

The Cedar School

Redbridge Lane, Southampton, SO16 0XN

Inspection dates 18–19 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
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

- Teaching does not always have a positive impact on pupils' progress. In some lessons work is not sufficiently well matched to the different ability levels of pupils. Achievement requires improvement because pupils do not always achieve well because there is an insufficient focus on learning. Too little attention has been given to developing pupils' number skills in the teaching of all subjects.
- Leadership and management have made some improvements to teaching but have not been fully effective and there is no current school development plan.
- Although governance has improved since the previous inspection it does not always challenge senior staff sufficiently.
- Insufficient attention has been given to the development of information and communication technology to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievements.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is a very caring community where all staff work closely together to address the care needs of each pupil.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils are excellent. Pupils show considerable respect towards each other and behave exceptionally well in all situations.
- The school has very effective induction procedures for children when they join in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Over the past year very good support has been offered, where appropriate, to improve and develop pupils' reading skills.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in eight lessons taught by eight teachers and undertook two learning walks where they sampled teaching and learning in all classes. They held meetings with groups of pupils and staff. Meetings were also held with two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work, teachers' lesson plans and tracking data showing pupils' progress. School policies were sampled and the minutes of recent governing body meetings reviewed.
- The inspectors took account of five responses to the online Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Charles Hackett, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Christine Pollit

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Cedar School caters for pupils with a wide range of disabilities and special educational needs. There are pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, as well as those with either severe or moderate learning difficulties. About half of the school population also has physical disabilities. There are a number of pupils with significant medical needs who require regular access to nursing. Staff employed by the National Health Service are based at the school.
- An above average number of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium.
- A lower than average number of pupils come from minority ethnic groups.
- The school has been placed on a national priority list of schools whose buildings are under the Priority Schools Building Initiative.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Over the present academic year, improve the impact teaching has on the achievement of pupils through:
 - ensuring lesson planning is always clearly focused on what pupils will learn during the lesson
 - ensuring that all teachers limit the time they speak to whole-class groups and use a wide range of teaching strategies that match the individual needs of each pupil
 - increasing the accessibility and use of information and communication technology for both staff and pupils
 - improving the strategies used to develop pupils' number skills in the teaching of all subjects.
- With immediate effect improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - developing a more robust monitoring system to manage teachers' performance and the progress of the students, and learning how to raise standards and ensure that the good practice of some teachers is shared throughout the school
 - increasing the rigour with which senior staff analyse and evaluate the school's work
 - in consultation with other stakeholders, including parents and carers, creating both short- and long-term plans for how the school will be developed to become more effective
 - increasing the effectiveness of governance through strengthening governors' ability to challenge the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and more systematically evaluate and ratify school policies.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Evidence shows that over time many pupils achieve the targets set for them, but in too many individual lessons they do not make sufficient progress in their learning. Pupils happily engage in a range of activities but it is not always clear what they will learn from them. Although some teachers regularly assess progress in each lesson this is not the practice in all classes. This explains why the pupils' achievement is not good.
- Achievement is also affected negatively by the loss of time each day, through a morning break of 50 minutes and lunchtime of an hour and 15 minutes. At lunchtime there are clubs and activities that pupils enjoy, but these are not specifically linked to pupils' individual learning targets. Appropriately, there are feeding programmes for those pupils who need specific support.
- Pupils with the capacity to engage in reading have made good progress over the past year. This has been as a result of the whole-school initiative to tackle reading and the development of a library, which is becoming effective at encouraging pupils to develop a love of books. Progress in other aspects of literacy and in numeracy has not been as good because the planning for these aspects is not consistently effective throughout the school.
- The school has collected a good range of data on pupils' achievement. Appropriately, it has sought to compare the rates of progress with those within national data sets. Encouragingly the results exceed national figures in English and mathematics. However, care has to be taken in the interpretation of these because of the very small numbers at each key stage in the school. Nevertheless, they do indicate that many pupils, more so in the primary part of the school, make good progress in some aspects of English and mathematics.
- There are no differences in the achievements of the different groups of pupils in the school, with those eligible for the Pupil Premium achieving similar rates of progress as other pupils.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teachers' use of their own individual methods to plan their lessons varies. Some are of high quality, more so in the primary department than the secondary, and clearly show learning expectations and links to pupils' individual learning targets. Others highlight the activities and resources that are needed, but are not always clear what it is that pupils will learn and how the lesson fits in with work that has been undertaken in previous lessons. Teaching thus requires improvement.
- Some lesson plans fail to allow for pupils' different ability levels or provide activities to match these. This means there are occasions when higher attaining pupils are not challenged by the work. On other occasions pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are unable to follow what is being said and actively engage in the lesson.
- In many lessons teachers start the lesson with an explanation of what activities pupils will be doing. During the inspection this explanation was often seen to go on for too long, leaving many pupils unable to follow and engage with the teacher.
- There are limited opportunities for staff and pupils to make use of information and communication technology to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Some individual students have equipment that supports their communication and there are computers available in class. During the inspection some of these were not in working order and the access to technician support is very limited.
- There are many examples of good practice in the school. In these lessons, lesson planning is clear and a good variety of resources is employed to engage pupils of different abilities in learning.
- In the best lessons there is a good pace to learning, with pupils moving quickly from one activity to another. In these lessons, teaching assistants play a valuable part in supporting pupils' learning. They show a good awareness of the individual learning targets of each student. This was seen in a good primary mathematics lesson, where the pupils were

engaged in different tasks, set according to their different abilities. Teaching assistants led these well, enabling the teacher to offer guidance to each group in turn.

- In another example of good practice, the teacher worked hard to ensure that pupils enjoyed learning together. Pupils, following a well-established warm-up routine, with teaching assistant support, engaged in an orienteering exercise searching around the school grounds for various hidden envelopes. These featured letters and numbers, with tasks matched to their different abilities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The excellent behaviour and safety of pupils contribute greatly to the caring and inclusive environment within the school, as well as supporting their learning and progress. Pupils look out for each other, ensuring that those with significant physical or learning difficulties are very well supported and not disadvantaged in any way. One pupil stressed how having other pupils with the same disability helped him talk about it and feel the same and equal to everyone else.
- Pupils highlight how much they enjoy being in school and how well they believe everyone behaves. Two pupils spoke about how much better it was to be at the school after their mainstream experiences. One stressed that at Cedar, 'You can be who you really are.' He stressed how his behaviour had improved considerably as a result of being in the school.
- Both in lessons and outside during break times, pupils show considerable skills in being able to relate positively to each other. They clearly enjoy each other's company. Their excellent behaviour overtime is demonstrated by the records of recent years showing there have been no incidents of bullying and the school has very rare incidence of physical restraint and no exclusions.
- Pupils appreciate the support provided for them to meet their personal hygiene needs. Staff demonstrate considerable attention to privacy and respect the dignity of each pupil. Very close links exist between those staff employed by the National Health Service and the school. This means pupils' medical needs are addressed very well. It also ensures that pupils can attend school despite significant medical needs.
- The school pays rigorous attention to the safety of each pupil. It is very apparent both at the start and end of the school day that staff work closely with escorts and drivers to ensure that students are safely brought into school and very well prepared for leaving at the end of the day.
- The spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of each pupil is given considerable prominence. For example, they are encouraged to think about friendship and consider how they can support each other. During an assembly where the theme was 'friendship', one boy very happily declared that when he leaves school he and the girl sat next to him in assembly will 'definitely be going on a date'.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher is very passionate about the school and well respected by his staff team. This view is shared by the local authority which has supported the school through developing its understanding of the importance of analysing achievement data. The headteacher has played a key role in the development of the school's excellent care systems. Leadership and management, though, have had an insufficient impact on improving and developing the quality of other provision within the school.
- Observations of teaching and learning have been undertaken and those teachers whose performance is deemed to be only satisfactory identified. Some appropriate action has been taken to address these weaknesses and training opportunities have been provided. This is ongoing but at this stage has proved not to be sufficiently rigorous and effective in raising standards throughout the school.
- The professional development opportunities provided for staff have led to a consistent approach in the management of pupils' behaviour and this has contributed to the excellent

behaviour shown by pupils.

- Over the past year the headteacher has developed a useful self-evaluation system whereby his termly report to the governors identifies strengths and areas of development for each of the aspects of the inspection framework. Evidence suggests this has been discussed by governors, but it has not always been used rigorously enough or to develop an improvement plan for improving the weaker aspects of the school's work. It is unsatisfactory that parents and carers have not been consulted as to any improvements they would like to see to the school's provision.
- The headteacher has brought about improvements in financial management and helped the school reduce and eliminate a previous overspend of its budget. Additional monies allocated as part of the pupil premium have been used appropriately to provide these pupils with additional communication equipment.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - has shown some improvement since the time of the previous inspection, but still requires further improvement. A number of governors are regular visitors, supporting activities such as swimming and reading
 - is not sufficiently involved in evaluating and challenging senior staff on all aspects of the school's work
 - does not have an effective process to ensure regular evaluation and ratification of school policies.

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	116622
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	401606

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Thomas
Headteacher	Jonathan Howells
Date of previous school inspection	9 March 2010
Telephone number	023 8073 4205
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