

The Cedars Academy

Ivy Lane, Low Fell, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear NE9 6QD

Inspection dates

19–20 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Governors and the headteacher set a clear, strong direction to provide high-quality education and care for all pupils.
- Staff are motivated and are committed to bringing the school's vision to life through their work. As a result, the school is improving
- The curriculum is well planned. It responds to pupils' needs very well. The planning and delivery for pupils' personal development are highly effective.
- Leaders carefully monitor the quality of teaching and assess pupils' progress to help them plan training and bring about improvement.
- Teaching is effective. Teachers and classroom teams work effectively together. Pupils make good progress across a range of subjects.
- Good teaching leads to strong progress across the broad range of subjects, but does not yet result in the same rapid and often outstanding progress as found in mathematics and English.
- Pupils are open, welcoming and accepting of others from backgrounds different from their own. They know how to lead healthy lives and keep themselves safe.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and secure at school, and all groups of pupils attend very well. This enables them to learn well. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.
- The sixth-form provision is ably led. Courses tailored to students' needs, the wide range of opportunities for work-related learning and good teaching lead to good progress. Students are supported and prepared well for the next steps in education and training, and for adult life.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - developing subject leaders' skills to improve learning programmes and teaching that support rapid pupil progress across the wider curriculum
 - sharpening senior leaders' and governors' challenge, so that they scrutinise achievement across the full curriculum in the same detail used for English and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by ensuring that:
 - lesson planning is sufficiently precise to provide for consistent challenge of pupils' progress
 - pupils' learning is moved on more quickly, as and when pupils are ready to do so.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Governors and the headteacher have a well-articulated vision to provide high-quality, relevant learning in a safe environment that promotes pupils' well-being and personal development. Leaders and staff share a common determination to do the best for all pupils. They bring the school's vision to life. As a result, pupils flourish and achieve well. The school's ambition for its pupils helps it continue to thrive and improve quickly.
 - Leaders make effective use of performance management and professional development to improve the curriculum and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders value the contribution that staff make to the school's improvement. This motivates staff very effectively.
 - Leaders ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of pupils. Through careful use of assessment and other progress information, leaders and teaching teams ensure that pupils are engaged in their learning and make good progress. The work done in sharpening the curriculum, especially in English, mathematics and personal development, has enabled pupils to improve their learning and progress rates rapidly. In English and mathematics, the vast majority of pupils make at least good progress and many make exceptional progress.
 - Leaders in the sixth form ensure that the curriculum takes into account the interests and aspirations of students through a personalised mix of vocational courses, study in core subjects, and a wide range of other relevant courses. The sixth-form curriculum provides students with effective support to experience and learn about the world of work, and carefully builds in preparation for study and life when students leave school.
 - The well-constructed and carefully thought-through programme for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is particularly effective across all key stages. Pupils are very well prepared for their next steps in education and training. Their achievement, personal skills and understanding of wider society are catered for extremely well.
 - Leaders ensure that pupils' experience of learning is as rich and varied as possible. They make sure that the range of extra-curricular activities and clubs, educational visits and trips, and visiting speakers provides an effective context for learning. This contributes to pupils' personal development and prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
 - Leaders maintain an unerring focus on pupils' safety and how they can best safeguard pupils. Policies and practices are kept up to date through regular training. As a result, staff are knowledgeable and vigilant at all times for any sign of abuse or neglect. The PSHE education programme supports pupils effectively in learning about and managing risks to their well-being.
- Determined that pupils, whatever their background, should flourish and achieve well,

leaders make effective use of the additional funding available through the pupil premium. The enrichment curriculum and the sharper focus on effective teaching in English and mathematics have brought about sustained improvement in the progress made by all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. The gaps between the progress made by these groups and others has almost completely closed.

- Leaders make effective use of the additional funding for pupils with low attainment on entry to key stage 3. The focused spending plan has led to highly effective investment in additional staffing and resources to improve phonics and reading. As a result, pupils are much better able to access learning across a wider range of subjects. They also enjoy reading for pleasure.
- Additional funding to support high-quality learning experiences in physical education in the primary phase is used effectively. Pupils develop very well their movement and sports skills, including swimming, under the sports leadership in the school. Swimming on site and the use of a wide range of sporting facilities locally enrich pupils' learning, and support their physical and emotional health. The success of the primary sport programme is reflected in the increasing number of pupils who represent their region or compete nationally.
- Leaders monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning in a planned, systematic way. They use their findings to shape the curriculum and develop teaching skills further through professional development and the use of performance management. The school's focus in recent terms to strengthen and develop the curriculum and quality of teaching in mathematics and English has brought about rapid improvement in the rates of pupils' learning in those areas.
- Leaders are making use of their successful experience in English and mathematics to re-focus and improve the curriculum and teaching and learning generally, so that pupils are enabled to make the same rapid progress in these other areas.
- Through good-quality classroom teaching and careful use of additional support, leaders have ensured that the progress made by disadvantaged pupils has accelerated, so that gaps in achievement between them and others have almost completely closed.
- Leaders have put in place additional resources to improve attendance. Pastoral teams, including family liaison staff, work effectively with a range of external teams and agencies. As result, attendance rates are consistently high, including for disadvantaged pupils. With very rare exceptions, where there is persistent absenteeism, it is related to extended periods of ill-health or chronic medical conditions.
- Leaders who are new to post, including new middle- and subject leaders, have not scrutinised pupils' progress in the wider range of subjects, including science, with the same rigour as in English and mathematics. While progress is strong, it does not match the rapid and often outstanding progress made in English and mathematics.

Governance of the school

- Governors work closely with school leaders. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors promote pupils' development and learning. They ensure that there is a coherent strategic plan for the school's future health and development by:
 - keeping a sharp eye on how well pupils develop personally and acquire important basic skills, by scrutinising information and through their own visits
 - ensuring that the arrangements to safeguard pupils are kept up to date and remain a key focus for the school
 - reflecting on the effectiveness of the school's leadership structure and amending it to best promote further growth towards the school's strategic priorities.
- Governors do not check, with the same detailed precision, that their ambitions for pupils are being equally well realised in all subjects, as they are in English and mathematics.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Governors and staff are well informed about risks to pupils' safety and keep a sharp eye out for any signs of abuse or neglect. They know what to do if they have a concern.
- Governors and leaders ensure that the personal development programme provides frequent opportunities for pupils to learn how to identify and manage risks to their safety, including the safe use of digital technologies.
- Staff build positive relationships with pupils, so that pupils are confident that they can turn to a trusted adult if they have a concern or need help.
- Staff work effectively with outside agencies and teams to support children and families, providing early help where it is needed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and classroom teams have high expectations of pupils. Teachers establish classroom routines and pay attention to pupils' safety, for example in minimising potential physical hazards in food technology and physical education lessons. Pupils follow instructions readily and this contributes to the strong progress they make overall.
- Teachers have very detailed knowledge of pupils' learning needs and prior achievement. They make use of this information and their own good subject knowledge to plan learning that interests and engages pupils. As a consequence, pupils apply themselves to the tasks teachers set and try hard to learn well.
- Leaders and staff use the outcomes of checks on pupils' progress to plan personalised, additional support for pupils who are struggling or who are falling behind with their work. In such instances, focused work leads to pupils making significant improvements over time.
- Planning for learning is particularly strong in English and mathematics and in personal and social development. Alongside detailed curriculum plans for progression, and

sharp, incisive checks on pupils' progress, such precise planning often leads to excellent rates of progress in those areas. Consequently, pupils from all groups and from different starting points thrive.

- Teachers make effective use of resources to support pupils' learning. These include the use of digital resources, such as programmes to support phonics, and classroom assistants both to help pupils learn and to provide emotional support. These contribute well to pupils' progress.
- During lessons, teachers and their teams use questioning well to identify where pupils have misunderstood or have a difficulty. This feedback through questioning is effective in sustaining the flow of learning.
- Teaching generally leads to effective learning over time. However, because assessment and curriculum planning is not yet developed as sharply in other subjects as it is in English and mathematics, teaching does not enable pupils to make the same excellent progress overall.
- The additional focus given to the teaching of phonics and reading is effective. As a result, pupils have improved their reading skills overall over time. Some pupils who have received personalised support have made very impressive improvement in their reading ages over relatively short periods of time. Such successes sustain learning and progress across the curriculum, and help pupils prepare well for adult life.
- The strong sense of purpose and the encouragement that pupils receive consistently from all the adults who work with them generate pupils' positive views about their learning. They are not afraid to 'have a go', and are ready to improve their work wherever they can.
- The school shares information about pupils' learning and progress with parents in highly informative annual reports. Pupils' achievement at the school is celebrated through further information on the school's wide-ranging and engaging website.
- Staff exemplify the clear expectations of the school in promoting equality and diversity. As a result, pupils learn to develop highly positive attitudes, and staff very rarely have to challenge pupils about the use of derogatory language in lessons or around the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The successful partnership between pupils and staff is underpinned by thoroughly relevant learning and detailed planning to develop all pupils' potential, whatever their starting points. As a consequence, pupils grow in confidence, both as individuals and in their learning skills. They value their education, and are ambitious and enthusiastic about their future in training or education and as young adults in society.
- The support and encouragement that staff provide spur pupils on to achieve very well. As a consequence, pupils are rightly proud of their many achievements, whether reading much more fluently, taking part in school drama productions performed in an

entirely different setting, or representing their region or the country in sport.

- With sensitivity and maturity, pupils discuss and debate issues, including, for example, disability. They listen to the ideas of others carefully and respectfully. Similarly, they show respect towards visitors, and towards the adults who work them.
- Pupils develop both respect for, and genuine interest in, those who come from cultural backgrounds that are different from their own. Pupils grow in their understanding of the diversity of British society, including, for example, acceptance of the range of different relationships, or different religious beliefs. Pupils, as they leave the school, are well positioned to play a full part in life as young adults in modern British society.
- Pupils do not only understand right from wrong; they understand that others may be less fortunate than they are, or might have particular needs. Their growing sense of social justice leads them to organise their own charitable events in support of others regionally and nationally. The positive attitudes towards others who are different from themselves are played out in pupils' day-to-day interactions with each other.
- Careful planning of the PSHE education programme supports pupils in developing incrementally their understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Pupils learn about themselves and, over time, how to develop healthy relationships with others. Older pupils learn more directly about the risks of abuse, including the possibility of abuse perpetrated by people of a similar age, and how to get help. Significant time is devoted to teaching pupils how to use the internet and social networking sites safely, helping pupils to identify and avoid risks.
- Pupils have an extensive understanding of how to keep healthy. Their learning through science, home economics and physical education is rounded and detailed. Pupils also learn how to keep well emotionally. Therapeutic aspects of music and art contribute to pupils' well-being. A wide range of opportunities to develop resilience and self-reliance makes a strong contribution to pupils' mental well-being.
- The close and effective work of the school with other teams and agencies plays an important role in promoting pupils' mental wellness. Pupils know that they can get effective help if they have an issue.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils typically manage themselves with assured good manners, showing consistently deep consideration for others, both pupils and staff. On the rare occasions when pupils' individual needs make it very difficult for them to manage themselves properly, they use effectively the techniques staff have taught them.
- Staff are highly skilled at knowing when to intervene with additional support at an early stage to help pupils, when needed, to re-establish their positive behaviours. As a consequence, instances of low-level disruption are rare.
- Pupils understand the harm that bullying causes and know absolutely that it is wrong. They contribute to the school's work to tackle any form of bullying by making sure that staff know if they have a concern. Pupils are confident that staff will help them and deal with issues. Almost all the parents with whom inspectors talked agree. Pupils

confirm that when there is an instance of bullying, staff deal with it effectively.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Across all key stages, including in the sixth form, pupils make good and sometimes excellent progress, taking into account their very varied starting points.
- The progress that pupils make in English and mathematics is particularly strong. The highly effective curriculum, coupled with effective teaching, ensure that pupils develop basic skills very well, often from very low starting points. The vast majority of pupils meet the school's demanding targets, and a large proportion of pupils exceed them.
- Careful analysis and evaluation of pupils' progress in English and mathematics enable leaders and teachers to focus additional support, so that pupils at risk of falling behind are supported very well to catch up and make further progress.
- Highly effective phonics teaching means that pupils develop the skills they need to develop their reading and writing skills. As a result, pupils develop confidence in their reading and their ability to make sense of, and sound out unfamiliar words. This supports pupils very effectively in engaging in learning across the whole curriculum.
- The intense work of staff to develop pupils' reading and communication skills, in key stages 1 and 2 in particular, paves the way for pupils to accelerate their learning in later key stages and in the sixth form across a wider range to subjects and in preparation for a wide range of accreditation. Pupils understand the importance of being able to read well and many enjoy reading for pleasure.
- The early work done to secure good basic skills means that an increasing proportion of pupils are able to succeed and attain well at a range of levels, from pre-entry level to GCSE and occasionally to A level.
- The wide range of qualifications, including in vocational skills, focuses on demonstrating pupils' readiness for the world of work and adult living. It reflects the effective curriculum and teaching that meet pupils' interests and that challenge them at the right level for their ability.
- The most able pupils make strong progress from their starting points. They maintain good rates of progress across key stages, so that at the end of key stage 4 and the sixth form, they complete externally accredited courses successfully.
- There is no discernible difference between the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and others. Boys achieve as well as girls. The gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others have narrowed quickly, as the quality of curriculum planning and the quality of teaching have improved over time.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Provision in the sixth form is well led and ably managed. Leaders, along with the school's governors, maintain high expectations of students' achievement and personal

development.

- The careful curriculum planning which corresponds to students' interests and ambitions is accompanied by effective teaching. This leads to improvements in students' achievement. As a consequence, students maintain the good progress that they have made in earlier key stages and many accelerate their progress further.
- The strong and positive relationships between staff and students are effective in promoting students' development, resilience and readiness to leave school and take the next steps in their education or training. As a result, students almost always complete their courses and with considerable success.
- Students have frequent and wide-ranging opportunities to gain experience of, and insight into the world of work. This brings their 'classroom learning' to life and is an important and effective contribution in helping students achieve well.
- Teachers use their very strong knowledge of students' needs to plan learning which supports their continuing progress and development. As a consequence, students enjoy their learning, adapting quickly to the demands of new courses in a new context as they begin study in the sixth-form setting some distance from the main site.
- Leaders and teachers are adept at supporting students in managing this significant change. They use it as part of students' personal development, thus preparing them well for life after school and meeting new people in new contexts.
- The school's work to support students' personal development is strong. The PSHE education programme provides a rich variety of opportunities for students to learn about wider society and the contribution they can make to it. The recent acquisition of a high-street shop run by students supports their enterprise learning but also provides a context for putting important interpersonal skills into practice.
- The school's systems to keep students safe and safeguard them are effective. Well-trained staff are vigilant, keeping a sharp eye out for any signs that cause concern about students' well-being. The PSHE education programme provides students with opportunities to learn about risks to their well-being and how to manage them. As a consequence, students are well prepared for adult life.
- Staff ensure that students continue to receive high-quality independent careers advice and guidance in the sixth form. Staff work very closely with local colleges and a range of businesses and social enterprises. They ensure that students access well-planned, relevant training and education as they leave the school. As a consequence, with the exception of a very few students who have ill-health, all students had a secure place for further education and training in 2016/17.

School details

Unique reference number	138652
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	10036532

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	165
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	28
Appropriate authority	The Cedars Academy Trust
Chair	Gill Morton
Headteacher	Martin Flowers
Telephone number	0191 487 4595
Website	www.cedarsacademy.org.uk
Email address	enquires@cedarsacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 September 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school provides education for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, between the ages of three and 19. At the time of the inspection, there were no children in the early years.
- Since the previous inspection, the current headteacher and a new chair of the

governing body have taken up post.

- The school's senior and middle leadership teams have been restructured to meet the changing needs of the school.
- The school's pupil population, following a decline, is rising again steadily. There is an increase in the proportion of pupils who have primary needs relating to autistic spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school provides education for sixth-form students on a separate site.
- The proportion of pupils coming from disadvantaged backgrounds is significantly higher than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors talked with pupils informally throughout the inspection and met with a representative sample. Inspectors took into account pupils' views expressed in the online survey and considered the outcome of surveys of pupils' views conducted by the school.
- The views of staff given in Ofsted's questionnaire were also taken into account, as were their views expressed in the school's own surveys.
- Inspectors observed teaching and how well pupils learned in each year group throughout the school. Inspectors looked closely at a wide sample of pupils' books and files.
- Inspectors scrutinised a large number of school documents and records, including curriculum planning, records of pupils' progress and pupils' attendance, and the school's arrangements to keep pupils safe and safeguarded.
- Inspectors took into account the views of parents, provided through Ofsted's online survey. They also talked with some parents at the end of the school day, and considered the outcomes of surveys of parents' views conducted by the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with a wide range of leaders and met with members of the governing body.

Inspection team

Chris Campbell, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Zoe Westley

Ofsted Inspector

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