

Calder House School

Thickwood Lane, Colerne, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN14 8BN

Inspection dates

27–29 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders, including the proprietor, and staff have worked diligently to sustain the outstanding quality of care and education for pupils since the previous inspection.
- Leaders have the highest expectations and ambition to ensure that pupils thrive academically, socially and emotionally.
- Leaders ensure that the school's aims and mission are at the heart of the pupils' learning and experiences. The curriculum promotes excellence and enjoyment, so that pupils achieve well and are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers and leaders know the needs of every pupil in exceptional detail. Teachers plan the precise next steps to enable all pupils to make rapid and sustained improvement in the range of subjects taught.
- Teachers have the highest expectations of pupils, including the most able. Pupils are routinely stretched and challenged, including to become independent and resilient learners.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons is exemplary. This contributes to an orderly, happy and safe environment in which pupils flourish.
- Leaders have established an overwhelmingly positive learning community, so that everybody feels valued and respected. As a result, morale is high and the pupils, parents and carers, and staff are motivated and determined.
- Middle and subject leaders contribute effectively to school self-evaluation and review. Their much-increased contribution is adding even greater capacity for improvement.
- The work of the new local governing body is not yet fully established. This prevents governors from having the strongest possible impact through their current ways of working.
- Leaders ensure that careers advice and guidance for pupils are in place. However, this lacks a clear strategy to get the highest quality of support for pupils, particularly those in key stage 3.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders, including the proprietor, should:
 - provide high-quality training and support to improve further the effectiveness of the local governing body
 - formalise and agree the school's strategy for careers advice and guidance, particularly for pupils in key stage 3, in order to provide them with the highest quality of support.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leaders, including the proprietor, have maintained the outstanding quality of care and education for pupils since the previous inspection. Leaders' diligence, determination and resilience ensure that pupils continue to benefit from a high-quality and individually tailored education.
- Leaders have the highest expectations and are ambitious for every pupil. As a result, pupils are motivated and thrive academically, socially and emotionally.
- Leaders use rigorous and detailed assessments to inform personalised weekly timetables for every pupil. This highly meticulous approach, for example, their 'strengths and weaknesses chart', ensures that every pupil receives a bespoke programme to meet his or her needs. This enables pupils to make excellent progress in targeted areas to overcome barriers.
- Leaders' aims and mission to enable every pupil to catch up quickly and reintegrate into mainstream education, wherever possible, permeate the school. Staff and pupils are acutely aware of the overall aim that pupils make rapid recovery. Furthermore, the strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal skills and attributes enables pupils to thrive in every sense.
- The acting head of school (AHS) took up post following the retirement of the substantive headteacher in September 2018. The AHS has wasted no time in working with the school's leadership to identify the right improvement areas and is effectively tackling priorities rigorously.
- Middle and subject leaders have a clear mandate to reform key aspects of the ways in which they are working. This has led to further improvement in some subjects. For example, the way that information communication technology (ICT) is set up has been overhauled to enable pupils to operate their own working files, documents and tasks. These leaders are taking a direct stake in evaluating the school's effectiveness and contributing their ideas to drafting the next round of school priorities.
- The leaders for English and mathematics are highly trained in their areas of expertise. Their knowledge is used extensively to lead staff training and professional development which, in turn, raises the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leaders work cohesively and with a common purpose. For example, members of the leadership team (comprising the AHS, managing director (MD) and head of sub-skills) work closely to rigorously assess and evaluate the progress of each pupil. They work closely with class teachers and professional experts, such as speech and language therapists, to set precisely the right challenges for pupils and hold teachers to account.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and provides a strong, well-rounded basis for developing pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in the full range of subjects. Pupils show their enjoyment of humanities, religious education, computing, art and physical education. They also enjoy extra-curricular activities, such as music club, to add further breadth and interest.
- Pupils show an exceptional regard for, and interest in, other cultures, societies and

religions. For example, all classes are studying a different world faith, and pupils talk knowledgeably and with conviction about other cultures. Pupils have a keenly developed sense of spiritual, moral and social issues to prepare them for life in modern Britain, including reflecting with empathy on victims of the First World War and acts of terrorism.

- Leaders communicate highly effectively with other stakeholders, including parents and placing authorities. Parents hold the school in high esteem. For example, a typical parental view expressed during the inspection was, 'I cannot speak highly enough of Calder House. They have altered the trajectory of my son's life through their understanding, teaching and ability to recognise the individual needs of each child.'

Governance

- The directors of the company hold school leaders firmly to account. They continue to have an excellent, first-hand knowledge of Calder House, including how well it is operating, and a strategic overview. As a result, the school continues to be an outstanding provider and fully meets all of the independent school standards.
- Regular meetings between board representatives and the MD ensure that the running of the school is efficient and effective. Directors and other leaders have a shared and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The proprietor retains the full legal responsibilities for the running of Calder House. Those responsible have decided to introduce a local governing body, in an advisory capacity, to help with the running of the school. Three new governors were appointed in March 2018. However, they have not yet had sufficient impact in their roles.
- Nevertheless, governors are motivated and committed. They have a wealth of skills and knowledge from different backgrounds to contribute. In the short time since their arrival, they have started to gather information and take some action towards being a critical friend to school leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders are tenacious in the ways that they tackle and respond to safeguarding concerns. They work with the full range of services and external agencies to make timely referrals and keep pupils safe.
- Staff are well trained and know what to do to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. For example, staff know how to refer a concern in a timely and efficient manner. Staff are keenly aware of their safeguarding duties and responsibilities.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. They know what bullying is and say that it is very rare. However, if it does happen, pupils say they trust teachers to intervene and make the right decisions to help them.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Pupils know what to do to stay safe in different situations. For example, they know what information they should withhold when working online and what to do in the event of a fire to evacuate safely.
- The proprietor ensures that all standards and regulations for health and safety are fully implemented.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers have an excellent knowledge of every pupil. Together with specialist experts, including the on-site speech and language therapists and occupational therapist, teachers plan sequences of learning matched precisely to each pupil's individual need. Consequently, pupils thrive academically, socially and emotionally.
- Pupils are taught in very small groups and qualified teachers work very closely with them across the school day. Teachers identify and address pupils' individual needs quickly. As a result, pupils make rapid and sustained progress, particularly to help catch up in reading, writing and communication.
- Teachers use a range of assessment information effectively to target pupils' particular weaknesses, such as spelling. This leads to rapid intervention and improvement. Leaders also track pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses closely, on a weekly basis, to ensure that programmes and interventions are working well.
- Personalised timetables featuring bespoke activities are highly effective. These are produced for every pupil, so that they receive the timely and specific support needed to overcome their individual barriers.
- Teachers plan work to match the recommendations and advice from external experts and professionals, including following clinical and/or medical advice. In this way, pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan have their specific needs met consistently. As a consequence, pupils make strong progress, through highly refined and personalised 'next steps'.
- Teachers have the highest expectations of pupils, including for the most able and older pupils. For example, in a Year 6 and Year 7 English lesson, pupils were evaluating the merits of analepsis (use of flashback) in narrative writing. Pupils also showed tremendous knowledge of morphology (the formation of words) to understand particular words and their meaning. These expectations enable pupils to catch up in their readiness for mainstream education.
- Teachers and additional adults have excellent professional relationships with the pupils. Pupils respond well to teachers' prompts, guidance and skilful questioning to achieve well in all lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils often recover their confidence and rapidly gain independence through their time in Calder House. As a result, they are emotionally well prepared for the next stage in their education, which for many means returning to mainstream education.
- Pupils show mutual care and respect towards each other across the school day. They are supportive and kind. For example, peer mentors look out for other pupils and intervene well at times when some pupils feel they may need a friend.
- Pupils enjoy having positions of responsibility. For example, they relish opportunities to be

school councillors or house captains. These roles enable pupils to contribute to the running of the school and learn the importance of working together.

- Pupils take great care and are impeccably behaved when moving around the school, including between lessons. They are punctual and well prepared, so that lessons begin, and are conducted, seamlessly and free from distractions. This promotes a sense of order, purpose and calm that is conducive to effective learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is exemplary. They are attentive and highly motivated. This work ethic contributes to pupils making rapid progress.
- Pupils show a great understanding and tolerance towards others, including fully respecting individual differences. Pupils also show empathy for those facing political and historical prejudice, such as in their studies of the abolition of slavery and the American Civil War.
- Pupils say, 'Bullying does not happen here.' If it does occur, pupils feel that it is dealt with quickly by staff. Pupils integrate and play harmoniously without barriers or discrimination.
- Pupils enjoy attending school. Overall, the school's attendance is in line with the national average for primary schools and is much higher than the attendance typically seen in a special school.
- Pupils receive helpful information and guidance for careers in lessons and through visits. However, this is not yet as rigorous or strategically well planned as it could be to ensure the very highest quality of careers support, particularly for pupils in key stage 3.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- The school cannot be compared with other schools using published national test data due to the complexity and uniqueness of the pupils attending this school. However, internal assessment, pupil destination information and evidence in pupils' work show that they make rapid gains from their entry points to Calder House.
- Pupils catch up quickly in the full range of subjects. Leaders' dedication to improving core literacy skills, including reading, writing and communication, enables pupils to make accelerated learning across the curriculum. As a result, the overwhelming majority of pupils re-integrate successfully to mainstream education, having caught up with their peers.
- The school has a strong record in supporting some pupils towards being successful in further and higher education.
- Pupils make exceptional progress in reading. Leaders prioritise reading and insert key activities across the school day including, 'drop everything and read' (DEAR) stories at lunch and hearing pupils read daily. Well-maintained reading records show the discipline and ambition for every pupil to become a reader.
- Those pupils with an EHC plan make strong progress. Highly refined targets and well-planned next steps ensure that pupils' social, emotional and academic needs are fully

met, so that they can achieve well.

- Most-able pupils are stretched and challenged to achieve well. Workbooks show how individual challenges are provided to 'raise the bar'. For example, this is evident in geography, where pupils are required to read more intricate maps to find significant places and cities. The extra challenges mean that pupils are motivated and can apply their skills and knowledge routinely to maintain a brisk rate of learning.
- Pupils make sustained progress across the curriculum. For example, older pupils who entered the school with extremely limited skills and knowledge in ICT can now accomplish complex, multi-staged tasks successfully, such as coding and creating animations. This transference of key skills prepares pupils well for re-entry to mainstream schools, and ensures their readiness for life beyond school.
- However, on very few occasions, the quality of work in other subjects, including science and humanities, is not as consistently high as that produced in English written work.

School details

Unique reference number	126542
DfE registration number	865/6024
Inspection number	10053773

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Calder House Ltd
Managing Director	Jason Page
Headteacher	Julie Delahay
Annual fees (day pupils)	£17,775
Telephone number	01225 743566
Website	www.calderhouseschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@calderhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–5 November 2015

Information about this school

- Calder House is a registered school for up to 48 pupils, between the ages of five and 13, who have specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia.
- No pupils are disadvantaged, in that they are known to be eligible for free school meals, or children looked after.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British origin.
- The school does not use other alternative provision or provision for boarders.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils in a range of subjects in all classes. In addition, the inspector looked at pupils' work and information kept by the school about pupils' learning.
- The inspector held discussions with pupils, staff and leaders throughout the inspection, including the acting head of school, managing director, mathematics subject leader, ICT leader and director for sub-skills.
- The inspector met with the managing director and proprietors. He scrutinised key plans, including the school development plan, summary self-evaluation and programmes of study. He also reviewed the school's curriculum plan and other information provided by the school, including headteacher's reports and pupil tracking information.
- The inspector scrutinised documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour, exclusions and attendance. School policies and documentation, including risk assessments, EHC plans and individual education plans were also examined. In addition, the inspector reviewed the site and premises to check regulations in line with the independent school standards.
- The inspector took account of the views of 17 members of staff who completed Ofsted's questionnaire for staff and considered the views of 32 parents expressed through Parent View. The inspector also met with parents at the start of the second day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Stewart Gale, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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