

# Cedar House School

Low Bentham, Lancaster LA2 7DD

**Inspection dates** 26–28 April 2016

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision	Good
Quality of care and support in the residential provision	Good
How well children and young people are protected in the residential provision	Good
Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers in the residential provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The quality of teaching and assessment is good and enables pupils to make good progress with their learning from low starting points.
- Senior leaders promote continuous improvement. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths based on thorough evaluation of teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- The small number of post-16 learners make good progress with the development of their independence skills. Staff support them well as they prepare for the next stage of their education and employment.
- Effective governance arrangements provide good support and hold senior leaders and staff to account.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and are justifiably proud of their achievements.
- Pupils enjoy strong, positive relationships with staff in the residential setting. As a result, they develop self-confidence and learn how to manage their own behaviour.
- Pupils feel safe in the school and in the residential setting. Staff are trained regularly in safeguarding and have a good understanding of the potential risks to pupils' well-being.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is insufficient outstanding teaching and learning to ensure that pupils exceed expected levels of progress across a range of subjects.
- Pupils do not have access to a wide enough range of practical and work-related learning activities at key stage 4.
- A small number of pupils do not manage their own behaviour adequately. Alternatives to physical restraint by staff are not embedded sufficiently.
- Improved records of pupils' care plans, fire evacuations and risk assessments in the residential setting are not yet complete.

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

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'), the national minimum standards for residential special schools and associated requirements.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to outstanding by
  - ensuring that activities and tasks are consistently challenging and engaging to enable pupils to make outstanding progress
  - increasing the range of practical and work-related learning, particularly at key stage 4.
- Continue to develop alternative behaviour management strategies in the school and residential provision, in order to reduce further the use of physical intervention.
- Record the names of all those involved in residential fire practices to ensure that all staff and young people experience fire evacuations in accordance with national minimum standards.
- Continue the implementation of new care plans that detail how young people will be cared for on a daily basis. Ensure that relevant individuals sign these.
- Further develop concise and clear risk assessments in the residential setting. Ensure that they demonstrate individual risks and their management, the analysis of grades and progress in reducing risk.

## Inspection judgements

<b>Effectiveness of leadership and management</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers in the residential provision</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>How well children and young people are protected in the residential provision</b>	<b>is good</b>

- Senior leaders and the proprietor’s representatives have ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards and national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- The headteacher, working effectively with a recently appointed senior leadership team, has created an ethos of high expectations for pupils’ personal development. The school’s vision is shared widely across the education and residential staff teams.
- The school provides excellent opportunities for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils to achieve and make progress towards future independent lives. The school is ambitious for all pupils and post-16 learners to achieve academic success and make good progress. It is largely successful in achieving this.
- The school and residential staff have developed strong positive relationships with pupils. Pupils state that they enjoy the opportunities provided for them. Staff are proud to work at the school.
- Senior leaders, and the school’s management board, have a shared understanding of the school’s strengths and areas for further development. They monitor the educational and residential work of the school effectively at all levels.
- Senior leaders have addressed recommendations for improvement from recent inspections successfully. They continue to evaluate rigorously and have identified appropriate areas for further improvement.
- Staff in the residential setting feel well supported by their managers. They receive regular supervision and this contributes strongly to their confidence in undertaking their roles. Effective monthly monitoring forms assist managers to identify any areas for improvement. Managers respond swiftly to address any points raised. They demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in their service. The residential development plan shows a clear focus on areas for improvement.
- The school provides good opportunities for the continuous training of staff. All statutorily required training is completed and monitored robustly. Senior leaders have planned further training for staff in the school and residential settings to increase awareness of autism and associated communication and behavioural difficulties. A number of staff members have taken advantage of opportunities to improve their personal qualifications and enhance their contributions to the life of the school.
- The curriculum includes access to all the required areas of learning. Pupils at key stages 2 and 3 study a suitable curriculum that broadly reflects the structure of the revised national curriculum.
- The key stage 4 curriculum enables pupils to study for a number of appropriate external examinations up to GCSE level. It also includes access to suitable practical and work-related learning, although there is a limited range of options available at present. Overall, pupils are prepared appropriately for their future economic well-being.
- Senior leaders demonstrate a strong and successful commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils, reducing stereotyping and discrimination, and promoting the well-being of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils.
- Staff address the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils effectively within the school and residential provision. They promote British values, for example through weekly assemblies that encourage pupils to consider and understand conflicting ideas about major national and international events.
- The school council enables pupils to contribute their ideas for the improvement of the school, including the provision of playground equipment for younger pupils and toast at breaktime. A group of pupils requested a successful trip to meet the imam at a mosque to learn about cultural differences and diversity.
- Residential staff members are kept up to date with current issues, including risks to which young people may be vulnerable. They understand, for example, the indicators of child sexual exploitation and are quick to act and report any concerns to safeguarding officers. All members of staff educate pupils about staying safe and they monitor internet usage appropriately.
- Pupils know how to complain or to express concerns. They feel confident to express their feelings. They have access to telephone numbers for children’s helplines and for the Children’s Commissioner.

- New care plans are in the process of implementation as the result of a standard not met at the previous inspection. Work is also in progress to improve record keeping related to fire practices, and the coherence and accessibility of risk assessments in the residential setting. This necessary development work relates to recording issues and does not affect pupils' quality of care.
- All staff work extremely hard, demonstrating exceptional patience, to support pupils with improvements in their behaviour. School records confirm that the behaviour of the great majority of pupils improves strongly during their time at the school.
- There has been a decrease in the use of physical restraint in the management of serious incidents over the course of the current school year. Senior leaders manage and record all such incidents robustly, following the guidelines of the company and school policy. Additional training and development work is required to embed the consistent use of alternatives to physical restraint in the de-escalation and management of serious behavioural incidents. Senior leaders have begun this work with an increased focus on therapeutic approaches to support the development of positive behaviours.
- Senior leaders have investigated thoroughly any complaints arising from implementation of the school and residential restraint policy, including reports to the local authority designated safeguarding officer. They maintain robust records of all investigations and the school's management board reviews these regularly.
- Senior leaders and managers demonstrate the capacity to ensure the continued improvement of the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The management board holds senior leaders to account through effective arrangements for evaluation and regular reporting. The board ensures that the work of the school and residence is subject to appropriate external review and evaluation.
  - Senior leaders meet regularly with members of the school's management board. The chair of the board, in particular, has a secure understanding of the school's provision and the progress made by pupils in their personal development and academic achievement.
  - Additional officers of the company provide effective support to leaders and staff in important areas such as assessment, recruitment and safeguarding.
  - Senior leaders manage the performance of staff effectively. With the support of the management board, they reward positive contributions appropriately, and any underperformance is subject to agreed company procedures.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders implement robust procedures for all aspects of safe practice throughout the school and residential settings. Rigorous procedures have been established for the recruitment of suitable staff, training in all aspects of safeguarding, the monitoring and recording of premises and fire safety, and careful attention to the medical needs and well-being of pupils.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The good quality of teaching is achieved through teachers' strong knowledge of individual pupils' learning needs and behaviour characteristics. Staff have high expectations of pupils' involvement and engagement in learning and the great majority of pupils respond positively.
- Teachers and teaching assistants encourage pupils to develop their literacy skills, including the quality of their handwriting. Pupils have regular opportunities to read aloud in class or to improve their reading through one-to-one sessions with staff. Younger pupils, in particular, enjoy reading and are proud of the progress they are making.
- Teachers have a good understanding of the subjects they teach and they use this knowledge effectively to provide interesting and challenging learning activities. Pupils, for example, in a key stage 3 mathematics lesson gained a good understanding of rotational symmetry through a combination of stimulating practical activities, and clear explanation and visual presentation by staff.
- Teachers and teaching assistants, in a number of subjects, demonstrate the ability to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding through skilful questioning. Pupils in both key stage 2 personal and social education and key stage 4 childcare demonstrated mature skills of evaluation and judgement while discussing controversial social issues. They listened well to each other and, with the guidance of staff, were able to present coherent and considered reasons to support their own ideas.
- Teachers implement the marking policy effectively by using encouraging and positive feedback to pupils

about the quality of their work. Teachers identify areas for improvement and future targets, and convey these clearly to pupils, which has an impact on the improving quality of their written work.

- Pupils at key stage 4 make good progress in managing their anxieties and uncertainties. As a result, the majority respond positively to the challenge of preparing for external examinations.
- The school provides appropriate information for parents and carers through regular progress reports and attendance at annual reviews of progress.
- The school has developed accurate measures to determine the starting points of pupils when they enter the school. Teachers assess the extent of pupils' progress from their starting points regularly, using robust procedures that take account of the requirements of the current national curriculum and suitable external examinations.
- Staff implement the school's policy and procedures for the management of pupils' behaviour consistently. The great majority of pupils respond appropriately and sustain their concentration well.
- Occasionally, some members of staff do not communicate high enough expectations of pupils' response and involvement in lessons. In these cases, the learning activities provided are not sufficiently challenging or interesting to engage all pupils, resulting in decreased motivation and a desire by a minority of pupils to leave the class.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils, who have often had negative previous experiences of education, develop strong and positive relationships with staff. As a result, they improve their self-confidence and take a pride in their personal achievements.
- Education and care staff work very effectively together with therapists to identify successful approaches to respond to the individual needs of pupils. Older pupils develop the ability to understand their personal barriers to learning and to take advantage of the support provided by staff to overcome these.
- Pupils develop pride in their work. A number of pupils, across all key stages, voluntarily offered samples of their work for the scrutiny of inspectors. When asked, they were also confident to read aloud.
- Pupils respond positively to choices about which subjects to study at key stage 4. They develop clear aspirations for the future because of impartial careers advice, and make appropriate decisions about school, college or employment routes at the end of Year 11.
- Conversations with pupils, and the school's records, demonstrate that bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that staff in both the school and the residential setting deal with any attempted bullying promptly and effectively.
- Pupils take an active part in challenging outdoor activities, such as a recent sailing trip in Scotland, conservation projects and a nationally recognised award scheme involving community service and planning an expedition.
- School and residential staff provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills within the local and wider communities. Pupils take part in a good range of sporting and social activities, and they make appropriate use of local services such as the library and local shops. They contribute to a variety of collections for local and national charities, including a sport relief 'swimathon' and a Pioneer Project providing lunches for disadvantaged members of the local community.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. Reluctant learners respond well to the patience and encouragement of staff and begin to demonstrate increasing responsibility for their own learning and behaviour.
- Overall, pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school demonstrates respect for each other and for staff. Good examples were seen of cooperation between pupils and care for each other. Pupils can identify clear evidence of improvements in their behaviour and social relationships.
- Incidents of poor behaviour do occur. Staff manage these well within the framework of the school's written policies and guidance. The behaviour of the great majority of pupils improves over time, often from low starting points on entry to the school.
- Attendance is close to the national average. There are very few persistent absentees. Senior staff in the school and pupils' residences work tirelessly and with persistence to improve the attendance of this small

minority of pupils.

## Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils make good progress with their learning from mostly low starting points. Pupils, who have often experienced a variety of disruptions to their previous education, begin to make expected rates of progress.
- The proportion of pupils making expected progress from their low starting points in English and mathematics is high in comparison with the national average. Only a small number exceed expected progress, particularly in English.
- The school's records indicate that there has been a recent improvement in the rate of progress made by pupils, with only a small proportion failing to make expected progress.
- Pupils make good progress with their reading skills. Younger pupils demonstrate good skills in reading unfamiliar words by careful use of the sounds made by letters (phonics). A number of older pupils read fluently and with good expression.
- Teachers place a strong emphasis on the improvement of handwriting and the results are evident in much of the work in pupils' books. Pupils show good development over time in their use of vocabulary and interesting ideas in their writing. The accuracy of their spelling and grammar is less secure.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics results from good teaching that emphasises how the subject can be applied in everyday situations.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress comparable with their peers. Those who have special educational needs begin to make expected progress and fill the gaps in their learning.
- Pupils' results in entry-level and GCSE examinations over the last two years are mostly close to expected progress from their starting points. However, very few achieve higher-level results and not all pupils achieve the standards predicted by their earlier assessments.
- Pupils are beginning to achieve success in a small number of practical and work-related subjects. Senior leaders have identified the need to increase the range of awards available.
- The school and residential provision work effectively together to prepare pupils for the transition to further education or employment. All pupils who left the school at the end of Year 11 in the last two years moved on successfully to college places, apprenticeships or employment.

## Sixth form provision

is good

- The school's post-16 provision is a recent development. A small number of learners move into this provision at the end of Year 11, following impartial careers advice and individual assessment of need and suitability.
- Senior leaders select suitable courses and activities to provide for the needs of individual learners. Learners attend appropriate part-time courses at local colleges of further education that take account of their personal interests and aspirations.
- Appropriately qualified staff oversee the progress and personal well-being of individual learners, including their integration into college and work placements. Staff have developed strong and effective links with a range of suitable external providers.
- The school ensures that learners continue to develop their skills in literacy and numeracy, including access to level 1 or 2 examinations if required.
- Post-16 courses also include opportunities for learners to develop key life skills, such as cooking and employability, as they prepare for greater independence in the future. In addition, learners complete a period of work experience in a suitable area of employment.
- Excellent integrated work between the school, learners' residences and external agencies and partners contributes strongly to the development of the post-16 provision.
- These arrangements enable learners to move on successfully to full-time courses in further education, or into employment with training, at the end of years 12 or 13.

## **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision** are good

- Pupils make good progress in all areas of their development.
- Pupils' confidence, communication, social and independence skills increase significantly. One parent commented, 'She has made huge progress emotionally and behaviourally.'
- Pupils recognise their own achievements. They are proud of improvements in their behaviour and believe they can manage their feelings better. Appropriate bonds between pupils and adults help individuals to share their feelings and concerns. Pupils develop a sense of belonging and stability.
- Pupils enjoy a nurturing and supportive relationship with staff. They receive the levels of attention and supervision that they need because of consistently high ratios of staff to pupils.
- Pupils improve their fitness levels through a range of suitable activities, including weekly workouts, biking and climbing.
- Despite staff efforts to educate pupils on the dangers of smoking, alcohol and substance misuse, on occasions some pupils do not follow this advice. Staff continue to provide appropriate support and to address the issue consistently.
- Pupils make good progress with their independence skills. They achieve qualifications in life skills, such as cooking and keeping safe. They are prepared well for independence in later life.
- Pupils feel safe in their home. Staff lead by example, promoting an ethos of trust and respect for others; they actively prevent any bullying. Pupils are motivated to achieve through positive behaviour rewards and, as a result, young people's behaviour improves.
- All the standards and recommendations identified for improvement at the last inspection have now been met. This has enhanced young people's experiences.
- Managers are aware of the strengths and areas for further development in the residential setting. Their ongoing development plan focuses on appropriate areas for improvement to enhance standards of care.

## **Quality of care and support in the residential provision** is good

- Pupils enjoy their time in this home. One young person commented, 'I love it here, it's like my home and it's like my family.'
- Pupils enjoy a range of social and individualised activities, including fencing, cinema, trampolining and sailing holidays. One young person commented, 'I like climbing best.'
- Young people's views are central to the running of the residence. They believe that staff listen to their wishes; they achieve a sense of value and belonging through choosing their own food, activities and decor.
- New care plans are in the process of implementation in response to an unmet standard at the time of the previous inspection. The new structure draws together a range of information about how pupils are cared for on a daily basis. The national minimum standard is now met. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of individual pupils; they respect pupils' routines and choices.
- Pupils benefit from high-quality furnishings in a well-maintained home. They are proud of their bedrooms; they enjoy personalising their rooms and helping to decorate their homes.
- A recommendation set at the previous inspection is now met. This allows pupils extra privacy and security as they can lock their bedroom doors. In addition, they each have a safe box for treasured possessions.
- Staff in the home, the school and therapy team have a holistic approach to young people's care because of good communication. This successfully ensures that any issues related to individuals are identified and addressed swiftly.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	112456
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC040058
<b>Inspection number</b>	10018438
<b>DfE registration number</b>	815/6041

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–18 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Girls
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	60
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	1
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	17
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Witherslack Group
<b>Chair</b>	Mike Barrow
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kathryn Taylor
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£30,860–£79,167
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£51,085–113,812
<b>Telephone number</b>	01524 261149
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/cedar-house-school">www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/cedar-house-school</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:cedar-house@witherslackgroup.co.uk">cedar-house@witherslackgroup.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18–20 November 2014

## Information about this school

- Cedar House School is a residential special school for boys and girls with a variety of emotional, social and mental health difficulties, and associated challenging behaviour. It is part of the Witherslack Group, a national provider of specialist education and care for children and young people who have special educational needs or disability.
- The school is registered to admit up to 88 pupils, aged between seven and 18 years.
- There are currently 60 pupils on the school roll, of whom 58 have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Twenty-seven pupils are looked after by a variety of local authorities.
- Seventeen pupils live in four self-contained residential units adjacent to the school site.
- Cedar House School aims '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 aspires to being 'an exemplar of best practice for children locally, regionally and nationally'.



- The school's previous inspection was in November 2014 when its overall effectiveness was judged good. The residential provision was last inspected in November 2015, when the overall experience and progress of children and young people was judged to require improvement.
- A small number of post-16 learners attend part-time courses at Craven College, Skipton.

## Information about this inspection

- This was an unannounced inspection.
- The inspectors observed teaching and learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of ages and subjects.
- Meetings were held with senior representatives of the Witherslack Group, the headteacher, senior leaders and staff with management responsibilities in the school and residential provision. They observed the morning and evening routines in the residences.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online 'Parent View' questionnaire for these to be taken into account. Inspectors held discussions with a sample of parents, carers, and representatives of placing authorities.
- The inspectors considered responses to 12 questionnaires completed by members of staff.
- The inspectors scrutinised a number of policies, procedures and records related to the school and residential provision in order to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards and the national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- The Department for Education commissioned Ofsted, as part of this standard inspection, to take account of complaints about the use of physical restraint in the education and residential settings. The education standard inspection was brought forward in order to integrate it with the residential inspection.

## Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jamie Richardson

Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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