CEDARS ACADEMY TRUST

Cedars Academy: Low Fell

Cedars Academy: High Heworth

SEND Information Report

2026-27

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The Report

1. About this report

1.1 This report explains how Cedars Academy supports children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) at Cedars Academy: Low Fell and Cedars Academy: High Heworth. "Parents" includes carers.

1.2 Every pupil at Cedars has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Our teaching, support and learning environments are planned around pupils' individual needs, strengths and aspirations.

1.3 The Trust must publish this report under section 69 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014, following chapter 6 of the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (January 2015). The Trust Board approves it. We review it every year and update it during the year when arrangements change. You can ask for a free paper copy from either school office.

1.4 Read it alongside our SEND Policy, Admissions Policy, Accessibility Plan, Behaviour and Anti-bullying Policies, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy and Complaints Policy.

2. The kinds of SEND we provide for

2.1 Cedars is a special academy for children and young people aged 3 to 19 with a range of learning, communication, sensory, physical and medical needs. These may include autism, learning difficulties, speech and language needs, and associated social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils often have needs across more than one area. We consider each pupil individually, using their EHCP, professional advice and information from the pupil and their family.

2.2 **Cedars Academy: Low Fell** provides for pupils with complex learning needs, currently from Reception to Year 11. It has taken nursery-age children in the past. Learning follows developmental pathways, with a strong emphasis on communication, sensory learning, wellbeing and independence.

2.3 **Cedars Academy: High Heworth** provides for students in Years 7 to 13 who are ready for a broad, subject-based curriculum with a high level of structure and support. It opened in September 2025 on the former Colegate Primary School site, replacing our Walker Terrace provision, previously known as Cedars College. Post-16 provision is at High Heworth.

3. How a place is offered

3.1 Places are arranged through the local authority's EHCP process. Families cannot apply directly to the academy for a place. When the local authority consults us, we consider the pupil's needs, the provision described in their EHCP and whether Cedars can provide appropriate support. If the local authority names Cedars in a pupil's EHCP, the academy must admit the pupil.

3.2 In the past the academy has also offered assessment places, agreed with the local authority while a child's needs are assessed. There are none at present, but they may be offered again.

3.3 Disabled pupils are admitted on the same basis as every other pupil. The Trust must not treat a pupil less favourably because of their disability, and it makes reasonable adjustments so that disabled pupils can take a full part in school life.

4. How we assess needs and check progress

4.1 Before a pupil joins, we gather information from their family, current setting and the professionals involved in their care and education. Teachers use this alongside assessments and observations to understand the pupil's starting points in learning, communication, physical and sensory needs, emotional wellbeing and independence.

4.2 We assess progress from each pupil's starting points, including progress towards their EHCP outcomes. We recognise progress in communication, engagement, emotional regulation and independence alongside academic achievement.

4.3 At Low Fell, each pupil has a Personal Learning Plan that turns their longer-term EHCP outcomes into individual learning priorities. Engagement Profiles are being introduced within the Early Years, Informal and Semi-Formal pathways to support planning, observation and assessment. Staff use Evidence for Learning to record learning and support assessment moderation, and leaders review progress at termly pupil progress meetings.

4.4 At High Heworth, staff use assessments suited to students' needs and programmes of study. These include English and maths baseline assessments, reading and comprehension assessments, and assessments of phonics, practical maths, emotional development and preparation for adulthood.

4.5 If a pupil's needs change, we work with their family and relevant professionals to consider further assessment or changes to support. EHCP annual reviews bring together the pupil, family, school and relevant professionals to consider progress, changing needs and next steps. The academy shares review information and any proposed amendments with the local authority.

5. How we involve parents, carers and pupils

5.1 Families know their children well and are central to planning and reviewing support. We work with parents through everyday communication, meetings, parents' evenings and EHCP annual reviews, and parents can ask for a review meeting at any point in the year. At both sites, parents are invited to consultation meetings and receive an end of year report.

5.2 Our Cedars Academy app supports day-to-day communication with class teams. Families can also contact the school office or the family liaison team to arrange a conversation.

5.3 We support pupils to express their views, make choices and influence decisions about their learning and school life. Pupils contribute to planning and reviews in ways that suit their understanding, which may include conversations, photographs, symbols, observations, signing or communication technology. We recognise that a pupil's preferences and feelings may be communicated through their actions and responses as well as through words.

6. Teaching, the curriculum and communication

6.1 Our curriculum starts with the pupil's strengths, needs and stage of development. Pupils learn in small teaching groups, with support organised around their individual needs. At Low Fell,

developmental pathways include sensory, therapeutic, play-based and practical learning. At High Heworth, personalised programmes combine subject learning, appropriate qualifications, vocational opportunities and preparation for adult life.

6.2 Adaptations may include visual timetables, symbols and objects of reference; tasks broken into small steps with repetition and time to practise; practical resources and real-life learning; individual or small-group teaching; adjustments to pace, routines and the learning environment; specialist equipment and communication technology; and appropriate assessment and examination access arrangements.

6.3 We use a Total Communication approach, valuing every way pupils communicate. This can include speech, signing, gestures, objects of reference, photographs, Widgit symbols, the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), including the Grid app. Staff work with families and speech and language professionals so pupils can use their communication systems throughout the day.

7. Therapies, staff expertise and training

7.1 We work with therapists and other professionals, planning support around individual needs and professional assessment. This may include speech and language therapy; occupational therapy, including visiting support from Treetops Occupational Therapy; physiotherapy; hydrotherapy and sensory swimming; rebound therapy; sensory and movement programmes; and counselling and emotional wellbeing support. Kalmer Counselling provides support at both sites, with provision primarily focused on High Heworth. Staff build agreed strategies into everyday routines. Specialist clinical therapies are delivered by appropriately qualified professionals.

7.2 Staff receive induction and ongoing training planned around pupils' needs, including safeguarding, communication, autism, sensory needs, emotional regulation and relevant medical or physical support. Training has included moving and handling, PECS, Makaton, trauma-informed practice, multi-sensory impairment, epilepsy and supporting pupils with acute anxiety. We employ Higher Level Teaching Assistants with additional specialist skills.

7.3 Where a pupil needs a specialist procedure or programme, staff receive the appropriate training and guidance. Where we need further specialist advice, we draw on professionals such as educational psychologists, therapists and sensory integration specialists.

8. Equipment, facilities and accessibility

8.1 We consider the equipment and adaptations each pupil needs, such as communication aids, adapted seating, mobility support, accessible personal care facilities and sensory resources. Needs are identified from the EHCP and professional advice, and reviewed at the annual review.

8.2 At Low Fell, facilities include a hydrotherapy pool, rebound therapy room, sensory room, soft play, immersive room, sensory integration and movement room, the Liz Neale sports hall and outdoor learning spaces. The building has lift and hoist facilities, height-adjustable tables and a wheelchair-accessible toilet, and the ground floor and outdoor area are fully accessible.

8.3 At High Heworth, facilities include playing fields, an indoor sports hall, a gym, outdoor learning areas and an on-site social enterprise outlet. There is no second floor. Some classrooms are

reached by three or four steps, with lifts installed for those who need them. The outdoor playing field is reached by several steps, with a step-free alternative via the main gate and around the site to the taxi drop-off entrance.

8.4 Our Accessibility Plan sets out how we improve access to the curriculum, the physical environment and information.

9. Taking part in school life

9.1 We plan activities, visits and enrichment with pupils' needs in mind, considering accessibility, communication, personal care, medical needs and support so pupils can take part safely. We work with families and professionals to identify barriers and make reasonable adjustments.

9.2 Pupils also learn in the wider community, using local facilities and services alongside people who do not have SEND. Post-16 students follow a community-based programme in and around Gateshead. Opportunities have included lunchtime clubs, after-school sport with the Gateshead Kestrels disability sports club, and outdoor activities with True North Outdoors.

10. Wellbeing, emotional development and bullying

10.1 Positive relationships help pupils feel safe, understood and ready to learn. We use predictable routines, communication support and personalised strategies to help pupils recognise feelings, develop relationships and manage difficult moments. Support ranges from everyday approaches for all pupils to more intensive help when a pupil needs it, including counselling and the Thrive approach.

10.2 Pupils are taught how to tell an adult they are worried, using their own way of communicating. Staff listen to pupils and families, take concerns about bullying seriously and remain alert to changes in behaviour or other signs that a pupil who cannot tell us in words may be experiencing bullying. Staff act promptly, make sure the pupil is safe, record the concern on CPOMS the same day and involve senior leaders and the Designated Safeguarding Lead where needed. Support is planned for all pupils involved, with families kept informed, and staff check that the bullying has stopped before the incident is closed.

11. Moving into, through and beyond Cedars

11.1 When a place is agreed, we work with the pupil, their family and their current setting to plan a supported start. This may include a home visit, an 'All about me' document completed with the family, visits, time in the class group the pupil will join, and a phased start.

11.2 Moves between classes, phases or sites are planned around individual needs. Moving to High Heworth is not an automatic next step for every Low Fell pupil.

11.3 Preparing for adulthood includes independence, relationships, community participation, health and further learning and work, and is part of annual reviews from Year 9. Our careers programme, Work Skills, helps pupils prepare for their next steps. We work with families, the local authority and receiving providers to support moves into further education, training, employment or other provision.

12. Working with other services

12.1 We work with local authorities, health professionals, social care services and other organisations involved in pupils' education and care. Our family liaison team helps coordinate communication with families and professionals, supports reviews and helps families access advice and services. Where appropriate, we seek additional specialist advice to understand changing needs.

12.2 The Director of Inclusion is the designated teacher for pupils who are, or have been, looked after by a local authority, working with carers, social workers and the Virtual School so that the EHCP and personal education plan support each other.

12.3 The Gateshead SEND Local Offer sets out education, health, social care and other support for children and young people with SEND. This report is the academy's contribution to it. If you live outside Gateshead, your own local authority publishes a Local Offer.

13. How we evaluate our provision

13.1 Leaders review pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of support, using assessment information, reviews of learning and feedback from pupils, families and professionals. Findings inform staff development, provision and academy planning. Trustees oversee the academy's work and challenge leaders on its effectiveness.

13.2 Priorities include embedding Engagement Profiles, Personal Learning Plans and termly pupil reviews at Low Fell, as well as strengthening our shared systems for assessing progress at High Heworth, beginning with English and Maths.

14. Questions, concerns and complaints

14.1 If you have a question or concern, please speak to your child's class teacher or contact the relevant school office, and we will help you reach the right member of staff. The Director of Inclusion leads SEND across the Trust. If your concern is not resolved, our Complaints Policy explains how to make a formal complaint.

14.2 Disagreements about what an EHCP says, or about a local authority decision, are for the local authority. It must offer mediation, and some decisions can be appealed to the First-tier Tribunal (Special Educational Needs and Disability). Gateshead SENDIASS gives free, impartial advice.

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