

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Cedar Children's Academy

Cedar Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 2JP

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 October 2024

Outcome

Cedar Children's Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The executive headteacher of this school is Kirstie Jones. The school is part of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Stuart Gardner, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gerard Newman.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to be part of this aspirational and caring school. They proudly contribute to the wider school community. Pupils act as play leaders and organise playground games and sports. Older pupils are trained as peer mentors to help younger pupils resolve friendship worries. In their roles as school councillors, pupils take part in surveys on school life and decision-making about improvements. Pupils make friends throughout the school and look forward to social times when they can play together.

Adults are excellent role models and inspire pupils to be their best selves. Pupils strive to live up to the school's high aspirations. In lessons, they focus intently and reflect thoughtfully on their learning. Pupils say the best thing about the school is that teachers always make learning interesting. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about the local history they find on school trips, such as visits to Rochester Museum and Cathedral.

Pupils consistently behave well. They walk around the school calmly and are considerate to visitors and each other. Pupils have a strong understanding of British values and why they are important in society. They learn to respect different beliefs and viewpoints and know it is never right to treat people unfairly.

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

The school has developed an inspiring curriculum. It is broad and well sequenced, building towards ambitious goals for pupils. Adults are knowledgeable about the most important parts of the curriculum that must be taught, so pupils' learning builds securely.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They are clear in their explanations so that pupils fully understand new learning and do not fall behind. For example, when learning about the number two, teachers show Reception children precisely how to write the number in the air with their fingers. Teachers model many different examples of two objects and actions. Pupils become fluent at recognising quantities. When older pupils learn about the Victorians, teachers explain the meaning of contextual vocabulary, such as 'bonnet' and 'shilling'.

The school is working on making sure that all pupils remember what they have learned in every area of the curriculum. This work is already well established in some areas, where pupils apply what they know automatically. For example, in mathematics, right from starting in the Nursery, pupils practise their learning daily. They quickly become confident with numbers and calculate simple operations. In geography, when learning about climate, pupils draw on their knowledge of how close continents are to the equator. This helps them to think independently about why plants and animals need to adapt for survival. In some other areas of the curriculum, pupils' learning is not as secure. The school is continuing to develop teaching so that pupils learn equally well in every curriculum area.

The school recognised that early reading was not taught rigorously enough, and some pupils struggled to become fully fluent readers. A new early reading curriculum has recently been introduced. In the early years foundation stage and key stage 1, teachers have expert subject knowledge. The school monitors and identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and is vigilant about meeting their needs. They adapt their teaching so that pupils, including pupils with SEND, learn the same curriculum. Checks on pupils' learning are used well, and teachers correct misconceptions quickly. Any pupils who struggle to keep up are given frequent, tailored support to achieve as well as they can. The books that pupils read help them to practise the sounds they are learning. The school is providing training so that all staff know how to teach pupils how to read and spell words accurately.

The school uses every opportunity to introduce pupils to new experiences and build their confidence. Sports competitions, musical concerts and poetry performances all serve to highlight pupils' talents. Pupils know the school attributes and proudly strive to live up to them. Pupils respect each other's right to learn without interruption. They know that if anyone is treated unfairly, they should not be bystanders, but should help them. Pupils learn about online risks. They know how to recognise their emotions and ways of helping themselves if they feel angry or anxious.

Leaders focus their work sharply on the areas that benefit pupils most. The trust creates a climate of professional openness and honesty. It supports the school effectively, for

example, through opportunities for training and professional development. The school considers staff well-being and workload when changes are needed. Staff feel valued and are proud to work at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some areas of the curriculum, pupils do not have frequent opportunities to revisit the most important knowledge they have learned and to commit it to long-term memory. This means that sometimes pupils have gaps in their knowledge and struggle to build their understanding securely. The school should continue to develop teachers' pedagogy so that pupils have opportunities to connect past and present learning and achieve equally well across the whole curriculum.
- The school has recently introduced a new early reading curriculum. The teaching of phonics is not consistently secure across the whole school. The school should continue to train staff so that all pupils have the support they need to read fluently.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in May 2019.

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	142817
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10341803
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	655
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gerard Newman
CEO of the trust	Stuart Gardner
Headteacher	Tracey Baillie
Website	www.cedarchildrensacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 September 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Cedar Children's Academy joined the Thinking Schools Academy Trust in July 2016.
- The headteacher started in post in January 2024.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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.
- During the inspection, the lead inspector met with the executive headteacher, the headteacher and the senior leadership team. They met with the CEO and other leaders from the trust. They also met with members of the academy governing body.

- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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' interest first.
- Throughout the inspection, the lead inspector met with groups of staff. She also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- The lead inspector met some parents at the beginning of the day and considered the views expressed through Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Jo Brinkley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Hylands

Ofsted Inspector

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