased they were to be able to know how well you were doing, both socially and academically, through the very impressive 'e-portal' website. We think your headteacher is an excellent leader. He and his senior, subject and pastoral teams lead and manage your school well and have been very innovative in using the science college and refurbishment funding to great effect to improve your opportunities and experiences. We also think your sixth form has very many strengths and is very well led.

Thank you again for representing yourselves and your school so well. The team and I wish you every success.