

Cedar Hall School

Hart Road, Thundersley, Benfleet, SS7 3UQ

Inspection dates 2–3 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The few children in the Reception Year make good progress from their low starting points.
- At Key Stages 1 to 4, pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties and those with additional medical needs make good progress. Pupils with more complex needs such as autistic spectrum disorders make good progress in communication skills.
- At the end of Year 11, nearly all pupils enter further education. The school prepares them well for the next stage of their lives.
- Teaching is good and sometimes it is outstanding. Lessons are planned effectively with a wide variety of activities and good use of resources to stimulate learning.
- Pupils feel safe. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. Pupils with severe behavioural difficulties make good progress in their behaviour and safety.
- As a result of good leadership and management, the school has maintained good achievement and good teaching with good improvements to the curriculum and resources.
- The governing body provides good oversight of the school's work supporting leaders well in sustaining good achievement and good teaching and in overseeing the development of staff with leadership responsibilities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not always deepen the thinking of all pupils by showing them how to improve their learning in lessons.
- Less experienced teachers are not given enough opportunity to observe outstanding teaching in the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed all teachers in the 19 lessons seen. Nine of these were joint observations with senior leaders. An inspector heard a few pupils read.
- Meetings took place with a group of pupils, eight parents, three members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and staff with leadership responsibilities.
- The inspectors took account of the online survey of parents Parent View and the school's recent surveys of parents and pupils. They also considered the views of 44 staff who returned their questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including the school's summary of its self-evaluation, minutes of governors' meetings, the school development plan, safeguarding policies and records of attendance and behaviour.
- They looked at a sample of pupils' work across the school and information about pupils' progress over time, including the local authority's moderation of this information, jointly with senior leaders.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jackie Cousins

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This oversubscribed school provides for pupils with complex learning difficulties, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. Although the majority of pupils have moderate or severe learning difficulties, an increasing proportion have medical needs, severe behavioural, emotional or social difficulties, or autistic spectrum disorders.
- Nearly all pupils are White British and there are significantly more boys than girls.
- There are very few children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and they are taught in a mixed Reception and Key Stage 1 class.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is above average. A significant number of pupils, especially at Key Stage 3, are admitted to the school other than at the usual times of admission.
- The school does not use any other location to provide additional education for its pupils.
- Since the last inspection, the school has converted to a foundation school and taken on trust status in partnership with 13 local primary and secondary schools. The governing body has been reconstituted accordingly.
- The number of pupils on roll has also increased significantly as has the number of pupils referred with medical needs. The school's outdoor learning environment contains new all-weather sports pitches, a sensory garden, an allotment and an area for environmental science. The school has gained the Recognition of Quality Award for Careers Education and Guidance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding and raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently deepen the thinking of all pupils by showing them how they can improve their learning in lessons
 - less experienced teachers are given more opportunities to observe the best teaching in the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children in the Reception Year quickly settle into their routines because staff work closely with parents and as a team to ensure that children's needs are accurately assessed on entry. This information is used effectively to plan activities which get children off to a good start. As a result, they make good progress in all areas of learning, particularly in their communication and social development.
- Pupils in Key stages 1 and 2 build on this achievement and make good progress in English. They begin to link the sounds that letters make in words and use this knowledge in reading and writing. They make equally good progress in mathematics because staff focus on developing pupils' understanding of mathematical language, building on what they have already learned when introducing new mathematical ideas.
- At Key stage 3, those pupils who entered at the beginning of Year 7 continue to build on their prior knowledge, understanding and skills and make good progress in all subjects. Those pupils who entered Key Stage 3 from other schools at other than the usual times also make good progress from their lower starting points.
- At Key stage 4, pupils are thoroughly prepared for further education, employment and training and since the previous inspection they have continued to make at least good progress. They acquire a range of relevant academic and work-related qualifications matched closely to their different learning needs. This enables them to take work-related courses in further education to prepare them for entering employment.
- Accurate school data, which are externally checked by the local authority, show that a small yet significant number of pupils make outstanding progress in basic skills, including information and communication technology. A significant number of pupils make outstanding progress in practical subjects such as food technology, design and technology, art and physical education. In lessons seen, pupils across the school made outstanding progress in music, for example singing rounds in parts.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium make at least the same progress as their classmates in English and mathematics from their different starting points.
- All pupils leave with a range of qualifications, including in literacy, numeracy and functional skills. The relatively more-able pupils make good progress gaining GCSEs or their equivalent in at least three subject areas. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and ensures that discrimination is tackled effectively.
- Pupils with more complex needs such as autistic spectrum disorders, those with medical needs and those with more challenging behaviours make the same progress as their classmates because they receive good support for their learning. Tasks are consistently broken down into smaller achievable steps, and technical words are explained in simple terms by using examples to clarify meaning.
- Good use of signing and the use of symbols and pictures by teaching assistants enable pupils to develop their communication skills well and access learning. Teaching assistants also use well-chosen practical activities, such as conducting a survey of pupils' pets in mathematics which stimulated great enjoyment and engaged pupils in learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good quality teaching has been sustained since the previous inspection because leaders have rigorously monitored the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress across the school. As a result, some teaching is outstanding.
- Learning activities are well planned, matched closely to pupils' individual needs and are varied and interesting and enable pupils to make choices in their learning. In an outstanding food technology lesson, pupils made up their own recipes for a fruit crumble choosing from apples, pears, raspberries and peaches and deciding whether to add cinnamon or not. As a result all pupils, including those with more challenging behaviour, mixed and baked their own fruit crumbles to a high standard.
- Staff support younger pupils in making good use of the new resources in the outdoor area, purchased by the primary school sport funding, enabling them to make good progress in their physical development.
- Good use of communication aids, signing, symbols, real objects, photographs and visual timetables by teachers and support staff help pupils with additional complex needs access learning in full and make the same progress as their classmates. This encourages pupils to think for themselves and learn as independently as they can.
- Laptop computers and interactive whiteboards are used well and safely to support pupils' learning and develop their skills in technology, as seen when pupils researched the work of a famous graffiti artist to produce their own graffiti artwork.
- The skills of communication, literacy and numeracy are well taught and promoted across different subjects such as counting time in music, and writing accounts of what the pupils made when using resistant materials in design and technology.
- The best teaching was seen in practical subjects where teachers have particular expertise. They know how to deepen the thinking of all pupils through providing skilful feedback on how well they are doing and showing them how to improve further. Occasionally in other lessons, such feedback is not always consistent and some pupils do not deepen their understanding as much as their classmates.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour and safety in lessons is nearly always good and sometimes it is outstanding as a result of strong relationships between staff and pupils and consistently good management of behaviour. Pupils' individual targets for behaviour in lessons are displayed and consistently referred to when needed. Pupils are then judiciously rewarded, praised and encouraged. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
- Staff quickly and successfully refocus pupils with more challenging behaviours on their learning on the few occasions when disruption occurs. As a result, these pupils make sustained progress in their behaviour and re-engage with learning.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is good and sometimes outstanding. Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors, help one another and maintain good relationships with others. They say bullying is rare and if it occurs staff always deal with it quickly. This was also confirmed by most pupils in the school's recent survey of their views.

- Students have a clear idea why it is important to be safe and behave well in school. In all practical lessons seen, including science, pupils wore protective clothing, handled equipment and tools safely and exercised the utmost safety at all times in moving around the school. All pupils were seen using computers safely and had a developing understanding of the safe use of the internet.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation stage are safe and their well-being is protected by staff who are vigilant in supervising them during their play and learning activities.
- The majority of parents in Parent View believe that behaviour and safety are good. This was also confirmed by all parents in discussion and the vast majority of parents in the school's own survey of parental views.
- Behaviour and safety are not outstanding yet because pupils' attitudes to learning are not of a consistently high standard across subjects, years and classes.
- The attendance of the majority of pupils is above average and compares favourably with similar schools. Pupils with medical needs who require regular hospital treatment or therapy as part of their well-being want to be in school as much as their classmates. They attend as often as they are able to.

The leadership and management are good

- Good leadership and management have ensured that the area for improvement identified at the previous inspection has been addressed well: arrangements for managing the performance of staff are now good.
- Leaders have ensured that good or better teaching continues across the school and have brought about good improvement in the use of support assistants to support pupils' learning since the previous inspection. These have occurred through rigorous checks on the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement. Strengths are clearly identified and any weaknesses tackled through effective training and support. All teachers have clear performance objectives based on accurate self-evaluation and the national 'Teachers' Standards', which are linked clearly to the school's priorities for improvement.
- This has led to teachers improving their performance as they become more experienced and better trained over time. Although a few less experienced teachers receive good induction and support to improve the quality of their teaching, leaders understand that there are limited opportunities for them to observe outstanding teaching, to accelerate improvements in their practice.
- Leaders have developed a wide range of opportunities to improve learning based on pupils' individual needs. Staff have benefited from updated training in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) as part of the strong emphasis on developing communication and literacy skills further. Subject leaders have also ensured that mathematics and functional skills in information and communication technology are promoted well across subjects.
- Older pupils have good opportunities to prepare for a range of examinations, with an increase in the number of GCSE subjects offered from three to five, since the previous inspection. Pupils also have good opportunities to develop work-related learning skills which prepare them well for further education through strong links with a local agricultural

college, the Salvation Army Centre, and local employers where Year 10 and 11 pupils do work placements and community service. The strong careers programme, based on good preparation, planning and monitoring, and good links with Connexions, has led to the school's recent achievement of the Recognition of Quality Award for Careers Education and Guidance.

- Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities which have been extended since the previous inspection. These include an international trip, a new Saturday morning cookery club, a residential trip, visitors to the school, a range of well thought-out visits to places of interest and a wide variety of after-school clubs including dance, cookery and a homework club. New facilities, such as the multi-gym, a large horticultural area, new all-weather football pitches and a quiet area are enjoyed by pupils and enrich learning.
- There are good opportunities for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development such as participation in the school production of 'Oliver', through singing and dancing and through success in practical subjects. These have led to improved self-confidence and promote positive attitudes to learning. The many opportunities to enrich learning through sport have led to pupils' success in competitive games with other schools and the development of good social skills.
- Leaders have used additional funding to support good learning and achievement. The use of pupil-premium funding to purchase additional support for learning has led to at least good progress in learning and good achievement over time. The school plans to use the remainder of its primary school sport funding to improve outdoor physical education equipment in order to encourage pupils exercising more at break times and lunchtimes.
- Strong links with local schools through the Foundation Trust has enabled the sharing of facilities such as access to a designated school for teacher training. Good partnerships with outside professionals such as health, speech therapists, the Child and Family Consultation Service and Mencap promote pupils' learning and well being effectively.
- Senior leaders are developing teachers with leadership responsibilities well by, for example, involving them in school leadership meetings and checking teaching and learning in their departments.
- Links with parents are good and reflected in their positive views about the school's work. Parents said they receive good support and guidance from staff in how to support their children's learning at home. The majority who completed Parent View would recommend the school to others.
- The school continues to receive appropriate light-touch support from the local authority, for example, through the checking of its data on pupils' performance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and a realistic view of their own strengths and areas for development based on a review and evaluation of their work. They have an accurate view of the quality of teaching based on a consideration of the school's information about pupils' progress, a scrutiny of leadership reports and a first-hand view through regular visits to the school. They make sure that good teachers are rewarded and underperformance is tackled. They hold the school to account for its additional spending on the pupil premium and have a clear idea of how this has achieved value for money. Governors make sure that all legal requirements are met, especially for safeguarding.

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	115457
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	425402

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deborah Braithwaite
Headteacher	Peter Whelan
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2010
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