

# Cedars School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	869/6012
Unique Reference Number	110174
Inspection number	320280
Inspection dates	6-7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Elisabeth Linley 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).

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Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE  
T 08456 404040

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



## 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 Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

## Information about the school

The Cedars School was founded in 1992. It is situated in Aldermaston village in a building that was once the church school. The proprietor, who is also the headteacher, is currently seeking planning permission to extend the main school building.

The Cedars School is a non-selective independent day school for girls and boys aged 4 -11 years. A partnership has been established with the local primary school where after school care is provided; as a result, parents of pupils at Cedars School can use this provision by arrangement.

The school's ethos is clear and is very well supported by parents: 'We have a firm belief that children will learn if they are happy and secure in their environment. We believe that each child is unique, that all children have many talents and that it is our responsibility to seek out and promote these talents so that each child can develop fully both academically and socially'.

## Evaluation of the school

The Cedars School provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Parents are very supportive of the school and value the high quality care that is provided for their children. As one parents writes: 'the school is wonderful at developing each individual child.'

## Quality of education

The Cedars School provides a good curriculum. This ensures that pupils achieve well by making learning fun. Planning reflects the National Curriculum with a strong emphasis being placed on the teaching of English, mathematics and science. The headteacher has also organised for teachers to teach their subject specialism throughout the school. As a result, pupils benefit from the teachers' expertise and they achieve well. For example, during the inspection the teacher of French enthused the pupils in her class with songs and games to reinforce knowledge and understanding of French conversation about the family. Learning was clearly fun and as a result pupils made good progress. From the infant class upwards pupils have homework that is appropriate to their age. Expectations for it to be completed on

time are clearly understood. This helps pupils to consolidate their learning and to prepare them well for what will be expected of them at their next school.

The curriculum is enriched by a good range of activities. Pupils have the opportunity to take piano lessons and learn how to play the recorder. In response to parental requests, judo is now taught as an after school activity and is something that pupils very much enjoy. Other opportunities include activities out of school, such as working with a local author as well as excursions to places of interest for example, the Milestones Museum in Basingstoke and the Science Museum in Bristol. Links with local industry also provide the chance for older pupils to be involved with an annual science investigation that is both challenging and exciting. Pupils have to work in teams and with other schools – a requirement that prepares them well to develop skills they will need in later life. Visitors to school also enhance the curriculum's enrichment. When the pupils were learning about the Vikings, a speaker visited to talk about weaving. Pupils very much enjoyed the practical activities that they had the chance to experience.

The quality of teaching is good overall. In an upper junior English lesson, pupils worked hard in groups to consider both the good and bad characteristics of Templeton the rat from the book 'Charlottes Web' and whether or not they could persuade him to save the life of the gosling. The teacher's effective questioning prompted pupils to think carefully about the best way to convey their thoughts in support of their arguments. Teachers' planning and notes for their lessons outline the content to be covered. However, the quality of the planning is variable. The best is where the objectives for learning for the different tasks are made clear; but teachers' notes do not always show this or indicate how pupils of different abilities will be challenged to achieve their best. Upper juniors, with their teachers, prepare their own targets to help them improve their work. This way of working is not yet established throughout the school. However, because of the small numbers in classes, teachers know every pupil very well and respond to their needs effectively. Pupils say that the discussions they have with their teachers and the marking of their work helps them to know how they can improve. Pupils who need additional help are well supported by their teacher and other staff and so they too make good progress.

Assessments of pupils' progress are carried out during the year. The school records the progress made as pupils move through the school by teachers' assessments of their attainment against National Curriculum levels and standardised tests. In addition, the school's own tests are used together with reading and spelling assessments. Data gathered shows that good standards are reached by many pupils and that, in relation to their starting points when they join school, most make good progress.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Every member of staff knows each pupil very well and takes care to ensure that they

feel valued. As a result, the school is successful in promoting pupils' confidence and raising their self-esteem. Parents comment on the very good care that is shown to their children and this in turn helps pupils to be thoughtful of others. The pupils' involvement with the Treloars School for pupils with severe disabilities is indicative of this characteristic. There are regular assemblies that reinforce the caring ethos of the school; relationships are very good and pupils are caring of each other. Examples of this were seen during the inspection at lunch time and play times when older pupils helped the younger ones.

Pupils receive visitors with courtesy and are polite at all times. Their very good attitudes to school life characterise their behaviour in and around the school which is consistently good and often better. They enjoy their involvement in the school's local community even though many live some distance away. Pupils develop an appreciation of other faiths through the school's provision for religious education. A positive link has been established with the local Parish Church and plans have been made for the older pupils to visit a synagogue in Reading. These experiences help pupils to develop their awareness of beliefs and cultures that are different to their own. Pupils know that they have many opportunities to help during the school day and that their views are valued. However, they say that they would like more opportunities to take on specific responsibilities throughout school.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school's procedures for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of its pupils are good. Detailed policies are in place to promote the safety and well-being of pupils in all circumstances. Risk assessments are thorough and cover all aspects of staff and pupil activity. The child protection policy meets current requirements and the school makes the necessary checks on the suitability of all adults who work with the pupils. However, training on child protection is not up to date for all staff; in addition, the headteacher has yet to undertake training in safe recruitment.

Pastoral care and procedures for promoting pupils' personal development are very good. Policies to promote pupils' good behaviour are clear and ensure that they learn in a calm and positive atmosphere. Pupils behave in a sensible and safe way around the school. Pupils confirm that they feel secure in school. The vast majority say that they have no worries about bullying and that they know what to do and who to go to if they have any concerns. Healthy living is an integral part of school life. Pupils know the importance of healthy eating and the taking of exercise. They are also safety conscious and use equipment both indoors and outside carefully.

The school takes seriously its duty with regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. Although currently there are no pupils attending with mobility difficulties or disabilities, the school's accommodation would nonetheless meet their needs. However, the school is yet to put in place specific plans to upgrade curriculum access and facilities for future pupils who may have mobility difficulties or disabilities.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All of the required checks are in place and have been brought into line with current legislation. As a result, all staff who work with the children have been subject to a check with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) before being permanently employed.

## School's premises and accommodation

The school premises are small but provide adequate accommodation for the number of pupils in school. At the current time there are no specific facilities for the care of pupils who become ill. However, the planned extension is set to include this provision. Maximum use is made of the school's facilities and there are appropriate arrangements in place for the emergency evacuation of all parts of the building. The hall is used for many purposes including assemblies, physical education lessons, the teaching of information and communication technology and school performances. At the end of the hall there is a small library with a good stock of reference books. All parts of the school are in good order and outside play areas with hard and grass surfaces are well maintained.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

In recent years parents requested information about the school in addition to its brochure and as a result, an information booklet has been written for parents which is appreciated. Regular newsletters to parents are also sent out; they are informative and let parents know about forthcoming events. Parents find out about their child's progress through annual reports they receive and they also have the opportunity to talk to the staff about their child's progress during the school year.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The schools' complaints policy satisfies requirements and is made available in school for any parent who wishes to see.

## 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 provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- undertake appropriate training in line with DfES guidance on Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the education (School premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(l)).

## 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:

- ensure that planning to meet pupils' needs in lessons consistently focuses on objectives for learning and not just activities to be completed
- provide more opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities in school.

## School details

Name of school	Cedars School		
DCSF number	869/6012		
Unique reference number	110174		
Type of school	Primary		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1992		
Age range of pupils	4-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 17	Girls: 13	Total: 30
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 5,475		
Address of school	Church Road Aldermaston Reading Berkshire RG7 4LR		
Telephone number	01189714251		
Email address	enquiries@thecedarsschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs J O'Halloran		
Proprietor	Mrs J O'Halloran		
Reporting inspector	Elisabeth Linley HMI		
Dates of inspection	6-7 November 2007		