

# SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) Information Report 2023-2024

The SEN Information Report is a requirement under the Children's and Families Act 2014 and will be updated annually by the Academy in order to reflect any changes that have taken place or are planned to take place.

It is intended as a response to specific questions identified within the Act and should be read in conjunction with the Academy's prospectus and additional information available on the Academy's website such as the SEN Policy, the Equality Scheme and Accessibility Plan.

If you have any further questions or would like to seek clarification with regard to the content of this document then please don't hesitate to contact the Academy:

Phone: 0191 4874595

Email: [michelleoreilly@cedarstrust.org.uk](mailto:michelleoreilly@cedarstrust.org.uk)

Website: <https://www.cedarstrust-school.org.uk/>

Cedars Academy 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, where is it located and what areas does it cover?

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.

Cedars Academy is located in Low Fell, Gateshead. We also have a Key Stage 4/5 satellite provision at 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.

#### 2. 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.

The majority of pupils have a moderate learning difficulty combined with specific communication difficulties, and many of our pupils have associated difficulties such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Dyslexia, or other specific Learning Difficulties.

Out of the 230 pupils currently (Sept 2023) on roll there are:

- School (KSR-3): 157 students in 16 teaching groups at Ivy Lane
- College (KS4&5): 73 students in 9 teaching groups at Walker Terrace

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.

### 3. What are the categories of need that you provide for?

Cedars Academy takes children from each of the three banding categories used by Gateshead LA to define level of need. Each category is then broken down into four levels of need, from 1 (highest level of need) to 4 (lowest level of need).

#### Cognition and learning needs

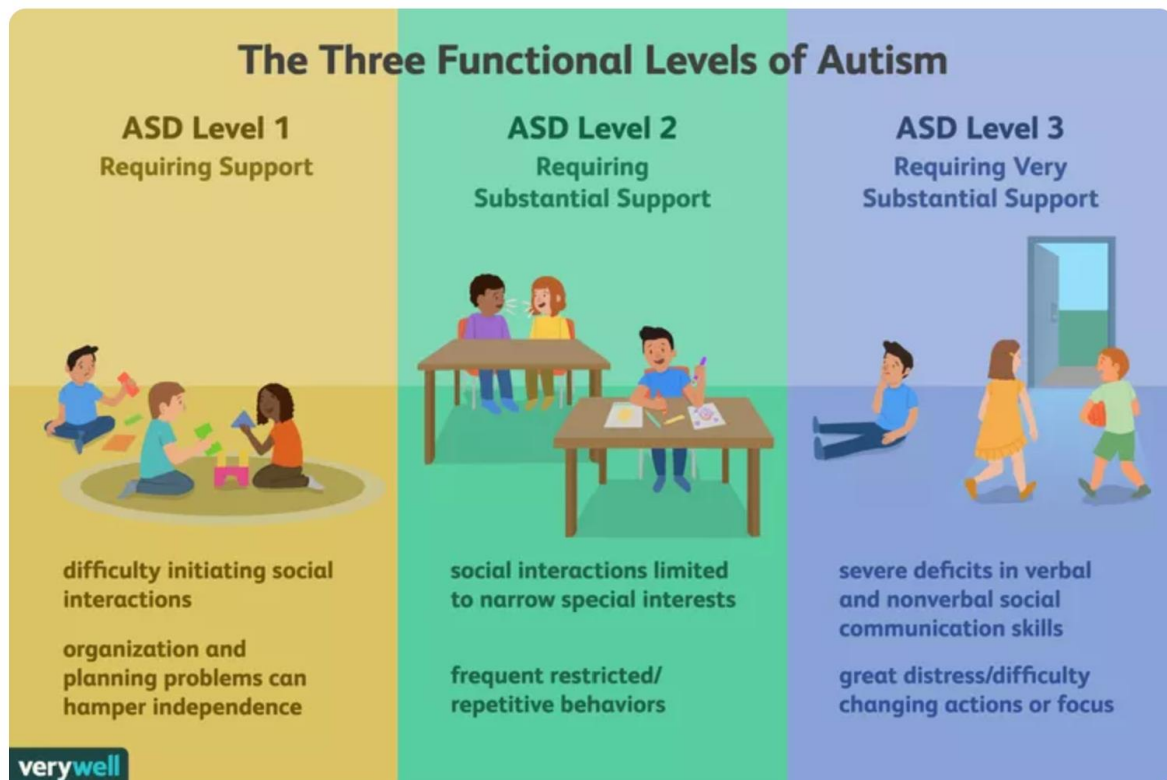
Children may demonstrate features of moderate, severe or profound learning difficulties or specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia. Some may have associated behavioural difficulties that compound their needs. Children who have these needs require specific strategies to help their learning and understanding. Included within this group are children with sensory and/or physical needs. Sensory needs range from profound and permanent deafness or visual impairment through to lesser levels of loss, which may only be temporary. For some children these needs may be accompanied by more complex learning and social needs. Children with these needs require access to all areas of the curriculum and may use specialist aids, equipment or furniture. Many will need specialist support (for example mobility training, occupational therapy or physiotherapy). Children with sensory impairments may need particular acoustic or lighting conditions. Some may need extra space and additional 'clues' to help them negotiate their environment independently. Health and personal care needs will also need to be met for these children. They may need facilities where their medical or personal care needs can be met in privacy.

We offer for all children and young people small class sizes; assess pupils for access arrangements for external examinations; planning, assessment, and review through SEND/ pastoral targets or review EHC plan; visual timetables; use of symbols and objects of reference; ICT/ switch technology where appropriate; qualified, specialist trained staff who can provide advice and guidance for colleagues; multi agency involvement; advice and support from outside agencies; support and advice sought from outside agencies to ensure any barriers to success are fully identified and responded to; a responsive to need curriculum; an emphasis on developing programmes of learning that support independence, preparation for adulthood and work/life skills development.

For those pupils with more acute cognition and learning needs we provide specific interventions to promote and develop literacy and numeracy; individual timetables; one to one learning opportunities and personal tutorials to help pupils to stay motivated to achieve; individualised psychology and therapy input to provide them strategies for long term resilience; opportunities for repetition of key learning; advice, support and assessments from outside agencies; specific support re transition if appropriate; alternative curriculum options, where appropriate to provide a different approach to the curriculum.

## Autism, Communication and interaction needs

At Cedars we are best equipped to support children who are at Level 1 or 2 of the DSM-5 Description of Autism.



Children presenting with characteristics of **Autism at Level 1** may not need a support for all areas of development and interaction. Children presenting at this level may find communicating difficult with others. For example, they may not say the right thing at the right time or be able to read social cues and body language.

The child is usually able to communicate in full sentences most of the time, but may have trouble engaging in extended, back-and-forth communication with others. They are likely to have social anxiety and may experience fatigues from long term masking, or acting neurotypical. They may also have trouble moving from one activity to another or trying new things. Additionally, they may have difficulty with organisation and planning, and independence for them may differ from neurotypical expectations for people their age. These children may benefit from interventions and programmes to build their confidence and skills in social situations and visual supports to aid with orginaiston.

Children presenting with characteristics of **Autism at Level 2** may have more difficulties masking than those diagnosed with level 1 and may find it hard to communicate or socialise in ways that are accepted or understood by neurotypical peers. Likewise, they will find it harder to change focus or shift from one activity to the next. The DSM's level 2 expression of autism includes children who have very specific interests and who engage in repetitive behaviours. For example, an autistic child may pace back and forth during lessons, or say the same thing over and over again. These behaviours are types of stimming, self-stimulation, that autistic children use to regulate themselves internally.

Children with these needs require support in acquiring, comprehending and using language, and may need specialist support, speech and language therapy or language programmes, augmentative and alternative means of communication and a quiet place for specialist work. Many Autistic children presenting at Level 2 have difficulty interpreting their surroundings and communicating and

interacting with others. They need an easily understood environment with a low level of distraction and sensory stimulus to reduce anxiety or distress. They may need a safe place to calm down if they become dysregulated.

To support these children we offer small nurturing educational environment; quality teaching and differentiation within teaching sessions; flexibility within sessions/lessons to meet changing needs; engaging resources; visual timetables; fully qualified specialist trained staff who can provide advice and guidance to colleagues; staff have completed and will continue to receive on-going training in relation to meeting pupils needs; support staff utilised to support pupil progress and promote independence; support is offered to families through multidisciplinary team.

For those pupils with more acute communication needs, but still presenting within the level 2 expression of Autism, we use individual timetables; symbols/objects of reference; access to expert services to support or provide strategies/programmes; support and advice sought from outside agencies; technology is used to reduce barriers to learning; access to support from family support worker; planning, assessment and review through SEND/ pastoral targets or review of Education, Health and Care Plan; Access to specialised speech and language, social skills and communication programmes; exam access arrangements as appropriate.

### **Social, emotional and mental health needs**

Children who have emotional, social and mental health needs may be withdrawn or isolated, disruptive and disturbing and they may be hyperactive. They may lack concentration and have immature social skills. Challenging behaviour may arise from other complex special needs, including Autism. Children who have these needs may require a structured learning environment, with clear boundaries for each activity. They may need extra space to move around and to ensure a comfortable distance between themselves and others. They may take extreme risks or have outbursts and need a safe place to calm down. Behaviour support or counselling may take place in a quiet supportive environment.

For all children and young people, we provide clear guidance to offer structure and routine; risk assessments are used and action is taken to increase safety and inclusion; liaising with pupils home local authorities; whole school system for gathering information on baseline and changes to social and emotional learning through Emotional Literacy; use of a range of strategies to reduce anxiety and promote well-being.

Staff are experienced in working with young people with SEMH needs, and will continue to receive ongoing training. Staff work very closely with clinical and therapeutic professionals and access to information and support is available within school.

For those pupils with more acute emotional needs we provide small group or 1:1 targeted programmes are delivered e.g. community teaching, counselling, educational psychology interventions; referrals to specialist outside agencies where appropriate; individualised therapy input to provide pupils with strategies for long term resilience; Individual timetables; specific support re transition if appropriate; alternative curriculum options, where appropriate to provide a different approach to the curriculum, and support pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs; exam access arrangements as appropriate. Due to the vulnerability of our students, the fabric of our buildings and staffing ratios, we do not have facilities to safely support students who present as significantly physically violent.

#### 4. What are your accessibility and inclusion arrangements?

Cedars Academy is a large specialist School and small specialist College with high student/staff ratios. Students are taught in small friendly teaching groups with experienced Teaching Teams (Teachers and Teaching Assistants) able to give one-to-one help where it is needed. The Teaching Team works 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 offsite educational visits.

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 integration.

#### 5. How will my child's learning needs be met at Cedars?

'Quality of Education First' is the core philosophy of our provision; teaching sessions, resources, groups and timetables are differentiated and organised as such to ensure that they are accessible for all.

Our curriculum is delivered through a multi-disciplinary team with a strong emphasis on an integrated therapeutic approach so that all students have access to regular, personalised and high-quality interventions and therapies to support their emotional regulation and other barriers to learning.

We provide specialised Sensory Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists to deliver specialised programmes. We also have a school counsellor, Sharon, from Kalmer Counselling to provide talking and play therapy. We have staff trained in school to deliver therapies such as Rebound Therapy and sensory sessions in the hydrotherapy pool. We use a therapeutic approach to music, art and drama. These are activities that are delivered by our teaching teams so that students can enjoy exploring and experiencing creative arts. Although we look to develop skills/knowledge wherever possible, the focus is on enjoyment, wellbeing and emotional regulation.

If a student's EHCP or Health professional recommends a specific Music therapy, Art Therapy or Drama Therapy, these will be provided by appropriately qualified therapists/Allied Health Professionals (AHP). The list below shows the range of therapeutic programmes we provide. Many will be delivered within classrooms or in our new, purpose-built therapeutic and physical development centre:

- Sensory Occupational Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Rebound Therapy
- Sensory Hydrotherapy
- Sensory Regulation in our Sensory Studio
- Speech and Language Therapy

- Talk Boost
- THRIVE – 1:1 and small group/class delivery
- Counselling
- Outdoor Learning (Forest School, OPAL)
- Play based Interventions
- Brick Therapy
- Pet Therapy
- Music, Art & Drama for Wellbeing

All of our staff have thorough induction training followed by ongoing professional development opportunities throughout the year, both formally and informally. The skills and knowledge of the staff at Cedars is exceptionally well developed in the area of learning disabilities and is supplemented by additional support therapeutic areas.

We have a comprehensive in-house training programme on statutory and additional elements, (including Moving and Handling, PECS, Communication, Speaking and Listening, Motor Skills, ASD, Emotional Literacy, Makaton). In recent staff training days, we have focused on Child Protection, Autism, Trauma Informed Practice, Multi-sensory impairment, epilepsy and the education of children diagnosed with acute anxiety. 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 Teaching Team supports and understands the needs of all pupils. Individual Learning Plans are set and evaluated half termly.

## 6. How does Cedars Academy evaluate its effectiveness and review Pupils' progress?

At Cedars we work hard to ensure that we are a highly reflective and analytical school which is relentless in its pursuit of excellence. In order to help achieve this we set highly detailed individual targets for every child which are monitored on a daily basis. These are set based on the evidence of thorough assessment and, where required, advice from subject leaders, the Senior Leadership Group and from other professionals.

We also have a Middle Leadership structure which monitors the effectiveness of the delivery of specific lessons and additional lesson observations from the Senior Leadership Group. Information regarding how successful we have been in enabling all of our pupils to make progress is communicated to the pupils and their families, all staff and the Board of Trustees, as well as informing the Academy Development Plan. In addition to this we have weekly team meetings, weekly Curriculum Development meetings, monthly whole staff meetings, Parents' evenings, termly Key Stage meetings, two meetings per year to discuss pupil records and an Annual Review meeting.

## 7. 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.

At Walker Terrace students 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. All learners access local workplace environments, entertainment and leisure facilities all within Gateshead Centre. 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 and social skills.

### 8. How do you meet emotional and social needs?

We meet individual needs through a continuum of targeted support. Importantly, students have access to more support when they need it. The continuum emphasises a therapeutic approach, with an understanding of adverse childhood experiences, where consideration is given to anticipation & preparation, attachment awareness, an emphasis on mindfulness and well-being, the use of reflective language; the focus is on early intervention through to targeted and intensive interventions through a compassionate and humane approach to teaching & learning.

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.

We have a very strong culture of mutual respect and respect for the wider school environment and have well developed systems in place to support pupils who are experiencing emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, whether this be on a temporary or longer-term basis. This is addressed systematically through the PSHE part of the curriculum, but also incidentally through the way both staff and pupils conduct themselves at school. Where we feel that a pupil's needs are beyond our own skills set, we have good links with local specialist services and are able to use these to support our work.

We have two, well established and vitally important, Student Councils; School Student Council (KS1-3), and College Council (KS4-5); 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. They provide essential feedback to the Senior Leadership Team, in order to influence the school and its development.

### 9. What are your Transition Arrangements?

Parents are welcome to undertake a without prejudice visit to school to see what the Academy 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 Bloomz, 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 class has an online Bloomz page. This is a two-way communication system where information about staff and timetables are updated. Photographs of class work and activities are regularly uploaded and parents can comment and message teacher's privately.

Families are actively encouraged to engage in supporting the students within the curriculum, afterschool 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 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 local medical team (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.

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

At Cedars Academy we are committed to ensuring that anything which is planned is planned to include all pupils. As such any trips or events are organised on this basis, with appropriate support put in place to ensure that this can happen safely. Beyond sixteen the students access a community-based education programme which sees them make use of a wide range of facilities and services in and around Gateshead.

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, Dance, Drama and Social Club.

Cedars Academy prides itself on a variety of opportunities available for pupils outside the classroom and beyond the school day. 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.

### 14. How does Cedars Academy prepare and support its pupils to join the school or transfer to a new setting/next stage of their life?

In advance of starting at the Academy the pupils and their families are encouraged to visit and where appropriate spend time in the class group they will be joining. Both the families and the pupils themselves are provided with their own prospectus which details the ethos and values of the school and some of the practical details. Some pupils may require a phased entry to the school and we work in partnership with families to ensure that every pupil gets the best start to their time at Cedars.

With regard to transition beyond school, we participate in the Transition Reviews undertaken from Year 9 onwards and support this with our own Family Liaison Officer who is able to provide advice and guidance in this area. We also encourage providers to come into school to meet the young people and

work in partnership with them to ensure that the transition goes as smoothly as possible. This is followed up with additional support to the setting where required following the completion of the move.

### 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 decide 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 Michelle O'Reilly, Headteacher (School) or Julie Vincent, Headteacher (College) 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](http://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 18th and 19th January 2023. Cedars was judged to be a 'Good' school. 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.*

Pupils thrive at Cedars Academy.

*Staff have extremely detailed knowledge of each pupil and student and have developed strong, caring relationships with them all.*

*Pupils trust the adults who work with them They feel that they can always go to an adult if they need support with a concern.*

*Staff support pupils with SEND skilfully. Pupils who find communication difficult are well supported in their interactions with staff.*

*Pupils rise to the high expectations that adults have for them. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Many parents made similar comments about the school such as one parent who said , "I think the staff at the school make a huge effort to support every child to do their best, according to their own individual needs and challenges."*

*Leaders are determined that all pupils should achieve to their full potential.*

*Staff make skilful adaptations to the curriculum for pupils who have more complex needs.*

*Leaders have developed a carefully considered approach to reading. This begins at the earliest stages with enjoying shared stories with an adult to fluent reading of texts reflecting GCSE pathways.*

*There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school.*

## 20. Who can I contact for further information?

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