

Cedars Academy Offer Information for Parents

Revised: September 2019

To be reviewed: September 2020



Fit For Life



Cedars Trust aims to be a vital resource for Special Educational Needs provision in Gateshead, a centre of excellence and, primarily, a provider of learning, training and employment pathways for people with disabilities or learning difficulties

We Believe

Community engagement changes schools for the better; schools can help to change communities for the better; schools and communities working together can radically transform the futures of young people

Our Mission

Ours is a community of learning, where secure partnerships create opportunities for students, staff, parents and carers alike to grow to become intellectually, emotionally and socially *Fit for Life*

Our Purpose

We provide a wide range of high quality, specialist and personalised education, training, care and support to young people and their families

Twenty most frequent questions asked by parents

1. What does your service do?

We are an all-age school for children and students aged 3 to 19 years. We are an Academy Trust. We are one of a number of Special Schools in Gateshead.

2. Where is it located and what areas does it cover?

Cedars Academy is located in Low Fell, Gateshead. We also have a Post 16 satellite provision at 13 Walker Terrace, in the centre of Gateshead.

We cater for children with special educational needs from all of Gateshead. We also have some children on roll from neighbouring authorities.

3. Who does your service provide for?

We specialise in providing education for children and young people with physical and medical needs, speech and language disorders, autism, and a wide range of other complex needs often associated with emotional vulnerability.

Cedars Academy follows the National Curriculum and offers our own broader curriculum, enabling our students to study a wide range of subjects up to, and including, Entry Level Certificate, Functional Skills, BTEC, GCSE and A levels.

Every child deserves the finest educational opportunities; we provide this - plus a huge range of extra activities. Our focus is on the positive. We want every child to be happy, secure, and to achieve, and to gain self-confidence through achievement. This may come via sporting, creative, educational or social opportunities. We focus on the individual needs of every child, working in close liaison with their parents or carers.

As of September 2019: Out of the 194 pupils currently on roll, 79 in KS1&2, 93 in KS3&4, and 22 in KS5; approx. 28% of school population are girls.

Currently we have:

- seven classes in KS1&2, average class sizes of 11 children
- eight classes in KS3&4, average class sizes of 11 children
- Four groups in KS4/5, based at Walker Terrace, average group size eight students

Pupils at Cedars must have an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP, or Single Plan), although it may be possible for this to be drawn up whilst they are in attendance. The Single Plan protects the child's individual needs and is formally reviewed at least annually. The Single Plan has protection in law, and describes the education provision to meet the child's individual need.

Pupils are admitted at any time during the school year, referred via a range of routes. We work closely with all involved professionals to ensure pupils are correctly placed and that they receive appropriate provision for their needs.

4. What are your accessibility and inclusion arrangements?

Cedars Academy is a small school with a high student/staff ratio. Students are taught in small friendly class groups with experienced Teachers and Teaching Assistants able to give one-to-one help where it is needed. The teaching staff work closely with our therapists and are able to tailor the students' curriculum to their individual needs.

Our school is fully accessible, with appropriate elevator and hoist facilities, for pupils and families with mobility difficulties. We use height adjustable tables and foot blocks when required. There is a wheelchair accessible bathroom on the ground floor and the ground floor and outdoor area is fully accessible. In addition the school has a number of wheelchair accessible buses for outings.

Our displays are child height and generally have an interactive element. Written labels are supported by symbols and/or photographs. Some of our children use augmented or alternative communication aids or sign.

Cedars Academy is able to provide Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy (including use of our 6m hydrotherapy pool) and Counselling on site for the students according to their needs. Therapists work closely together, and as part of a wider team with the teaching and support staff. In addition the Academy has links with a number of other professionals whom we regularly call upon for advice and to provide input in areas such as educational psychology or sensory perception.

5. What will my child learn at Cedars?

Our new curriculum is skill and context based and encourages active engagement in learning; it is based on effective

approaches to learning, with embedded cross-curricular and contextual themes. The curriculum focuses on developing the key themes of communication and creativity, understanding the world, preparation for adulthood, and personal, social & physical development; it develops transferrable skills that equip children and young people for life beyond the school. It is child-centred and led.

5.1 Primary Curriculum

Within Key Stage 1&2 we believe that each Class Teacher, with support from their Teaching Teams and subject specialists are best placed to design an individual curriculum to suit either individual pupils or groups of pupils within their class.

The most effective and powerful curriculum is one that is flexible, allows for responsiveness and continually changes through evaluation. Each learner is unique and staff are able to create a motivating and progressive curriculum based on individuals' interests and needs. Termly themes are planned to encompass all areas and are chosen to stimulate pupil motivation and enhance their interest.

5.2 Senior Curriculum

Cedars Academy senior curriculum is broad, balanced, relevant, stimulating and challenging. It meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and includes modifications to make it accessible to all pupils. Emphasis is given to individual need and to the development of learning skills and communication, in its widest sense, across the whole curriculum.

Our curriculum is designed to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school, and to prepare pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

Monitoring and assessment of pupils work takes place continuously across the school. Pupils are encouraged to be involved in thinking about their learning, the setting of their own targets and in assessing to what extent these have been met.

Pupils and staff use a range of methods to record work and to monitor progress, to self and peer assess and support each other's learning. In addition to the more usual methods of writing and drawing, models, photographs, IT and video clips are all used.

Learning styles vary from pupil to pupil. This is taken into account when lessons are planned and teaching styles are therefore equally varied. Although a mixture of whole class, group and individual teaching is usually appropriate, the exact balance between these depends upon the needs of the class and the individual. Interactive and proactive learning is highly valued. Practical lessons, enrichment activities and educational visits are a common feature of the school week for all classes.

5.3 Post 16 Curriculum

Our Post 16 College is based at Walker Terrace, in the centre of Gateshead. All learners will access local workplace environments, entertainment and leisure facilities all within Gateshead Centre. They also access Gateshead College campuses at the Baltic site, Academy for Sport and Skills Academy. Our central location allows access to a range of different environments and create situations for learners to meet new people and develop new independence, employability skills and social skills.

We provide a number of routes, or curriculum pathways, for our post 16 provision. Students choose a route depending on interest and need. Some students will move across routes according to their own individualised learning plan. Individual timetables across all programmes are entirely bespoke/ individualised to the learner depending upon their needs and aspirations.

6. What happens when my child turns 16?

Students may choose to leave Cedars Academy at the end of Key Stage 4 to move on to Further Education locally or to specialist provision out of Borough. Other students prefer to stay on at the academy in our Post 16 college provision based at Walker Terrace, Gateshead, to continue to develop their core skills, literacy and numeracy, life skills and vocational qualifications to prepare them for their next move into university, college, training or employment.

7. How do you meet learning needs?

This special school has well trained and specialist staff, many with additional external higher qualifications in SEN.

We have a comprehensive in-house training programme on statutory and additional elements, (including Moving and Handling, PECS, Eye gaze, Communication, Speaking and Listening, Motor Skills, ASD, Emotional Literacy, Makaton). In recent staff training days, we have focused on Child Protection, Autism, Multi-sensory impairment, epilepsy and the education of children diagnosed with acute anxiety. All our Teaching Assistants attend the same training as our teachers. We employ assistants with relevant experience who hold NVQ qualifications from Level 2 to level 4. We also employ a number of Higher Level Teaching Assistants who possess additional specific skills and qualifications.

Support in the classroom is led by pupil need; the expectation is that each class team supports and understands the needs of all pupils. Staff encourage pupils to be as independent as possible and this is reflected in their half termly targets for PSHE. Individual Learning Plans are set and evaluated and shared with parents half termly with opportunities to comment or recommend areas of focus.

Our Teaching & Learning and Access to Learning Leaders are responsible for:

- Coordinating all the support for students and ensuring that all students get a consistent, high quality response to meeting their needs in school.
- Ensuring that parents/carers are: involved in supporting their child's learning; kept informed about the support their child is getting; involved in reviewing how they are doing; and involved in planning for their future.
- Contacting other people who may be coming into school to help support your child's learning for example, an Educational Psychologist.
- Making sure that there are excellent records of your child's progress and needs.
- Providing specialist support for teachers and support staff in the school, so they can help students make the best possible progress.
- Writing Learning Plans that specify the student's targets.
- Ensuring that all staff working with the student in school are helped to deliver the planned work/programme so the student can make the best possible progress. This may involve the use of additional adults, outside specialist help and specially planned work and resources.

Our Class Teachers are responsible for:

- Making sure that all students have access to excellent classroom teaching (this is known as quality first teaching) and that the curriculum is adjusted to meet your child's individual needs (this is called differentiation)
- Checking on the progress of your child and identifying, planning and providing any additional help your child may need. This could be things like targeted work and additional support
- Following the Individual Learning Plan; these will be shared and reviewing with parents at least once each term
- Planning for the student's next term based on their progress

Our Teaching Assistants work with the class teacher to identify areas of support for students. They:

- Support students to access the curriculum
- Help to implementation of differentiation and specialist support strategies in the classroom
- Keep students focused on learning activities during lesson
- Attend all training opportunities related to SEN and differentiation.
- Are mainly classroom based, however Higher Level Teaching Assistants are able to deliver specific SEN programmes outside of the classroom. They may also provide support during social time and unstructured parts of the day
- Help students to develop effective ways of becoming independent learners
- Pass on any concerns regarding progress/emotional and social development to the Teaching & Learning and Access to Learning Leaders

School and home visits occur annually with frequent opportunities for parents throughout the year to share and celebrate their child's achievements and progress. Each pupil has a target set at Annual Review with a focus on inclusive learning. We work in partnership with a range of mainstream and special schools and colleges.

Some older students access modules in local colleges and training providers and these are supported by Cedars Academy and progress is recorded and evaluated. Work experience is offered to students in Year 10 and above.

Our provision map clearly shows each pupil's access to additional interventions and evaluates the impact.

8. How do you meet emotional and social needs?

We have developed a continuum of support; importantly, students have access to more support when they need it. The continuum emphasises a therapeutic approach, with consideration to anticipation & preparation, attachment awareness, an emphasis on mindfulness and wellbeing, the use of reflective language; the focus is on early intervention through to targeted and intensive interventions.

We plan for all our staff to better understand adverse childhood experiences and the impact they have on health and well-being throughout education and life. We place significant emphasis on social and emotional learning that is relationship based, and strive to create a compassionate school.

9. What are your Transition Arrangements?

Parents are welcome to undertake a without prejudice visit to school to see what this school offers.

All new parents complete information sheets detailing contact information, permissions, medication and most importantly key information about their child that they want us school to know.

Some parents of very young children feel more comfortable with a phased introduction to school.

For most pupils who join us at other points in their school career there is the opportunity to have a taster session(s). Whenever possible staff also visit their previous school too.

Our KS4&5 Transition Coordinator works closely with local colleges and providers of post-16 opportunities. The Transition information evening gives the opportunity for parents to meet and discuss options with a range of different providers. They are supported in this by our Transition Team workers and the Early Support Service.

10. How do you review and evaluate outcomes?

Annual Reviews are held regularly with invites to parents/ social workers/ transition workers/ therapists. Pupils attend part of the review and all contribute a report. At each Annual Review Meeting consideration is given if amendments are required to the current provision; this can include changes to learning objectives, banding and provision.

Other, less formal Reviews are held throughout the year, usually termly. Parents can also request a Review Meeting at any other point during the year.

11. How do you communicate with service users and how are they involved in decision making/planning?

As a small school communication between school and parents is part of the daily life of the school. We contact parents regularly on Parent Mail, social media and school website to update them on school events and activities. We have a Parent Council that acts as a confidential forum for parents and carers to raise concerns, issues and suggestions for improvement relating to school life. The group also provides a highly effective and supportive parental network which meets regularly at the Academy, and organises learning, social and fundraising events.

Each pupil has a home school book and this is a two way communication system. Information about staff names are updated. Photographs of class work and activities are regularly uploaded onto our school website and social media page.

Families are actively encouraged to engage in supporting the students within the curriculum, after-school activities and on school trips. This helps promote a close relationship between home and school as well as bringing a range of experience into the learning environment of the students. Throughout the year we have whole school activity days and events that parents are encouraged to join.

The school has a formal reporting process based largely on the timetable of annual reporting required by the Single Plan process. In addition to which both education and therapy staff input to reports as required by students for assessment. We also have a Transitions event for parents of our older pupils when they can meet transitions workers and post school providers.

12. How do you involve students and others?

We have three School Councils; Primary Student Council (KS1&2), Senior Student Council (KS3&4), and College Council (KS5); each of them meet regularly throughout the term. These pupil representatives have an opportunity to influence specific elements of school life – e.g. playground activities, healthy food options, lunchtime clubs. The councils hold a termly joint meeting together with the Parent Council.

13. How do you respond to medication issues?

Medication is handed directly to the academy office by transport passenger assistants/parents. The Academy Medication Team undertakes medical care plans in conjunction with parents, these are reviewed at least annually.

During education visits, care plans are taken off site by a designated member of staff and any medication administered is recorded and counter-signed. Any staff trained in specific procedures by the school nurse (e.g. tube feeding, emergency medication) have their training dated and recorded, the details of which are held centrally.

A high proportion of our staff are trained in First Aid and protocol is in place to respond to medical emergencies.

14. What enrichment and extra-curricular activities do you offer?

There are lots of opportunities for our pupils to work and play with their friends and practise some new skills at Cedars. We offer a range of lunchtime activities, including Cartoon/Media, History, Art, Lego, Computer, Drama and Social Club.

Cedars Academy prides itself on a variety of opportunities available for pupils outside the classroom. Many of these opportunities are linked with sporting activities delivered through the Gateshead Kestrels, a disability sports club based at Cedars Academy. Every week pupils can join in with after school clubs offered every evening, such as swimming, football, wall-climbing, trampolining, Boccia and athletics. Students are provided with opportunities for individual participation and competition as a team player.

At Cedars we believe that Outdoor and Adventurous Activities (OAA) plays a key role in the advancement of student skills and confidence. It allows students to take part in adventurous activities in a safe and secure setting. For Cedars students learning outside the classroom can take place in many places, from the school grounds to the highlands of Scotland, or further to the ski slopes of the Alps. In partnership with True North Outdoors, Cedars Academy and Gateshead Kestrels have developed extensive experience in facilitating learning in an outdoor setting.

15. How can I start using the academy?

Gateshead Council has a duty by law to support your child if s/he has been identified with a special educational need and or/disability. The council will:

- Identify and assess needs of pupils with special educational needs/disability and provide appropriate provision for your child
- Provide high quality support and services to schools
- Improve accessibility to the curriculum, premises and written information for pupils
- Develop coordinated multi-agency provision
- Plan strategically with schools and other relevant partners to develop systems for monitoring and accountability for special educational needs and disability
- Continue to review local authority arrangements for SEND provision
- Provide independent consultation service for parent and carers

For some children with significant educational needs, a Statutory Assessment may be recommended.

16. What is a Statutory Assessment and who can ask for it?

This is a very detailed look at a child's difficulties, strengths and needs to decide whether a child requires more or different educational help and how this could be provided. It may lead to the compilation of an Education, Health Care Plan.

A statutory assessment can be requested:

- by your child's school
- by you as a parent/carer
- by referral from another organisation, such as health or social services

17. How will a Statutory Assessment be carried out?

Following a request for statutory assessment, the local authority will write to you to let you know that they are considering whether it is necessary. You will also be given the name of a member of staff who can give you more information throughout the process. This person is called the 'Named Officer'.

If the local authority decides to go ahead, you will be informed and the team at the local authority will then gather information about your child's special needs from his/her school, from doctors and from an educational psychologist. You will also be asked to provide information and your own views about your child's needs. The local authority will have six weeks to gather the relevant information and a further six weeks to make a decision and inform you of the decision.

Some children will need special educational help that cannot be provided in primary and secondary schools. There are currently six special schools in Gateshead. Cedars Academy is one of these.

18. What are the complaints procedures?

Parent/carers should contact the Headteacher with any complaints about the provision that the student is receiving at school. If the complaint is not resolved, the school has a complaints policy.

Parents/carers can contact the Special Educational Needs and Disability Information and Advice Service which is run by Barnardos in Gateshead (tel 0191 4784667). This is a free, confidential service for young people who have SEND and their parent/carers. The service is available whether or not the young person has a Single Plan.

Gateshead Council has developed a Local Offer which provides information about education, health and social care support for children and young people with SEND in Gateshead. The Local Offer can be found at www.gateshead.gov.uk/localoffer.

19. What were the main findings from Cedars last OFSTED Inspection?

Cedars Academy had a full, 2 day Ofsted inspection on 13th and 14th September 2017; cedars was judged to be a 'Good' school with some many outstanding features. Below is a summary of key findings from the inspection that we believe parents and carers will be most interested in:

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is OUTSTANDING.

The behaviour of pupils is OUTSTANDING. Pupils typically manage themselves with assured good manners, showing consistently deep consideration for others, both pupils and staff. On the rare occasions when pupils' individual needs make it very difficult for them to manage themselves properly, they use effectively the techniques staff have taught them.

Staff are highly skilled at knowing when to intervene with additional support at an early stage to help pupils, when needed, to re-establish their positive behaviours. As a consequence, instances of low-level disruption are rare.

Pupils are open, welcoming and accepting of others from backgrounds different from their own. They know how to lead healthy lives and keep themselves safe.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and secure at school, and all groups of pupils attend very well. This enables them to learn well. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.

The successful partnership between pupils and staff is underpinned by thoroughly relevant learning and detailed planning to develop all pupils' potential, whatever their starting points. As a consequence, pupils grow in confidence, both as individuals and in their learning skills. They value their education, and are ambitious and enthusiastic about their future in training or education and as young adults in society.

The support and encouragement that staff provide spur pupils on to achieve very well. As a consequence, pupils are rightly proud of their many achievements, whether reading much more fluently, taking part in school drama productions performed in an entirely different setting, or representing their region or the country in sport.



The progress that pupils make in English and mathematics is particularly strong. The highly effective curriculum, coupled with effective teaching, ensure that pupils develop basic skills very well, often from very low starting points. The vast majority of pupils meet the school's demanding targets, and a large proportion of pupils exceed them.

20. Who can I contact for further information?

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