

# **Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report**

**The Cedars School** 

April 2022

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# **School's Details**

School	The Cedars School
DfE number	306/6012
Registered charity number	1053810
Address	The Cedars School 147 Central Hill Upper Norwood London SE19 1RS
Telephone number	020 8185 7770
Email address	enquiries@thecedarsschool.org.uk
Headteacher	Mr Robert Teague
Proprietor	PACT Educational Trust Ltd
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils on roll	243
	Seniors 216 Sixth Form 27
Inspection dates	26 to 29 April 2022

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## 1. Background Information

#### About the school

1.1 The Cedars School is an independent Catholic day school for male pupils. It was established in 2013 and is one of three schools in London which are owned and governed by the PACT Educational Trust Ltd. The school comprises two sections: the senior department, for pupils aged 11 to 16 years; and the sixth form, for pupils aged 16 to 18 years.

- 1.2 Since the previous inspection the school has relocated from its original location in Croydon to larger premises in Upper Norwood. The new site is on the estate of the Sisters of Our Lady of Fidelity and is shared with its sister school, The Laurels. The schools occupy different sections of the site but share a sports hall.
- 1.3 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

#### What the school seeks to do

1.4 The school aims to work in partnership with parents to help each pupil to acquire moral, intellectual, and social virtues within a framework of Catholic principles.

#### About the pupils

1.5 Pupils come from a wide geographical area encompassing large parts of London and Surrey. Whilst most pupils are Catholics, a significant minority are from different religious backgrounds. Nationally standardised data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is broadly average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 32 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health needs, of whom 5 receive additional specialist support. One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 26 pupils, seven of whom receive additional help for English. The school modifies the curriculum for those pupils it identifies as the most able in the school's population.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

#### **Preface**

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as <a href="mailto:met">met</a> or as <a href="mailto:not met">not met</a>. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. In addition, the standards relating to premises and accommodation are also included. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Additionally, this visit serves as a material change visit to assess the school's proposal to increase the maximum number of pupils from 260 to 350.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: <u>The Education (Independent School Standards)</u> Regulations 2014.

### **Key findings**

2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

# PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's GCSE and A-level results in the years 2020 to 2021 confirm that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships and sex education, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.

### PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.

#### PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.

# PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.

#### PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

#### PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.
- 2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

#### PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.
- 2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

#### PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.
- 2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

## 3. Recommendation with regard to material change request

### **Summary of findings**

This was an announced material change visit, as part of a scheduled inspection, at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to increase pupil numbers from 260 to 350. The visit focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs).

The school implements an appropriate policy for safeguarding, which is supported by suitable policies for recruitment, whistleblowing, mental health, and pupil behaviour. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL), deputy DSLs, and staff are all trained appropriately. Leaders and staff demonstrate suitable understanding of the staff code of conduct and safeguarding procedures. The school has effective recruitment procedures and arrangements for handling allegations of abuse against staff, volunteers and the head, including reporting to the DBS and TRA. Records show that the school communicates and refers concerns effectively, including to pertinent external agencies when appropriate. Governors review the safeguarding policy annually and maintain effective oversight of safeguarding through a designated safeguarding governor. Discussions with staff confirm that they take safeguarding of pupils seriously, act in the best interests of the child, know how to recognise children in need or at risk and understand the importance of early help. Records show that any allegations of child-on-child abuse, including sexting, are responded to effectively. In discussions staff confirmed that they recognise the vulnerabilities of those with SEND to abuse, including child-on-child abuse. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that there are members of staff who would listen and respond to their concerns. The school has appropriate procedures for internet safety and pupils are taught how to keep safe when online. Records show that any safeguarding concerns are reported promptly to the DSL, and that such concerns are dealt with promptly and effectively. The DSL and deputies provide sufficient cover for safeguarding to cater for the needs of 350 pupils.

Safeguarding is likely to meet the needs of an extra 90 pupils as the school has one DSL and two DDSLs already in place and plans to appoint an additional DDSL in September 2022.

The school implements appropriate policies for health and safety, fire, and risk assessment; during interviews staff showed a suitable understanding of these policies. Records show that supervision of pupils is effective. The school assesses risk effectively.

The arrangements for health and safety, fire safety, first aid, supervision and risk assessment are likely to remain suitable once the proposed material change takes place.

The school employs sufficient staff to be able to meet the needs of 350 pupils appropriately. As class sizes are currently small, the current arrangements are likely to remain suitable once the proposed material change takes place.

There are ample toilets, and the catering arrangements and medical facilities are sufficient to accommodate an extra 90 pupils.

Plans to increase pupil numbers to a maximum of 350 include the opening of the classrooms in the North Wing. The school moved to new premises in September 2021. This has created sufficient teaching spaces for the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

#### Recommendation

It is recommended that the school's proposal to increase maximum capacity from 260 to 350 be approved.

## 4. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

**The EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection reports on the quality of the school's work**. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

School name	National Curriculum name
First Form	Year 7
Second Form	Year 8
Third Form	Year 9
Fourth Form	Year 10
Fifth Form	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

## **Key findings**

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
  - Pupils are highly articulate communicators who express themselves clearly, both orally and in writing.
  - Pupils make strong progress from their varied starting points.
  - Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to their learning.
  - Pupils engage actively in collaborative tasks and take leadership in their learning when they are given the opportunity to do so.
  - Pupils are competent users of Information and Communication Technology (ICT); however, their skills lack sophistication as they are not used consistently across the curriculum to enhance their learning.
- 4.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
  - Pupils have a markedly strong sense of community and are very supportive of each other.
  - Pupils develop decidedly high levels of self-awareness and self-confidence as they progress through the school.
  - Pupils have a very well-developed sense of the school's Catholic beliefs and values, whilst warmly including those of other faiths and none.

• Pupils are able to distinguish right from wrong and are willing to accept responsibility for the decisions that they make.

#### Recommendations

- 4.3 The school should make the following improvements.
  - Strengthen pupils' development and use of ICT skills so that they are well-prepared for the next stage of their lives.
  - Strengthen the quality of pupils' service to the local community and beyond by encouraging a wider range of pupils to initiate such service themselves.

# The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

- 4.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 4.5 Pupils develop excellent communication skills during their time at the school. Pupils are highly articulate, expressing themselves clearly and with purpose when given the opportunity to debate in the classroom and beyond. For example, in a Year 10 history lesson, pupils proved to be accomplished communicators when presenting complex ideas on aspects of the Cold War. Pupils demonstrate advanced listening skills and respond readily, especially when encouraged to do so by teachers. For example, in a Year 7 French lesson, complex and varied classroom commands in the target language were readily grasped by most pupils. In a Year 8 music lesson, pupils worked hard to listen to other band members as they focused on the importance of timing in their classroom performance. Pupils demonstrate well-developed writing skills, as seen through well-written essays in English and history and good note-taking in science, for example. It is notable throughout the school that those pupils with SEND who experience difficulties with communicating their ideas have the confidence to contribute to discussions as they are encouraged by their teachers and supported by their peers.
- 4.6 Pupils, including those with SEND, make good progress over time, as evidenced by comprehensive assessment data. Their progress in lessons is facilitated by focused teaching and a culture where pupils try to perform to the best of their ability. Pupils are good at monitoring their own progress and this has been facilitated by regular self-assessment during which pupils reflect on areas for improvement. At A-level in the years 2020 to 2021, over two-thirds of pupils achieved grades A\* to A in centre-assessed and teacher-assessed grades. As a result, the majority of pupils are successful in gaining places at universities of their choice. During the years 2020 to 2021 over half of the pupils achieved grades 7 to 9 at GCSE in centre-assessed and teacher-assessed grades. In discussion, pupils were keen to point to the individualised support and encouragement they receive both from teachers and tutors as key contributory factors to their academic progress.
- 4.7 Pupils display excellent attitudes to their learning, demonstrating an intrinsic desire to do well. During the inspection it was observed that, although much of the learning was led by teachers, pupils were very good at taking responsibility for their own progress and success. For example, Year 11 pupils organised their own biology revision session to share their knowledge and hence enhance each other's understanding. In lessons and activities where pupils are given the opportunity to collaborate with their peers, they benefit by sharing ideas to enhance their understanding. For example, in a Year 10 physical education (PE) lesson, pupils displayed excellent collaborative skills by giving constructive feedback to their peers to help them to improve their bowling technique. Sixth form pupils demonstrate high levels of independence when they explore topics of interest beyond the curriculum and present them, in seminars, to the school community. A very large majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the school equips their child with the team working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life.

- 4.8 Pupils make excellent progress in developing knowledge, skills and understanding as a result of the care teachers take in addressing their individual needs, and of their own determination. Year 9 pupils' work showed excellent algebraic competence as they solved linear simultaneous equations by elimination. Outstanding creativity and artistic skill were in evidence amongst Year 11 pupils as they prepared for their final GCSE pieces inspired by, for example, the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. In a Year 8 English lesson, pupils demonstrated considerable determination to understand the issues in *Henry V* and in a Year 7 Latin lesson, pupils showed a strong grasp of case and tense. In discussions, sixth form pupils said that they are developing a rich and broad education as a result of the 'Eudaimonia' programme and the Beckett lectures, which have been introduced and supported by the leadership and governors.
- 4.9 Pupils' study skills are well-developed. Throughout the school, pupils use these skills extremely effectively because they are encouraged to extend their understanding by learning through open questions and appropriate tasks. For example, in a Year 12 geography lesson, pupils demonstrated clear understanding of the concept of thesis and hypothesis in a piece of short writing exploring the merits and otherwise of a range of hard-engineering solutions to the problem of flooding. In a Year 10 theology, philosophy and ethics lesson, more able pupils, including those with EAL, showed an excellent ability to draw on a range of sources and ideas when interpreting the parable of the Samaritan in a modern-day context.
- 4.10 Pupils display strong numerical skills and apply their good mathematical knowledge effectively to other areas of learning. This is because pupils have frequent opportunities to put their mathematical skills into practice to enhance their learning. Subjects such as science, geography, design and technology (DT) and sports science contribute strongly to the development of these skills. In discussions, pupils asserted their confidence that they are good at using their mathematical expertise in other areas of the curriculum. This was confirmed by inspection evidence. For example, in the scrutiny of work sixth form pupils displayed strong mathematical skills when balancing chemical equations and calculating errors. In a GCSE physics lesson pupils used their good numerical and algebraic skills as they calculated force using equations of motion and impulse. Some pupils demonstrate a high level of competency in ICT as seen in the use of complex software in GCSE music, DT and art. In a Year 11 music lesson, pupils showed good ICT skills as they used software to underpin the development of the piece. During periods of remote learning pupils used online video learning platforms effectively to access lessons and resources. However, in interviews staff said that most pupils lack the ability to use presentation software and spreadsheets in a sophisticated manner. In discussions, pupils said that this is because, in the majority of subjects, they do not use ICT to collaborate or to enrich their learning.
- 4.11 Pupils' success in co-curricular activities is good, and in some areas excellent. Pupils achieve particularly highly in sporting competitions. Successes include being winners of regional and national rugby sevens competitions and finalists in a national football tournament. Individuals have been invited to join rugby and football academies of professional clubs and represent their county in cricket. Pupils also gain success in Salters' Festival of Chemistry competitions, the UK Maths Challenge, music examinations, poetry competitions and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Pupils achieve well in these areas partly because they have strong independent and collaborative skills, but also because they are encouraged by leaders and staff to pursue their interests to the highest level.

### The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 4.12 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.13 Pupils demonstrate an outstanding sense of community. In discussions with inspectors, they spoke warmly of a culture of mutual support where pupils and staff will go out of their way to help each other. Pupils work together completely naturally in lessons and activities, and the supportive environment enables pupils with SEND to gain social skills and form successful relationships with their

peers. Pupils show concern for each other and readily welcome new pupils to the school, ensuring that they feel part of the community. In discussions, pupils spoke assuredly of how they achieve more if they work together. They have an excellent appreciation of the needs of others and express with conviction the benefit of sharing knowledge. Pupils are extremely good at working collaboratively to benefit others within the school community. For example, Year 11 pupils made an outstanding contribution to the progress of their peers by sharing knowledge to gain a deeper understanding of the adaptations of alveoli to increase gas exchange. In discussions, pupils spoke of the decidedly strong support of their peers during an expedition for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. The pupils' markedly strong social awareness is enhanced by a tutorial programme where moral and social character virtues are developed. Sixth form pupils make an excellent contribution to the local community by volunteering at a local primary school and pupils of all ages are keen to support local foodbanks and raise money for charities through cake sales. However, relatively few pupils initiate and engage with opportunities for service within the community beyond the school gates.

- 4.14 Pupils make rapid progress in developing their self-confidence, resilience, self-discipline, and other personal skills from the moment they join the school. Within the school, pupils show a distinctive degree of self-confidence. They are comfortable in themselves and try to be the best that they can be, rather than compare themselves to others. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson, pupils displayed excellent self-confidence as they answered questions on male and female characteristics whilst learning about puberty. In discussions, pupils spoke of their decidedly strong resilience as they persevere in matches when playing sport against stronger opposition. Pupils with SEND are very positive about the help they receive because they understand that help offered supports their self-confidence and self-esteem. In questionnaire responses, an overwhelming majority of parents said that the school helps their child to be confident. Inspection evidence confirms this.
- 4.15 The pupils' spiritual understanding is excellent. The school's Catholic ethos is immediately apparent and respected by pupils, whatever their personal creed. In discussions, pupils affirmed that their Catholic faith is a very important element in the life of the school. Pupils demonstrate an innate and willing interest in spiritual matters. Their voluntary attendance at mass suggests that pupils welcome the invitation for some quiet, reflective time in school. Pupils develop a deep understanding and appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. For example, in the gardening club, pupils showed amazement at the wonder of nature as they cultivated plants from discarded pieces of vegetables. In a Year 11 art lesson, pupils spoke of the sense of calm within the classroom and of how immersing themselves in their art helps them to relax.
- 4.16 Pupils demonstrate a markedly strong level of respect for one another, regardless of any perceived difference, as exhibited during observations of and interviews with different groups. There is a clear sense of an ethnically diverse but socially united school, with mixing not only between pupils of different ethnic backgrounds, but between pupils of different ages. Pupils strongly appreciate others from different backgrounds to their own and are keen to learn about and understand different cultures and religions. Pupils have a great respect for the overseas exchange students in the school, helping them to integrate quickly into the community. In questionnaire responses, a minority of pupils did not agree that pupils are kind and respect each other. In interviews and observations, it was clear that pupils are very accepting of each other, and that affection and concern are the hallmark of interactions between all members of the community.
- 4.17 Pupils display a notably strong moral compass which is inherent in the culture of the school. In discussions, pupils displayed a good grasp of what is right and what is wrong. The prevailing impression of a well-ordered and cohesive community presented to the inspectors during their visit corroborates this. Pupils show remarkable self-awareness when they reflect on any lapses in behaviour. This is as a result of the encouragement by staff for pupils to self-reflect, rather than just receive a sanction. Written work scrutinised shows that pupils have a very well-developed sense of rights and compassion, and are able to discuss issues of morality with confidence. In discussions with inspectors,

- older pupils spoke of their debate, in history lessons, of the rights and wrongs of Soviet control of Eastern Europe and of questions of the role of government, liberty and control.
- 4.18 Pupils have a good appreciation of the importance of a healthy and balanced lifestyle and of how to stay safe online. Pupils' well-being is strongly promoted through the tutorial programme because the school recognises the possible impact of mental illness and stress on pupils. Pupils of all ages are keen to participate in sporting activities, as they are highly conscious that an active lifestyle is good for their well-being. In discussions, older pupils said that they value the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) sessions that they have had on topics such as consent. However, they said that they would be keen to learn more about how to stay safe when they leave school. In discussions, pupils said that they felt particularly supported during periods of online learning, asserting that the school made a concerted effort to check their well-being, and encouraged them to participate in a daily running competition for pupils and staff.
- 4.19 Pupils have a very clear understanding of how the decisions that they make now will influence their own future success. Younger pupils make good decisions to join clubs to make like-minded friends. Pupils of all ages think very carefully when selecting the subjects they will study. They reflect thoughtfully on assessments and set themselves ambitious, but achievable targets. This is all done with the encouragement and guidance of their personal tutors and their teachers. Older pupils recognise the importance of their decisions when selecting pathways to their future careers. In discussions, sixth form pupils asserted that they are well-prepared both intellectually and socially for the challenges of university life. This is as a result of the strong pastoral care which, in partnership with the parents, guides the pupils in acquiring moral, intellectual and social virtues within a framework of Catholic principles. This amply fulfils the aim of the school.

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# 5. Inspection Evidence

5.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings. Inspectors visited the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Sue Clarke Reporting inspector

Mr Chris Carlier Compliance team inspector (Head, IAPS school)

Mr Adam Reid Team inspector (Principal deputy head, HMC school)