

# The Cedars School

Independent school standard inspection report

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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, 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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

The Cedars School was founded in 1992. It is situated in Aldermaston village in a building that was once the church school. It is a non-selective school for girls and boys aged 4–11 years. There are currently 42 pupils on roll. The school has one child in the Early Years Foundation Stage who is in receipt of government nursery funding. There are no pupils who have a statement of special educational needs. A partnership has been established with the local primary school where after-school care is provided. The last Ofsted inspection was in 2007 when the school met all but two of the regulations.

The school's ethos is clear and is very well supported by parents: 'We have a firm belief that children will learn if they are happy and secure in their environment. We believe that each child is unique, that all children have many talents and that it is our responsibility to seek out and promote these talents so that each child can develop fully both academically and socially.'

## **Evaluation of the school**

As a result of dedicated and effective leadership, The Cedars School provides an outstanding quality of education and succeeds in its aims. Through the outstanding curriculum and teaching, the pupils make outstanding progress. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their behaviour are outstanding. The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is outstanding. Safeguarding procedures are robust. The school has improved since the last inspection and now meets all the regulations but one, as there are still no facilities for pupils who are unwell.

## **Quality of education**

The school provides an outstanding curriculum, which very effectively meets the needs of the pupils. It contributes to pupils' outstanding progress, particularly in their basic skills. Pupils are taught in groups, which are broadly age-related, for English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT), so that the teaching can be geared to their ability. As a result, pupils benefit very effectively from the teachers' expertise and they achieve exceptionally well. The teachers'

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

detailed planning reflects the programmes of study of the National Curriculum. These plans show sufficient challenge for the most-able pupils as well as supporting those who need additional help, and there is clear progression in the activities planned for year groups. ICT skills are taught very effectively and integrated into the curriculum. For example, Year 6 pupils made very impressive computer PowerPoint presentations on the Christmas story, which they shared with the rest of the school in assembly. French, Spanish and German are also taught. Staff effectively support younger children's learning through a range of appropriate activities planned using the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance. Where subjects are taught separately, very good links are made between subject topics and an overall theme for each term is agreed to improve cross-curricular links. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is given a very high priority and is integrated throughout the curriculum. For example, pupils in Year 6 were helped in their interview technique, preparing them well for the next stage of their education. As an older pupil commented, 'The school helps us to be ready for our next school.'

The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils have the opportunity to learn a range of instruments and all learn to play the recorder. Recent visits outside school include the Beaulieu Motor Museum (where older pupils learnt how to be a spy). Links with local industry also provide the chance for older pupils to be involved with an annual science investigation that is both challenging and exciting. Each summer, the whole school spends three days at Ufton Court, an educational charity. This gives the pupils the opportunity of taking the curriculum outdoors, focusing on areas such as outdoor mathematics, environmental studies and team-building. The parents and carers are invited to join in on the third day, offering the learning experience to the whole-school community.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding. The excellent relationships between teachers and pupils ensure that there is an enjoyable learning environment. Teachers use questioning effectively; for example, during a creative writing lesson, this prompted pupils to think carefully about the best way to convey their chosen character. At the last inspection, it was recommended that lesson planning should focus on objectives for learning. This focus is now in place and staff are adept at checking learning against objectives during the lesson and again during the plenary. Most marking of the pupils' work is supportive but not all staff give the pupils written guidance on how to improve. However, pupils know and work towards their targets and confirm that, through the discussions they have with their teachers, they do know how they can improve. As there are small numbers in classes, teachers know every pupil very well and respond to their needs effectively. Staff ensure that pupils achieve well by making learning fun. Pupils, in turn, respond by listening, concentrating and trying their best which contributes to their outstanding progress. The teaching assistants give excellent support to pupils who need additional help and these pupils make also outstanding progress. Thorough assessments of pupils' progress are carried out during the year and these show high standards are attained by most pupils. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers provide a good range of learning activities that enable children to make good progress in all areas of learning.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in this area. There is a very friendly, welcoming atmosphere in the school. The school promotes in its pupils self-reliance, thoughtfulness and consideration for others from an early age. It has a Christian ethos but pupils from all religions and cultures are welcomed and embraced. Through the teaching of religious education, pupils learn about world religions and visit other places of worship such as a mosque. They have very regular contact with the village church and use it for many celebrations. The daily assemblies give pupils valuable time for reflection. Regular links with, and raising funds for, a local school for the severely disabled supports the pupils' awareness of others. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Their attitude to school is exceptionally positive and attendance is excellent. Older pupils confirm that 'everyone knows everyone' and 'This is a very happy school, we love it.' Pupils are confident and are keen to be involved and take responsibility; this aspect has been developed since the last inspection. The new school council takes its job seriously and is articulate in raising issues that it feels should be addressed. Pupils' behaviour around the school and in classrooms is outstanding. They enjoy excellent relationships with each other and their teachers. The school makes exceptional efforts to promote respectful treatment of other cultures through its religious education programme and the curriculum, including projects about how other countries celebrate festivals and projects on world cultures and languages. Pupils gain an understanding of English institutions and services by learning, for example, about the role of the police, fire service and ambulance service, and through holding their own elections. The school is well known locally and it takes a very active part in village life.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is outstanding. The school safeguards and promotes the welfare of all the pupils, including the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has devised and implemented effectively a range of detailed policies, which include anti-bullying, health and safety on visits outside the school and behaviour management. Risk assessments are thorough and cover all aspects of staff and pupil activity. The policy for safeguarding meets the regulations and all staff are trained in safeguarding, with the named officers trained to a higher level. Precautions to prevent fire are robust. There are many trained first aiders, including two who have paediatric first aid certification, on site and an appropriate first aid policy. Pastoral care and procedures for promoting pupils' personal development are very good. Pupils confirm that they feel secure in school, and are adamant that they have no worries about bullying and that they know what to do and who to go to if they have any concerns. Healthy living is an integral part of school life; pupils know the importance of healthy eating and the taking of exercise. They are also safety-conscious and use equipment both indoors

and outside carefully. The school has devised and implemented a three-year accessibility plan to fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The school checks the suitability of all staff to work with children and holds the information on the required single central register of staff information.

### **Premises of and accommodation at the school**

The premises and accommodation are welcoming, attractive and effectively support the pupils' learning. The school was required following the last inspection to provide facilities for pupils who are ill. There are still no suitable facilities, a situation attributed by the school to space limitations. Pupils who are ill are made comfortable until their parents and carers come to collect them. The building and grounds are very well maintained and equipped.

### **Provision of information**

The school provides a very good range of information for parents, carers and others through the attractive and informative website, prospectus, parents' information booklet and regular newsletters. Parents and carers are given information on their children's progress through annual reports and they have opportunities to talk to the staff about their children's progress during the school year. The school operates an open-door policy and the headteacher makes herself available to speak to parents and carers.

Parents and carers who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were highly supportive of the school, making comments such as, 'the most perfect school for my son ... my children are extremely happy ... we are delighted with the school which has a very strong pastoral approach.'

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school has a suitable set of procedures, which are available to parents and carers.

### **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and it meets the needs of the children. A planned range of learning opportunities helps to meet the children's needs well and keeps them actively engaged in a variety of play activities. Effective links with parents and carers involve them in their children's care and education, and they are kept well informed about their progress. The welfare of the children is a high priority with staff, who promote a caring, nurturing environment.

Provision for children is good. Good planning and organisation ensure that children are given the opportunity to express themselves through role play and creative activities. There is a good balance between focused activities and those initiated by the children. Good observations by staff identify the children's achievements and next steps. The attractive space and plentiful resources are used well and accessible to the children. Leadership and management are good. Those in charge have identified areas of weakness and demonstrate the capacity to improve. They have well established partnerships with outside agencies. Secure arrangements are in place to safeguard children and staff are well qualified. Health and safety procedures are meticulous. Records are thorough and children's progress is carefully monitored.

The outcomes for children are good. They participate effectively in their learning. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of learning in relation to their starting points and capabilities. Literacy and numeracy experiences are well promoted and children count well and know many sounds. Creative talents are encouraged, for example with children using a wide range of resources to make decorations for Christmas. They enjoy the outdoor physical activity and good use is made of the outdoor areas to promote learning. Children's personal development is very good; they are self-motivated and choose their own activities. Children enjoy making a positive contribution to the school community, for example through classroom tasks and through singing in the school carol service and Christmas production.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>3</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with regulation 5 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(k)).

## **What the school could do to improve further**

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

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2010/1997/contents/made)

- in teachers' marking of work, ensure consistency of best practice in providing guidance to pupils on how to improve.

## Inspection judgements

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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### The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1992		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 28	Girls: 14	Total: 42
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£ 6,570		
<b>Address of school</b>	Church Road Aldermaston Reading Berkshire RG7 4LR		
<b>Telephone number</b>	0118 9714251		
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@thecedarsschool.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J O'Halloran		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mrs J O'Halloran		