

# Cedars Academy

Cedars Avenue, Birmingham, West Midlands B27 6JL

## Inspection dates

25–26 June 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Since the headteacher took up post, he and his dedicated staff have been unwavering and untiring in their drive to improve the school.
- Leaders at all levels, including members of the advisory board (AB), know their school very well. They address quickly any areas that fall short of their high expectations because they have robust systems and procedures in place to monitor, track and evaluate the school's effectiveness.
- Pupils achieve well because of strong teaching and exceptional support and care. Parents and carers, staff and pupils are unanimous in their praise for the excellent pastoral care provided to pupils, which includes a strong focus on mental health and well-being.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are courteous, friendly and eloquent about their learning. Pupils speak with pride about their school.
- The quality of teaching is strong across year groups. Teachers demonstrate an enthusiasm for learning, have good subject knowledge and know their pupils very well. Some teaching is not yet routinely ensuring that the most able pupils are stretched and challenged sufficiently well to achieve at greater depth.
- Leaders' work to promote pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils receive many opportunities to learn about how to promote their own and each other's mental health.
- Leaders have restructured the school's curriculum so that it offers appropriate learning opportunities. Pupils learn well in subjects such as music. Leaders continue to develop the curriculum to offer an even wider range of subjects.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding they receive effectively. They track carefully disadvantaged pupils' progress and put a range of strategies in place to address any underperformance. As a result, disadvantaged pupils currently at the school make better progress than in the past. Performance gaps between them and their peers are closing, but small differences remain.
- Although the progress of most-able pupils is improving, they continue to do less well than pupils with similar starting points nationally. Learning tasks do not yet consistently stretch and challenge their thinking.
- Pupils attend school regularly. They value their education and most are rarely absent. The number of pupils who are excluded for fixed periods is well below the national average.
- Staff, pupils and parents are complimentary about leaders' work and are proud of their school. Almost all teachers state that they are proud to work at the school and they speak of the school community as the 'Cedars family'.

## **Full report**

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

- Improve teaching so that pupils, especially the most able pupils and disadvantaged pupils, make the progress of which they are capable, by ensuring that:
  - pupils routinely complete tasks that stretch and challenge their thinking
  - teachers give pupils more opportunities to learn and achieve at greater depth.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- The headteacher, since taking up his position, has changed the school's ethos, raised aspirations and introduced highly effective systems and robust structures to improve the school. These have resulted in significant improvements across the school. For example, teaching is now strong, pupils' behaviour is excellent and the school is once again becoming a school of choice for parents.
- Leaders are unwavering and untiring in their drive for excellence. They know the school's strengths and the few remaining weaknesses and work collaboratively with other schools across the trust to address any underperformance. For example, staffing turbulence has been an issue in the past. Leaders have addressed this and, as a result, the school is fully staffed with expert teachers in every year group. Leaders review regularly their own and colleagues' performance and put in place well-focused plans to address any aspect that needs improving.
- Morale at the school is exceptionally high. Teachers are proud to work at the school. They are fully engaged in leaders' improvement drive and all share a common goal, namely to ensure that all pupils receive the best possible education. Teachers commented that the school is a most supportive community and called it the 'Cedars family'.
- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment is highly effective. Senior leaders accurately evaluate and analyse teachers' performance. They act quickly to address any underperformance they identify. As a result, teaching has improved markedly and much of it is strong. Staff are unanimous in their praise for the many training and professional development opportunities they are given.
- Middle leaders form a dedicated and highly focused group of professionals. They are consistent in their messages and their drive for excellence. A shared language among middle leaders is used to enable them to consistently address issues, identify any underperformance, share good practice and then disseminate that practice across the school and the trust. The school is now a regular giver as well receiver of support within the trust.
- The school's redesigned curriculum offers a balanced breadth of learning experiences that are tailored to pupils' individual needs and circumstances. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as the many sporting opportunities available at lunchtimes. Pupils study a broad range of subjects, including music, and use technology with ease and confidence.
- Leaders' work to promote pupils' personal development is exceptional. It has a positive impact on pupils' understanding of the world around them and what kind of person they want to be. During the week of inspection, the school hosted a well-being week. Each afternoon consisted of different mental and physical health sessions. Pupils are able to speak confidently about how they keep themselves healthy and support each other in difficult times. This work is highly effective.
- Senior leaders use and evaluate effectively the impact of any additional funding they receive, including pupil premium and physical education (PE) and sport premium

funding, and funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). For instance, targeted one-to-one support and timely interventions are planned carefully and reviewed regularly for their impact on pupils' outcomes. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are now making better progress, although some differences remain.

## **Governance of the school**

- The AB has the duty to provide robust rigour and external validation to senior leaders' work, specifically on the quality of teaching and standards at the school.
- Members of the AB know their school very well and have a clear view of its strengths and the few areas where further improvement is needed. They are dedicated to the school and bring a range of relevant educational experiences and expertise to their roles. They discharge their statutory duties with diligence.
- The chief executive officer (CEO) has high expectations of the school's performance and provides an effective balance of support and challenge to the school's leadership team. He uses a range of information to ask challenging questions in order to bring about further improvements.
- Governance for the school is rigorous and effective in ensuring that leaders' work is monitored and that they are held to account for their work.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff work together to create a strong culture of safeguarding that permeates the school. It is underpinned by regular training and frequent updates on local, regional and national issues for every member of staff at the school.
- The safeguarding and pastoral teams work highly effectively with relevant external agencies when required. Staff are persistent when they are concerned about a pupil's welfare and follow up concerns with these agencies as necessary. Leaders complete appropriate employment checks and keep accurate records.
- All pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in school. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They understand the risks involved when they are online and when using social media, for example.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Leaders monitor rigorously the quality of teaching and provide effective support and targeted training when required. Consequently, teaching has improved and is now strong. As a result of leaders' actions and improved teaching, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, now make better progress across all year groups.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and encourage respectful relationships. They believe that every pupil can and will make progress. They have strong subject knowledge and a clear enthusiasm for learning, and plan lessons that incorporate a range of innovative teaching strategies to stimulate pupils' interest and curiosity.

As a result, pupils enjoy learning.

- Teachers give ongoing feedback to pupils. They check pupils' understanding effectively and provide swift support and intervention when pupils fall behind and need to catch up. Pupils speak highly of the support they receive in lessons and feel well supported to do their best.
- Leaders regularly assess pupils' progress and use this information to identify priorities for staff training. Teachers work closely with colleagues from other schools within the trust to share good practice and regularly moderate pupils' work together. This helps everyone in the trust to reach a common understanding about the expected standards of pupils' work.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Pupils read well and with fluency. They read often and enjoy reading to adults. Pupils are supported by staff to choose appropriate books to read at home.
- Staff are unanimous in their praise for the many training and professional development opportunities afforded to them. For example, the school funds Master's degree studies for staff so that they further develop their practice. Additionally, this ensures that new and research-based educational initiatives are introduced to the school and the wider trust.
- Teachers generally plan lessons that are well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. However, at times, tasks designed for the most able pupils do not stretch and challenge them enough and therefore do not deepen their thinking or learning. As a result, most-able pupils in the past have underperformed. Although improving, current most-able pupils continue to do less well than other groups of pupils. Leaders are aware of this and have plans in place to address this issue. It is too soon to see the impact of their planned actions.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The pastoral support provided by the school is a clear strength. Leaders have created a truly inclusive school where every pupil is valued and cared for. Pupils and staff are unanimous in their praise for the help, support and guidance pupils receive when they need it. Parents agree that the school is a safe place for their children.
- Pupils say that bullying is extremely rare. They have every confidence that when it does occur, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by staff.
- Pupils are friendly, courteous and respectful of each other and staff. They welcome visitors to their school and inspectors were overwhelmed by the many offers of help while at the school. Pupils are proud of their school and look after the school environment. As a result, the school's buildings are free from litter and graffiti.
- Leaders meticulously plan the curriculum to ensure that pupils have a good understanding of current issues, such as extremist views and online risks. The school's well-being programme is excellent. It is designed for all year groups and offers many

and varied opportunities for pupils to learn about social issues appropriate to their age.

- Pupils' physical health is underpinned effectively by the many sporting activities on offer. Pupils spoke with absolute joy about these activities and how they help them to stay fit and active.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and no learning time is wasted. Behaviour during breaktimes, lunchtimes and in corridors during the day is calm and orderly. All pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that the behaviour around school and in lessons is excellent. Pupils regularly regulate or correct their own or each other's behaviour. This is because all pupils have the highest expectations of themselves and each other. The school oozes a purposeful learning atmosphere.
- Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils are clear about what these are and staff consistently apply the behaviour policy. As a result, the number of pupils being excluded for a fixed period of time is well below the national average. Sanctions are very rare and when they are used, they have a positive effect and pupils generally do not re-offend. Pupils are trusted to prove that they behave well and almost all pupils are keen to repay that trust by exhibiting high standards of behaviour.
- Staff and parents are unanimous in their view that the behaviour of pupils has improved dramatically. This is due to high aspirations and a change in culture at the school, as well as the new policies and procedures in place. Pupils now value their learning and enjoy being at school.
- Pupils are immensely proud of their school and rarely have time off school. Attendance has improved significantly and is now broadly in line with national averages. Hardly any pupils are persistently absent. When a pupil is absent, leaders have robust and clear procedures in place to check on them and ensure that they attend as soon as possible.

## Outcomes for pupils

### Good

- Current pupils at the school are making good progress. This is evident in their books, their displayed work and in the school's assessment information. Good progress is the result of strong teaching, much improved attendance and effective intervention strategies to ensure that pupils catch up quickly.
- Disadvantaged pupils have historically underperformed significantly. Leaders have recognised this and have put targeted and individualised interventions in place. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' outcomes are improving. For example, current assessment information shows that differences between disadvantaged pupils' progress and that of other pupils with similar starting points still exist but are narrowing considerably.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make excellent progress. This is because of specialist English language acquisition programmes and targeted interventions to help those who are new to speaking English to make rapid progress. Pupils are happy and enjoy the activities that help them to catch up. As a result of the relationships that staff and pupils develop quickly, pupils rapidly become proficient in

English.

- Although the progress of pupils with SEND is beginning to improve, it is not yet as strong as it could be. Leaders have well-focused plans in place to address this. Additional adults provide targeted support in lessons and pupils' achievements are now more closely tracked.
- Leaders have introduced an effective and reliable system for collecting pupils' progress information. Senior and middle leaders, together with teachers, now hold pupil progress meetings to identify quickly any trends or patterns in underachievement. As a result, leaders and teachers are able to put timely and effective interventions in place to help pupils catch up and close any gaps in their knowledge.
- While the outcomes for the most able pupils are improving, these pupils continue to do less well than other pupils. Leaders have analysed this information and have put plans in place to tackle any underperformance. It is too early to see the impact of these actions on pupils' outcomes.

## School details

Unique reference number	143088
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10099543

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	354
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Diane Cooper
Headteacher	Joe Purnell
Telephone number	0121 464 3178
Website	<a href="http://www.cedarsacademy.org">www.cedarsacademy.org</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiry@cedarsacademy.org">enquiry@cedarsacademy.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The academy is part of the Robin Hood Multi Academy Trust.
- This school is governed in parts by the AB and the board of trustees through the work of the CEO of the trust.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The majority of pupils are of White British origin.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is average. The number of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The school operates a breakfast club every morning.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation. This included: the school's self-evaluation and action plans; school policies; information about pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance; and information about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors visited lessons in all year groups, most visits being carried out jointly with senior leaders. They observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors evaluated pupils' work across all year groups, in English and mathematics as well as in their topic folders.
- Inspectors held formal meetings with senior and middle leaders, teachers, members of the AB and the CEO.
- The views of parents were considered through the 22 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including the 19 free-text comments received during the inspection. Inspectors considered the 34 responses from staff to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors had informal discussions with a large number of pupils in lessons, and at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors spoke to parents as they arrived on the morning of the second day of the inspection.

## Inspection team

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Graeme Rudland	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Ogden	Ofsted Inspector

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