

# 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>	360552
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 September 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jon Carter

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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	87
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Claire Hughes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Furdas
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 December 2007
<b>School address</b>	Lynchet Close Hollingdean Brighton BN1 7FP
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors who observed 14 lessons taught by 13 teachers. Meetings were held with school staff and a representative from the governing body, as well as groups of pupils representing all age groups. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at school policies, planning documents, governing body minutes and information about pupils' progress as well as scrutinising responses to 42 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How well teachers use marking and assessment systems to promote good learning and progress, particularly in literacy.
- How effectively the school's leaders ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress through the personalisation of learning and efficient monitoring systems.

## Information about the school

The Cedar Centre is a small special school for children who mainly have moderate learning difficulties and speech, language and communication needs and associated behavioural difficulties. Under local authority reorganisation, the school is now admitting pupils with increasingly complex needs and has programmes to reintegrate more able pupils into mainstream schools. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A higher than average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school holds the Healthy Schools and Eco-Schools Silver awards.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

The Cedar Centre is a good school. It has a friendly and welcoming atmosphere which contributes strongly to ensuring that pupils feel safe and make good progress. Many pupils arrive at the Cedar Centre with negative experiences of school but staff here ensure that the positive learning environment and good curriculum are well suited to their needs and this is particularly effective in helping pupils settle in and move on in their education. One parent commented, 'My child has only recently started at this school. He is very keen to go and is enjoying it.'

Since the last inspection, school leaders have successfully introduced improvements to assessment systems so that pupils usually have a good idea about what they need to do to improve further. Overall, this ensures that pupils make good progress from their starting points in both their academic and personal skills. However, the number of pupils in Key Stage 3 making good progress is not as high as in the primary department or Key Stage 4. This is because there is still some inconsistency between how teachers use these assessment systems and because the school has not yet fully established a clear and shared understanding of what good progress looks like. This means that, for a few pupils, expectations are not high enough and they do not make the progress they are capable of. While the school's good systems for self-evaluation have identified that this is an issue and school leaders demonstrate the necessary commitment and capacity to rectify the situation, effective action to address it and monitor impact has not yet been taken.

The curriculum is well planned and organised, and learning activities are usually well matched to pupils' needs and interests. Consequently, lessons are engaging and pupils' behaviour is usually good because their interest is maintained effectively. Where isolated instances of challenging behaviour occur, staff manage this skilfully so that learning is not impeded. However, while the school recognises that most of its pupils experience some level of difficulty with literacy skills, those in the secondary department do not continue the good progress they make in primary because teachers do not specifically incorporate activities which support literacy development into all of their lessons.

Pupils in Key Stage 4, especially those requiring personalised learning programmes, are particularly well served by the range of opportunities available through the partnerships the school has established with a wide range of other providers. These are effectively used so that, for example, pupils access appropriate vocational courses both on- and off-site, leading to successful transition to suitable educational or training opportunities upon leaving school. These developments in partnership working contribute strongly to improved outcomes for pupils and, together with positive changes to assessment practice, clearly show the commitment and good capacity of the school's leaders to

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secure further improvement in the future.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure pupils, especially those in Key Stage 3, make at least good progress by:
  - establishing a clear and shared understanding among staff of what represents good progress for the pupils at the school
  - setting aspirational targets for pupils' progress
  - rigorously and consistently using the established assessment systems to monitor progress
  - moderating teachers' progress judgements as a staff team.
- Ensure pupils in the secondary department make improved progress in their literacy skills by routinely incorporating tasks which will develop these skills into lessons across the curriculum.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment for pupils at The Cedar Centre is low, and is likely to remain so, when compared to all schools nationally because of the diverse range of pupils' special educational needs. However, pupils' achievement is good because most make good progress from their starting points as they enjoy learning and going to school. This good achievement is evident in the majority of lessons, where pupils make good progress because teaching is stimulating and relevant. For example, in a science lesson for Years 7 and 8, pupils were excited by a lesson on evaporation and were able to make predictions using knowledge gained during the teacher's demonstration. At the end of Key Stage 4, most pupils who remain on the school's roll and have not been re-integrated to mainstream provision, leave with some BTEC, GCSE and entry-level qualifications, demonstrating good progress from the levels they achieved at the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils who find engaging with education much more difficult than their peers complete their personalised learning programmes successfully with one of last year's cohort, for example, going on to an apprenticeship. In recent years, all pupils have gone on to suitable further education, employment or training upon leaving school. Following successful action to bring boys' performance in line with that of girls, boys currently make slightly better progress than girls. There is no significant difference in progress between other groups of pupils with those eligible for free school meals, for example, performing at a similar level to their peers.

Pupils, including both those who have recently joined the school and those who have attended The Cedar Centre for some time, are positive about their experiences and can give examples of how they have made progress in their personal and academic development. They have strong social skills, engage readily and politely with visitors and demonstrate a good understanding of consequences. They have a good understanding about being healthy and choose to be active, with many participating in clubs and visits organised by the school including maintaining the allotment. The school's contribution in

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these areas is recognised by the Healthy Schools and Eco-School Silver awards. Pupils develop good awareness of the world around them and are excited about learning new things and expressing themselves through music. While there is limited ethnic diversity within the school, pupils have developed the skills of tolerance and friendship well and there are few instances of racist behaviour. Pupils' attendance at school is average, although there is considerable variation among classes. In Year 10, for example, the large majority of pupils had high attendance but despite the school's efforts to encourage good attendance, a small minority were persistent absentees.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Staff are knowledgeable about the nature of the educational and personal difficulties experienced by pupils at the school. This is used effectively to ensure that pupils transferring from other schools are helped to feel welcome and secure in their new

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

\* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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environment. Teaching usually motivates pupils well because lessons are planned to match their needs and interests. The adults involved with pupils during lessons are active in providing support and this is often done with skilful timing and well-considered questions to ensure that pupils remain active participants in their learning. Sometimes, however, the way work is planned to meet the needs of individuals is too general and provides insufficient focus on the intended learning outcomes for each pupil. Recently introduced assessment techniques, such as learning ladders, are more strongly embedded in the primary department than in secondary and consequently younger pupils and the staff who teach them have a better understanding of how much progress is being made and what the next steps in learning need to be than those teaching the older age groups.

The school uses its many robust links with other establishments to individually tailor provision for each pupil in terms of courses that they follow. In this way, the curriculum is made relevant to pupils and it usually meets their needs well. This is particularly true for older pupils, who benefit from access to GCSEs and additional vocational courses through these partnerships. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, in which pupils participate keenly, such as 'bikeability' which gives them access to bicycles to use outside of school in addition to the training they need to maintain and ride them safely. This kind of activity supports and enhances the good personal and social education programme provided as part of the weekly timetable.

The school also works effectively with agencies to support the welfare of pupils. The school's Pupil Family Support Worker takes a leading role in seeking to re-engage pupils with learning, especially when they are experiencing difficulties at home. Attendance procedures are generally sound and the number of persistent absentees is being reduced through effective liaison with the appropriate local authority services.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How effective are leadership and management?**

Despite the challenges presented by the re-organisation of special educational provision in the local authority, the school's leaders have secured the support of both staff and parents so that pupils are provided with relevant and stimulating learning experiences. Consequently, there is a shared ambition to move the school forward while the school continues to go through a period of significant change as the roll reduces, the involvement with outreach support to mainstream schools increases, and the needs of

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pupils joining the school increases in complexity. The headteacher and her team have ensured that the impact of these changes is as positive as possible. For example, staff working with pupils who attend both The Cedar Centre and a mainstream school have been able to revise their expectations of individuals in the light of their achievements. This has led to greater aspirations and more appropriate levels of challenge for these pupils when at The Cedar Centre. However, systems for monitoring how well staff are incorporating this challenge into their lessons have not been sufficiently rigorous due to the impact of increased partnership working on staff time.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are well established and effective. Key staff and governors have a good overview of all relevant information and staff receive appropriate training on a regular basis. School leaders have a very accurate understanding, through their monitoring of the progress and welfare of groups of pupils, of the effectiveness with which the school promotes equality and tackles discrimination. Appropriate and effective actions are taken to redress imbalances where necessary. Governors provide a good level of challenge and support to the school and have a clear understanding of where the school's strengths and weaknesses lie. However, governors' visits to lessons are relatively infrequent.

While much information is gathered and stored about pupils' progress, it is not always most effectively analysed, and systems for moderation of teachers' judgements are inconsistent across the school. School leaders have not yet shared an established view on what constitutes good progress through Key Stage 4 and as a result there is a lack of clarity and consistency in setting benchmarks for pupils' performance.

Senior leaders have a good understanding of the context of the community which the school serves and recognise that opportunities for pupils to have multicultural and international experiences are currently too limited. This has to some degree been affected by staffing. There is, however, an appropriate plan in place to improve this provision.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>



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<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## **Views of parents and carers**

An above average number of responses to the questionnaire for parents and carers were received by the end of the inspection. The responses were very positive about the work of the school, although few made written comments. Where these were made, they were often to qualify negative responses to the questions, for example, because their child was transferring to more appropriate provision to better meet their needs. There were no recurring negative comments or suggestions on the responses.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Cedar Centre to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 42 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 87 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	57	24	36	2	5	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	29	69	29	24	3	7	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	24	57	24	38	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	43	18	43	4	10	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	26	62	26	36	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	57	24	24	5	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	55	23	38	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	23	55	23	33	1	2	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	26	62	26	26	2	5	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	62	26	29	2	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	50	21	43	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	27	64	27	26	2	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	69	29	26	2	5	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



17 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Cedar Centre, Hollingdean, BN1 7FP

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We were very impressed with how polite and well behaved you are and we are pleased that most of you enjoy going to school.

We think that The Cedar Centre is a good school where you get to do interesting and exciting lessons and make good progress. We think that the way the teachers make sure that nearly everyone is learning what is right for them is good. We also like how well the staff at your school look after you, especially when you are finding being at school difficult. Most teachers are using things like 'learning ladders' well to help you know what you need to do to improve your work. We think that the school needs to make sure that everyone is using them so that everyone makes at least good progress. We know that many of you find reading and writing quite difficult and we want the school to make sure the good help that primary pupils get carries on in the secondary department. We also think that the school needs to make sure you get more experience working with people who come from backgrounds that are different to your own.

We have asked your teachers to improve your school further by:

- making sure all pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make as much progress as everyone else
- giving pupils in the secondary department more opportunities in lessons to get better at literacy.

You can help by letting your teachers know if you find the work too easy, so they can challenge you a little more.

Yours sincerely

Jon Carter

Lead inspector

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