

Inspection of a good school: The Cedar School

Redbridge Lane, Nursling, Southampton, Hampshire SO16 0XN

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 January 2024

Outcome

The Cedar School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a very happy and positive school community. Both adults and pupils enjoy being here, and their smiles and upbeat attitudes convey this clearly. Because staff get to know the pupils so well, relationships are strong, and everyone feels safe and secure. There is a strong shared commitment to making sure pupils achieve everything they are capable of. This sense of aspiration, combined with a caring approach, means pupils develop high levels of confidence. Pupils of all ages proactively invite visitors to join in with their learning. The youngest children warmly invite everyone to join in with their song time, and older pupils eagerly share their learning about 'Romeo and Juliet'.

All pupils behave exceptionally well. They are active participants in their learning. This is because of the well-established routines and expectations, which are consistently followed by everyone. Pupils are polite to each other and to adults. External professionals, from health and therapy services, are regularly involved in classroom activities. They also share the same high expectations of the pupils they support. They work closely and effectively with school staff to deliver personalised care. Staff are focused on promoting independence at every opportunity, and pupils' opinions and preferences are listened to and acted upon.

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

The school's curriculum is organised to meet the diverse range of needs of the pupils in the school. The learning provided includes age-appropriate, interesting and motivating experiences from which pupils successfully learn about the world around them. Pupils follow one of two curriculum pathways: 'Formal/Semi Formal' or 'Sensory/Pre-Formal'. Within the curriculum, pupils have individual learning targets, which are based on their education, health and care (EHC) plans outcomes. In lessons, these outcomes are broken down into smaller steps to ensure that pupils make progress towards meeting them. The school is currently implementing a new assessment system. Once this is fully embedded, leaders and staff expect to gain an improved overview of the progress pupils are making and where the curriculum on offer needs further refinement.

The holistic needs of every pupil are prioritised. To meet these with minimal disruption to class-based curriculum lessons, the school has introduced a 'Targeted Support Team'. These specialist support assistants focus their expertise on planning and delivering personal care to pupils across the school. Pupils are encouraged to communicate their preferences, and to develop their voice and agency in their personal care routines. Meanwhile, classroom staff continue to seamlessly deliver the individualised teaching and learning. This results in the integration of care, health and therapy into the curriculum. Every activity is creatively turned into a personalised learning opportunity. For the pupils who will rely on care support in their future, this forms a vital part of their learning and prepares them well for their future.

Teachers help pupils to enjoy reading. In the early years class, children are surrounded by rhymes, stories and songs. They develop their communication by, for example, learning Makaton or by recognising symbols. As appropriate, pupils learn to read through phonics, and this helps them to become independent and confident readers. The school has identified the texts which are important for pupils to read as they go through the school. Staff carefully adapt these, so that all pupils can access them. For example, the welcoming library in the heart of the school contains symbol supported versions of 'Animal Farm' and Shakespeare plays and a collection of sensory and massage stories. This helps everyone to enjoy storytelling.

A unique feature of this school is the extensive range of lunchtime clubs available. All pupils attend at least one a week, if not more. These activities broaden pupils' experiences of the world, with many expressing their enjoyment of newspaper club, choir, or story club. Connections with local community groups means that there is also a wealth of sporting activities for pupils to enjoy. Older pupils gain appropriate accreditations which show what they have achieved in their time at Cedar. They are well supported to develop their understanding about the world of work. The school has plans to broaden the range of available work experience in the community to prepare pupils even better for future employment.

Governors and leaders have a shared moral purpose to ensure the pupils have the very best education. They support the staff team to pursue a broad range of professional development opportunities. This is how leaders ensure that staff are well equipped to meet the diverse and evolving needs of the pupils and results in a culture of collaboration and teamwork, where staff feel valued.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has recently implemented a new assessment system. They are in the process of transferring from the previous system to use this across all subjects for both curriculum pathways. The school should continue the work to fully implement this system to ensure there is a clear overview of the progress pupils are making through the planned curriculum.
- There are currently not as many opportunities for pupils to access work experience placements in the wider community as leaders intend. This means some pupils could be better prepared for future employment. The school should continue to broaden the range of settings that pupils can visit to experience the world of work.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2014.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	116622
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10296245
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	91
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-chairs of governing body	Ginny Assinder and Sally Sampson
Headteacher	Neil Revell
Website	www.cedarschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils between the ages of 3 and 16 years who have a physical disability and other needs, including specific learning difficulty, visual impairment, other difficulty/disability, hearing impairment, speech, language and communication difficulty, autistic spectrum disorder, social, emotional and mental health, multi-sensory impairment, moderate learning difficulty, severe learning difficulty and profound and multiple learning difficulty.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- 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 and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector also met with the representatives of the governing body, including the co-chairs of governors. The lead inspector also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading and communication, mathematics, personal, social and health education. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including the free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed and scrutinised a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' plans for improving the school, minutes of governor meetings and records of attendance and behaviour incidents.

Inspection team

Jo Petch, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alan Johnson

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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