

The Cedars Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102558
Local Authority	Hounslow
Inspection number	323657
Inspection date	30 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Sheila Nolan

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Father Luke Irvine-Capel
Headteacher	Mrs Lesley Julian
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2006
School address	High Street Cranford Hounslow TW5 9RU
Telephone number	020 8230 0015
Fax number	020 8230 0016

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- How well the school's leadership has sustained good practice and improved it since the last inspection.
- How well pupils achieve in literacy and numeracy.
- How effectively the school promotes the pupils' personal development.

Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation form; observation of lessons; scrutiny of the school's records of pupils' standards and achievement and other documentation; and from discussions with students and staff. Parents' responses to questionnaires also informed judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were other than justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The Cedars caters for pupils with a wide range of severe emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. A growing number have complex additional needs, particularly in younger year groups. All have a statement of special educational need. The pupils are drawn from across the local area and from the surrounding boroughs. Although most pupils remain permanently on the school's roll, there are a few places reserved for those likely to return to mainstream school after specialist intervention. Currently, there are no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

There are many more boys than girls and over half come from White British backgrounds. Other pupils come from a broad range of minority ethnic backgrounds, of which the largest groups are those from Black African and White and Black Caribbean heritages. A much higher than average proportion of the pupils is eligible for free school meals. Pupils join The Cedars throughout the school year. On entry, their attainment is generally well below average, often because of previously disrupted schooling. The Cedars has recently been accredited with Investors in People status and the Healthy School award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Cedars aims to provide a truly inclusive education that promotes the pupils' sense of self-worth. In this, it is exceptionally effective and provides an outstanding quality of education for its vulnerable pupils. The Cedars is indeed 'a very special school for special children'. Parents, too, really appreciate the school's work, and their views are summed up well in a comment from one who said, 'It's the best school my son has been to. It has made a huge impact on him, both in terms of behaviour and academically.'

The school has sustained and improved further the excellent practice noted at the last inspection. This owes much to the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, the commitment and teamwork of all staff, and the robust systems to ensure the on-going high quality of the school's work. Outstanding leadership and management have ensured that every staff member strives to do the best for the pupils. Each individual is valued and resources are targeted as well as possible to meet their learning and behavioural, social and emotional needs. A major strength of the school is that it is determined never to 'do second best'. Because of this, systems to track and check the pupils' progress, carefully underpinned by initial detailed and diagnostic assessments, are even more rigorous than at the last inspection. Teaching is now excellent because of well-considered staff development opportunities that have led to the increasing use of signing and other techniques to assist the increasing numbers of pupils with speech and communication difficulties. The carefully constructed self-evaluation cycle involves all staff and has identified accurately that information and communication technology (ICT) is not always used creatively enough in areas other than English and mathematics. As a result, there are missed opportunities to use interactive whiteboards as effectively as they might be.

The Cedars has exceptionally helpful links with many external agencies to find the best support for the children and, where possible, their families. Partnerships with the local authority schools are also excellent. This allows for the gradual re-integration of some pupils into mainstream schools. The support for families has had a huge impact on the pupils' attendance. When absence for medical needs is disregarded, the pupils' attendance is generally good. Some pupils manage full attendance, well motivated by the interesting rewards, by the very caring staff, the 'Friday hobbies', and the stimulating yet peaceful environment of the school.

Care, guidance and support for the pupils are of very high quality. The school adopts a carefully integrated approach to its education and personal development programmes. The Cedars lays great store in maintaining a safe and secure environment where pupils can learn to trust adults and each other. As a result, pupils make great strides in their personal development so that it is excellent by the time they leave. Pupils' good behaviour and understanding of how to keep safe represent immense improvements from their starting points. Pupils are particularly proud of the gold and silver certificates awarded for successfully meeting their targets in class and around the school. Their outstanding progress in working cooperatively with each other and in communicating courteously with both their peers and adults is evident in the smooth-running assemblies, in the school council, in their positive attitudes to learning and in their positive engagement with visitors. Staff and pupils work collaboratively in the weekly 'club afternoon'. Pupils know about healthy eating and of the importance of keeping fit. They are keen on the organised sports provided at break times, on dance and on the many 'climbing activities' for younger pupils. Within The Cedars community, many pupils come to understand the importance of helping others. Pupils run the school shop with staff and have 'meaningful work' opportunities. A favourite event was the allotment project with the local police. They also make

positive contributions to the wider community through events with local residents, through links with a neighbouring Hindu temple, for example, and through raising money for charities at home and overseas.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is good. From often low starting points, pupils make excellent progress in respecting each other and in learning to value different views and experiences. They know clearly what is expected of them even when they find it difficult to conform at all times. They are interested to discover traditions other than their own and join in celebrations of other cultures. Pupils are involved in a wide range of activities to prepare them for the next stage of education. Many manage their 'points currency' wisely to buy much-wanted prizes from the school shop. The school council proudly manages its budget. Above all, they learn to cooperate with others in the smooth running of projects such as the 'Respect' and 'One World' weeks. All pupils make at least good progress in basic skills and some gain as much as five years in terms of reading age.

Pupils make particularly fast progress towards their behavioural and social targets and this has a positive impact on their performance in literacy and numeracy. All groups of pupils, whatever their additional needs, learn exceptionally well at The Cedars, given their well below-average starting points. Those joining the school with speech and communication challenges do amazingly well. For many, standards are close to the age-expected levels in English, mathematics and science when they leave. The school has recognised, however, that pupils achieve less well in problem-solving tasks such as those involved in mathematics. This mainly arises from pupils' challenges in comprehending and analysing written texts. Excellent teaching and purposeful individualised support allow pupils to learn successfully and grow confident in their academic tasks. The management of pupils' behaviour is exemplary, as is teachers' pursuit of interesting tasks to capture the pupils' attention. Classrooms are lively and colourful with celebratory and thought-provoking displays. Whole-school arrangements for pupils' academic guidance are also very effective. This information, coupled with that from individual education plans, effectively informs lessons.

Governors take their responsibilities seriously and play a full part in the school's development. Led by a very able chair, the school is supported well and increasingly confidently challenged to be ever better. Governors are convinced that the continuous improvement since the last inspection is due to the staff's 'real passion for the school and its children' and the atmosphere of 'dignity and mutual respect' engendered by the headteacher. The Cedars has clearly demonstrated that it can go from strength to strength and that it has a strong capacity to improve even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make more creative use of ICT across all areas of the curriculum.

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Annex A

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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
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?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

20 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Cedars Primary School, Hounslow, TW5 9RU

Thank you for welcoming me to The Cedars. I very much enjoyed sharing time with you, listening to your views, and seeing how secure you feel in school. Many of you greeted me very courteously and were obviously proud to belong to such a happy school. I know that both you and your parents appreciate how well staff look after you.

You think that The Cedars is an excellent school and I agree with you. Most of you are making really good progress because your teachers make sure that work interests you and that you are helped to make up lost ground from previous years. Because of the high quality of individual guidance and support you receive, you make giant strides in your personal development. Your social skills improve and you learn to assume responsibility for your actions. You make really good progress in English, mathematics and science because you are helped to learn exceptionally well.

Your very committed headteacher and staff never stop trying to make The Cedars an ever better place to be. To help them do this, we have asked them to work even harder at using ICT imaginatively in some subjects.

I hope you will continue to make the most of the opportunities you have at The Cedars by continuing to work together with your teachers. The Cedars really is a 'very special school for very special children'.

I wish you every success for your futures.

Yours faithfully

Sheila Nolan

Lead Inspector