

Inspection of Cedar House School

Low Bentham, Via Lancaster, North Yorkshire LA2 7DD

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 June 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy school. Pupils get the support they need to succeed. Pupils are well cared for. They attend well. Behaviour is positive around the school. Bullying is rare but, if it does happen, staff deal with it promptly. Pupils trust staff to sort out any problems that might arise.

Leaders' vision for the school is about 'changing lives and building futures'. Many pupils join the school after missing a lot of education. Staff understand the individual needs of pupils well. Pupils start to make progress quickly once they have settled in the school. Pupils study an ambitious range of subjects. Pupils' learning is strong in most subjects. However, in a small number of lessons, teachers are not as confident in the subject content as they need to be. Leaders recognise the importance of pupils being competent readers. The teaching of reading is a strength. Pupils also learn about themselves and the world around them. Pupils enjoy the many trips and activities on offer to them. Pupils develop the life skills they need to help them be successful when they leave the school.

The majority of parents are pleased with the support their child receives from the school. Many parents speak highly of the school. One parent said, 'This school has not only changed my child's life but our life as a family.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have developed a broad and ambitious curriculum. There are effective and well-structured plans for each subject. Staff regularly revisit important learning to help pupils remember what they have learnt. Pupils' work shows that their learning develops well over time.

Staff regularly check what pupils know and can do. Most teachers are confident in their subject knowledge. These teachers are quick to spot what pupils have misunderstood. They then adapt the lesson swiftly to plug gaps in pupils' learning. However, some teachers do not pick up on pupils' misconceptions as much as they need to. This is because some teachers lack the subject knowledge they need to support pupils as well as they might.

Pupils have a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Their additional needs are met well. Leaders gather a lot of information on pupils before they join the school. Specialist clinical staff check what help pupils need. Leaders use this information to create a personalised plan for each pupil. Staff implement pupils' support plans diligently.

Pupils who join the school have often been out of education for some time or have struggled to learn in their previous school. Leaders check the reading knowledge of all pupils when they join. All pupils have reading for pleasure on their timetables. Pupils read a stimulating range of books and magazines. Staff carefully design

reading plans for pupils so that the books match each pupil's interests and reading level.

Leaders have high expectations of behaviour and attendance. These expectations are shared by staff. Staff implement the school's behaviour policy consistently. Behaviour is generally good around the school. There are pupils who struggle to keep calm at times. This can sometimes lead to them getting upset and reacting poorly to other pupils. Staff are quick to intervene and resolve issues when they arise.

Most pupils attend well and are punctual. Many pupils who have previously had poor school attendance, settle into full-time education quickly when they join Cedar House. There are still a very small number of pupils who struggle to attend. Leaders work closely with parents and external agencies to improve attendance for these pupils.

Staff support pupils' personal development effectively. Pupils have opportunities to try out new things. For example, all classes have an anti-bullying ambassador and student council representative. Pupils are proud of the leadership roles they take on in school. There is a taught programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). There are lessons in relationships and sex education (RSE). Parents have been consulted on the school's RSE policy. Important topics from the PSHCE curriculum are reinforced in other subjects. For example, in food technology, pupils learn how to cook healthy meals for themselves. Pupils learn about different cultures and religions in their faith and beliefs lessons.

There is a strong focus on preparing pupils for their next steps in education, employment or training. Pupils are given opportunities to develop their social skills through community activities. Pupils study vocational subjects such as construction and animal care. Older pupils get advice on careers from an independent advisor. Pupils go on regular visits to local colleges. Pupils learn how to travel independently. In recent years most pupils have moved on successfully to further education.

The proprietor ensures the independent school standards are met. There are robust school governance systems in place. School policies and plans are kept under regular review. The proprietor is rightly proud of how the school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Leaders have high expectations of staff. Staff are regularly trained how to meet the additional needs of pupils in the school. Leaders are aware that some staff need more subject-specific training. Staff feel well-supported by leaders, including support with managing their workload. Leaders communicate well with parents and other stakeholders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a very strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff build positive relationships with pupils. This helps pupils feel confident about sharing any worries they may have. The proprietor ensures that all staff know how to keep children safe. Staff are trained in child protection and wider safeguarding such as health and safety. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and her deputies receive enhanced training. The DSL is quick to identify any emerging safeguarding concern. She takes prompt action to get additional help for pupils who need it. The DSL keeps detailed records of any referrals and their outcomes.

Leaders carry out robust checks on all adults that work or volunteer at the school. The proprietor closely monitors the school's child protection and safeguarding arrangements.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- Some teachers do not have sufficient specialist knowledge to support pupils to learn the planned curriculum effectively. This is leading to some pupils not being secure in their understanding of important concepts and ideas before they move onto new topics. Leaders need to review the training and support provided to teachers and ensure that all teachers are implementing curriculum plans effectively.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	112456
DfE registration number	815/6041
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10220616
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Witherslack Group
Chair	Phil Jones
Headteacher	Kathryn Taylor
Annual fees (day pupils)	£66,540 to £92,000
Telephone number	01524 261149
Website	www.witherslackgroup.co.uk/cedar-house-school
Email address	Cedar-House@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 to 14 February 2019

Information about this school

- Cedar House School is a residential special school for pupils aged seven to 18 years with social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils may also have moderate learning difficulties, a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder or attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder.
- Cedar House School is part of the Witherslack Group, a national provider of specialist education and care for children and young people with SEND.
- The school is registered to admit up to 88 pupils, aged between seven and 18 years. There are currently 83 pupils on the school roll, most of whom have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does use any alternative education provision.
- The school has no religious denomination.
- The school's previous inspection was in February 2019 when its overall effectiveness was judged as good. The residential provision was last inspected in September 2021 when the overall judgement was outstanding.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to carry out this standard inspection earlier in the cycle than was previously planned. This was because of concerns received by the DfE about how effectively the school was safeguarding its pupils. This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, including those responsible for safeguarding, and the proprietor. They also met with a range of other staff and members of the school's clinical team.
- Inspectors undertook a tour of the school and visited the classrooms, social areas and other facilities. They checked the school buildings and grounds against the independent school standards.

- Inspectors did deep dives into English (including reading), mathematics, food technology and art. The deep dive for each subject included a meeting with curriculum leaders and a review of subject documents and plans. The deep dive also involved lesson visits, meetings with pupils and scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at the curriculum plans of all other subjects and visited a range of other lessons.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school throughout the day, including breaktimes and in lessons. Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experience of the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised school documents and the arrangements to safeguard pupils. This included checking the school's safeguarding systems and the single central record of staff recruitment checks, meeting with the DSL and speaking with staff and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered 23 responses to Ofsted's Parent View and surveys completed by 39 staff and five pupils.
- Inspectors spoke to representatives from the local authorities who commission places at the school.

Inspection team

Patricia Head, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lynda Florence

Ofsted Inspector

Michele Costello

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children’s social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children’s services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022