

# The Calder High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	107562
<b>Local Authority</b>	Calderdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	324593
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Muir HMI

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 (total)	1290
Sixth form	240
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Bryan Mensforth
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Stephen Ball
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 October 2005
<b>School address</b>	Brier Hey Lane Mytholmroyd Hebden Bridge West Yorkshire HX7 5QN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01422 883213
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Calder High School is a popular comprehensive school, with specialist technology status for boys and girls aged 11 to 19 years. It is large: there are nearly 1300 students on roll, including 240 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 and there is a tradition of higher education. About 9% 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. About 15% 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 15% 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.

It is 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: Investors in People, Information and Technology Mark, Extended Schools Award, Healthy Schools Award and Artsmark Gold.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

The Calder High School is a good school. It provides an effective learning environment where students feel safe and their individual needs are well catered for.

Students make good progress overall from their entry at Year 7 until the end of Year 11. Their standards are above the national average. Personal development and well-being are good. Students enjoy school and their behaviour is generally good, making the school a welcoming place for visitors, although there are some inconsistencies in the application of the Behaviour for Learning policy. Students participate in the community at local and global level, raising money for a range of worthy causes. Students know how to keep themselves healthy and are involved in a wide range of clubs and activities.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. There are good relationships between staff and students. The best lessons challenge the students and have a well planned mix of activities, so that students remain engaged throughout. However, there are also examples of lessons with too much teacher talk and not enough challenge, which limits the progress made by students. The school knows this and is working to identify the best practice and use it to raise teaching standards for all staff. This is not yet fully embedded, however, and is a current focus of the school's improvement agenda. Technology is well used to enhance the learning environment, by providing extra resources throughout the school. The curriculum is outstanding and is well supported by an impressive range of extra-curricular activities. It is regularly reviewed and is flexible enough to meet the needs of all learners. This ensures that progress continues to improve over time.

The care, guidance and support of students are good. Students settle in well in Year 7 because the school's work with its primary feeder schools is effective. Students say that staff are friendly, caring and approachable regarding school or personal problems. They feel that they are listened to. Any racist incidents are logged and dealt with and are few in number. Arrangements for moving between each key stage are good and improving. Students at risk of disaffection are quickly identified and supported effectively with a wide range of strategies, including the school's 'care-takers' and 'alternative to exclusion' (A2E) provisions. The school works well in partnership with a number of external agencies including the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and Youth Offending Team.

Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision securely focused on improving standards and students' progress, which has led to significant improvements throughout the school. The involvement of all members of the school community, including the governors, has been a key element in driving these improvements. The school's 'Exceptional Curriculum Leadership' initiative has been a major force in developing an ethos of continuous self-evaluation and improvement throughout the school. Data is used effectively for tracking individual students' progress. The governing body provides outstanding support and challenge to the management of the school. The school's specialist status in technology has contributed to the raising of standards in subjects throughout the school. Good progress has been made in relation to the areas identified for improvement in the last inspection. The school provides good value for money and is well placed to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

Attainment on entry is broadly average. Students reach standards which are in line with national averages at the end of their time in the sixth form. There is a significant variation in subject performance. However, achievement overall is satisfactory.

The quality of teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory. Lessons are well organised, though activities are not always sufficiently targeted to individual students or matched to their needs. There are limited opportunities for independent learning and challenge for the more able students. Students are happy about the quality of the feedback they receive. They enjoy good relationships with their teachers and each other. The curriculum is good and is becoming increasingly broad with the addition of five Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) subjects.

Students enjoy being in the sixth form and the opportunities they have to be involved in the wider school community, for example, by supporting and mentoring younger students. Attendance is in line with the national average. Students organise events in the school and the local community and raise funds for an array of good causes. For example, students have been involved with a charity to raise funds for a project within an African community. Students receive appropriate support and guidance and they all move on to further or higher education or employment.

Leaders have a clear and detailed understanding of the strengths and areas for further improvement in the sixth form. The head of sixth form knows the sixth form very well and has a very clear grasp of what needs to be done. Improvement is rapid. Recent initiatives such as the introduction of a wide range of enrichment activities and the creation of a 'learning and teaching group' to share good practice amongst staff are already having an impact. Systems for tracking students' progress are strengthening but retention and attendance are areas which need to be improved further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the monitoring of policies and procedures, relating to teaching and behaviour management to ensure consistency across the school.

-Improve provision and achievement in the sixth form to match progress made in the main school.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Students' standards on entry to the school are above average. This is maintained during Key Stage 3 and progress is satisfactory. The number of students reaching expected and higher levels in mathematics and science is above the national average and is rising year-on-year. However, students perform less well in English, although provisional results show an improvement in 2008. Overall, progress made by students in Key Stage 3 has improved in the last two years.

At Key Stage 4 students make good progress. The school's data tracking is robust showing that standards in Key Stage 4 are above average and are improving. The proportion of students obtaining at least five GCSE A\* to C grades has been rising recently and un-validated results show a continued rise in 2008. The percentage of five A\* to C grades, including English and

mathematics, is above the national average. Standards in English language have improved to be in line with those in mathematics and science. There are no variations between the achievements of different groups of students. In the sixth form, however, achievement is satisfactory. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well throughout the school. The school has met its specialist school targets for the end of Key Stage 4 and for the sixth form.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The personal development and well-being of students, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Students say that 'Everyone gets accepted for who they are'. All students feel safe at school and know that there are people they can talk to if they are troubled. The school council has influenced the school into taking a more effective stance against bullying. Students now say that when bullying occurs, it is dealt with effectively. Students participate in a wide variety of extra-curricular sporting activities. The school contributes well to the healthy lifestyles of students. Relationships are good, although some students and parents have concerns about behaviour in a few lessons, because the 'Behaviour for Learning' initiative is not applied consistently. However, a large majority of students agree that behaviour has improved. Overall, behaviour is good with students being courteous and polite.

Students generally enjoy their lessons and like coming to school. Most students know their targets and what they need to do to improve their work. They do not enjoy the lessons where they feel insufficiently challenged. Students feel that their move from Year 6 to Year 7 was well organised. Entry to sixth form arrangements have improved recently. Attendance has improved and has recently overtaken the national average, although some students have a casual attitude to punctuality when arriving to lessons. Students take part in activities that encourage an understanding of diversity and make a positive contribution to the local and international community. All students were involved in the 'Row to Africa' event to raise money for a sixth form activity, supporting a village in Africa. Students also contribute to local charities including the preparation and distribution of food boxes to the local community.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. A staff 'learning and teaching' group provides increasingly effective training and advice for teachers. The best teaching is well planned with a good mix of activities so that students remain focussed, work hard and make good progress. In a Spanish class, students clearly enjoyed the high level of challenge. The tasks were well matched to all members of the group. Consequently, all students made impressive progress. The school's specialism, technology, is well used to enhance the learning environment. The use of data in the day-to-day work of the school has improved since the last inspection.

Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning, however, remain. A small proportion of teachers do not have high enough expectations of their students. As a result, students in these classes are not sufficiently challenged and do not make as much progress as they could. This also impacts negatively on students' behaviour.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

Despite the school judging the quality of its curriculum to be good, inspectors found it to be outstanding. The curriculum meets the needs of all learners. It is regularly reviewed taking into account the changing needs of the students in the school. In Key Stage 3, the curriculum is enhanced through the use of units of work which promote 'learning for life'. A summer school for students coming in to the school from Year 6 had very positive outcomes in terms of their rapid integration into the life of the school. A wide range of choices caters very well for the individual needs of students in Key Stage 4. These are tailored around academic and vocational courses, some provided in connection with a local college. The success of the curriculum is seen by the rising attendance and improving standards. As a specialist technology college, all students take at least one technology subject. However, good timetable planning allows all students to be able to choose up to three technology subjects or to take three separate science courses. Gifted and talented students can do both.

A wide range of work-related opportunities promotes the future well-being of students. This is further enhanced by technology, enterprise and enrichment days. There is a rich programme of field studies, cultural visits and extra-curricular activities, especially in sport and the performing arts. All Year 8 students also have a few days camping in the Lake District. 'Extended Schools' designation, awarded last year, recognises the exceptional range of additional activities offered by the school

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The care, guidance and support of students are good. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are in place and health and safety and risk assessments are well managed. Students at risk, and vulnerable students, are quickly identified and supported effectively. The school actively promotes inclusion and equality. The support students receive at the A2E centre has been successful in reducing the number of fixed term exclusions. The 'care-takers' initiative identifies students at risk of disaffection and works effectively to re-engage them. The learning support team offers good provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A comprehensive inclusion booklet ensures that the needs of all students are known to all staff. This enables additional support to be well targeted. There has been an increased focus on improving standards through more rigorous target setting. Most staff now ensure that marking and feedback is directed towards what students have to do to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. According to the returned Ofsted questionnaires, parents overwhelmingly agree that the school is well led and managed. The headteacher has shown strong leadership in implementing a vision which has involved all members of the school community, focused securely on raising expectations and standards. Since the previous inspection he has set challenging targets for improvement and the involvement of all staff in school improvement has been a major element in driving this vision forward. Self-evaluation at all levels is very accurate, demonstrating an excellent awareness of strengths and areas for improvement. Lesson observations are undertaken to monitor the quality of teaching and

learning and these are accurate. Initiatives and appropriate monitoring systems have been established with the governing body to ensure that inclusion is promoted effectively. As a result of this, the outstanding curriculum, and other initiatives, the school is promoting community cohesion well.

The systems for collecting data are not yet sophisticated enough to monitor the progress of groups of students by gender, ethnicity or need. The school's specialist status in technology has contributed to improvements in all subjects. An example of this is the wide range of technology resources available throughout the school. Local primary schools and the wider community have also benefited from these resources. The use of technology throughout the school is currently under review, to ensure that its impact is as effective as possible.



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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2	

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	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	2	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	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	

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of The Calder High School, Calderdale, HX7 5QN

Thank you very much for the very enjoyable two days that my colleagues and I recently spent inspecting your school. It was made all the more pleasant by your behaviour and attitude towards us. We were impressed about how willing you were to talk about your school and it was interesting to hear your views.

We found your school to be good and it has improved since the last inspection. The curriculum is now outstanding which means that you have an excellent range of subjects that you can choose from as you travel through the school and into the sixth form. Your personal development is good and you are being given the skills to grow into successful and confident young adults. You said that behaviour has improved since the introduction of the 'Behaviour for Learning' policy, but you would prefer if it was more consistently applied by all staff. Also, although you enjoy your lessons, sometimes you find the lessons not challenging enough for your abilities. This means that you don't make as much progress as you could in some lessons.

As a result I have asked the school to improve in two areas.

- Improve the monitoring of policies and procedures, particularly teaching and behaviour to ensure consistency across the school.
- Make sure that the sixth form improves so that it matches the standards and progress in the rest of the school.

You can help with this by using the school council to pass on your views to the leadership of the school about how they can improve in these areas.

Finally, I would like to wish you all the best for the future in your school and thank you again for your very warm welcome.