

Calder High School, A Specialist Technology College

Brier Hey Lane, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, HX7 5QN

Inspection dates 12–13 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too many students do not achieve to their potential. Achievement requires further and more rapid improvement particularly at GCSE level.
- The most able students are not sufficiently challenged to enable them to achieve well and excel. More students should be achieving the highest grades at GCSE.
- There remain significant achievement gaps between different groups of students. In particular those students known to be eligible for free school meals and boys are not making the progress that they should be.
- Too much teaching lacks sufficient planning, variety and challenge. An aspirational culture is not embedded sufficiently to motivate and direct students to enthuse in learning.
- There remains too much variability in the quality of feedback to students. Poor marking practice in some classes prevents students from making better progress.
- Well considered but new systems to monitor and track the quality of provision are not fully embedded at a middle management and classroom level.

The school has the following strengths

- The new senior leadership have made an immediate and significant impact on creating a much better-focused and cohesive school community. All this has been achieved in a relatively short period.
- Senior leaders and improving middle management are now better placed to accelerate improvement.
- New and more effective systems for tracking and monitoring student progress have been introduced. They are demonstrating some initial impact through improving performance in mathematics and across provision.
- There is now a foundation of outstanding teaching within the school. Good staff development and support systems are beginning to embed a more self-critical and aspirational culture. Teaching and learning for sixth formers is improving and in many cases is good.
- Behaviour and attendance have improved. Systems for checking and monitoring behaviour and attendance are more robust.
- This is an improving school with increased staff accountability. Senior leaders take a fair but tough approach to performance management.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons. They also visited tutorials, watched a school drama production, attended an archaeological event and listened to students read.
- Five groups of students met with inspectors. Discussions were held with school staff, including senior leaders, heads of departments, teachers, representatives of the local authority and governing body.
- Inspectors looked at responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They held telephone conversations with several parents. They analysed 68 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors read a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, improvement and development plans, monitoring reports, behaviour logs and records in relation to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Patrick Geraghty, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Derek Davies	Additional Inspector
Tudor Griffiths	Additional Inspector
Peter Harrison	Additional Inspector
Janet Peckett	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures

Information about this school

- Calder High School serves towns and communities along the Calder Valley. It is situated in a local authority which operates a policy of selective entry to secondary education.
- This is a much larger than average sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) is below average although increasing.
- A lower than average proportion of students is of minority ethnic heritage.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is average, while the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school exceeds the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.
- Prior attainment on entry varies between at the national average or significantly above.
- The interim executive headteacher and interim headteacher took up position in September 2012. The third member of the senior leadership team, acting as senior consultant, took up post in the spring of 2012. Previously the school has had two headteachers in quick succession.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that a greater proportion is at least good by:
 - improving lesson planning to enable all lessons to best meet the needs of all students, and ensuring that tasks are challenging and engage students
 - ensure that student tracking data is used in all lessons to inform planning
 - providing greater opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills
 - using questioning more effectively to challenge and engage students so that they have opportunities to develop their reasoning, spoken language and extend their thinking
 - promoting the sharing of the best practice so that all may aspire to good or better teaching
 - ensuring that feedback and marking informs and supports students in their next steps in learning.
- Continue to raise and accelerate achievement by:
 - ensuring that the momentum for improvement in mathematics and English is accelerated
 - embedding high aspirations for students across all subjects and classes
 - closing the gaps in achievement between different groups of students and especially those known to be eligible for free school meals and boys
 - improving teaching in weaker performing classes and subjects in order to achieve better outcomes for students.
- Ensure that systems to improve teaching and learning and the promotion of best practice are embedded at a middle management and classroom level. Make sure that any inconsistencies in the application of school procedures, systems and approach to the improvement of provision are swiftly identified and tackled.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Too many students do not achieve to their potential; this has been an historic issue for the school. In 2011/12 pass rates at GCSE 5A* - C including English and mathematics declined further.
- Current school tracking and monitoring data indicates an improvement in student progress and this was confirmed during the inspection through lesson observations and the scrutiny of current work. However there remains too much variation within and across subjects in the progress that students are making.
- In too many lessons the most able students are not challenged to excel or are not provided with high quality extension work and tasks to promote deeper understanding. Too few achieve the highest GCSE grades.
- Achievement in mathematics is improving and students are making better progress. Recent modular results in mathematics indicate a significant improvement in pass rates. Improvement in English is currently less marked.
- Achievement in the sixth form is improving. GCE AS-level achievement significantly improved in 2011/12. The school acknowledges the need for a greater focus on the achievement of higher grades at GCE A-level.
- The quality of school data and its application to the tracking of student progress has improved. More effective and comprehensive monitoring, tracking and intervention systems are enabling a more productive focus on how best to support students to make better progress.
- Effective programmes and intervention strategies are tackling some low literacy levels at entry. Reading ages in Years 7 and 8 are improving. The development of spoken and listening skills is increasingly promoted in the better lessons especially at Key Stage 3.
- Gaps in attainment between different groups of students are too wide. The gaps between students known to be eligible for free schools meals and their peers remain significant. Boys do not achieve as well as girls. The school recognises this and is now using the pupil premium to better effect to implement additional activities and initiatives to support improvement for these groups. Initial indications are positive but it remains too early to confidently judge impact.
- The school has significantly reduced the use of early entry for GCSE confining them largely to mathematics. Those students who take early entry for mathematics but do not achieve the highest grade are given the opportunity to continue to study and at a later date re-sit the paper.
- The school promotes an increasingly wide range of extra-curricular activities to support students in their studies.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The overall quality of teaching over time requires improvement. Teaching is improving and the school now has a foundation of outstanding teaching practice on which to build. However, there remain too many inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning within and across subjects.
- The weaker lessons are characterised by a lack of sufficient planning. Data is not well used to plan learning activities and to take account of the different ability levels of students. These lessons are teacher dominated and opportunities for independent and group learning are limited. Teacher questioning is shallow and fails to extend student understanding.
- In too many lessons teachers' aspiration for students are low. There is too little challenge for the more able. In one lesson a student noted 'I'm capable of a lot more'. Advanced extension work is either not planned for or when it exists is not sufficiently challenging. Extended answers by students to explore ideas and deeper understanding are not promoted. The pace of these lessons is pedestrian and consequently students are passive and sometimes distracted.
- In the better lessons all students are challenged. The most able are extended and their

confidence and curiosity directed productively into independent learning or very constructive group activities. In one outstanding geography lesson students produced models to explain and explore river bends and meander formations. Their application was highly focused. They then studied and investigated each other's plasticine models bestowing praise, questions and constructive criticism. One student echoed the experience of all in saying "I'm learning so much". The learning atmosphere was exciting; all students made excellent progress.

- Teaching in the sixth form is generally good or better. Lesson planning is detailed and resources appropriate. Students are engaged and challenged.
- There is too much variation in the quality of written feedback to students. Too much marking is superficial and does not give pointers on how to improve or build upon present progress. There was little evidence of teacher follow-up to assess improvement and chart student progress. In too many lessons and exercise books no dialogue between teacher and student about learning, improvement and challenge was evidenced.
- Staff development programmes are now more directed to supporting improvements in the quality of teaching. However the school needs to harness and spread the outstanding practice seen in the school to accelerate improvement further.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Students, staff and parents agree that behaviour has significantly improved since it was graded inadequate at the last inspection. Many students are self-assured and become discouraged when their learning is not challenging. Some students are very selective about the extent to which they engage and the degree to which they work consistently throughout lessons. The school acknowledges the need to find ways and means of directing this self-assurance into positive and productive learning opportunities and experiences.
- Sometimes students are boisterous around the school although generally they conduct themselves well. Students commented that there was a greater sense of 'order and consideration' among students now. Students said they felt more positive about the school since changes to the leadership. Staff have a heightened but sensitive supervisory presence during break times and the lunch hour.
- Student Council members remarked that they felt a greater sense of responsibility and trust conferred on them and were more actively involved in ways to improve the school. Sixth formers are making a greater contribution to school life and act as mentors to younger students.
- Few lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour. When low level disruption occurs it is frequently linked to lessons where there is weaker teaching. Where there is a lack of well-planned activities and challenge in lessons student behaviour is passive and progress slow. Lessons are rarely disrupted by late arrivals.
- Bullying is not perceived as a significant issue by the majority of students. No incidences of inappropriate language were observed by inspectors. Students have contributed to anti-homophobic and anti-racist campaigns and are inducted well into the respect ethos of the school. Exclusion rates have declined. Some students and parents have expressed concern about some pockets of poor behaviour and the school has assimilated these concerns into its behavioural policy and procedures to better tackle them.
- Over the last year attendance has improved and is now broadly at the national average. However the attendance of those students who are eligible for free school meals is below the school average and requires improvement. The school recognises this challenge.
- Students feel safe. They have a good understanding of safety concerning their own health and well-being because these aspects are covered in the curriculum and pastoral system. Spiritual and cultural issues at both a personal and global level are increasingly well covered. Opportunities for students to understand and develop an awareness of the diversity of both the local communities and the wider British culture are limited.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school has been through traumatic times. Relationships between leaders, governors, staff, students and the local community have, at times, been stressful. The school has underperformed. The new school leadership have had an immense impact in transforming the culture of the school. The school requires improvement because there has been too little time to embed fully the changes promoted by the new leadership.
- The new leadership has brought a sense of purpose to school life. Staff strongly support their strategy for accelerated improvement and change. Student behaviour has improved and students feel happier and more involved in school life. Many parents have expressed their support for the new leadership via Parent View or by communicating directly with the inspection team.
- New and well developed data and monitoring systems have been introduced. Weaknesses across all aspects of provision have been identified; self-evaluation is highly critical and accurate although slightly overgenerous in its grading of internal teaching and learning observations.
- A new and rigorous monitoring programme has been established to assess classroom provision, identify effective teaching practice and challenge underperformance.
- New appointments to the leadership of English and mathematics have strengthened the capacity of middle management. Middle managers are developing a better understanding of the school's weaknesses and the means and ways by which they can tackle these within their areas of responsibility.
- Most recent school data indicates that standards and achievement are beginning to improve. For the first time pupil premium funding is being used and targeted more effectively to impact on student outcomes, behaviour, and attendance. However this is at too early a stage to judge impact.
- There is an improved performance management system that has a stronger focus on rewarding best practice. Performance management and professional development are increasingly used to support and challenge teachers whose work has been judged as weak.
- Support from the local authority is effective.
- The curriculum has been restructured to better meet the needs of all students. The introduction of an accelerated reading programme has placed a stronger focus on literacy skills. The school has trained a number of parents and sixth formers as reading mentors for younger students. Less able students are increasingly well supported by teaching assistants. Some excellent engineering provision was observed with a group of Year 11 students. 40 Year 11 and 10 students are on college courses one day each week. Good guidance enables appropriate progression onto sixth form and college courses.
- A Parental Engagement At Calder High (PEACH) group has been formed which has improved communications between parents and the school. Parents noted the new spirit of 'openness and responsiveness'. The current school drama production of Edward Scissorhand involved local community participation. The local authority has played a positive role in reviewing the quality of school provision and in particular teaching and learning.
- The school is placing a strong focus on equality of opportunity in its curriculum and evolving support structures. However it recognised that gaps in achievement between groups of students are too large.
- Significant success in a short period has already been achieved to move this school forward. This success and transformation of culture is testimony to the quality of the school's new leadership and reflects a robust capacity for further improvement.
- The governance of the school:
 - Governors are in a period of transition with the appointment of a new Chair. Governors have also been on a journey through recent traumatic times for the school. They strongly support the present leadership and its strategic vision. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. They have a strong recognition of the importance of performance management and the need to reward and promote the best teaching and practice. Statutory duties are undertaken effectively and safeguarding

requirements are fully met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	107562
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	399652

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,312
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rob Good
Headteacher	Mark Leicester
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2012
Telephone number	01422 883213
Fax number	01422 881876
Email address	admin@calderhigh.calderdale.sch.uk

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