

# Cedar House School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	14 November 2007

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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## **Service information**

### **Brief description of the service**

Cedar House is a co-educational special school for children exhibiting emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school caters for children of either gender aged 7 to 16 years on a day or residential basis. The school is situated close to the centre of the market town of Kirkby Lonsdale, which is within easy travelling distance of the larger towns of Kendal and Morecambe as well as the city of Lancaster.

The residential accommodation comprises of five separate residential units, each with its own facilities. Three of the residential units house only male boarders, one houses female boarders and the other houses a mix of male and female boarders.

### **Summary**

The purpose of the visit to the school was to carry out an inspection of all of the key National Minimum Standards relating to Residential Special Schools. The residential areas at Cedar House School provide children with a very safe, caring and enabling environment. This supports their social, emotional and educational wellbeing. The school is outstanding in all outcome areas particularly in equality and diversity.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the school were asked to consider reviewing their methods of recording the minutes of young people's residential unit meetings. The school have fully addressed this recommendation and the minutes of these residential meetings are now fully reflective of how issues raised by young people have been addressed by the school.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

All of the young people living at Cedar House School receive advice, guidance and are well supported in health and personal care issues. This advice is given in a very positive and constructive manner by care and educational staff. Robust policies, procedures and guidance are in place to ensure that staff are fully aware of how to deal with a wide range of often complex health needs including the use of inappropriate substances.

Young People are registered with the local GP practice, dentists and opticians where appropriate. A signed parental consent form is in place for the administration of both medication and emergency medical treatment and this document is maintained on their comprehensive personal health plan. The health, welfare and medication needs of young people are well monitored, administered and recorded by the school's Registered Nurse and also, where appropriate, by members of the care staff. The recording of this important information is being maintained to a high standard. Confidential medical information is maintained securely in the first aid room. In-depth individual medical risk assessments are undertaken on the young people by the school and the detailed information contained in these assessments is reviewed, updated and acted upon as required. The school actively encourages wherever possible the involvement of the young person's family and supporters in dealing with the complex health needs of young people.

There is regular involvement of many different health specialists, for example, speech therapist and physiotherapist.

All of the medication is stored securely in locked medication cabinets. Those members of care staff who administer medication have received training in the safe handling and recording of medication. All of the staff have a recognized and up to date qualification in emergency first aid whilst the senior care staff hold an advanced first aid qualification.

Young people take their meals, with the exception of late supper and breakfast, in the school's pleasant and well decorated dining halls. There is a wide choice of food available to young people from the menu including vegetarian meals, salads, meals from other cultures as well as the more traditional types of cooked meals. The meals are well-prepared, cooked, nutritious and healthy in content and use wherever possible local produce. All of the meals are prepared on site by a well qualified catering staff at the school and take full account of the specialist dietary needs of individual young people. All of the young people regularly input into the school's council which meets on a regular recorded basis with the head of care, head teacher and pupil liaison officer. Young people spoken with confirmed that through these regular meetings as well as from the results of the school food questionnaire they have been able to influence the choices of food available during term time. Young people confirmed that they are fully aware of the need to eat healthily and that the food they were eating was well-prepared and of a very high standard. It was also confirmed by young people that the school provided very good guidance on what was an appropriate diet for their individual needs. Older pupils were being positively encouraged and supported to prepare meals on their house unit for themselves in preparation for independent living.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Cedar House School has very good policies and procedures in place for dealing with the countering of bullying in its many forms. Information is prominently displayed in different formats throughout the house units as well as the school on how to counter different types of bullying.

Where the behaviour of the young people falls below the high standards expected at the school there are sanctions available for use by staff, including the use of detention or restrictions of activities. When sanctions are used they are well recorded and documented in the appropriate bound books. The school has a readily available comprehensive written policy and guidance in regard to the use of physical intervention by staff. There are very good and detailed records being kept of when staff have had to use physical intervention. Recently the school achieved the Gold Standard in Team Teach the physical intervention system used in school. All of the staff working at the school undertake regular recorded training and briefings in its application.

The school has an Independent Listener who regularly visits the school to meet informally with the young people during the school term. The Independent listener can be easily contacted by young people personally or by telephone and these contacts are always initially in confidence but always in line with the school's policy in relation to confidentiality. A number of different youth support organisations telephone numbers are displayed throughout the building, for example, Childline, enabling young people to access an independent agency if they wish to speak to somebody who is not working at the school. The school operates an open door policy so that young people can speak with any member of staff or the senior management team if

they so wish about any topic. Young people confirmed that they were aware of the schools countering bullying and complaints systems as well as to whom they could talk to about any issue including safeguarding issues. The school ensures that all relevant agencies are notified when there are safeguarding issues raised by young people, staff and outside agencies. Comprehensive records of safeguarding issues and their outcomes are securely maintained and can only be accessed by authorised staff.

All of the staff employed at the school prior to their employment undergo a written and verbal reference check, an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check as well as a formal interview. The school also operates a rolling programme of three-yearly enhanced CRB checks in line with government guidelines thereby ensuring that staff records are fully up to date. All of this information is being kept securely and in line with the Data Protection Act.

The school has a Safeguarding Policy and Procedure in place which is robust in design and operation. Cedar House School ensures that all staff receive regular recorded training and briefings in the safeguarding of young people residing at the school. The school has a very experienced and trained senior member of staff who acts in the role of the school's designated safeguarding officer. All of the staff are in receipt of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and are fully aware of their roles in ensuring the safety of the young people. The head teacher is also a representative on the local safeguarding board.

The school has good policies and procedures in place regarding the schools complaints procedures for both parents and young people. The young people have an easy to understand document provided that explains how to complain if they need to. Records are maintained appropriately of all complaints made and how they have been dealt with by the school.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Key workers and care staff work closely with the educational and support staff to ensure that all of the young people are given the highest levels of support they require to manage their lives. Young people living at the school have a wide range of often complex educational, social and emotional needs to be met, for example, severe autism, physical difficulties such as dyspraxia, specific and general learning disabilities as well as speech and language difficulties. These complex needs are being well met by the use of an integrated and experienced clinical services support team at the school. All of this work is being underpinned by a comprehensive formal recorded review process that involves the input of young people, their families and specialist services to the outcomes for the young person concerned. Young people spoken with commented that they were involved in taking part in their meetings and were well supported by their staff.

The wide range of planned and unplanned leisure activities are very well supported by staff and take full account of the differing needs, abilities and backgrounds of the individual young people. There are equal opportunities offered to both the boys and girls living at the school to take part in many different sports including football, swimming, fishing, board games, computer games and outdoor pursuits. Comprehensive records and risk assessments are undertaken and maintained of all activities undertaken at the school and take full account of the individual young people's abilities. The school actively encourages young people to take part in different physical sports and offers opportunities for them to represent the school in competitive sporting activities against other similar schools. One young person said, 'they

enjoyed taking part in the team games against other schools' another one said, 'the trips to the swimming pool were enjoyable'.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are positively encouraged to take part in the day-to-day running of the house unit and can influence decisions made within the school via the school council. There is also regular 'circle time' during the school week for young people to raise issues with members of staff. Both the Head of Care and the Head Teacher have an open door policy for young people to speak to them about any subject at any time.

There are telephones made available in the school for young people to keep in contact with their family and friends in private. Young people can also make use of either e-mail or the more traditional methods of letter writing. There are regular games events and activity weekends and parents are fully encouraged by the school to attend these. The school has its own website which is regularly updated to ensure parents are kept informed of the events taking place at the school.

Great care and attention is given to the support of young people when they first come into the house units. All of the care staff ensure there is a friendly welcome and a careful eye is kept upon new pupils so that 'homesickness' does not become a problem. Each young person has a comprehensive educational and care plan in place. Regular formal and informal meetings are taking place between the individual young people and their key care workers and these are well documented and acted upon where necessary. Regular statutory reviews are taking place with all of the professional agencies, families and young people being appropriately involved in the process.

Young People confirmed that they could influence decisions in the school by their involvement with the school council, circle time and being able to speak to both educational and care staff. They also confirmed that they get regular home contact with their family and friends at weekends and during the school holiday periods. The school is ensuring young people are enabled to positively contribute to the running of the residential houses and are positively encouraged to keep in contact with their family and friends.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

There is an extensive programme of refurbishment and redecoration work being undertaken in the school and residential areas at Cedar House School. The work undertaken so far has significantly improved the quality of the living areas used by the residential pupils. The work is fully compliant with the requirements of regulatory bodies such as the Fire Authority. Residential pupils spoken with were highly complementary of the results of this work and they confirmed that both as a group of pupils and as individual pupils they had been fully consulted in helping to plan these improvements. The accommodation and living areas used by the residential pupils are very tidy, clean, well maintained and suitable for purpose. Those rooms visited by invitation during the inspection were found to be well decorated, warm and pleasingly personalised by the occupants.

There are separate and distinct sleeping areas for both boys and girls as well as high levels of privacy for washing, toileting, showering and bathing in all of the houses. Residential pupils have access to their own lockable facilities for storing small personal items in their rooms. The school can also, when necessary, provide secure storage facilities in the house units for young people's valuables. Full and appropriate records are being maintained of these valuables stored by the school as well as the administration of the young people's pocket monies.

The school has developed close working relationships with both the local and wider community in the Kirby Lonsdale area. The residential pupils supported by the school and its staff have held extremely successful open days and charity events in conjunction with members of the local community.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The school provides an easily understood Statement of its Principles and Practices for parents, young people and staff. The organisation and management of the residential units is creating a very safe and supportive atmosphere for young people to live in.

There are excellent recording systems and up-to-date risk assessments in place throughout the school to ensure the health and safety of the young people. The management and administration systems used in the school also ensure the safety and welfare of the young people is paramount.

There is a very experienced and dedicated team of care staff employed by the school to ensure the residential units are being well managed and operated. There are very good systems of staff supervision and appraisal in place and all staff receive high levels of training throughout the year. Over 90% of the current residential staff have achieved the appropriate level of National Vocational Qualification as detailed in the National Minimum Standards.

Staffing levels both during the day and at night are well meeting the current needs and numbers of young people residing at the school. This level of staffing is contributing to the very positive working relationships that are occurring between the staff and young people and helps to create a safe caring and very supportive environment for young people to live in.

Young people confirmed that they felt well cared for by the staff team. One young person commented, 'that staff were always there for them when necessary'.

The very experienced senior management team of Cedar House School is providing a very good and supportive management structure for the day to day running of the residential units. There are robust external and internal monitoring systems in place to ensure the effective and efficient running of the school throughout the year. Monitoring is undertaken on a monthly basis by an independent officer appointed by the schools parent company and records being well maintained of the outcomes of these visits. The senior management team also carry out an internal monitoring programme on all aspects of the practices being used at the school.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding at the school.



## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):