

Inspection of Cambian Hereford School

Coningsby Road, Leominster HR6 8LL

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 April 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders set clear expectations for how everyone should behave. Staff are friendly, firm and consistent with pupils. Lessons start and finish at the same time each day, and the school's rules are fair. All of this means pupils know what to expect every day.

Pupils say that they know the staff care about them. Indeed, the staff keep a very close eye on pupils. In class, outside or when moving around the school, pupils always have an adult with them. At times, pupils do not like this, but they understand that it helps to keep them and others safe. This close watch means that bullying cannot happen. If any pupil says and does something unkind, then staff notice and explain why it is wrong. Similarly, if any pupil gets upset, angry or finds it hard to settle, the staff help them in calm and constructive ways.

The school offers many different subjects, with personalised learning for each pupil. Pupils are expected to work hard and most gain qualifications that help them go to college or get jobs. While the school has a strong track record in doing this, the way staff check on what pupils already know could be improved.

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

Pupils who come here have usually missed a lot of school. They often have gaps in their learning and find it hard to manage their behaviour. In this school, they get exactly what they need to help them re-engage with education and to develop their interests. It is a safe, nurturing place to be.

Leaders and staff help pupils manage their feelings and improve their behaviour. The headteacher and staff have an informed vision about how to do this and are well trained. Across the school, supportive teamwork shines out as a strong feature. Whatever happens, staff manage incidents with consistent calmness. They follow the correct procedures.

Staff provide personalised learning plans for pupils because they arrive at different stages in their education. These plans set out a broad, ambitious curriculum which is taught by well-qualified staff with good subject knowledge.

In many subjects, including English, mathematics, geography and history, the curriculum is well organised with targets for pupils to aim for. Pupils work towards qualifications, and many are successful. Even so, in some subjects, teachers' checks on what pupils know and understand could be strengthened. In science, for example, ambitious curriculum planning and teaching sometimes introduce new ideas before pupils have the background knowledge they need to understand them.

Staff encourage pupils to read, both for pleasure and for information. Reading

happens every day and all subjects require pupils to read regularly. Drama is used well to support this work and pupils' personal development. Earlier in the school year, everyone was involved in producing a pantomime. Every staff member and pupil had a part to play. Through this, and other speaking and listening activities, pupils gain confidence in speaking and in working with others.

Even though reading is a high priority, resources for supporting early reading, including phonics, are quite limited. Leaders recognise this. They are making improvements so that the right training and resources are in place, should they be needed.

The school's work to build pupils' confidence and character is exceptional. Staff inject imagination, humour and optimism into many whole-school events that unite everyone. Through a very effective personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum, pupils learn how to look after themselves and others. On top of this, staff go out of their way to chat informally with pupils, play games and be a listening ear. Pupils value this. It helps them to settle and builds their sense of self-worth.

Furthermore, the school equips pupils with important life skills, such as how to budget, cook and stay healthy. Out of the classroom, pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, work on a farm and learn about different trades. These extra activities prompt pupils to develop their interests and ideas about what they want to do in the future.

Pupils' attendance, which has often been poor in the past, usually improves at this school. However, for some, poor attendance continues to be a problem. Leaders work with other professionals to try to improve this. However, external support is not always effective, and problems persist.

Staff say that they enjoy their work and feel supported by leaders. They say that it is a tough job, but the workload is reasonable and school leaders take time to check how they are feeling.

The proprietor maintains regular oversight of the school's work. They have ensured that it continues to meet the independent school standards and complies with the Equality Act 2010. Through the Cambian Group, staff access helpful training. Nevertheless, there is scope to increase and improve the quality of curriculum training available to staff.

Classrooms are suitable for their intended purposes and there is space to play and socialise outside. All the required information is published online, and staff keep necessary school records about pupils up to date.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff keep a very tight watch on pupils. They notice what they do and say and are alert to the signs that indicate a pupil may be worried, upset or at risk. When needed, they pass information to other professionals and take action to keep pupils safe.

They teach pupils how to take care of themselves and how to behave around others.

The school site is kept secure, and pupils say they feel safe at school. All the right checks on adults in school are carried out and recorded properly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The attendance of some pupils is low. While, for some, this represents an improvement from what it was in the past, it is still a concern. It means that they are missing valuable education and not getting the help that they need. Leaders and staff should continue to work with families, professionals in placing local authorities and Cambian Group to challenge poor attendance. They should do this so that pupils do not continue to miss lessons and fall further behind.
- The school's resources to support early reading, including phonics, are limited. This means staff cannot respond quickly enough should the school admit any pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read. The proprietor should ensure that resources are provided and that staff's training is refreshed. They should do this so that staff have a well-supported knowledge of phonics.
- In a small number of subjects, teachers do not check carefully enough what pupils know and understand. This means that they introduce some new learning before pupils have the knowledge they need to understand it as well as they might. Leaders should make sure that all staff understand how to order and sequence a curriculum, and how to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding effectively. They should do this to ensure that new learning builds securely on what pupils already know and that they remember the right things.

How can I feed back my views?

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

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

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	117048
DfE registration number	884/6010
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	10220395
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Group
Chair	Farouq Sheikh
Headteacher	Vickie Wilton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£48,661
Telephone number	01568 620443
Website	www.cambiangroup.com/specialist-education/our-schools/semh-schools/cambian-hereford-school/
Email address	vickie.wilton@cambiangroup.com
Date of previous inspection	13 to 15 February 2018

Information about this school

- Cambian Hereford School is a small independent special school that caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Most pupils have an education, health and care plan. Pupils are referred to the school by local authorities.
- The school is registered to take pupils from age 11 to 19. Currently, it only caters for pupils up to the age of 16.
- The school is part of the Cambian Group, which operates specialist education and care settings across the country.
- The school uses three alternative providers to support the vocational curriculum. These are not registered with Ofsted. The school uses local sports venues for physical education.
- The school's last full inspection was in February 2018, when it was judged to be outstanding.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, staff, pupils and a representative of the Cambian Group.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and food technology. In these subjects, inspectors looked at curriculum guidance, visited lessons, looked at work and talked to staff and pupils. Inspectors also looked at guidance and work in PSHE and some other subjects.
- Inspectors looked at the school's website and examined several documents. These included school policies and records relating to safeguarding, the curriculum, complaints, health and safety, pupils' behaviour and attendance. They considered the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff, pupils and parents.
- Inspectors checked the single central record of employment checks on staff, looked at pupils' records and talked with staff and pupils about safeguarding

matters.

- The lead inspector checked that the premises complied with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and levels of supervision throughout the day.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Claire Price

Her Majesty's Inspector

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