

# The Cedar Centre

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133639
<b>Local Authority</b>	Brighton and Hove
<b>Inspection number</b>	316175
<b>Inspection date</b>	6 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mike Kell

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5-16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	127
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Terry Sexton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sue Furdas
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Lynchet Close Hollingdean Brighton BN1 7FP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01273 558622
<b>Fax number</b>	01273 702112

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is the first time that the school has been inspected since it opened in September 2006. It was established following the merger of adjacent primary and secondary schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, although the merger took place at short notice. The headteacher of the primary school took up the headship of the new school. Both of the buildings are still used and they now function as primary and secondary departments.

Since amalgamation, the school has been redesignated as providing for pupils with a wide range of social, emotional, behavioural and academic difficulties. All of the pupils have a statement of special educational need. There are twice as many boys as girls on roll and the vast majority of pupils have a White British background. A very high proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. A small number of pupils are looked after by a local authority. Currently, there are no children of Reception age.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The Cedar Centre provides a satisfactory education even though it has been through a turbulent period since it opened because of the short notice of merger that was given. With the help of a new leadership team, the headteacher has set a clear direction and managed a difficult period of transition skilfully and sensitively. Staff now work towards a common purpose and pupils identify themselves with The Cedar Centre. The majority of parents express their support for the new school. 'No matter what special needs the child has, the staff are very kind and very supportive to the parents and their children', is typical of parents' views. The school's links with its many partners and its commitment to meeting the needs of pupils with additional learning needs are impressive features of its work.

Most pupils enter the school after having been in a mainstream setting that was not able to meet their needs. Consequently, many join The Cedar Centre, especially the secondary department, with a sense of failure and a history of challenging behaviour. Through the extremely good level of care and personal support and guidance, the school changes this behaviour and improves pupils' attitudes. The pupils' good progress in their personal development is evident in their enjoyment of school. Their attendance is good and they usually behave well. This is because the school provides a good curriculum and lessons are motivating, as teachers give pupils interesting activities that engage them in learning. As a result, pupils make good progress in lessons. Despite this, their progress over time does not proceed at the same rate and their achievements are satisfactory. This is because the setting of targets for pupils is inconsistent, as is the marking of their work. This hampers teachers' ability to explain what pupils need to do to improve their work. Limitations in leaders' analysis of assessment data restrict their ability to compare the performances of different groups of pupils or to set challenging individual targets. This reduces the potential for pupils to make more rapid progress.

School leaders have rightly focused on those aspects that would have the most impact on learning, such as improving behaviour in the secondary department. They have achieved this successfully but this has deflected time away from the effectiveness with which they analyse and use data from more routine self-review procedures. This is reflected in the fact that the school's evaluation of itself in some areas differed to the team's judgement. Leaders are aware that they need to use this information better if they are to sustain improvement. They recognise too the need to ensure that there is a more consistent approach in the use of the school's systems across the two departments, such as the usefulness of individual education plans (IEPs) in supporting pupils' progress.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Provide clearer targets for pupils and improve marking so that pupils have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve.
- Analyse whole-school assessment data so that any areas of relative underachievement are quickly picked up and acted upon.
- Ensure that there is consistent practice in all aspects of the school's work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Standards are below those expected of pupils of similar age because of the nature of their learning difficulties and disabilities. Despite learning well in lessons and having a good attitude to work, pupils do not make the same rate of progress over time. They achieve satisfactorily in the rate at which they acquire literacy and numeracy skills, although the school's extended use of information and communication technology (ICT) enables pupils to develop these skills more quickly. Learners in Years 10 and 11 are successful in a variety of academic and vocational qualifications, and their achievements in these examinations are satisfactory. These qualifications act as a spur, but there is not the degree of challenge that there could be because the school does not make enough use of targets to really stretch pupils. Therefore, pupils do not have goals that motivate them and, consequently, accelerate their rate of progress. The school's IEPs do not always quicken the pace of learning either. In the secondary department, targets often lack focus and so pupils are not totally clear about what they need to do in order to achieve better. Secondary-aged pupils with specific additional learning difficulties, such as poor literacy skills, make good progress in reading and writing. The school's commitment to equality of opportunity has seen the establishment of the Centre for Learning and Mentoring (CALM), which gives pupils the extra momentum that they need to make up lost ground and be better prepared for their examination courses.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good strides in developing as young people as their self-esteem rises and they become more self-assured and confident communicators. They make good progress in their social and moral development. This reflects their more positive attitudes towards education and their willingness to make the most of their opportunities. They are prepared well for leaving school and every school leaver this year went on to a college course. The pupils develop a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. They keep themselves fit and know about a healthy diet, growing their own vegetables on the school's allotment. Pupils feel safe in school and confirm that they are confident about speaking with someone if they have a concern. The pupils have a good opportunity to support the work of the school, such as through the school councils, but there are fewer opportunities for them to contribute to the local community.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Lessons are generally well organised. Appropriate resources are readily at hand and teaching assistants are fully briefed about their precise roles. Pupils follow well established routines, such as when moving into groups, and teachers manage pupils' behaviour with minimum fuss. As time is used efficiently, teaching and learning proceed at a good pace. Teachers and teaching assistants support learners well through encouragement, praise and checking what they are doing in lessons. Teachers regularly assess the extent of pupils' learning through ongoing questioning and plenary sessions at the end of lessons. This provides them with insight into pupils' achievements and pupils gain good ongoing feedback about their learning, although some of the secondary pupils' marked work is less informative. Teachers use their knowledge

of pupils' prior learning in planning subsequent activities that challenge them, but in a few instances pupils' long-term targets are not clear to them and so they do not have something to aim for. There is a high level of expectation of pupils' attitudes and teachers plan many opportunities for pupils to develop their personal skills, such as through independent learning or working in pairs.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is matched to pupils' ages and capabilities and is, therefore, effective in gaining their interest. ICT is used well to enhance pupils' learning, and there is a good focus on promoting their personal, social and health education. The learning and social needs of individuals, or small groups, are provided for through links with local schools. The school provides very well for a small number of pupils with additional needs, such as specific learning difficulties, through the 'Key Stage 4 Re-engagement Programme'. It admits disaffected pupils late in their school careers and offers what it calls a 'parallel curriculum'. This personalised programme gives them vocational education on and off site; work at school with their peers or individually with a learning mentor; and in some cases home tuition. A particularly well-planned curriculum meets the needs of pupils in Years 10 and 11. It combines opportunities for pupils to follow nationally accredited courses, including vocational subjects, with work experience and college links. Pupils' class-based learning is brought to life by a programme of visits and visitors into school.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils and their families receive very high levels of support from the school and outside agencies, such as Connexions, which the student-family support officer coordinates very effectively. The quality of this family-centred support helps pupils to get through short, traumatic periods in their lives, and it also has a longer-term benefit in smoothing the transitions for part-time placement in a mainstream school or when transferring to college. The school has in place the appropriate procedures for child protection and safe staff recruitment, and staff liaise closely with other agencies to ensure that children who are looked after are supported appropriately. Pupils know their personal behaviour targets and this adds to the pace at which they learn. Other aspects of setting targets and supporting pupils' learning are less effective. Staff do not use subject targets to raise expectations, IEP targets are of variable quality, being much better in the primary department, and marking is inconsistent. As a result, pupils do not receive information as to what they ought to be achieving and advice on how they can make their work better in order to be successful. This holds back pupils' achievements. Through CALM, the school provides very good individual guidance for secondary-aged pupils with poor literacy skills.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher's clarity of vision has been instrumental in establishing a sense of calm and focus in the past year. In a relatively short period, she and a new leadership team allayed the fears and concerns of many parents and developed in staff and pupils a sense of belonging to a single school. Leaders dealt very successfully with their immediate priorities. Attendance

figures increased, the overall behaviour of secondary-aged pupils improved, and the planned restructuring of staff responsibilities began. Inevitably, leaders had less time to devote to developing more routine management procedures that reconciled systems from two schools. Consequently, inconsistencies in practice between the two departments remain, and leaders do not interrogate fully, and use the data that they collect to raise standards. Although some aspects of management remain relatively underdeveloped, leaders have a good record of showing that they can make big changes in a short time. Therefore, they have a good capacity to make the required improvements. Governors support school leaders satisfactorily, although they now have a clearer focus on how they can be more influential and are in a good position to help to bring about these changes.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### 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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

7 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Cedar Centre, Brighton, BN1 7FP

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. Special thanks go to the members of the two school councils who met with us. We found that the school gives you a satisfactory education.

Here are some of the things we found.

- You make satisfactory progress with your work.
- Adults in the school look after you well.
- You like school and go as often as you can.
- You behave well in lessons and work hard.
- You learn a lot about keeping safe and staying healthy.
- You develop into sensible young people who are ready to leave school. It was very good to see that most of you go on to college.
- Lessons are good and teachers give you interesting things to do.
- The staff are working very hard to make the school even better.

We have given those in charge some ideas about what the school should do now.

- Give each one of you targets that you can work towards and mark all of your work.
- Check that all of you are doing as well as you can.
- Make sure that all the adults in the school do things in the same way.

You can help as well by continuing to go to school as often as you can and working hard.

Thank you again, and I wish all of you lots of luck in the future.

Mike Kell Lead inspector