

# Cedar House School

Low Bentham, Lancashire, LA2 7DB

<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–15 March 2013	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### This school is good

- Cedar House is an inclusive, caring school. This helps pupils to make good progress socially, emotionally and culturally.
- Teaching is often good and occasionally outstanding. This contributes to the generally good progress pupils make from their often very low starting points when they join.
- Arrangements to safeguard pupils are strong and communication with parents and carers is excellent. All report positively on their children's experiences at the school and say that their children are safe.
- Behaviour is usually good in school and in the residential units. Pupils grow in self-confidence because of the good care, education and wide range of activities available. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their future lives.
- The school is well led and all staff are working together to fulfil their vision to make Cedar House a centre of excellence. Excellent therapeutic care for pupils in times of need helps to successfully break down barriers to pupils' learning, and their social and emotional development.

### It is not yet outstanding because

- Teachers do not always plan lessons matched to the different abilities of pupils in their class. This slows the rate of progress for a few.
- At times, teachers talk too much and do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning or work independently, in pairs or groups.
- Pupils are rightly supervised and supported at all times. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to learn to take decisions for themselves. Opportunities for residential pupils to take part in activities or clubs in the local community are also limited.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for residential special schools

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day's notice. The education and residential provision were inspected at the same time by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Social Care Inspector.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, residential staff, teachers, and groups of pupils including pupils in the residential provision. Inspectors spoke to the proprietor of the Witherslack Group and a senior manager within the group. Seven lessons were observed, two of which were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Both inspectors reviewed a range of policies and documents including information on how the school keeps pupils safe, information about the progress pupils are making in school, their life as residents and a review of pupils' books in lessons.
- In the absence of sufficient parent and carer responses from Ofsted's Parent View survey, inspectors took account of the school's most recent survey and a range of letters and communications from parents, carers and local authorities who place their children here. Inspectors also took account of Ofsted's recent 'online' surveys from residential pupils and surveys from both residential and education staff. One parent telephoned her views to an inspector and these were taken into account.

## Inspection team

Margaret Farrow, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Elaine Clare

Social Care Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Cedar House School is a residential special school for girls and boys experiencing a range of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It is part of the Witherslack Group, a national provider of specialist education and care for children and young people with a disability or special educational needs.
- In January 2012, the school moved from Kirkby Lonsdale into fully refurbished accommodation in the village of Low Bentham in North Yorkshire, close to the borders of the counties of Lancashire and Cumbria.
- The school is approved by the Department for Education to cater for 88 boys and girls, between the ages seven to 16 years, on a day or residential basis. Currently 56 pupils attend, comprising 37 boys and 19 girls. Of the 28 pupils who are resident, there are 18 boys and nine girls. There are 33 pupils in the care of a local authority. All pupils are educated on the school premises. A number of pupils live in the Witherslack Group's care homes and travel to school daily. The number of day pupils has increased since the move from Kirkby Lonsdale.
- Pupils come to Cedar House from 27 local authorities across the country. All pupils have histories of fractured or significantly disrupted schooling, and all but three have a statement of special educational needs.
- The residential accommodation comprises four separate residential units, each with its own facilities. Three of the residential units are for male residents of similar age, with the other currently for female residents, but with the potential to mix genders.
- Cedar House aspires to being an exemplar of best practice for children locally, regionally and nationally and its mission statement includes the key principles: to respect the value of all individual pupils and staff; to provide the highest standards of care and education; and to ensure safety, security and opportunities for success.
- The school's residential provision was last inspected in February 2012 and was the first inspection of the new residential provision in Low Bentham. The education provision was last inspected in December 2009.

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

- Improve the quality of all teaching to outstanding so all pupils can make the best possible progress in lessons by:
  - making sure that all teachers use the detailed assessment information they have about pupils' abilities to plan different activities that help pupils to move on quickly from their different starting points
  - reducing the time pupils spend listening to teachers and increasing the time they have to work independently, in pairs or in groups and in finding things out for themselves.
- Work with residential pupils to:
  - develop ways of helping them to take more responsibility for their free time while, at the same time, ensuring their safety and care
  - widen opportunities for pupils to take part in groups, clubs or activities within the local community.

## Inspection judgements

### Pupils' achievement

**Good**

Pupils' achievement is good. Lesson observations, book scrutiny, and leaders' regular assessments of pupils' work show that most make good progress in their lessons. It is not surprising that in outstanding lessons pupils' progress is excellent. Pupils come to Cedar House having had fractured and often unhappy experiences of school life. Sensitive induction procedures, including careful assessments of pupils' emotional, physical and educational needs, make sure that they settle in quickly and gain attitudes that sustain them well as they move through school. A range of appropriate work experience and careers advice, as well as leavers' plans, are helping to prepare pupils for their next steps successfully. Although a lower than average number of pupils achieves five GCSEs, the proportion is increasing and virtually all pupils gain a good range of externally accredited courses by the time they leave. This is good progress given pupils' often very low starting points when they join. The school's focus on improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is paying dividends. Younger pupils were heard to read with confidence, enthusiastically using strategies they had been taught to work out difficult words. They are clearly proud of their achievements.

The school tracks the progress of individual pupils and different groups regularly to make sure that all have equal opportunities to succeed. If anyone is at risk of falling behind, intervention programmes or support are put in place, including one-to-one or therapeutic support to tackle any barriers to pupils' learning. As a result of such actions, there is little difference in the progress of day pupils, residential pupils, and boys or girls. Pupils who are in the care of the local authority also do as well as others because of the way the school works to meet the individual needs and interests of every pupil. Residential activities after school and a good range of visits out of school stimulate pupils' interests and involvement in their learning successfully. In the residential units, pupils are well-supported to continue developing skills learnt in class. All pupils have meticulously kept individual care and education plans. These help to make sure that residential and teaching staff work towards the same goals, and ensure that pupils' progress in all aspects of their learning and development is carefully tracked against their individual, challenging targets.

### Pupils' behaviour and personal development

**Good**

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good. High quality relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils themselves are evident across school. In the residential setting, harmonious and positive relationships result in a relaxed, safe and inclusive atmosphere. The staff teams promote consideration and respect for others well and this impacts positively on pupils' good attendance, behaviour, social skills and in their generally caring approaches to others. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary in the 'five-star' dining room. Pupils were seen eating healthy food and socialising with each other, adults and visitors in a mature and friendly manner.

Behaviour is well managed in school, in residential units and when pupils go on visits. Patterns and trends are carefully monitored, and pupils usually make good progress in managing their own behaviours and in improving their attitudes. Well-staffed, small classes means that, when a challenging behaviour incident occurs, there is always an adult around to help defuse the situation so that the pupil can quickly settle down again and get on with their learning and so that other pupils are not unduly disturbed. A number of pupils exhibit very challenging behaviour at times and staff are required to restrain them for their own safety, using positive handling methods. Careful tracking shows that most incidents occur in school time and few in the residential setting. Although the numbers of restraints are reducing, leaders are working to reduce the proportion further.

The school's good focus on promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is helping them to become active participants in the school, and to develop the skills and attitudes that prepare them well for their futures. Pupils show a good level of understanding of the needs of

others. Pupils attend school from all parts of the country and thus learn directly from each other about other cultures within the United Kingdom. Residential staff support pupils in making good progress with overcoming their personal difficulties, developing their strengths, independence and social skills. Consequently, young people develop a strong sense of their own value and self-worth, together with a humane and tolerant approach to others. However, comments made by pupils indicate that they would prefer more independence, particularly in their free time around school. The school has only been located in the community for a year. Links are developing effectively, with good plans for pupils to be more active in the village. Knowledge of local clubs and activities that pupils can access in their free time are still limited.

### Quality of teaching

**Good**

The quality of teaching is good. Some is outstanding and a small proportion adequate. Teachers' tracking information about pupils' individual achievements in all subjects is analysed regularly and used to help teachers to plan pupils' next steps. In one outstanding lesson seen, the teacher enthused pupils by using this information to provide a range of interesting activities that stretched pupils' imaginations and thinking. This made sure that pupils made rapid progress from their varied starting points. Occasionally, teachers do not use this information well enough and they deliver whole-class lessons where all pupils complete the same work. This slows the progress of a few, particularly the more able, to a steady rather than rapid pace. On occasions, teachers do too much talking and direct all the work, leaving little time for pupils to develop skills in independent learning, group or paired work, or to take responsibility for their learning themselves.

All teachers use a wide range of stimulating resources, including visits, computers and interactive white boards to make learning enjoyable and interesting. In most lessons, teachers use carefully considered questions to check what pupils know already and to stretch their thinking further. This helps pupils to gain confidence in putting their views forward and to develop their speaking and listening skills well. All pupils have individual targets and work is marked regularly. There are examples of excellent marking and feedback that the leaders are now sharing with all staff to make sure that all marking becomes as good as the best. Good systems are in place to ensure that teaching, residential and care staff from the children's homes share information at the beginning and end of each day in order to smooth transitions from home and school. This helps pupils attend lessons promptly and settle down quickly. It also enables residential and care staff to support pupils learning at home effectively. During the day, some residential staff are on hand to support teachers when pupils are experiencing emotional or significant behavioural issues; leaders are rightly considering developing their role further so they take a more active part in pupils' learning.

### Quality of curriculum

**Good**

The curriculum is good. It is enriched well by a good range of additional activities in and out of school, beyond the school day and at weekends for residential pupils. Collectively, these experiences help pupils gain the knowledge, skills and competencies that their previous schools have failed to secure. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next steps into further education or training. The curriculum is meticulously planned to be broad and balanced, and to meet the individual interests of pupils as well as making sure that their literacy and numeracy skills improve well. Because of this individual approach, all pupils - whether day, resident, girls or boys - have activities that interest them and this helps them to achieve well and enjoy their time at the school. Facilities in the new school are of a high quality and aid the successful delivery of subjects; these include, for example, the well-resourced science and art rooms, computer facilities and a range of outdoor equipment for pupils to use in social times. Physical education is well promoted through sporting facilities, including the sports hall, and outdoor activities such as horse-riding, ghyll scrambling and swimming. The highly sensitive therapeutic curriculum supports pupils' emotional development well, particularly in times of greatest need. The personal, social, citizenship and health education, together with the religious education curriculum, are meticulously planned to make sure that pupils have a good awareness of cultures and faiths different from their own. The

school has a strong tradition of learning about and celebrating world religious festivals throughout the year. This contributes to pupils' spiritual and cultural development successfully; activities often extend well into residential times. Regular assemblies enable pupils to reflect on spiritual, moral, cultural and religious issues. Inspectors observed an exciting Red Nose Day assembly which showed the tangible sense of fellowship in school. Importantly, pupils were seen reflecting with empathy to a film about young people in Kenya and developing fun, individual ways of raising money for their chosen charities. One pupil's fundraising by singing a solo in front of the whole school was excellent.

Pupils also gain a good understanding of principles such as right and wrong, the justice system, democracy and knowledge of local public services. The Duke of Edinburgh Award, the conservation Grizedale forest project and work with students from Cumbria University are just a few examples of the range of activities that promote pupils' good health, problem-solving skills, team building and cooperative skills well. A wide range of recreational activities are well maintained and continue to be developed effectively. However, opportunities for pupils to access groups and activities after school in the local community are underdeveloped.

### **Pupils' welfare, health and safety**

**Good**

The quality of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good and all independent school standards are met. There is a seamless, rigorous approach to ensuring that pupils are well cared for and safe both in school and in the residential provision. This includes robust safeguarding, child protection and recruitment procedures, with all staff being trained to the suitable level. As a result, all the national minimum standards for residential schools are met. The high quality accommodation is light and airy; outdoor spaces are of good quality. Residential rooms are furnished and decorated to meet the needs of the pupils within them, and are age and gender appropriate. Children can personalise their bedrooms and bring their own possessions. Although lounges in the residential units are small, they are well furnished and provide a space to relax outside the school day.

Well-trained teaching, residential staff and the school nurse provide high quality support and care, tailored to pupils' individual needs. All residential pupils are assigned a key worker who supports them prior to placement, through their induction and throughout their stay, helping to ensure the continuity of their care. Pupils all report that they are safe and they value the positive relationships they develop with staff. Pupils are well-supervised at all times. Indeed, some pupils think they are over-supervised and would like occasions when they can be on their own with friends.

All policies take account of current statutory guidance and are personalised to make sure that the needs of pupils in Cedar House are well met. Policies and procedures are well focused, detailed and rigorously implemented; they have a good impact on pupils' safety and care. For example, anti-bullying arrangements are strong. Pupils consider incidents are rare and any issue would be tackled quickly if they reported it to a teacher. Records of bullying or poor behaviour are carefully recorded and suitable sanctions imposed, when needed. Exemplary individual care and education plans are shared with parents and carers, and regularly reviewed for impact. Pupils are helped to contribute to their reviews so that changes can be made to take account of their views.

### **Leadership and management**

**Good**

The quality of leadership and management is good in both the educational and residential provisions. The headteacher and proprietor have ensured that all regulatory requirements are met. The Witherslack Group has invested heavily to make sure that both the education and residential provisions are of high quality and help pupils to make the most of their time at the school. Staff share the headteacher's vision for the school to be a centre of excellence in meeting the complex needs of pupils with special educational needs or a disability and ensuring pupils do well. The whole staff team are professional and passionate about their work and residential staff place the

safety and well-being of children at the centre of their practice. Staff are suitably qualified for their roles and well trained in all aspects of child protection and safeguarding. They are well supported to continue to improve their practice through professional development opportunities, performance management arrangements that include regular supervision.

Every effort is made to include all pupils successfully into Cedar House and no stone is left unturned in working to meet the sometimes very complex needs of pupils. Transition arrangements into school are excellent. Pre-admission information is completed by the head of care, pupil liaison officer, education staff and families together, and information shared with relevant staff in a professional and sensitive manner. This information is used to develop individually tailored packages of support so that barriers to learning or care can be minimised; this enables pupils to settle in and make good progress in all aspects of their personal, social, cultural and educational development. However, there is an imbalance between the amount of supervision of pupils and their ability to take decisions for themselves.

Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school’s work means that everyone is very clear about what is going well and what needs to be better. Outcomes from evaluation inform detailed plans across both education and care; these are monitored and evaluated regularly for impact by school leaders and senior leaders in the Witherslack Group. For example, leaders’ regular monitoring of teaching has helped to identify and share good practice and improve weaker teaching. Consequently, the proportion of good or better lessons is increasing and the proportion that is adequate is low.

Partnership work is outstanding; leaders work successfully with parent and carers, local authorities and external agencies to ensure that the school meets the individual needs of pupils and help them to make the most of their time in Cedar House. Foster carers, social workers, independent review officers, parents and carers all report positively about the leadership and impact of the school’s work. The information provided to local authorities for the annual review of each pupil’s statement of special educational needs is exemplary. Progress against all areas of education, emotional, social and personal development is reported in detail, with clear evidence of the good impact of the school’s work on pupils’ learning and progress towards their individual targets. The views of pupils are paramount and all pupils take part in these reviews and, where appropriate, their looked after children reviews. An active school council is also ensuring that the voice of pupils is heard and acted upon.

Parents and carers receive high quality information when considering their children’s placement in the school. They are also provided with very clear information about the school’s work, policies and how to complain. Parents and carers are fully involved in their children’s education and care through regular calls home and communications, informative and cheery newsletters, regular review meeting, and surveys of their views. Leaders listen to views and take action where possible. For example, following the most recent feedback, parents and carers will be sent a montage of photographs as a record of pupils’ activities and work each half term. One parent spoke with conviction about the difference the school has made to her child, reporting: ‘Staff quickly got to know her and they have tailored her learning around her needs. She has really blossomed here and there is hope that her future will be a lot brighter because of this.’

<b>Outcomes for residential pupils</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Quality of residential provision and care</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Residential pupils’ safety</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Leadership and management of the residential provision</b>	<b>Good</b>

## What inspection judgements mean

School and residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education and care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education and care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education and care has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	112456
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC040058
<b>Inspection number</b>	397760
<b>DfE registration number</b>	815/6041

This inspection was carried out 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. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

<b>Type of school</b>	Residential and day special school for boys and girls with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
<b>School status</b>	Independent residential special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–16 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	56
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	28
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mike Barrow
<b>Chair</b>	n/a
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gillian Ridgway
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 December 2009
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£40,752 –£68,651
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£68,202–£98,333
<b>Telephone number</b>	015242 61149
<b>Fax number</b>	0808 280 1892
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