

# Cedar Hall School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115457
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	357753
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 November 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jeffery Plumb

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	136
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Deborah Braithwaite
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Whelan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 September 2007
<b>School address</b>	Hart Road Benfleet SS7 3UQ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who observed 13 lessons. Inspectors observed 10 different teachers and a technician. Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, a group of pupils, representatives of the governing body, the school's counsellor and staff. They observed the school's work, and scrutinized policies, curriculum and improvement plans, case studies of pupils, assessment records and the attendance data. The arrangements for getting pupils into taxis and buses at the end of the school day was observed. Questionnaires completed by 60 parents and carers, pupils and staff were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The progress made by groups of pupils with different special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How well the school meets the needs of pupils with very challenging behaviour.
- The impact of the admission of pupils with complex medical needs on attendance

## Information about the school

The designation of Cedar Hall School has changed since the last inspection. It now provides for pupils with complex needs. Although it provides mainly for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, it also provides for pupils with severe learning difficulties, those with autistic spectrum disorder and pupils with severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. There are a few pupils with speech and language difficulties and with hearing impairment. A significant number of pupils have additional medical needs, including mental health needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Almost all pupils are White British. There are significantly more boys than girls on roll.

This term, significant construction work is going on to improve the school's football pitches and play areas. This is in addition to significant refurbishment of other facilities. The school is one of six schools taking part in a Community Learning Partnership and works with the extended school coordinator to provide services for the pupils. The school has Healthy Schools status.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

The school's overall effectiveness is outstanding. Outstanding leadership from the headteacher, supported by a dedicated staff team, ensures that every barrier to learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is removed. Equality of opportunity for each pupil lies at the heart of this successful school. Partnership with parents and carers, who are thrilled with what this school achieves for their children, is excellent. Their views are typified by the parent, who writes: 'This is a fantastic school made up of people who care. It has made a huge difference to our lives as a family.' Exceptionally effective joined-up partnerships between therapists and education staff very significantly benefit pupils and their families.

Pupils make good academic progress and achieve well. Tailored and specialist innovative curriculum programmes ensure that the needs of the pupils are exceptionally well met. By the time they leave school, they have acquired the social and life skills required to succeed at college in accordance with their capability. The highest achievers leave school with GCSE and Entry Level qualifications, which represent good progress when measured against their starting point within the school. Overwhelmingly, parents and carers say that their children feel exceptionally safe at school. Pupils who spoke with the inspectors confirm this view and the curriculum focuses strongly on promoting pupils' awareness of the importance of adopting a safe lifestyle. Pupils' contribution to the school and wider community is exceptional. This has two benefits: it has resulted in a changed attitude towards pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities within the local community and has enabled pupils to integrate as mature young people within that community. The pupils exercise their voice very enthusiastically through the school council. They effect change, which enhances their learning and raises their achievement. Partnerships with local businesses generate funds to improve resources, for example sponsorship for football kit. These exceptionally effective links also make a very valuable contribution to pupils work-related skills as local companies provide work placements for pupils and support them in their development of job interview skills.

Teaching is good with pockets of outstanding practice. However, opportunities to promote pupils' independence in learning are occasionally missed in lessons and learning support assistants are not always used sufficiently to contribute to pupils' learning. Although rare, on these very few occasions, pupils' learning is slowed. Deeply reflective analysis of every aspect of its performance is a key feature in this school. Self-evaluation is used to plan decisive action to bring about improvements. For example, data analysis showed that, two years ago, the achievement of girls lagged behind that of boys. Changes made in the curriculum and teaching methods for girls since that time have narrowed that gap and there is no longer a significant achievement gap between girls and boys. Pupils not on target to make the expected progress gains are identified speedily and interventions put in place bring the vast majority of these pupils back on track so that they achieve well. The

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different groups of special educational needs pupils all make good progress. Robust procedures and very effective actions taken have significantly cut unauthorised absence over the past three years. The school has risen to the challenge of meeting the needs of pupils with very challenging behaviours who have been recently admitted. Excellent counselling and a relevant curriculum are the reasons behind this particular success. Given the impressive success of actions to improve the quality of teaching, modify the curriculum to better meet pupils' needs and accelerate pupils' learning and achievement, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement by ensuring that all teachers consistently use learning support assistants to contribute to pupils' learning in lessons and always provide opportunities for pupils to gain independent learning skills.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

All groups of pupils make good progress in learning in lessons. Attainment on entry is very low, reflecting pupils' complex learning and medical needs. Carefully planned activities, which are very well matched to the needs of pupils with severe learning difficulties, ensure that these pupils make important gains in communication and independence, lesson by lesson. Trips out to the supermarket by bus enable these pupils to develop important life skills such as reading a bus timetable and using money at cash tills for their shopping. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties and those on the autistic disorder spectrum make good progress in their English, mathematics and science lessons. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, Year 9 pupils made excellent progress in their recognition of equivalent fractions because the teacher engaged their interest and challenged them to succeed. In a good English lesson, Year 7 pupils developed the skills required to write an extended story because of the high quality writing frames they were given by their teacher to support them with the activity. The school supports pupils with exceptionally challenging behaviour effectively and so these pupils achieve well, through for example vocational courses purchased for them on suitable off-site locations. There is no significant difference in the achievement between boys and girls. Almost all looked after children achieve well.

Pupils enjoy school and engage enthusiastically with learning. With the exception of a few pupils whose complex medical needs take them out of school, attendance is above average. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties respond well to the counselling they receive and most learn to manage their feelings of anger. Pupils participate in an extensive range of sporting activities which they understand make a valuable contribution to their physical fitness. They know why it is important to eat healthy food. Relevant work experience placements and good enterprise projects equip pupils with well-developed work-related skills. Most pupils care and support each other well. Their cultural awareness is successfully raised. A link with Bangladesh promotes pupils' awareness of cultural diversity well. Pupils' reflect deeply as they look with amazement at beautiful paintings and artefacts in art lessons and their eyes light up at awesome moments in their science and information and communication technology lessons.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	*
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is challenging, relevant and accelerates pupils' learning and development of independent learning skills well. Only on very rare occasions are opportunities to promote pupils' independence missed. Skilful behaviour management, particularly of pupils with behavioural and emotional difficulties, ensures that pupils are engaged with activities which promote their learning effectively. Teaching methods vary according to the age and learning difficulties of the pupils and are tailored to meet their needs well. Effective use is made of assessment to plan suitable activities to meet pupils' learning and personal needs. Consequently, pupils make good progress in learning in lessons. In almost all lessons, the pace of teaching is good but, on the rare occasions when it drops, pupils' learning slows. There are pockets of outstanding teaching, for example in design and technology.

Flexibly planned and innovative, the curriculum meets pupils' needs exceptionally well. The highly personalised curriculum in the primary department is a strong feature which moves each pupil forward rapidly in the areas of learning most important to them. Specific arrangements, such as the purchase of off-site vocational programs for disaffected pupils with extremely challenging behaviour, engage them again with learning and enable them to achieve well. Pupils' academic and life skills are developed exceptionally well.

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Therapeutic programs, such as art and music therapy, help meet pupils' additional emotional needs very well. A wide range of accreditation opportunities enable Year 11 pupils to achieve good nationally recognized qualifications and so leave school and enter college equipped with the skills required to cope independently as confident young learners as they follow a range of suitable courses which equip them well for the adult world.

Outstandingly effective communication and collaborative working between health professionals and educational staff ensure that pupils' care needs are exceptionally well met. For example, excellent joined up working with the Child Adolescent and Mental Health Service (CAMHS) ensures that parents and carers of children with emotional difficulties are extremely well supported. Pupils with speech difficulties and those with hearing impairment are equally well supported. Barriers to learning for pupils with complex needs are lessened as a result of effective multi-agency working and so pupils become better behaved and more engaged with learning. Induction procedures for pupils new to the school are excellent as are transition arrangements for pupils when they leave school to go to college. The school's Common Assessment Framework (CAF) counsellor attends the annual review of pupils moving from other schools before they join this school. Robust attendance procedures and protocols have resulted in the number of unauthorised absence being halved in the past three years.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, supported by an exceptionally effective staff team, has driven improvement which centres successfully on promoting equality of opportunity by removing obstacles to learning for pupils with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities. By the time they leave school and move to college, pupils are equipped with the required skills to cope independently within the context of their capability, and integrate confidently with their peers from other mainstream schools. Monitoring of teaching, involving both senior leaders and subject leaders, is outstanding. It is used to inform professional staff development, which raises pupils' achievement. Leadership is shared and senior leaders and subject leaders know and understand the responsibilities they have to improve the curriculum and achieve the very best for each student. Effective procedures and management systems ensure that pupils are safe and secure. Child protection procedures at the time of the inspection were robust. Risk assessments, including of pupils' medical and behavioural needs, are very thorough and detailed.

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Community cohesion is good. A detailed action plan, which has been evaluated, promotes a comprehensive understanding among pupils of their local and global communities. The next planned stage of development is to increase their understanding of the national community, particularly in the context of projects to remove barriers to disability. Governance is effective. A skilled and knowledgeable governing body provides good support and challenge to the school, particularly in the management of the budget.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Returns from questionnaires indicate that the vast majority of parents and carers are pleased with all that the school achieves for their children. They submitted extensive notes for inspectors which enthused with praise for the school. However, a very few parents and carers say that they do not think that their children make sufficient progress. Inspectors took these views into account but judged that pupils make good progress from their starting points.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cedar Hall School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 136 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	70	18	30	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	73	16	27	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	34	57	21	35	4	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	52	24	40	4	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	67	20	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	58	22	37	3	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	57	26	43	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	31	52	24	40	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	67	17	28	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	60	22	37	1	2	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	57	25	42	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	38	63	20	33	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	68	17	28	2	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



26 November 2010

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Cedar Hall School, Benfleet, SS7 3UQ**

We enjoyed our recent visit to your outstanding school. Your school is exceptionally caring and you achieve well. Your teaching is good and the curriculum offered to you is excellent. Every effort is made by your headteacher and all staff members to enable all of you to reach your full potential. You develop exceptionally well as young people and learn to keep yourselves safe and healthy. We are pleased to hear that you all feel so very safe at school and that you enjoy coming to school. The arrangements to keep you safe are good. You achieve well and, by the time you leave school and go to college, you are mature young people ready to cope with a college environment. Those of you with behavioural difficulties and medical needs are exceptionally well supported and so make good academic and personal progress. Links with businesses and organisations outside of school are excellent and provide a wide range of work-related experiences to equip you with very important job readiness skills.

We have asked your headteacher to make your teaching even better by ensuring that your learning support assistants are always used to contribute to your learning in lessons and that you are given every opportunity possible to develop your independent learning skills.

Thank you for the courtesy you showed us as visitors to your school. It was a joy to see you involved in so many interesting and exciting activities. Your behaviour is good. You make a very valuable contribution to the school and wider community.

Yours sincerely

Jeffery Plumb

Lead inspector

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