

# Inspection of Cambian Somerset School

Creech Court, Mill Lane, Creech St Michael, Taunton, Somerset TA3 5PX

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Inspection dates: 25 to 27 February 2025

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<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
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Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
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Personal development	<b>Good</b>
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Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	<b>Yes</b>
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## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils start the day at Cambian Somerset School with enthusiasm. Many pupils have joined the school following unsuccessful experiences of education elsewhere. Staff take the time to get to know them and their interests. Strong relationships with staff help pupils blossom. Staff use their expertise to support pupils' needs. Pupils feel safe to learn in this welcoming and inclusive place.

The learning environment is purposeful. This is because the school has made clear the routines it expects pupils to follow. Pupils learn about how to be a good friend and how to support one another. Pupils demonstrate tolerance and understanding of each other's needs and form warm friendships. Consequently, there are no concerns about bullying. The school teaches pupils how to behave so they are ready for the wider world.

Pupils rise to the high expectations the school has of them. They achieve well from their starting points. Pupils go on to further education, apprenticeships or employment, indicating their preparedness for life beyond this school.

The school has woven a wide range of learning experiences through its curriculum. For example, pupils visited a local castle linked to learning about the Vikings. They study plants at stately gardens to inspire their artwork.

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

Pupils typically have a history of low attendance in previous educational settings. This means they join the school with less knowledge than might be typical for their age. The school carefully checks pupils' starting points and any pastoral or therapeutic needs. This information feeds into individual curriculum paths for pupils, which are well-matched to their academic and pastoral needs. The school works successfully with parents and carers to overcome barriers to good attendance. Consequently, attendance is improving and pupils are learning the curriculum well.

The school has created a broad and ambitious curriculum. The sequence of learning is carefully considered, meaning staff are clear about what to teach. In most cases, staff have a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. This is because the school provides effective professional development to enhance their expertise. For example, in mathematics, teachers use well-considered mathematical vocabulary to help pupils learn algebra. However, on occasion, staff teaching outside their main areas of expertise do not spot misconceptions, for example when pupils read. This means some pupils make repeated errors and do not develop the reading fluency they are capable of.

Mostly, the school takes into consideration pupils' gaps in their ability to read. Those who are still developing their phonics knowledge are supported by well-trained staff. These pupils read books that match the sounds they are secure in. This is helping them to become more confident readers. To develop an enjoyment of reading, pupils

take the initiative to write school rules for one another to read. An example is about the sensible use of the pool table. A priority for the school is developing pupils' spoken language. For instance, pupils present to an audience about their passions, developing their confidence and speech.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The curriculum is successfully adapted to meet their needs in most cases. Pupils develop independence through thoughtfully considered activities to support their academic and wider needs. An example is through learning to travel on trains. Pupils' targets are clear. However, on occasion, the provision stated in learning plans to support their future learning is unclear. This means some pupils do not make the accelerated progress they are capable of because they do not have all the support they need to achieve the targets set.

The behaviour of pupils is a strength of the school. Pupils are supported to self-manage and communicate their feelings. Staff know pupils well. They use this knowledge to design interesting activities to engage pupils. Pupils appreciate having a say in how their learning is organised. They learn to be tolerant and respectful when debating topical issues.

The school helps pupils to be ready for life beyond school. Pupils get the opportunity to hone their interests, such as in dance and sport. For example, they visit Wimbledon to develop their love for tennis. Pantomime trips further enhance pupils' knowledge of the importance of spoken language. Pupils know how to support their own mental health. They learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. The school's careers work raises pupils' aspirations. Preparation for transition to local colleges and other providers begins early. This means pupils are prepared well for their next steps.

The school's leaders have a secure understanding of the independent school standards. The proprietor provides challenge and support. It ensures that the school is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. School policies reflect the latest statutory guidance. Staff are proud to work here. Most staff feel supported with their workload and well-being.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)**

- In some subjects, staff's subject-specific teaching knowledge is underdeveloped. As a result, some pupils make repeated errors in their work, including when reading, as staff have not developed their teaching strategies securely in order to identify these. The school must ensure that staff develop their expertise to be

able to teach the whole curriculum well, enabling pupils to know and remember more.

- The provision in learning plans to support future learning for some pupils lacks precision. This hinders how well these pupils learn in some subjects. The school should help staff identify how best to support pupils with SEND to learn the curriculum well.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131455
<b>DfE registration number</b>	933/6211
<b>Local authority</b>	Somerset
<b>Inspection number</b>	10342024
<b>Type of school</b>	Other independent special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent day school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	10 to 18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	41
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	8
<b>Proprietor</b>	Cambian Childcare Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Andrew Sutherland
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Fielding
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£53,974 to £99,339
<b>Telephone number</b>	01823 443 133
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.cambiangroup.com">www.cambiangroup.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:somersetschooloffice@cambiangroup.com">somersetschooloffice@cambiangroup.com</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	22 to 24 March 2022

## Information about this school

- The previous standard inspection of the school was in March 2022.
- The current headteacher took up post in February 2023.
- All pupils have autism, social, emotional and mental health needs or a combination of both. All pupils have an EHC plan, funded by a range of local authorities.
- The school is registered for 40 pupils between the ages of 10 and 18 years old. However, at the time of the inspection, there were 41 pupils on the school's roll. The school has informed the Department for Education about this. The school currently uses four unregistered alternative providers.

## 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 evaluation 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 the headteacher and members of the leadership team.
- The lead inspector held discussions with the proprietor, including the chair.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at lunchtime and breaktimes. In addition, the inspectors met with pupils formally and informally to hear their views.

- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils and staff.

### **Inspection team**

Lakmini Harkus, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Malcolm Willis

Ofsted Inspector

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