

Inspection of Cambian Wisbech School

Old Sessions House, 32 Somers Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 1JF

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 March 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Insufficient evidence – amnesty granted
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at this school have typically missed significant amounts of schooling in the past. Despite the challenges they face, pupils learn to enjoy school again and attend well. Staff work hard to gain pupils' trust, which pupils appreciate and benefit from.

Pupils behave well, are purposeful in lessons and try hard. Sometimes, pupils may find learning challenging, but staff encourage and support them well. The longer they are here, the better pupils achieve. The school makes sure that the pupils are safe and have someone to talk to should they have worries or concerns.

Pupils have access to a wide range of interesting activities. These include drumming lessons, cooking and visits to places of interest, including museums and farms. These enhance the pupils' education and keep them engaged. More recently, pupils on the school council group have been able to make more choices and decisions about their education and what is important to them, such as ideas for the school uniform.

Staff have high expectations and pupils gain appropriate qualifications, such as GCSEs. This prepares them well for their next stage in training or education. Pupils also access work experience and career development that caters to their ambitions and interests.

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

The school curriculum is ambitious and carefully tailored to the needs of pupils. There are clear and precise teaching plans in place to guide staff. Staff check pupils' understanding carefully and recap any key knowledge they have not grasped. For instance, some younger pupils receive to develop their fine motor skills so this doesn't hold them back in the future.

Staff teach the curriculum effectively in most cases. Staff use plans to help pupils build their understanding gradually and know which knowledge needs to be prioritised to help pupils in the future. Pupils are proud of their work. They gladly talk about their past learning, which shows that they have gained resilience when completing work. Occasionally, staff do not set tasks that are linked to pupils' understanding. This confuses pupils and slows their progress. This is because not all staff have been trained to how to deliver the curriculum effectively.

Many pupils are confident and competent readers. The school offers a wide range of texts that match pupils' interests, to promote reading enjoyment. Pupils read often in different situations, such as when following a recipe. This means they get further reading practice and can understand the importance of reading well. The school provides a phonics programme for those pupils who need it. Alongside this, pupils read books that match their phonic knowledge. This helps them practice their reading skills. A few younger pupils, though, still struggle to read. While pupils learn

to revise and recap the sounds they are unsure of, some do not receive the precise support they need to help them catch up as quickly as possible.

All the pupils at the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and the vast majority have education, health and care plans (EHC plans). The school works closely with parents and carers, along with pupils themselves to create individual plans. These are reviewed regularly and updated to reflect changes in pupils' circumstances and development. This approach means that staff understand pupils' unique needs and can provide thoughtful and practical support to help pupils achieve their full potential.

The staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour, which are realised by clear rewards for positive actions. Pupils respond well to this. Where a pupil is not able to manage their behaviour, staff provide sensitive and individualised support to help. They are quick to notice when pupils are uncomfortable or need a short break, which means that there is little disruption to lessons. The school has clear processes for addressing any concerns with attendance. Staff work closely with parents and carers if pupils cannot attend. As a result, pupils' attendance improves over time.

The school has a well-considered approach to pupils' wider development. The personal, social, health and education programme, although new, has a positive impact on pupils' development. Pupils are given the time and space to consider their actions and how these may affect others. The school provides the pupils access to career advice and work experience. The school leaders are rightly proud of the opportunities they create for pupils when they leave the school.

The school is spread over two sites; one has an outside space for play, and the other does not. Where there is no outside space, pupils regularly visit the nearby parks. Both schools have physical education sessions at the local leisure centre.

The proprietor group ensure that the school meets all the independent school standards. All new and current staff undergo the correct vetting checks. The school has an appropriate and up-to-date safeguarding policy. The proprietor also ensures it fulfils all statutory responsibilities, such as complying with equalities legislation. Effective health and safety procedures mean that the school site is safe. The school uses risk assessment very effectively to safeguard and support pupils. Where risks are identified, sensible mitigations are put in place to reduce these risks.

The headteacher is new to the school. At the time of this transition, the proprietor had not established clear systems to govern and check leaders' work. This led to a lack of oversight of the school at this time. This has been rectified, and staff are now positive about this recently introduced challenge and support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

[If the school is not outstanding] What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- In a few subjects, staff have varying levels of subject knowledge. Where it is less secure, teachers do not teach content or set tasks that helps pupils develop their knowledge. This means that pupils do not develop a secure understanding over time. The school needs to ensure that high-quality training and monitoring take place to address this.
- Some younger pupils do not receive the precisely focused teaching they need to help them learn to read. This means they do not develop the individual phonics knowledge they need to catch up quickly. The school should ensure that these pupils receive precisely targeted teaching that focuses on their individual needs.
- Those responsible for governance have provided insufficient support for leaders during a time of transition. This has led to a delay in strategic decision making. Those responsible for governance should refine systems to provide appropriate support to the school during leadership or staffing changes.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	134179
DfE registration number	873/6033
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10267631
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Childcare Ltd
Headteacher	Simon Paynter
Annual fees (day pupils)	£44,000 up
Telephone number	01945 427276
Website	www.cambiangroup.com
Email address	admin_wisbechschool@cambiangroup.com
Date of previous inspection	29 to 31 January 2019

Information about this school

- The school provides full time education to pupils with SEND. Most pupils have an education, health and care plan with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) as their main area of need.
- The proprietor for this school is also the proprietor for 24 schools, four post-16 colleges and 137 residential homes.
- Admission to the school is via admission to the company. Pupils' places are funded by their local authority. The school is registered to take a maximum of 42 pupils from the age of 7 to 17 years.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was using one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school operates from two buildings on two different sites: The Old Sessions House, 32 Somers Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, PE13 1JF and 3 Anglia Way, Wisbech, PE13 2TY
- One pupil is in the sixth form. Because of this, no judgement was made on the quality of the sixth form.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- Inspection history:
 - The school opened in September 2005.
 - The school received its first inspection in March 2006 under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002. It was called The Bridge School.
 - The school moved to Old Session House 32 Somers Road Wisbech Cambridgeshire in September 2008
 - In January 2008 the school received a standard inspection. The school was judged to be good.
 - In March 2012 the school received a standard inspection. The school was judged to be good.
 - In January 2017 the school received a standard inspection. The school was judged as requires improvement.
 - In January 2019 the school received a standard inspection. The school was judged to be good.

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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the proprietor body, including the director of education and the regional director, who is also the chair of the governing body. Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone with representatives of Norfolk and Cambridgeshire local authorities.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, humanities and personal, social, health and economic education. For most deep dives, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and support staff, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to evaluate the arrangements that are in place to safeguard pupils and staff. Inspectors reviewed records of safeguarding concerns and how these are followed up. Inspectors reviewed safeguarding training and spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector scrutinised the single central record of pre-employment checks and reviewed the arrangements that are in place to ensure the safe recruitment of staff.
- As part of checking compliance with the independent school standards, and evaluating other areas of provision, inspectors scrutinised a range of policies and documents. They checked the safety and appropriateness of the school site.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during social times. Inspectors spoke with pupils to seek their views and experiences of the school. Inspectors reviewed leaders' records of behaviour.
- Inspectors considered the feedback and free-text comments from four parents and carers that were submitted to Ofsted Parent View. An inspector spoke with one parent on the telephone. Inspectors spoke with staff and with pupils to gather their views of the school.

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Inspection team

Jessie Linsley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Charlie Fordham

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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