



The Cedar School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116622
Local Authority Southampton
Inspection number 290567
Inspection dates 3–4 October 2006
Reporting inspector Jacque Cook

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Redbridge Lane
School category	Foundation		Nursling
Age range of pupils	3–16		Southampton SO16 0XN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02380734205
Number on roll (school)	53	Fax number	02380738231
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Stephen Thomas
		Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Howells
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002		

Age group 3–16	Inspection dates 3–4 October 2006	Inspection number 290567
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Cedar is a school for pupils with physical difficulties where the range of ability has widened over the years and the number on roll has fallen significantly. Just under a half of the pupils have additional moderate, severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. There are several pupils with sensory impairment and a few with acquired brain injury. One child is of nursery age and there are no reception age children.

Although there is no sixth form provision, there are, temporarily, two students who are older than 16. A very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. The headteacher has been in post for just over a year. The school's outreach service to other schools is currently under review because the member of staff is seconded to another school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Cedar is a good and effective school where all pupils are included extremely well. This is because the headteacher provides effective leadership and has developed a very clear direction for the school's future. In the short time he has been in post there has been a good track record of significant and far reaching changes that demonstrate a good capacity to improve further. Most importantly, steps have been taken towards developing the management skills of a range of staff. For example, staff have worked exceptionally well with outside agencies to improve lunch arrangements. As a result, healthy food, prepared appropriately, is enjoyed by the pupils and there is a noticeable increase in their concentration in the afternoons. Changes to the staffing structure have improved links from primary to secondary education. Subject leaders now have a clearer role, although they are not yet sufficiently involved in monitoring teaching and how well pupils are achieving. New procedures to track pupils' progress are beginning to give information about how well they are doing, but there is not enough detail to set precise targets for individual pupils. There is good practice, for example, in Years 3 to 6 where targets are established for all subjects. This works well because targets on pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) concentrate on what the pupil needs to do next. This provides a clear focus for teaching and raises standards. Elsewhere, the quality of IEPs varies. There are too many instances where targets are not specific enough and, as a result, they are difficult for pupils to understand and meet.

The good level of care and guidance for the pupils is partly due to the outstanding quality of the partnerships the school has developed. Regular management team meetings that include senior therapists and the school nurse are effective. Links with parents are developed well and their views, and those of pupils, are sought and acted on. As a result, pupils feel safe and enjoy school. Their good personal development leads to excellent behaviour. They contribute well to the community and learn to be independent. Although standards are well below those of pupils of a similar age, given their starting points pupils' achievement is good. A few, more able, pupils gain GCSE grades. The increase in resources for information and communication technology (ICT) has led to a marked improvement in pupils' progress and contributes to the good quality of teaching and learning. Interactive boards, for example, are used far more by teachers to make lessons exciting so they capture the interest of pupils. Lesson plans, however, often lack important details and as a result, there are instances where pupils are not given work that is hard enough. The curriculum is satisfactory. The quality and standards at the Foundation Stage are good. The continuing use of the Foundation Stage curriculum for Years 1 and 2 is working well because they learn well through play. This contributes to the good progress made by young pupils. The music, art, drama and dance (MADD) and creative arts courses for older pupils broadens their learning well. There are, however, not enough opportunities for pupils to develop economic well-being and too little is planned for those few pupils that remain or return to the school after Year 11.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that work is always suitably challenging for pupils and their targets are specific and achievable.
- Improve the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and the progress made by pupils.
- Improve the planning for those remaining at school temporarily after they are 16.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The good achievement and progress of the pupils is largely due to the good quality of the teaching and learning. Many pupils have very low levels of attainment, however, all gain awards at suitable levels including a few at GCSE level. There are very few pupils who do not do as well as they should and this is usually because there has been a medical or an emotional difficulty that has slowed their learning. Otherwise, there is no measurable difference between the progress of different groups of pupils in the school.

Pupils have made significant progress in improving their ICT skills. New equipment, good technological support and more effective teaching have contributed to their success. Progress in science is slower than in other subjects. This is largely caused through staff not establishing what needs to be taught next for each pupil. Where targets are clearly set for pupils many make good progress towards meeting them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Many parents in their responses to the questionnaire commented on how much their children enjoyed coming to school. The pupils themselves are confident and very clear about their likes and dislikes. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils on the school council take their responsibilities very seriously. They talk animatedly about the difference they hope to make through developing a sensory landscape at a local park, having tried out prototypes in school. Additionally, they contribute well to the community through various fundraising activities for charities. The changes to school lunches have contributed to many adopting a healthy lifestyle. They talk about vegetables and fruit being 'good for you'. Pupils take steps to keep safe and will talk with staff if they are concerned. Young pupils commented 'You should use a zebra crossing' or 'stay close to who you are with when near a busy road'. Pupils learn how to cook and look after themselves as part of the lifeskills that help to develop their economic well-being. However, they do not gain a sufficient understanding of the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The teaching and support staff have very good knowledge of the needs of the pupils. They use this well to help pupils learn. Praise and encouragement are used effectively to maintain concentration and build self-esteem. As a result, pupils are very eager to tackle new things. Children at the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, for example, explored the texture, smell and appearance of vegetables and found out how pungent onions are. Good use is made of communication aids. Pupils respond well to clear signing from staff. In one class, text was supported by symbols for those that needed it, so they were able to read out loud. Staff programme electronic communication aids well so that pupils use them effectively to show their needs and their knowledge. ICT is used effectively to support learning. In one outstanding lesson, pupils studied the school logo in detail on the interactive board, and then they set out to create their own logo for the side of a mini-bus.

There is a lack of consistency in lesson planning. Often there is not sufficient information about what the pupils are expected to learn or how work will be varied so all pupils have the right level of support to do well. This contributes to instances where pupils are not given work that is sufficiently challenging and, as a result, their progress slows. Support staff are skilled in helping learning but there are times when there are too many and, in these instances, they are not well directed by teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Whilst satisfactory overall, the curriculum has rightly been identified as an area for development by the school. Much has been done to select appropriate courses for less able pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and there is now a broad range that leads to qualifications. The success of continuing the Foundation Stage curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 has led to more effective learning through the play activities. A strong sensory curriculum helps those with profound and multiple learning difficulties to learn effectively. Use of the hydrotherapy pool, for example, develops self esteem and physical skills well. For older pupils, the strong focus on creative arts has developed pupils' communication skills as well as their self esteem. Good links enable one pupil to study mathematics to examination level at a local secondary school. There are too few opportunities for pupils to take part in activities that improve their economic well-being. Strategies such as enterprises where pupils learn about the world of work through a group activity are not included. Not enough planning has been done to provide appropriate courses for pupils who are over the school leaving age to ensure their skills and experience broadens while they await their college placements.

The choir, a lunchtime activity, is well attended and clearly enjoyed by the members who join in enthusiastically.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

An outstanding feature of care and guidance is the way different agencies work together for the benefit of the pupil and their parents. This makes a major contribution towards pupils' good progress and personal development. The home-school co-ordinator is effective in ensuring that communication with parents is good. The introduction of the Cedar Chat weekly newsletter is appreciated by parents for the information it provides and the articles by pupils. Staff are very committed to ensuring pupils' well-being. Levels of supervision are high, particularly at break and lunchtimes. This is part of the robust arrangements for ensuring pupils' safekeeping. Close monitoring of the progress and well-being of looked after children and good contact with parents, carers and members of the social services helps to deal with any difficulties quickly so that the pupil is able to learn.

The monitoring of academic progress is not consistent. Recent work by staff to ensure they assess pupils' attainment accurately is helping to show their achievement. Although there are good opportunities for pupils to develop their independence, they are not able to judge how well they are making progress towards their IEP targets because they are set out in language that is too difficult for them to understand.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership and management of the school have helped staff to make changes successfully to improve the provision for the pupils. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and well-informed by the views of parents, pupils and other professionals. Difficult decisions about finances and staffing have been tackled well by the headteacher and a blueprint for the future established. The development of the roles of the subject leaders is moving forward quickly. They are not yet, however, monitoring their subjects to gain a clear insight into the effectiveness of teaching and learning. As a result, there are inconsistencies in lesson planning and the setting of targets for pupils. The monitoring of pupils' progress has improved but too little use is made of data, such as levels achieved to track how well pupils are doing and to enable any slowing of progress to be tackled quickly. The governing body is committed and supportive but is not involved in checking and evaluating the work of the school.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed seeing you in your lessons, looking at your work and talking with you. May I give a big thank you to those of you who talked with me about your school and told me what makes it good. It was very helpful.

This is what I liked about the school.

- You have a good school.
- You make good progress and your behaviour is excellent.
- Teaching is good.
- Your headteacher has made some good changes to the school which is run well. The staff are making improvements so it is easier for you to learn.
- Staff take good care of you and you learn to do many things on your own.
- I agree with you that your new lunch time arrangements are good.
- Staff are good at working with your parents and other people to solve problems.
- You have really improved in ICT.

This is what I have asked the school to do now.

- Plan lessons well so you do not find work too easy and make your targets clear so you can achieve them.
- Get better at checking that everything is as good as possible.
- Make sure that those aged over 16 that come back to the school have appropriate things to learn.

With best wishes

Jacque Cook

Lead inspector