

# The Cedar School

Redbridge Lane, Southampton, SO16 0XN

**Inspection dates** 5–6 June 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires Improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils enjoy attending school and most make good progress from their starting points. Some pupils make impressive progress, given the substantial barriers they face, caused by physical as well as learning difficulties.
- Teaching is good. All staff know their pupils well. Lessons are carefully planned to ensure that everyone is clear about what they need to do to make the most of the time available.
- Pupils behave extremely well. They are unfailingly polite and tolerant of each other. They listen well and work hard in lessons. Relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect and confidence.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school and parents support this view. School leaders do as much as they can to ensure that the school is a very safe environment for learning.
- All school leaders are focused on what needs to improve. They have good systems for monitoring which provide them with useful information about how everyone is doing.
- The school's good leaders and managers have worked hard to ensure that teaching and pupils' achievement have improved over time.
- Governors visit regularly and know the school well. They challenge the leadership team to use all available resources to the very best effect.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is promoted well, through participation in drama, sporting events, celebration and worship.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers and their support assistants do not always make the best use of opportunities for providing high quality feedback to pupils about their work.
- Pupils do not get regular opportunities to do work experience and community-based learning.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons. In six of these, they were joined by a member of the school’s leadership team. Walks around the school with senior staff provided inspectors with information about pupils’ learning and social experiences at the school and in the wider community.
- Important school documents were scrutinised, including key policies and minutes of governors’ meetings. Inspectors reviewed the school’s systems for monitoring its own work and for making decisions about its strengths and areas that need to be improved.
- The school’s systems for keeping pupils safe and well were thoroughly scrutinised.
- Meetings were held with governors, pupils, teachers and school leaders. A local headteacher who has been commissioned by the local authority to support the school provided her views of its progress.
- Inspectors took into account the views of the 17 parents who responded to the online Parent View survey, as well as the 43 members of staff who completed their questionnaires. The views of pupils were gained during a meeting held with them at which an inspector listened to them read, talk about their own work and describe their likes and dislikes.

## Inspection team

Bob Pugh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Veronica Young

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Cedar School is a smaller than average-sized special school for pupils with physical and health difficulties with associated moderate or severe learning difficulties. Many have difficulties with communication or mobility.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Almost half of all pupils are entitled to receive the pupil premium (additional funding made available by the government for children who are looked after and those known to be eligible to receive free school meals). This is much higher than the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Approximately twenty percent of pupils come from homes where English is not the first language.
- Pupils come to school from the city of Southampton. A few travel in from neighbouring towns in Hampshire or even further afield.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a change in leadership on the governing body and a number of new governors have been recruited.
- There have been changes to the school leadership team with the creation of additional posts of responsibility.
- The school will move to a new building later this year.

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

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding by:
  - ensuring that feedback to pupils always provides them with precise information about how well they have done and what they need to do next to achieve even more
  - planning high quality work experience and community-based learning programmes for all pupils so that they are even better prepared for the next stages of their lives and learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress from their low starting points. All pupils make the best use of available resources to help them make a contribution to lessons, to communicate needs or express opinions.
- Rates of progress made by pupils nearly always match that of pupils in other schools. Some pupils make more rapid progress than their peers elsewhere who have similar needs.
- Pupils make good progress in literacy and mathematics. Some make so much progress that they are able to gain GCSE or entry level grades from their very low starting points. The achievements of others are recognised through accreditation schemes such as the life and living programme which covers everyday social skills and personal care skills.
- Some pupils, for whom English is not the first language at home, make such rapid progress that they are able to use their communicators, or their voices, to respond to questions and to read and write.
- There are no differences in the rates of progress made by different groups. Those who receive support provided from the additional funding do as well as others. The number of pupils is too small to compare their attainment with other pupils. Girls and boys make progress which is similar. The very few children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress from the start. They are well prepared for the move into Year 1. Well-thought-through systems are in place for ensuring that pupils move with ease from the primary to the secondary department.
- Some older pupils have the opportunity to participate in work-related education and community learning. However, such programmes are limited and not everyone is able to make the most of opportunities presented by learning off site.
- Nevertheless, by the time they reach the end of Year 11, pupils are well prepared for the next stages of their lives and learning, at further education colleges or more specialist colleges.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Typically, teaching is good. A small amount is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will work hard and achieve well. They prepare lessons which capture the interest of each one. This is because they have such a clear understanding of every individual's learning needs. Time in lessons is always well used.
- The teaching of literacy, numeracy and communication skills is good. Where necessary, teachers use signing to enhance pupils' understanding of the lesson.
- An excellent example of this was seen in an English lesson when pupils were using their reading skills to great effect. Some were able to identify key words in the play Macbeth, to help them understand important themes. Others were reading out loud sentences they had written about a book they had read and enjoyed.
- Pupils are confident about asking for help when they need it. Well-pitched advice and support are readily available and given in such a way as to help pupils think for themselves to work out solutions.
- Special support assistants make an effective contribution to good teaching. They prepare resources, and, with great care, help pupils to position themselves so that they have the best possible opportunity to learn well.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and they know how to plan lessons which meet the different learning needs of all their pupils. They ensure that pupils know their improvement targets and they nearly always check that pupils have understood the learning before they move on to the next stage.
- As a result, pupils are able to talk confidently about what they are learning and about their targets.

- Sometimes, teachers miss opportunities for providing precise feedback to pupils. In lessons, verbal feedback is immediate and almost always accurate. However, the advice and feedback offered to pupils in their work books and files does not always focus on exactly what has been learned in a format which every pupil can easily understand. Similarly, teachers do not always provide clear written advice about what the next steps for learning will be.
- Teachers plan lessons which enthuse and inspire pupils to want to do more. In a well-planned music lesson, pupils played African drums and used their good communication skills to compose a call and response song. They followed this up by watching a video of children in an African school carrying out a similar exercise. By the end of this lesson, each one had learned to play a rhythm and to dance or move in time to the music.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They are keen and enthusiastic in lessons, and learning is never interrupted by difficult or challenging behaviour.
- Their very positive attitudes contribute to the progress they make during their time at the school. Pupils' attitudes in lessons are exemplary; however, given the other barriers to learning they face, together with the fact that improvements to teaching are relatively recent, their achievement and progress are good.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe at school. They know who to turn to if they are worried or unsure. Parents are very positive about pupils' behaviour at school and correctly believe that their children are very well cared for. The overwhelming majority of staff believe that pupils' behaviour is excellent.
- Bullying is rarely heard of at this school. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy attending. Their attendance rates have improved in recent terms, so that they match those of pupils in similar schools.
- They enjoy representing their school at sporting competitions, cultural activities and other events. Their 'can do' attitude shines through and they are excellent ambassadors for their school.
- Effective teaching about common dangers, including those presented by the internet, helps pupils to stay safe online and when using social media. Many pupils who attend this school take medication on a daily basis. They learn over time to administer their own medication safely and in a dignified manner. By means of strong teaching about the uses and misuses of drugs, they learn well about the dangers of substance abuse.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. School leaders and staff work hard to ensure that the school environment is safe. Where necessary, adaptations have been made to buildings and resources, to ensure equal access and opportunity for everyone.
- The school fosters excellent relationships. Relationships between staff and pupils, and pupils with each other, are excellent. There is no discrimination of any kind at this school.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- School leaders at all levels have worked well to successfully raise standards. Following the last inspection, they carried out careful analysis of leadership responsibilities, commissioned support from outside and used it effectively to strengthen their performance and improve governance.
- As a result, leaders and managers have robust information about what is working well and what needs to be improved. This is particularly notable in the learning improvement plans they have developed for pupils who are making slower progress.
- Leaders and managers confidently intervene when pupils need additional help. The monitoring programmes they have devised provide them with accurate information about their

achievements. Their effective tracking programmes ensure that help is provided leading to more rapid progress by each individual.

- In recent terms, school leaders have worked hard to make sure that their new building matches everyone's needs. They have used every opportunity in lessons and in assemblies to involve pupils in planning and to reassure those who find change upsetting.
- The team of middle leaders has recently been restructured. They make a good contribution to planning. A broad and relevant range of subjects is taught with a strong focus on learning to be as independent as possible and to participate in games and recreational activities. They are aware of the need to provide better work-related education programmes for all pupils and to extend the amount of time spent learning in the wider community.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well met in assemblies, celebrations and lessons about similarities and differences in lifestyles.
- Teaching is closely monitored and feedback on performance is precise and constructive. This has led to a greater proportion of good or better teaching in the school. Staff speak highly of opportunities for training and of their effective appraisal and performance management programmes.
- The school goes to great lengths to gain the views of parents and others who have an interest in its development. Their views have been taken into account when improving the curriculum or planning new resources.
- The local authority has supported this school by commissioning a headteacher of a neighbouring successful school to provide advice and guidance.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Governors have learned to interpret the data provided by school leaders and teachers and use this to hold them to account for the school's strengths and weaknesses. They visit regularly, meet pupils and parents and question staff about the reports they receive at meetings. To good effect, they use the information gained from performance management programmes to ensure that strong teaching performance is properly rewarded and that underperformance is tackled rigorously. Governors know that the school has used additional resources such as the pupil premium and sports grant for primary-aged pupils to good effect; for example, to provide extra help for some pupils and to increase the number of after-school clubs which are available so that everyone can be included. They monitor this and other expenditure very effectively.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	116622
<b>Local authority</b>	Southampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	433320
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community Special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	61
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ian Smith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jonathan Howells
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18–19 September 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	023 8073 4205
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