



Cambian Whinfell School

*Specialist Education Services for Asperger's Syndrome
(High-functioning Autism) and Complex Needs*

- Male • 7 - 19 years • Up to 52 Weeks
- Day and Residential Placements

Welcome

Thank you for taking the time to find out more about Cambian Whinfell School. I understand that the decision to choose specialist education and residential care for your son will have been reached with a great deal of thought and soul searching.

At Whinfell our first priority is to make our students feel safe, happy and secure in their new environment. We work hard to create a calm, therapeutic environment which feels as much like home as it is possible to be. With your son settled into the Whinfell family he will engage fully in education and the other myriad of experiences that we can offer. Working with him – and with you – we will make positive changes.

We deliver the full national curriculum to our students, and in a supported, caring way we challenge them to be the best they can possibly be.

While we individualise timetables as much as we can, most of our young men will gain at least 8 GCSEs and many go on to study A levels or NVQ Awards. They can do this either with us or at local colleges, including Kendal College, with whom we have excellent relations.

We aspire for all of our young men to be able to live independent or semi-independent lives in the community once they leave us. Academic qualifications are important so that our leavers can successfully enter employment or higher education when they do eventually leave us, but equally crucial is the development of independence, self-esteem, social and communication skills. We do this by supporting all our boys to access work experience, by fostering links with other schools and by getting involved with community events. Older boys can make a natural progression to

full independence through graduating to our 'independence house' where they are supported to take full responsibility for their own daily living.

Under-pinning all of this is the multi-disciplinary nature of the school. All staff are trained in working with youngsters on the autistic spectrum and boys' individual needs and strategies are identified by a team of educational psychologists, occupational therapist and speech and language therapist.

We are a 10 minute walk from the centre of Kendal but we are also on the edge of the Lake District. The boys are therefore never isolated from the community but also benefit from all of the advantages the Lakes have to offer. All boys have a weekly Therapeutic Outdoor Learning session which can be anything from canoeing to rock-climbing, caving to mountain-biking and in their spare time they access local clubs and do activities such as sailing on Lake Windermere.

I hope this prospectus gives you a good insight into the outstanding standard of education and care we provide for young males with Asperger's Syndrome and high-functioning autism. I am immensely proud of the boys and the staff that we have. I think we are a unique provision and would encourage parents (through local authorities) to visit our school and see first hand what we can offer.

If we can be of any further assistance, please feel free to contact us. I look forward to meeting you in the near future.

Paddy Sandham

Principal

52 Borough Road
Paignton
Devon
TQ4 7DQ
Phone:
01803 524537

Student Profile



Cambian has a heritage of delivering 'Outstanding' education and care for students with high-functioning autism and other complex needs.

"Pupils develop secure skills and knowledge that they have not achieved elsewhere. Leaders have high expectations for pupils. They reach personalised and highly ambitious goals because of the strong curriculum and expert support they receive. This prepares them very well for their future."

Ofsted November 2021

Cambian Whinfell School is a 52-week and day- education service that offers 'Outstanding' education and care for boys and young men aged 7-19. All our young people are on the autistic spectrum and often have a range of complex behaviours and additional diagnoses.

Our young people have often experienced significant disruption to their schooling and frequently come after multiple placement breakdowns. They may also present a risk to themselves or others due to high levels of challenging behaviour or deficits in personal development. Typically they are very disengaged, isolated and have little self-belief. By prioritising these deficits we create the conditions for young people to re-engage in education and achieve their full potential.

We offer a highly therapeutic environment and seek to understand the reasons for each young person's behaviour. The environment is supportive yet challenging. The school prides itself on the range of specialist support services within the multidisciplinary team who play a fundamental part in planning and implementing the learning experiences of our young people. We have an Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist, Educational Psychologist and Clinical Psychologist on our staff team. We aim to draw out the potential in each young person and work alongside them to discover and nurture their strengths.

Typical Student Profile

- Male, Ages 7-19yrs
- Primary diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome or high-functioning autism and associated conditions including ADHD and PDA
- May have mild to moderate learning difficulties
- Complex needs and associated challenging behaviour
- Often multiple exclusions and placement breakdowns
- A history of school refusal, periods of time out of school and may have experienced previous admission to a CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) inpatient unit
- Specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia
- Issued with an Education, Health and Care Plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs

Our Approach



The environment is structured, stable and secure with well-planned routines aimed at reducing anxiety and confusion.

Cambian Whinfell School

Our aspiration is for all of our young people to be equipped with the skills to fulfil their potential and be able to live happy, independent, or semi-independent lives in the community.

Cambian Whinfell School provide individual care and education to the highest standard. Our aim is to allow young people to develop their maximum potential and to learn coping strategies for life as an adult with Asperger's Syndrome / high - functioning autism.

Our approach is based on the belief that children and young people with an autistic spectrum disorder do not make progress if left alone. Students are guided to reach their potential with consistent, fully informed and appropriate intervention.

The environment is structured, stable and secure with well-planned routines aimed at reducing anxiety and confusion, whilst supporting decision-making and awareness of potential risks and dangers.

Each young person can increase in confidence and build self-esteem through the progressive achievement of realistic individual goals and targets. Once a student is secure with us, we will support and challenge them to move out of their comfort zones and develop the life skills necessary for future success.

Teaching and Learning

Cambian Whinfell's curriculum is designed to enable our young people to build self-esteem and achieve their full potential.

Whinfell School offers access to the National Curriculum using modified programmes of study where appropriate. In addition, we provide vocational training and opportunities for further education, often supporting young people to access the local FE College.

We are fortunate to be in the Lake District and use it to the full with an extensive programme of therapeutic outdoor learning. We also draw upon our close community links to access a wide range of work-experience placements.

The school day is structured and active, including many opportunities for physical activity and therapeutic input. All of our classes are small; no more than three students and a one to one staff ratio where appropriate. Students have individualised timetables which are informed by their education, health and care plan (EHCP) and by an understanding of their own individual learning style. Where necessary staff are skilled in using a wide range of visual supports and prompts. Autism specific awareness is central to the delivery of teaching and learning and all students have Individual Development Plans (IDPs) which are regularly reviewed.

Our students all access the national curriculum and most sit at least 8 GCSEs, some accessing the highest grades. We also offer a wide range of accredited courses for example through WJEC Entry Pathways in Independent Living and Preparing for Working Life and Post-16 students may remain within the school to continue their studies and we can currently offer A levels in English, Media Studies, Maths, Geography, Chemistry, and Art.

We also have excellent links with a local FE College where students can be supported to not only access a wider range of opportunities but also become used to working alongside peers in a busier, more mainstream environment.

This can be an important milestone towards independence and bolsters self-esteem. Some students will attend on a part or full-time basis depending on their choice of subjects or even as an evening course. For some of our young people to avoid 'falling off the edge' at 16 and to continue to be academically challenged, the college link is really important.

Our young people have access to the following subject areas:

- English Language
- English Literature
- Maths
- Science
- Hospitality and Catering
- Humanities (Geography, History, RE)
- International Computer Driving Licence (I.C.D.L.)
- Art
- P.E
- Foreign Language
- Drama
- Citizenship
- Therapeutic Outdoor Learning
- Personal Social and Health Education
- SMSC
- Independence Programme
- Social Skills
- Work Experience and Enterprise
- Therapeutic and Clinical Interventions
- Relationship and Sex Education

Therapeutic Outdoor Learning



Therapeutic Outdoor Learning is one of the cornerstones of Cambian Whinfell School.

Therapeutic Outdoor Learning (TOL) is one of the cornerstones of our curriculum at Cambian Whinfell School. It is a vital element in 'grounding' the boys so that they fully engage in the wider programme of education and personal development.

TOL involves the use of the outdoors as a central part of our provision. The activities we use may be anything from adventurous 'outdoor pursuits' (canoeing, climbing, mountain-biking, caving etc.) through to working on our allotment, on local farms or in the National Park. All activities are very closely linked to each young person's IDP targets as described in their EHCP or in their SEN Statement.

Sessions are often specifically informed by the therapy team and may be designed to enhance areas such as communication skills, collaboration and expressive language or may focus on developing motor skills, core stability or coordination, for example.

Psychological benefits of Therapeutic Outdoor Learning (TOL)

Research evidence increasingly suggests many benefits of spending time in the natural world for young people's psychological and physical well-being, including:

- Reduced stress
- Better concentration
- Improved feelings of well-being
- Independence
- Problem solving skills
- Self-discipline
- Team work
- Development of social skills

Students at Cambian Whinfell School enjoy TOL, which in itself is reason enough for participating. The benefits as described above have a positive impact on their engagement with classroom-based learning where they demonstrate improved confidence and better independent learning skills. Through engaging in TOL, young people develop positive relationships with each other and the adults who support them. They enjoy a wide range of adventures which provide a useful collection of shared experiences which they recall and talk about together long after the events have taken place. Engaging in TOL highlights strengths and abilities and ensures that all of the young people at Cambian Whinfell School experience success.

Alongside this we recognise the immense psychological benefits for our young people of spending time in the outdoors. It is a great environment for developing risk awareness and, in a carefully supported way, of pushing students out of their comfort zones without unduly raising anxiety.

Clinical and Therapeutic Support

At Whinfell we benefit from having a closely integrated multi-disciplinary team that includes:

- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
- Psychology (education and clinical where needed)
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Psychiatry

The team informs the waking curriculum and the environment around each young person. We have a solution-focussed approach and concentrate on developing emotional self-regulation and resilience. We focus on the development of personal, social, communication and living skills and deliver through an informed Individual Development Plan for each young person.

Profile

The key to our success is that we view every young person as an individual and do not define them by perceived deficits.

It is crucial for any young person coming to Whinfell that the move works and we do all we can to ensure this happens.

We have to feel assured that we can meet the needs of the individual and manage the impact they may have on the other young people whose home it already is. As an integrated team we review all referrals before offering to carry out an assessment in person. Any decision to offer a place will consider these factors:

- We are an autism-specialist provision so the young person will have a diagnosis of AS or ASD.
- Our cohort is higher-functioning and to integrate socially and academically the young person must be of comparable abilities. Typically we would expect them to access up to 8 GCSEs (although we are flexible if this is not appropriate).
- Our young people often present with challenging behaviours when they first come. We need to feel reassured that the change of environment and support put in will reduce behaviours. The physical building is not large and sustained high-level behaviours cannot be managed long-term without a big impact on housemates.
- We will need to feel assured that behaviours are AS/ASD driven. We would not normally accept young people who had significant SEMH needs or underlying complex mental health issues.
- We are not a secure setting and have direct access to town, busy roads and the open countryside. We would need to risk assess carefully if there is a history of going missing from home or using illegal substances.

Our Environment



Cambian Whinfell School is located on two sites in the picturesque town of Kendal, Cumbria.

Our main building is in two Victorian houses with a large extension. This forms both home and a school with purpose classrooms. We strive to create a homely environment for our young people where they feel safe, comfortable and valued. Young people will initially move into the main house until they reach 16 when they can have the opportunity to move into our off-site four bedroom 'independence' house at Kendal Green which is only less than a 5 minute walk away.

Any move will be dependent on the needs and development of the individual young person but we aim for all our young people to transition through Kendal Green.

This gives those approaching adulthood a chance to further develop independence and life skills, readying them for life beyond Cambian Whinfell School.



Family Contact



At Cambian Whinfell School, we work together in partnership with parents, ensuring a joined-up approach to care.

Prior to a student arriving at our school, we encourage family visits so that the familiarisation process can begin, not only with the surroundings, but also with the staff who will be directly involved with their son's care and education.

Once a student is established with us, parents are encouraged to keep in close contact with the school via our dedicated phone line to discuss progress.

Some of our students and their families have had traumatic experiences and breakdowns in the family home. If this is the case we work with them and their family, slowly progressing them into day and then weekend home visits when the time is right.

At Cambian Whinfell School we have a very settled staff group which means many parents remain in close contact with the same staff members during the duration of their son's time with us.



Robbie's Story

Robbie joined the Cambian Whinfell family at the age of 14. Prior to his arrival he had been out of mainstream education for 3 years. He had struggled with attendance at his previous school and had a wide variety of challenging behaviours including frequent acts of aggression against both staff and other pupils, along with the destruction of property. He presented as an unhappy young man with very high levels of anxiety and little self-belief. The expectation that Robbie would attend school affected his emotional well-being and mental health resulting in extreme difficulties at home and school. When he started at Cambian Whinfell School his parents simply hoped that he could attend a placement where he felt 'safe and happy'.

Arriving at Whinfell

When Robbie arrived his anxieties were such that he was unable to attend education. He described getting into class like 'climbing Mount Everest – 'when I get to the classroom door I have exhausted myself and have nothing left to give'.

After three weeks of barely leaving his room Robbie began to feel more comfortable – 'people genuinely care here and I feel I can trust them'. At this time he began to attend education in a class with two other young people and was soon engaged in lessons.

Robbie's Whinfell Journey

Robbie has made enormous strides.

Education: A huge barrier to his learning had been lack of self-belief which presented as negativity, doubt and lack of motivation. He ultimately enjoyed learning, was fully engaged and as such went on to achieve 6 GCSEs at grade C and above and then 2 A-Levels!

Independence: On arrival Robbie lacked the motivation and confidence to do much for himself. As he matured and became more independent he was able to plan and cook his own meals and carry out daily tasks with minimal prompting. He had a successful work experience placement in Year 11 which resulted in part time work and by Year 13 he was working the equivalent of one day a week for a local employer.

Social skills: Initially Robbie was withdrawn, socially awkward and found it difficult to interact. He found it especially difficult to express his feelings and bottled things up until they eventually spilled over. He was very intolerant of other young people and showed little empathy. Home life was difficult, with his relationship with siblings being especially volatile. He is now very accommodating of his siblings and supportive of the family. He also built excellent relationships with staff and was able to offer positive support and advice to other youngsters. He became captain of the school football team and he encouraged other young people to overcome their own reluctance to take part. For some time his social anxieties were so extreme that he found it very difficult to function in public but after a year at Whinfell he was able to go into town alone, to the climbing wall where he interacted with others and he took up playing snooker in a local club. He represented the school at sports and in the final of the National Consumer Challenge Quiz. By Year 13 he had made friends locally and had an out-of-school social life. He went climbing with a tight circle of fellow climbers and sometimes stayed overnight at their homes. He travelled independently to friend's houses and went abroad to Italy with his girlfriend.

Robbie has unfortunately had to deal with his parent's significant health issues. He is a strong young man but could not initially talk to anyone about his feelings and this weighed very heavy upon him. As his trust of staff grew he became better able to identify, regulate and express his own emotions and as a result has been better able to support his parents. He has gained a maturity and ability to self-reflect beyond his years.

Self-confidence: Robbie has massively gained in self-belief, articulates well and is much more willing to accept new challenges. He enjoys the outdoors and in Year 11 he acted as 'apprentice instructor' on Therapeutic Outdoor Learning sessions. He independently attended events such as the Mountain Film Festival and has asked questions of the speakers in a full auditorium. He is able to acknowledge his own successes and to take both criticism and compliments. He now has belief in his own future and is working towards achieving his goals.

After Whinfell

After achieving his A-levels Robbie left Whinfell and is now living independently. He has a network of friends and continues to pursue his passion for rock-climbing. The work experience placement that he started in Year 11 turned into a part-time job and he is now employed full-time by the same company. He is very well thought of by his employers and occasionally returns to school to give mentoring advice to other young people. From an unpromising start Robbie has done superbly well and we are all very proud of him.



*Name has been changed to protect identity. Photo for illustrative purposes only.

Extra-Curricular Activities



Additional activities in and out of school hours complement the curriculum and focus on the developmental needs of each young person. All young people have Individual Development Plans (IDP) which are informed by the multi-disciplinary team and are regularly reviewed.

Very few of our young people have ever participated in school sports and PE but we support them to do so and we have competed in football, athletics and fell-running fixtures. We have won Boccia competitions and have regularly taken part in tag-rugby sessions with other schools.

The physical and mental health benefits of participation are enormous. One of our young people has competed in indoor climbing competitions at a national level (which led to work experience where he is now employed full-time at a climbing wall).

We have a summer camp programme and expeditions to the mountains of the Scottish Highlands and Snowdonia alongside our daily forays into the Lake District. Young people can take part in the John Muir Award Scheme, carrying out environmental work in the National Park. We have an established annual ski-trip to Bulgaria, the benefits of which are enormous.

Older students have bespoke independence programmes at our Kendal Green site in a semi-independent residential setting. Here they will develop the skills and resilience to be as independent as possible when they eventually set out on the next part of their journeys.

Community Links



Our students make full use of the resources we have in Kendal to develop recreational, social, living, work and independence skills in a real-life setting.

Other existing community links include:

- Gyms
- Leisure Centre
- Golf Club
- Church Youth Club
- Army Cadets
- Dance Classes
- Taekwondo
- Squash Club
- Jui-jitsu
- Gaming Workshop
- Music Workshop
- Rugby Club
- Fell-running Club
- Athletics Club
- Climbing Wall
- Nearby Lakes
- Cinema
- Restaurants and Cafes
- Kendal 6th Form College
- Work Experience Opportunities
- Weekend Activities

The school is keen to encourage active links with the community and will ensure that young people are offered every opportunity to integrate into the activities of local groups, whether on or off site.

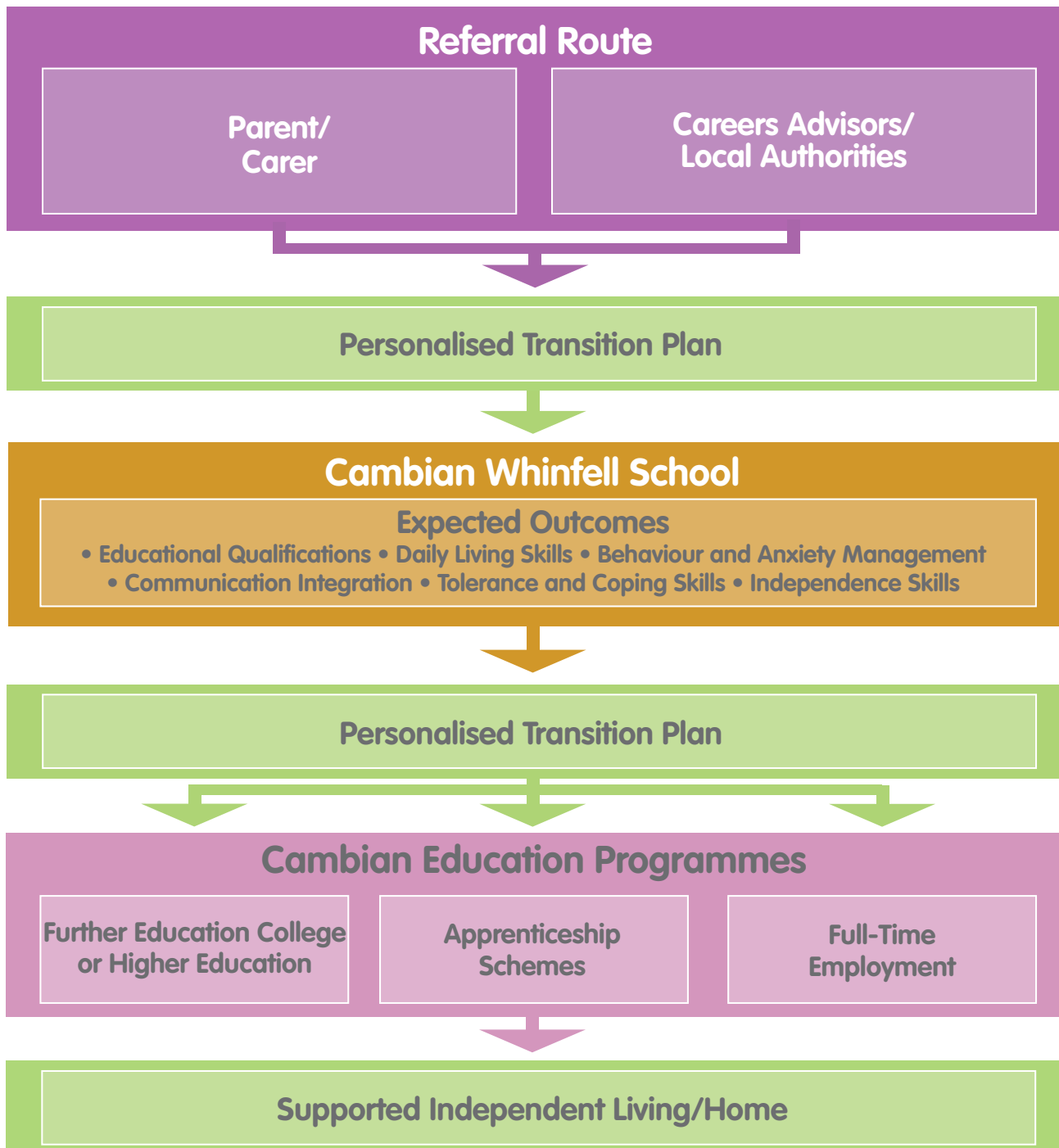
Our older students are also involved in a variety of work activities around Kendal and its surrounding towns and villages.

Our students are encouraged to continue their learning while they venture out into the community.

For example, we have no squash court on site so those of our boys who wish to play squash are supported to join Kendal Squash Club, book a court, pay on arrival and play in public, which helps their confidence, communication and interaction skills.

Transition Pathway

We focus on developing education, life and vocational skills that support a successful transition into adulthood.





Admissions

Securing your child's future

For more information about Cambian Whinfell School, the staff and an in depth look at their curriculum, services, outcomes and approach head to www.cambiangroup.com/specialist-education/our-schools/asperger-schools/whinfell-school/

Assessment and Admission

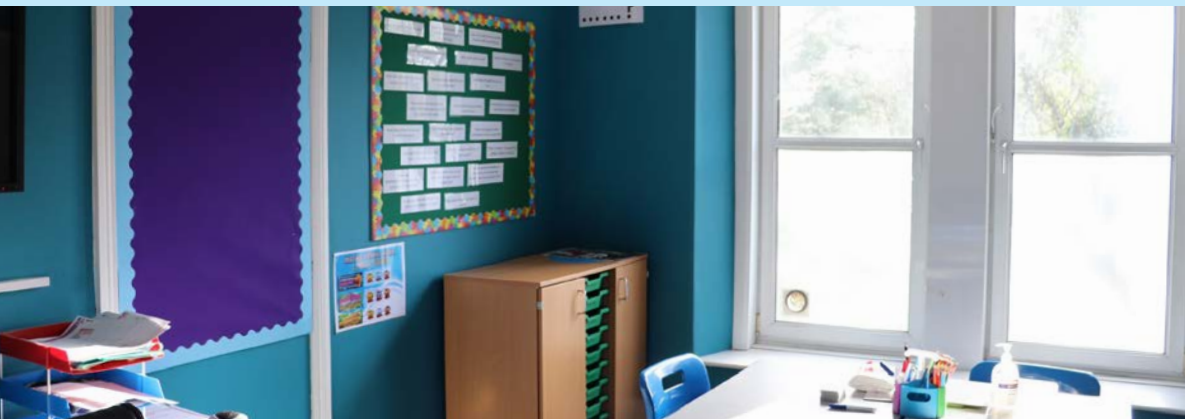
Assessment begins when we first receive an expression of interest and review the paperwork. If we feel we are likely to meet need we will offer to visit and meet the young person, their parents and social worker. We may also contact the education setting and any professionals who have been involved to date.

When we have offered a place and funding has been confirmed, we will work with all parties involved and support an agreed transition plan. This may involve further visits to home or to school including an overnight stay if that is felt necessary. Care, education and clinical staff will introduce themselves to the young person and keep in touch.

The first three months at Whinfell is always an extended assessment period during which time MDT and education will carry out baseline assessments. These will further inform the way ahead. Going forward we report termly on education, have comprehensive annual reviews and regular meetings between key workers and learning mentors.

We recognise how vital the link is with parents is and always want to work closely. MDT share strategies that we find effective and offer to meet with families at the end of each half-term. We also have an annual Sports and Open Day where the MDT team run short parental seminars.

Additional Information



Safeguarding Statement

The parents of students at Cambian Whinfell School should be aware that the School has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of their students. This responsibility necessitates a safeguarding policy and the School may need to share information and work in partnership with other agencies when there are concerns about a child's welfare. This policy complies with guidance from the DfE and Westmorland and Furness Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP). The School recognises it is an agent of referral and not of investigation. Anyone can make a referral to children's social care, if necessary. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for the School is Jennifer Carradus and the Deputy DSL are Paddy Sandham and Emma Brown.

Complaints Procedure

We know there will be times when students, carers, parents or placing authorities will want to give us feedback about our school and we will always be happy to hear from you. If you feel that you would like to make a suggestion, let us know about something you were pleased with, or tell us we did not meet your expectations, please contact the school via the details on the main page. A complaints procedure allows for both formal and informal complaints.

Informal complaints can be dealt with quickly, while formal complaints should be made in writing. Our full complaints policy is available above or from the school on request. This policy is designed to help you raise concerns and ensures your complaint will be dealt with fairly. Should you wish to take your complaint further or if you feel you are unable to discuss the details with the school, please contact the Director of Education , especially if your complaint relates to the school leadership.

The Proprietor

The proprietor of the school is Farouq Sheikh, Chair of the CareTech Board. The representative of the Proprietor of the school, whose address for correspondence during both term times and holidays, is:

Andrew Sutherland, Operations Director - Education,
Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 1AG.

The representative of the proprietor may be contacted at
Andrew.Sutherland@caretech-uk.com