



Cedar House School

Independent Special School

Inspection report

DfES Registration Number	909/6037
Unique Reference Number	112456
Inspection number	296791
Inspection dates	24 – 25 January 2007
Reporting inspector	Mrs Caroline Broomhead HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

Age group 7-16	Published 19/02/2007	Reference no. 296791
-------------------	-------------------------	-------------------------

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Cedar House School is an approved residential special school for up to 88 pupils aged 7 to 16 years who experience emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. Many pupils have found it difficult to stay in mainstream education and have experienced disrupted schooling prior to joining the school. Some also have complex needs arising from their learning difficulties or mental health problems. Of the 60 pupils on roll, 44 are resident during term time and the others are day pupils. All pupils have statements of special educational needs and are placed at the school by local authorities. A quarter are in public care. The school opened in 1976 and is part of the Witherslack group. It was last inspected by Ofsted in 2001. The school is also inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) annually and its last inspection was in November 2006.

Evaluation of the school

Cedar House is a well-established school which provides a good quality of education. Provision for the pupils' care and welfare is outstanding. As a result of the good teaching and high standards of care, the pupils make good progress in their learning and outstanding progress in their personal and social development. The headteacher and her senior managers provide clear direction for the school. They have established a culture of self-review which permeates all aspects of school life and involves all staff and pupils. As a result, the school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development and has continued to improve since its last inspection. The proprietor takes a keen interest. The very good support and challenge which the Witherslack group offers is valued by the school. The school is held in high regard by pupils, parents and placing authorities.

Quality of education

The school provides a good curriculum which has been carefully constructed to be relevant to the ages, needs and interests of its pupils. Pupils in the lower school experience an integrated day which supports their emotional as well as

their academic development very well. In Key Stage 4 there is an emphasis on work-related learning and preparing the pupils for adult life. The development of communication skills and teaching of life skills are key elements of the 'Leavers' Package'. The careers education programme begins in Year 8 and gradually builds up to include work experience placements and part-time college placements, which the older pupils thoroughly enjoy.

A broad range of subjects is offered, based on the National Curriculum, and appropriate emphasis is given to pupils' personal and social development. The pupils benefit from links with local schools, for example to study music or a modern foreign language. However, these subjects are otherwise underdeveloped and the school is planning to improve them. The development of pupils' literacy skills across all subjects is a strength. Intensive support programmes address individual literacy and learning difficulties. The curriculum has been adapted to interest pupils, to capture their imagination and to enable them to reinforce their learning in realistic settings. A focus on active learning within the school and residential setting along with excellent use of local community facilities brings the curriculum to life. The pupils speak excitedly about the wide range of activities they enjoy taking part in. As one local authority commented, 'the school goes the extra mile'. This is exemplified in the steps it takes to enable day pupils to take part in after-school clubs and events.

The curriculum is kept under regular review. Detailed long and medium term planning supports teachers' lesson planning well. The quality of teaching is good, strengthened by the team approach of teachers and support staff. The staff know their pupils well and plan their lessons so that each one can experience success. The pupils respond positively to the individual attention and encouraging support they receive. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect and high expectations. Any incidents of inappropriate behaviour are quickly and effectively dealt with, so minimising the disruption to pupils' learning. This contributes significantly to their outstanding personal and social development. Some outstanding features of the teaching include staff being passionate about their subjects and pupils being totally immersed in the activities they are doing rather than focussed on their own or others' behaviour.

Excellent systems have been established for assessing pupils' learning and personal and social development. Initial assessments, carried out by the educational psychologist and teachers, provide a sound baseline from which pupils' individual targets are set. The school tracks individual pupils' progress in all subjects and identifies those who are at risk of underachieving. This information is used by teachers when planning their lessons and when setting and reviewing targets for individual pupils. However, very occasionally, pupils are not challenged to achieve the higher standards of which they are capable. Most pupils make good progress in their learning and some make exceptionally rapid gains in their literacy skills and in other subjects. This is evident in their

successes in GCSE examinations. The school has set challenging targets for pupils' performance, based on GCSE passes. However this does not reflect the wide and very relevant range of accreditation which is in place to recognise and celebrate each pupil's achievements at the end of Key Stage 4. A good combination of teacher assessment, externally marked tests and externally moderated coursework underpins the school's assurance about the accuracy of its judgements on pupils' attainment and progress.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The broad curriculum and a varied range of activities ensure that pupils enjoy and appreciate their education. Self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-confidence are consistently promoted within the school through rewards and incentives that are well organised and age-appropriate. The pupils' behaviour in, around and out of school is good. The pupils are fully aware of the expectations of them and of the systems in place and are generally keen to participate in activities that bolster their feelings of self-worth. They are taught and encouraged to develop respectful relationships with fellow pupils and staff members. They show genuine concern for any peers who are in distress or underachieving and encourage them when they succeed. They distinguish between right and wrong and learn to respect the law. Pupils prepare for their economic well being through systems within the school that encourage self-reliance and responsibility. Through the religious education programme, extra-curricular activities and assemblies the pupils are acquiring a satisfactory understanding and respect for their own and other cultures.

The pupils make a positive contribution to the school by working together on different schemes that affect the school. An example of this is the consideration given to their views on plans for the new play area. The pupils contribute to local community life through various activities, charitable and the like. Their participation in environmental projects such as the one based at Grizedale Forest, raises the profile of the school in addition to providing the pupils with opportunities to interact with members of the public in meaningful ways

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The school enables the pupils to be healthy through relevant links in the curriculum and a general atmosphere of health-consciousness. This includes an emphasis on healthy eating and physical education. Pupils are provided with guidance regarding healthy living and have access to a wide range of sporting activities. This is further enhanced in the residential units.

Rigorous policies and procedures are in place to safeguard pupils' safety and welfare. Detailed risk assessments are undertaken to promote the safety of pupils both on and off site. Staff undergo regular training to keep them up to date with child protection matters and to ensure they are fully conversant with physical management techniques. The high staff-pupil ratio ensures that pupils are well supervised at all times. Key workers follow the progress of each pupil throughout the day and ensure that each pupil is safe and secure. The school has conducted an audit and drawn up a suitable access plan to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All permanent and temporary staff have been subject to thorough checks prior to their appointment to establish their suitability to work with children. These include enhanced checks with the Criminal Records Bureau. The proprietors set high standards for staff recruitment and selection.

School's premises and accommodation

The premises and accommodation are of a good standard. The school provides a pleasant and welcoming environment for living and learning. The classrooms all have adequate resources, are well decorated and suitably furnished. There is a good range of specialist facilities on site which are used well to support pupils' learning. The residential areas are well appointed and there are appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Parents and placing authorities are kept very well informed about the school's provision. They speak highly of the education and care offered to pupils and are pleased with the progress they make during their time at the school, noting in particular how much pupils' behaviour, confidence and social skills have improved. Inspectors agree with the views of one parent who describes the staff as 'skilled and caring'. The Parents' Handbook gives a clear, straightforward overview of the school's aims and its broader provision and makes clear that further information is available on request. The school meets nearly all of the relevant regulations. However, it does not inform parents about the number of formal complaints received in the previous year. Also, it does not provide local authorities with an annual statement of income and expenditure for each pupil they place at the school.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's arrangements for handling informal and formal complaints meet all requirements. The school has not received any formal written complaints in the last year.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- ensure that parents are aware they can request details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j))
- ensure that where a pupil who is registered at the school is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil is submitted to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 6(7)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- carry through the plan to improve the provision for the study of music and modern foreign languages
- extend the whole-school targets for the end of Key Stage 4 to reflect the broad range of accredited courses offered to pupils.

School details

Name of school	Cedar House School		
DfES number	909/6037		
Unique reference number	112456		
Type of school	Special school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1976		
Age range of pupils	7-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll	Boys: 46	Girls: 14	Total: 60
Number of boarders	Boys: 33	Girls: 11	Total: 44
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 46	Girls: 14	Total: 60
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 12	Girls: 4	Total: 16
Annual fees (day pupils)	£26,691 - £62,352		
Annual fees (boarders)	£41,298 - £96,609		
Address of school	Cedar House School Kendal Road Kirkby Lonsdale Carnforth Lancashire LA6 2HW		
Telephone number	0152 4271181		
Fax number	0152 4271910		
Email address	schooloffice@cedarhouseadmin.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Ridgway		
Proprietor	Mr James Bowers		
Reporting inspector	Mrs Caroline Broomhead HMI		
Dates of inspection	24–25 January 2007		