

Inspection of a good school: The Cedars Academy

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

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 January 2023

Outcome

The Cedars Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at Cedars Academy. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils and students attend at one of the two sites. These have been designed to best meet pupils' individual needs. School leaders have designed pathways which reflect the very different needs of the pupils. This helps teachers to plan teaching and learning to best meet the needs of all pupils. Staff have extremely detailed knowledge of each pupil and student and have developed strong, caring relationships with them all.

Most pupils behave exceptionally well. They move around the school calmly and with great respect. There are some pupils who have specific needs which lead them to struggle with self-regulation. Staff respond to these pupils with skill and patience, supporting them to learn how to better regulate themselves. Bullying is rare. Records show that when it does happen, staff act quickly to stop it. This helps pupils to feel safe in school.

Pupils trust the adults who work with them. They feel that they can always go to an adult if they need support with a concern. Staff support pupils with SEND skilfully. Pupils who find communication difficult are well supported in their interactions with staff.

Pupils rise to the high expectations that adults have for them. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Many parents made similar comments about the school, such as one parent who said, 'I think the staff at the school make a huge effort to support every child to do their best, according to their own individual needs and challenges.'

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

Leaders know pupils extremely well. They are acutely aware that pupils have a wide range of specific needs. Some of these pupils are provided with a highly specialised curriculum. Leaders ensure that advice from therapists and other professionals is

understood by staff. Leaders are determined that all pupils should 'achieve to their full potential'.

The school's curriculum makes it clear what individual pupils must know and be able to do in all subjects. Leaders have planned this learning carefully so that it is taught in a way which helps pupils to build up knowledge and skills over time. Staff make skilful adaptations to the curriculum for pupils who have more complex needs. For example, ensuring learning through exploration is built into lessons throughout the day. In mathematics, students visit local shops to develop their money skills while also developing their independent life skills.

Leaders have developed a carefully considered approach to reading. This begins at the earliest stages with enjoying shared stories with an adult to fluent reading of texts reflecting GCSE pathways. The books in school are carefully matched to the reading ability of the pupils and their interests.

The curriculum has been very carefully planned and is implemented effectively for most of the subjects in school. However, for a small number of subjects, school leaders continue to develop the leadership of subject areas. This means that some subjects are not consistently taught at a level which helps pupils to move forward in their learning as well as they do in other subjects in school.

Leaders and staff promote pupils' personal development effectively. Pupils enjoy the many enrichment activities offered by the school, for instance Gateshead Kestrel Sporting clubs, sensory experience clubs and holiday sessions. Pupils experience many trips and visits, including international trips to Italy and France.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the support leaders provide for their workload and well-being. Trustees are keen to support the school well and provide effective challenge to leaders. Trustees are developing their roles further to support and monitor the school's continued developments.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Leaders ensure that the required checks are carried out when recruiting new staff. Training and induction records are carefully maintained and managed. All staff have regular and relevant training on how to keep pupils safe. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. Leaders know pupils, families and the community well. Staff engage appropriately with outside agencies to provide help and support for pupils when needed.

Adults plan activities to help pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. These are relevant to the specific needs of the pupils and the potential risks they may face.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subject areas, the school's curriculum is not fully developed, because a small number of subject leaders are new to their roles and are in the early stages of monitoring the implementation of their subject area. Therefore, they do not yet provide appropriate levels of challenge to teachers in order to make sure that the curriculum is implemented as intended. Leaders should ensure that new subject leaders develop the necessary skills to lead their area of responsibility effectively.
- Recent changes in school leadership and at trust level have impacted on the overall leadership in school. At trust level, there is a lack of clarity over who will support school leaders and in which area. Trustees should ensure that these roles are implemented rapidly in order to ensure that appropriate levels of support and accountability are maintained.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2017.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138652
Local authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	10242065
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	239
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	31
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Andrew Thompson
Headteachers	Michelle O'Reilly and Julie Vincent
Website	www.cedarstrust.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a two site all through school.
- The school uses three alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the two headteachers, the director of inclusion, the deputy headteachers and other senior leaders. The inspectors also met with trustees and the school improvement partner.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, communication mathematics and personal development. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed

the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work or other evidence of the educational experience of the pupils.

- Inspectors visited pupils across the school, including children in the early years foundation stage and students in sixth form.
- Inspectors met with the school's designated safeguarding lead. The inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's single central record, which includes recruitment checks made on staff.
- The views of staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey were considered. The responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, were also taken into account. Inspectors spoke to pupils in school.

Inspection team

Catherine Beard, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

David Penny

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 2023