

# Cedar House School

Independent school inspection report

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DCSF registration number	909/6037
Unique reference number	112456
Inspection number	342466
Inspection dates	02–03 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Blake
Social care inspector	Len Hird

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended. The inspection of boarding was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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Age group: 7-16

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Published: 22 December 2009

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Reference no: 090070

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A<sup>1</sup> of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005<sup>2</sup>, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000<sup>3</sup>, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.

## Information about the school

Cedar House is a residential school for boys and girls aged from seven to 16 with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school, which is part of the Witherslack group, is located in Kirkby Lonsdale, Carnforth, in Cumbria. The school opened in 1976, and currently has 61 pupils on roll, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. Around one-third of its pupils are in care and 43 are currently in residence at the school. The pupils, who come from local authorities covering almost all geographical parts of the United Kingdom, have been referred to the school because of the difficulties they have experienced in other educational settings. The school's ethos is to provide a safe, secure and caring environment within which pupils' personal growth and development is promoted. It aims to respect the values of individual staff and pupils, and provide the highest standards of care and education, safety and opportunities for success. The school's educational provision was last inspected in January 2007. The residential provision was previously inspected by Ofsted in January 2009. This was an integrated inspection by Ofsted of the school's educational and residential provision.

## Evaluation of the school

Cedar House is providing an outstanding quality of education for its pupils. Pupils make good progress in their formal learning, but achieve outstanding progress in their all-round personal development. The pupils enjoy working with a dedicated and caring group of staff. The quality of adult support is helping the pupils to develop their personal qualities, alongside their gaining of different types of accreditation. The school meets all safeguarding regulations. The school has made excellent progress since the previous inspection and now meets all regulations for independent schools.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

<sup>3</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga\\_20000014\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000014_en_1)

## Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding, and includes a range of good quality, additional activities for the pupils to learn outside of traditional lessons. The range of these additional activities, particularly in using the local rural environment, greatly enhances the learning experiences and positively influences the attitudes shown by the pupils. The school's curriculum policy outlines a clear rationale for the range of National Curriculum subjects and other activities that will be offered across the school. The balance and time allocations given to these different areas and subjects are appropriate. There is good coverage of basic literacy and numeracy skills throughout the school, which is helping the pupils to improve their reading, writing and spelling. The increasingly flexible approach to the Key Stage 4 curriculum is providing the older pupils with a good quality range of different learning opportunities linked to nationally accredited courses. Links with Connexions personal advisers and other organisations enable the pupils to develop and appreciate the world of work, and aspects of life outside of school. Leisure activities for the boarding pupils are planned to meet their varying needs, and involves links with some local community groups such as army cadets.

The quality and effectiveness of teaching and assessment are good. The relationships between teachers and pupils are very good in all lessons because of the effective management and organisation of pupils' learning. The use of additional adult support in lessons works extremely well, and ensures that there is always an adult to whom the pupil can talk to, if the need arises. Teachers' planning is satisfactory overall, but there is insufficient recognition of the needs of higher attaining pupils. There is a general consistency to the planning format used by teachers throughout the school, but the range and quality varies in its usefulness to aid effective teaching. Where it is most effective, the planning balances what will be taught and what pupils will be expected to learn. In these lessons, teachers' assessment of pupils' progress is most accurate because of the clarity in identifying learning outcomes. However, not all lesson plans contain this level of detail, which makes the ongoing measurement of pupils' progress more difficult to achieve. Post-lesson evaluation of the impact of the lesson on pupils' learning also varies in quality and helpfulness. Too often, the comments reflect only the completion or otherwise of a task, rather than the gains made by the pupils in skills, knowledge and understanding. Some schemes of work also give too much emphasis to what the teacher will do rather than what the pupils will learn. Formal methods of collecting pupil assessment data are used well, but teachers' marking lacks sufficient information about how the pupils can improve upon the quality of their work. Also, there is an overuse of worksheets, which limits the potential for independent learning.

Although the standards achieved are below those seen for similar aged pupils, overall academic progress, given the pupils' starting point at the school, is good. However, when combined with improved attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning, pupils are making outstanding progress in their all-round development during their time at the school.

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

The overall quality and effectiveness of the school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils is outstanding. The pupils' moral and social development is developed positively throughout the school, particularly in the way that staff reinforce and support the pupils in understanding the differences between right and wrong, and the consequences that any anti-social behaviour has on them and others with whom they come into contact with. Good quality opportunities are provided for the pupils to develop aspects of their social skills, both in and out of lessons. The school's approach to recognising and celebrating individual success is well understood and appreciated by the vast majority of pupils, and includes regular assemblies where individual successes are publicly acclaimed. A calm and well formulated approach to behaviour management, together with the pupils' understanding and acceptance of school rules, contributes to the good behaviour shown by the overwhelming majority in school and in the residential accommodation. Pupils' cultural development is good overall. The curriculum and out-of-lesson activities provide a range of opportunities for the pupils to understand about different religions and aspects of different cultures. The personal, social and health education programme contributes to teaching the pupils about aspects of contemporary society, including areas such as sex and relationships, drugs education, and the law; this includes some work with public services, such as the local fire fighters. Work-related opportunities in Key Stage 4, including the opportunity for a number of pupils to attend local colleges, are helping to give the pupils an appreciation of the world of work and life outside of school. Pupils' attendance has improved significantly since being at the school, with the latest data for the autumn term showing a continuation of the high attendance rates. There are good opportunities for students to voice their views and opinions about aspects of life at the school. Although the overwhelming majority of pupils indicated to inspectors that they enjoy school, a significant number responding to the inspection questionnaire felt that behaviour and the promotion by the school of their healthy well-being could be improved further.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school's measures to promote the overall welfare, health and safety of its pupils, including child protection, are good. Procedures for safeguarding the pupils are well known and well adhered to by all adults who work in the school. Supervision in lessons and when the pupils are moving about the school is unobtrusive but very effective. The expectations of appropriate behaviour are clear and suitably informed by school policies and procedures. As a result of consistent actions by staff, the pupils know clearly what is expected of them in respect of their attitudes to learning, and to other pupils and adults in school. Staff encourage the pupils to develop their physical, emotional and social well-being, which is helping them to adapt well to the demands of attending school on a regular basis. The staff act quickly and effectively to support those pupils who present occasional episodes of very challenging

behaviour. The school policies on health and safety, anti-bullying, discipline and first aid are compliant with the regulations. Although the external visits' policy complies with the regulation, there is a lack of clarity with regard to the adult-to-pupil ratios required during different visits and activities outside of school. The school's promotion of healthy living, including its curricular work in personal, social and health education is good. There are regular opportunities for all pupils to engage in some form of exercise, in and out of school. Fire safety checks comply fully with the regulations. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school meets all the regulations for ensuring that all staff are suitably qualified and appropriately checked for them to work with the pupils, and records this information accurately on a single central register.

### School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are of a very good standard, with all classroom accommodation of a suitable size for the age and number of pupils using them. Specialist areas such as those used for information and communication technology and food technology are well equipped and provide access to a range of good quality resources. There are an appropriate number of washrooms and toilets.

### Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school meets all the regulations for the provision of information to parents, carers and others. The school has successfully addressed the requirement from the previous inspection to provide all local authorities which have placed pupils at the school with an annual statement of account. The range of information in the parents' booklet is clear and concise, and includes reference to the range of policies that are available, on request. Annual reports and annual reviews of special educational needs statements are of a good quality.

### Procedures for handling complaints

The procedures for handling complaints comply fully with the regulations, including those for boarders.

### Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The overall quality of boarding is outstanding.

The provision for promoting the health and well-being of boarding pupils is outstanding. Members of the boarding house staff team, working closely to the

school's personal, health and social care programme, provide positive encouragement and excellent advice to boarding pupils on adopting and maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle, in and out of school. There are excellent working relationships in place with the local health centre and the specialist health services. However, the school nurse meets regularly with the school doctor for professional guidance and consultation, but this is not formally recorded. There is a clear policy and set of procedures in place for the management, administration and storage of medication, and all members of staff receive good levels of training in first aid, as well as the safe handling and administration of medicines. The school is very committed to the development of pupils' general well-being, including eating healthily and engaging in regular exercise. Menus are planned jointly between the cook and boarding pupils, with the assistance of a dietician. There is a choice of meals available to select from each day, including a vegetarian option. However, a majority of boarding pupils responding to the inspection questionnaire, and a number who spoke with the inspector directly indicated that with a few exceptions, the overall quality of food was not very good. The school is currently responding to these concerns through the different house unit meetings and school council meetings.

The boarding pupils feel very safe, indicating that there is little bullying and that members of the care staff team are very supportive at all times. There are two experienced and trained senior members of staff who are school designated officers for safeguarding, and all staff employed in the residential accommodation are appropriately checked for their suitability to work with the boarding pupils. Staff training for safeguarding and managing behaviour is good, with a range of relevant policies and reporting procedures, including safeguarding, anti-bullying and complaints; these are available to parents, carers, staff and the boarding pupils. Overall systems to monitor, record, and prevent risks to the health and safety of the boarding pupils are good. Risk assessments for external visits are detailed and meet all requirements, but one examined during the inspection was incomplete. The school recognised this and responded quickly to resolve the issue. The boarding pupils confirm that fire drills are taking place at different times throughout the house units.

The well experienced residential staff team actively encourages the boarding pupils to keep in regular contact with parents, carers, families and friends. Close working relationships with parents, carers and teachers ensure that the boarding pupils are given all the help and support they require; for example, there is access to a good range of educational resources, including computers, to support them in their educational studies. Boarding pupils are encouraged to take part in the day-to-day running of the boarding house, and they can influence decisions via the school council. There is an 'open door' policy in operation for boarding pupils to speak to any member of staff about any problem. Support and advice are also available for boarding pupils through the school's independent listener or via external organisations.

The living accommodation is well cared for, decorated to a good standard and well maintained. The vast majority of boarding pupils have an individual bedroom, which is personalised sensibly. There are excellent levels of privacy and bathing facilities available in the boarding accommodation.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding, with good quality policies that underpin the work of the school. Boarding pupils confirm they are treated with understanding, respect and dignity by the staff, and that they are actively encouraged to be helpful to each other. The organisation and management of the boarding houses creates a safe, non-discriminatory and extremely helpful environment for all. The excellent staffing levels during the day and night are meeting the needs of the Boarding pupils.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- Ensure that all work in lessons is planned to help all abilities progress in line with their capabilities.
- Improve the quality of teachers' planning to identify more clearly, what pupils are expected to learn in order to help raise their standards and to overcome any difficulties they have with traditional learning.
- Ensure that all weekly contacts between the school nurse and school doctor regarding guidance and consultation are formally recorded. (NMS RSS 14).
- Ensure that all meals in the boarding units have due regard to the needs and wishes of the boarding pupils (NMS RSS 15).
- Ensure that all parts of the school's risk assessment forms are fully completed before undertaking any activity (NMS RSS 26).



Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	√			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	√			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		√		
How well pupils make progress in their learning	√			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	√			
The behaviour of pupils		√		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		√		
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The quality of boarding provision *(leave blank if not applicable)*

Evaluation of boarding provision	√			
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## School details

Name of school	Cedar House School		
DCSF number	909/6037		
Unique reference number	112456		
Type of school	Residential special school for boys and girls with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1976		
Age range of pupils	7-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 40	Girls: 21	Total: 61
Number of boarders	Boys: 26	Girls: 17	Total: 43
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 40	Girls: 21	Total: 61
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 12	Girls: 8	Total: 20
Annual fees (day pupils)	From £29, 053 to £68,946		
Annual fees (boarders)	From £44, 948 to £105,146		
Address of school	Kendal Road Kirkby Lonsdale Carnforth Lancashire LA6 2HW		
Telephone number	01524 271181		
Fax number	01524 271910		
Email address	schooloffice@cedarhouseadmin.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Ridgway		
Proprietor	Mr James Bowers		
Reporting inspector	Mr Brian Blake		
Dates of inspection	02–03 December 2009		