

Calder House School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	865/6024
Unique Reference Number	126542
Inspection number	333841
Inspection dates	9 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Calder House School, located near Chippenham in Wiltshire, provides education for pupils with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. On entry all pupils are operating below the academic levels of their peers in mainstream schools. Currently 38 pupils attend who are between seven and 14 years of age, approximately one third of whom are girls. Eleven pupils have statements of special educational needs; the majority of these are funded by the placing local authority. The school aims to provide an environment where pupils enjoy learning and develop their self esteem and confidence as learners. It is intended that pupils will return to mainstream school once they have reached broadly age-related expectations. The school opened in 1995 and was last inspected in September 2006.

Evaluation of the school

Calder House School successfully meets its aims and provides a good education for its pupils. All regulations for its continued registration are now met and the school continues to make good progress under the guidance of the recently appointed headteacher. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. All pupils make good progress and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, behaviour, well being and welfare are excellent features. The curriculum is good, as is teaching and assessment. As a consequence the majority of pupils quickly reach standards appropriate to their abilities.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good and enables pupils to make good progress. Individual learning programmes are designed effectively to tackle the learning difficulties of each pupil whilst offering full access to the National Curriculum. The carefully constructed and balanced timetable allows for short lessons that emphasise skills and ensure concentration levels are maintained. This structure allows for those pupils requiring personalised support, for learning to read or to develop speech and language and motor skills, to receive daily attention.

Excellent use is made of specialist strategies to increase pupils' understanding and communication skills. Every effort is made to provide a consistent and highly structured approach, based on established routines. The excellent enrichment through sport, excursions to London and Bristol, and live theatre add significantly to the pupils' healthy outlook on life, whilst giving them the confidence to tackle new experiences. Links with local mainstream schools afford good opportunities for the pupils to develop their confidence and provide additional sporting opportunities. There is some good and regular use made of computer programmes to support the teaching of spelling, numeracy skills and reading comprehension. The school recognises that further development is required of information and communication technology in order to teach research skills and encourage more independence in learning.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and is sometimes outstanding. Staff know pupils well, and are adept at getting the best out of them. Their subject expertise, particularly in the teaching of reading, results in very good progress for a majority of pupils. The staff recognise that reading is the key to unlocking success in other areas of the curriculum and are constantly refreshing their expertise in this area. Lesson planning is good. Teachers are skilful at pitching the material to match the high expectations they have of the pupils. For example, in a lesson studying First World War poets, harrowing news reel clips prompted a high quality discussion amongst the older pupils, about Siegfried Sassoon's work. Some excellent use was also made of visual and auditory stimuli that maintained a crisp pace to the learning. The aim of lesson planning is to match work to each pupil's capabilities and individual education plans. However, not all teachers successfully identify what pupils are expected to learn or remind them of what the expectations of them are, as the lesson progresses. This has an adverse impact on pupils' learning and does not help to advance the targets recorded in their individual education plans. Lessons generally start with a clear expectation of what is to be achieved but these are not personalised to ensure that pupils are reminded of their own individual targets.

Assessment has continued to develop well since the time of the last inspection. Pupils' good progress in English, mathematics and science is tracked closely through the achievement of their objectives in their individual education programmes. These make good use of National Curriculum criteria and age related expectations so that activities are pitched at the right level. The school analyses and compares pupils' progress with similar pupils nationally, so that any slippage in achievement can be identified and addressed; for example, through the support for those with dyscalculia. Most pupils make at least two years progress in one year. End of year reports to parents on pupils' progress over the year are very thorough and give a comprehensive picture of their achievements.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils develop very positive attitudes to learning and to each other. They say how much the school has helped them regain their self-esteem and recognise their 'unique talents'. Re-engagement with learning is impressive.

Pupils learn to work together across all the ages and to set their own personal challenges. Their awareness of each other's needs is particularly well developed. Pupils thoroughly enjoy lessons, particularly practical subjects such as science, but also philosophy and history which challenge their thinking.

The personal, social, health and citizenship education covers a wide range of cultural and spiritual topics and pupils are enthusiastic about their links with Indian and Kenyan schools. Pupils are very keen participants in sporting and educational activities; an increasing number in partnership with local schools. Pupils make a positive contribution to the local community by participating in local events, writing for the local magazine and maintaining links with the older citizens. Pupils, through the school council, have made useful suggestions for improvements, such as developing the 'golden time' programme. They have made their own choices as to who to sponsor through fund raising; choices that show their strong understanding of global issues.

Attendance is above average. Pupils respond well to the clear code of conduct and expectations of behaviour. Their behaviour is outstanding and there are no incidents of poor behaviour recorded for a number of years. This contributes to maintaining pupils' motivation and sustained application and makes an impressive contribution to developing their economic well-being, by preparing them for their successful transition back into mainstream schools.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The 'family' atmosphere is a testament to how well each pupil is known by the staff. Pupils are kept safe in very trusting and supportive relationships which often sustain them into their adult lives. There are strong pastoral systems in place, to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety is promoted very effectively. There are high levels of supervision and much improved guidance and training for staff on the health and safety of pupils. Child protection has a high priority and weekly meetings between staff ensure any issues affecting the pupils are appropriately responded to. Circle time is used well to discuss matters such as bullying but also to help pupils come to terms with past experiences, support each other and prepare for their transition to other schools. Pupils confirm the good sensitivity to the requirement for them to access help through the 'worry box'.

Appropriate staff suitability checks meet requirements and additional checks are now carried out every three years. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (2002).

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- further develop lesson planning to align lesson objectives more closely to pupils' individual targets and use these to check on progress during lessons
- consider ways to extend the use of information and communication technology to extend pupils' research and independent learning skills.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	√			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	√			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	√			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	√			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	√			
The behaviour of pupils	√			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	√			
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School details

Name of school	Calder House School		
DCSF number	865/6024		
Unique reference number	126542		
Type of school	Special school for pupils with specific learning difficulties		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1995		
Age range of pupils	7-14		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 28	Girls: 10	Total: 38
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 6	Girls: 5	Total: 11
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,900		
Address of school	Thickwood Lane Colerne Chippenham Wiltshire SN14 8BN		
Telephone number	01225 742329		
Fax number	01225 742329		
Email address	head@calderhouseschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr A Day		
Proprietor	Calderhouse Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Jonathan Palk HMI		
Dates of inspection	9 July 2009		