

Inspection of a good school: The Cedars Academy

Wanlip Lane, Birstall, Leicester, Leicestershire LE4 4GH

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 March 2023

Outcome

The Cedars Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where staff want the very best for their pupils. Leaders have a clear vision and are ambitious for the school. Pupils study a wide range of subjects. The curriculum has been carefully designed so that pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. They know that their teachers have their best interests at heart and listen to their opinions. Pupils take part in lessons well and are proud of their school.

Pupils behave well and get on well together. Leaders have introduced a new behaviour policy and this has led to improvements in pupils' conduct. The atmosphere in lessons and around the school is calm. Bullying is rare. When it happens, staff take it seriously and deal with it well.

Leaders help pupils learn skills that they need in adult life. Pupils take on leadership roles. For example, sixth-form students act as reading mentors to younger pupils. Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including music groups and sports teams.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have put a curriculum in place which sets out the knowledge that pupils should learn in each subject. They have considered the order in which pupils will encounter new learning so that they build their knowledge and skills over time. This helps pupils to achieve well. Leaders have worked on curriculum design with colleagues in the trust. They have ensured that the curriculum is relevant to the context of the school. For example, the history curriculum takes into account the fact that the school is built on an Anglo-Saxon site. Pupils study appropriate courses.

There is a higher than average proportion of pupils with SEND in school. Teachers adapt their teaching so that all pupils can access the full curriculum. Pupils' progress is carefully tracked. Teaching assistants understand their role and provide effective support.

Leaders have recently established a resource base, 'Endeavour'. Staff in this provision work effectively to support vulnerable pupils. Staff have established a calm and positive environment. Pupils settle well to their learning.

Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They use it well when modelling for pupils how to think about their learning. Teachers ask questions which help pupils to develop their understanding. Teachers receive high-quality training. Leaders support them to ensure that workload is manageable.

In lessons, teachers frequently remind pupils what they have learned in previous lessons. This helps pupils to remember their learning over time. Teachers share important knowledge clearly. They provide pupils with opportunities to discuss their learning. Teachers promptly identify pupils' misconceptions and correct them. They use their knowledge of pupils' understanding to decide next steps for learning.

Leaders promote reading for pleasure through the sharing of books, read aloud by the teacher. The English curriculum includes a wide range of reading material. Staff provide extra support to pupils who enter the school with weaker skills in reading. This helps these pupils to improve their reading. However, some pupils rarely read outside of lessons and so they do not have the opportunity to practise and develop their reading fluency.

Leaders have introduced a new careers programme. They provide pupils with information about next steps. Students in the sixth form receive detailed supported in their applications for university. Leaders are at the early stages of evaluating their careers provision.

Leaders in the sixth form have established an effective curriculum. Students take up opportunities to develop leadership skills. They help younger pupils to practise their reading. Sixth-form students have high aspirations for their next steps in education.

The new behaviour policy is effective. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is now good. Leaders keep detailed records of behaviour. They are beginning to use this information to identify areas for improvement. The school is a harmonious community.

Leaders have recently introduced a well-designed personal development curriculum which teaches life skills that pupils will need beyond school. Leaders have ensured that pupils learn about the wider world in many different subjects. They have put in place an innovative and effective programme to combat sexism and misogyny. Pupils have taken a leading role in this work. They enjoy developing their leadership skills as part of a mentorship programme. Pupils take part in clubs and societies such as debate club and diversity society. Leaders have not yet evaluated their personal development curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure there is a culture of safeguarding in the school. They have put rigorous systems in place to ensure that all safeguarding concerns are recorded and acted upon. Staff and governors receive regular training and updates, and have a good understanding of the risks facing pupils. They make sure that appropriate checks are made when staff are appointed and that staffing records are up to date.

Pupils know there is someone to talk to if they have a problem. They feel safe in school. Pupils are given opportunities in the curriculum to learn about safety, for example how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils who enter the school with reading skills that are below average are given effective instruction to help them to catch up. However, they rarely read independently or for pleasure. As a result, they do not practise and consolidate the skills of reading fluency. Leaders should ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop a love and enthusiasm for reading.
- The school has recently introduced a number of new policies and systems, for example the personal development curriculum, the careers strategy and the behaviour policy. Leaders have not yet been able to evaluate the impact of these new strategies. They now need to ensure that these are embedded and evaluated so that they are able to confirm that they are having a positive impact on pupil outcomes.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2018.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 140787 |
| Local authority | Leicestershire |
| Inspection number | 10254960 |
| Type of school | Secondary Comprehensive |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1010 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 58 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Anne Lamb |
| Principal | Laura Sanchez |
| Website | www.TheCedarsAcademy.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 17 and 18 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school uses the services of five alternative providers.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils who are at risk of exclusion. There are currently five pupils attending the provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in four subjects: English, mathematics, history and social sciences. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with a wide range of senior leaders, including the SEND coordinator and leaders responsible for behaviour and personal development.
- Inspectors met with trust leaders and those responsible for governance.
- Inspectors looked at information about behaviour, attendance and enrichment opportunities.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff.
- Inspectors talked to leaders in charge of safeguarding arrangements. They met with staff and pupils and looked at documentation to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding practices and procedures.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Paul Heery, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Peter Gilbride

Ofsted Inspector

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