

Inspection of Cambian Great Dunmow School

Unit 13, Flitch Industrial Estate, Chelmsford Road, Great Dunmow, Essex CM6 1XJ

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 October 2023 and 16 to 18 April 2024

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Sixth-form provision	Insufficient evidence
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	No

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils arrive at school having experienced disruption to their learning. Consequently, they have significant gaps in their knowledge and behaviours. Since joining the school, some pupils have successfully started to re-engage with education.

The turbulence to school leadership has not helped pupils. The quality of support they receive has suffered from inconsistency in leadership. Pupils are beginning to benefit from the recent changes new leaders have introduced. However, these improvements are very much in their infancy.

Leaders' higher expectations are beginning to be realised. Clearer approaches to behaviour have helped to ensure the school is becoming a place of learning. Pupils are now expected to work hard and to behave well. Many pupils respond well to this. Most are happy in school and appreciate these improvements. For example, pupils particularly enjoy the chance to learn a range of tasty new recipes when cooking. They also value choosing books from the new library. However, some pupils do not engage in their learning as well as they might. This is because, for these pupils, the school does not help them to manage their behaviour well enough.

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

Pupils have significant gaps in their learning. Up until recently, the school has not addressed these gaps quickly enough. Many pupils are beginning to learn with more confidence. The school has now identified what they want pupils to learn across the curriculum. The curriculum is broken down into small steps of knowledge. This knowledge is arranged in a logical sequence. Staff are starting to teach lessons that provide better opportunities for pupils to build on what they know and can do. For example, in English pupils are developing a more secure understanding of characters and language through carefully planned learning about Shakespeare.

Staff care deeply about supporting each pupil. They develop purposeful and warm relationships with pupils. However, many staff are only starting to get to grips with the new curriculum and raised expectations. They have also only recently started to identify the specific gaps in knowledge pupils have. Because this work is very new, the school has not fully provided the training and guidance for staff on how to teach or assess the curriculum. This means there are missed opportunities to check pupils' understanding or deepen their thinking. Staff sometimes do not know when to revisit important content or move learning on.

Most pupils find reading tricky when they join the school. This makes it hard for these pupils to access learning in other subjects. Leaders have rightly identified the need to improve the provision for pupils in reading. Some pupils receive focussed and targeted support to help them to develop their fluency and confidence. But this is not routine for all pupils who require it. Leaders are in the process of providing staff with training to teach phonics and early reading. However, staff require further support to do this consistently well.

All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Currently the information the school provides staff on how to support the specific needs of pupils is imprecise. As a result, some staff do not know exactly how to support pupils' individual needs. Therefore, some pupils find learning harder than they should. This can lead to disruptive and inappropriate behaviour and pupils refusing to work.

The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum now provides pupils with more of the important knowledge they need for their future. The school supports pupils to learn about areas such as the importance of healthy relationships and different cultures. Pupils get guidance about possible future careers. This is helping to raise pupils' aspirations for their future. The school council is beginning to establish itself and have a voice in the school. However, as with other areas of the curriculum, much of this work is very new.

New leaders are bringing about the rapid improvement that the school needs. They have ensured there are clear policies and procedures for teaching, assessment and behaviour. While these structures are all in place, this work is very much in its infancy. Currently, the school has not provided staff with enough training and support. This means staff do not implement these new approaches as well as they need to. The proprietor body has also not ensured that the acoustics in the school are conducive to learning. The noise level and echoing throughout the school has a significantly negative impact on the learning environment. The proprietor body has ensured that the school meets the requirements under schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. However, they have not ensured the school meets all of the independent school standards.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Some pupils do not get the help they need to become more fluent and confident readers. This is because the school has not provided all staff with the training and guidance required to do this. This impacts pupils' ability to access their learning across the curriculum. The school should ensure they provide staff with the training and guidance they need to teach phonics and early reading effectively.
- The school has not provided all staff with sufficient training and guidance in how to teach the new curriculums they have implemented. This means there are occasions where staff do not have the subject or pedagogical knowledge they need to teach the curriculum as leaders intend. The school should provide all staff with appropriate training to develop both their subject and pedagogical knowledge successfully.
- New approaches to assessment are not embedded across the school. This means the school does not routinely have the information it needs on the specific gaps in

knowledge pupils have. This makes it hard for staff to adapt their teaching to fill these gaps. The school should ensure their new approaches to assessment identify, with precision, the specific gaps in knowledge pupils have. They should then use this information to inform teaching and curriculum choices to close these gaps.

- The information provided to staff around pupils' specific needs is not consistently precise enough. This means some staff are not routinely clear on how best to support pupils to manage their behaviour and engage in their learning. When this happens, pupils disengage from learning and refuse to complete work. The school should ensure they identify, with precision, the specific and individual needs of pupils. They should then ensure staff use this information well to ensure pupils are better able to manage their behaviour to access their learning.
- The proprietor body has not ensured that the independent school standards are met. They need to make sure that the quality assurance processes and checks they make result in all standards being securely and consistently met.

How can I feed back my views?

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

School details

Unique reference number	149357
DfE registration number	881/6091
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10286499
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent School
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	15
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	0
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cambian Childcare Limited
Chair	Farouq Rashid Sheikh
Headteacher	Tonia Lewis (executive headteacher)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£59,000 to £89,000
Telephone number	01371 705623
Website	www.cambianguroup.com/specialist-education/our-schools/semh-schools/cambian-great-dunmow-school/
Email address	Tonia.Lewis@cambianguroup.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The proprietor body is Cambian Childcare Limited, which is part of the Caretech group of companies. The Caretech group provides a range of services for children nationally, including other registered schools.
- The school was first registered on 11 October 2022. This is the first standard inspection of the school.
- The school provides education for pupils with SEND who have an education, health and care plan for social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH). Places at the school are commissioned by Essex local authority.
- The school currently uses three unregistered providers of alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- There have been significant changes to leadership since the pre-registration inspection. A new headteacher joined the school in September 2022. An interim-headteacher then took up post before the current executive headteacher joined the school in February 2024.
- There are currently no pupils on roll in key stage 5.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of 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.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection started on 3 October 2023. Inspectors returned on 16 to 18 April 2024 to gather additional evidence in line with 'Ofsted inspections and visits: deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence policy.'
- Inspectors held meetings with the director of education for Caretech, the national SEMH lead, the executive headteacher, the regional SEND coordinator, subject leaders, staff, pupils, and a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects; English including early reading, mathematics, food technology and PSHE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered curriculum plans and evidence of learning in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- To check compliance with the independent school standards, inspectors spoke to leaders, staff and pupils. Inspectors visited lessons, observed social times, and toured the school site. They reviewed school development plans, policies and records relating to a range of aspects of the school such as behaviour and health and safety.
- Inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, alongside telephone conversations with parents.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils. Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to gather their views.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for school staff. Inspectors also met with staff throughout the inspection to gather their views.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Damian Loneragan	His Majesty's Inspector
Michael Williams, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sara Boyce	His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively;
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(b) fosters in pupils self-motivation, the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves;
 - 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;
 - 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
 - 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
 - 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress;
 - 3(h) utilises effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging pupils to act responsibly;

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 9 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor promotes good behaviour amongst pupils by ensuring that-
 - 9(b) the policy is implemented effectively;

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 26 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the acoustic conditions and sound insulation of each room or other space are suitable, having regard to the nature of the activities which normally take place therein.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently;

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