

Cambian Somerset School

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

Inspection dates

14–16 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Strong leadership by senior leaders and support by the proprietor ensure that the school continues to improve. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Leaders and the proprietor fulfil their responsibilities to meet the independent school standards consistently.
- Leaders carefully design and adapt the curriculum for pupils to ensure that it fully meets their special educational needs. Effective use of a small number of alternative education providers enhances the range of opportunities for pupils.
- Recent changes to assessment in English and mathematics are leading the way in accurately tracking what pupils know, understand and can do. This is not yet related to pupils' education, health and care plans tightly enough.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Most members of teaching staff have good subject knowledge, which they use to challenge pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding. However, this is not consistently the case when staff are teaching subjects that are new to them.
- Outcomes, over time, are strong. Year on year, pupils are achieving more qualifications at better grades. Some pupils are let down by the accuracy of their English grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Careers advice and guidance is strong. Each year, all pupils carry on to college or take up employment with training.
- Arrangements to keep pupils safe are effective. Staff are suitably trained and recognise when pupils are at risk of harm.
- Pupils are well cared for and have access to a range of support for their social and emotional well-being. External agencies are brought in to provide specialist support when required.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They work and socialise well together.
- Attendance is below average and shows limited signs of improvement. Leaders are aware of this and are taking action to increase pupils' attendance.
- Record-keeping is not always as precise as it should be.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - teaching staff have the training they need to be secure in their subject knowledge when teaching subjects that are new to them
 - the school's systems for monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress against their education, health and care plan are carefully recorded
 - record-keeping of administrative procedures and processes is tightened
 - leaders work effectively with placing authorities to improve pupils' attendance.
- Raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that teaching staff challenge pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding consistently
 - developing pupils' accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Clear leadership by the headteacher and her deputy, with the strong support of the proprietor's regional education lead, continues to improve the quality of education and ensures that pupils' welfare is paramount. Staff have bought in to this ethos and vision. Staff who have been at the school since the previous inspection are positive about the improvements that have been seen in recent years. Every member of staff who completed Ofsted's questionnaire feels the school is led well and is proud to work at Cambian Somerset School.
- The proprietor and leaders have ensured that the independent school standards (ISS) are met. The proprietor has ensured that the building is well maintained and that pupils' safety and well-being are not compromised.
- Leaders carefully work with pupils, their parents and placing authorities, to ensure that every pupil has a bespoke curriculum which meets their needs. Leaders engage alternative education providers to ensure that pupils' personal interests are accommodated. Leaders swiftly make changes when necessary. As a result, pupils make strong progress in their personal development and academic learning.
- Leaders are strengthening systems for assessing, monitoring and evaluating the progress that pupils make across the curriculum. They plan to introduce a common assessment system later this academic year to ensure that assessment across all subjects is equally rigorous.
- Leaders make good use of accredited courses. These courses provide structure to learning in a wide range of subjects. They help pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in academic studies, vocational programmes, life skills and sport. These are particularly effective in boosting pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Leaders are accurate in their evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the outcomes pupils achieve. They recognise that there is some variability in the quality of teaching and learning across the curriculum and within a few subjects.
- Staff benefit from a wide range of training, much of which is delivered by in-house specialists. As a result, staff are knowledgeable about the most common special educational needs (SEN) that pupils have. They are also confident in their management of behaviour. They calm situations skilfully and help pupils to manage their own emotions.
- Through carefully planning, leaders have integrated opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development into the curriculum. Pupils are able to explain the teachings of different religions about values, such as the importance of tolerance. Additionally, each half term pupils enjoy cultural enrichment days which help them understand the geography, history, religion, musical traditions, food and sports associated with different countries.
- Leaders plan visits and arrange visiting speakers to help pupils better understand British values, such as the rule of law. Pupils have a good awareness of the legal system and public institutions, such as the judiciary.

- Many of the systems used in school are now embedded in practice. However, not all of these systems are sufficiently well coordinated. In some cases, individual education plans lack the level of detail needed to help pupils, their parents and school staff monitor progress towards their targets. Leaders are aware of the need for a more cohesive approach to planning and have plans in place to achieve this.
- The school's website meets the requirements of the ISS. However, the website is difficult to navigate and the information about the curriculum is not sufficiently clear for parents to understand what their child is learning.

Governance

- Governors, who act on behalf of the proprietor, have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Through their regularly monitoring of school performance information, they are able to direct funding precisely to continue to improve the quality of education and the premises. As a result, the school is well maintained and resources are generally of a good quality. However, the science laboratory is not sufficiently well equipped to meet the expectations of new GCSE specifications.
- Governors use their knowledge and skills well to hold leaders to account. They ensure that all of the required policies are in place and are implemented by leaders in the day-to-day running of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils are taught well about the risks they may face. Leaders are swift to engage specialist agencies to provide highly effective programmes that explore specific risks.
- Leaders are in regular communication with placing authorities, for example when a pupil starts at the school or if a placement is at risk. As a result, pupils who are placed at the school settle in quickly and make good progress from an early stage. No pupil has had their placement terminated or received a permanent exclusion since the previous inspection.
- The few parents who responded to Parent View were unanimous in their appreciation of the school's efforts regarding their children's welfare. Parents commented on the regular communication they have with staff as well as the good understanding staff have of their children and their needs.
- Risk assessments are in place for the premises and for activities on the school site, at alternative providers and for educational visits. Some of the risk assessments do not contain the level of detail needed for the controls that are to be used. They lack specific detail about the additional provision some pupils need.
- Staff are regularly trained in different aspects of safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty. Referrals to local authorities and the police are of good quality and swiftly followed up by leaders when there is any delay in response.
- The requirements of the ISS regarding safeguarding are met, including the publication of the school's safeguarding policy. The arrangements take into account the latest guidance

from the Secretary of State. Leaders are aware that some record-keeping is not as tight as it needs to be, particularly with respect to administrative processes.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils work with positive attitudes and focus well on the tasks they are given. Most pupils can concentrate for extended periods of time.
- Staff are skilled at using pupils' interests to plan learning that ensures that they make strong progress. This includes deepening pupils' spiritual, moral, social development, such as in art, where pupils use their appreciation of local landmarks and knowledge of famous artists to influence their own designs.
- Relationships between teaching staff and pupils are very positive. Increasingly, pupils are interacting better with each other when they are taught with other pupils.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is generally secure and they use this to plan learning carefully in the areas they are expert in. They are accurate in their assessments and use their findings and their good knowledge of each pupil to ensure that pupils make good progress in their studies. However, the few non-specialist teaching staff have not had the training they need to support pupils to reach the higher standards.
- The vast majority of learning support assistants work well with the class teachers to help pupils to develop their skills and deepen their understanding. A few lack the confidence or skills to be able to support and challenge pupils effectively.
- Following recent training, many teachers increasingly use questioning to assess what pupils know and understand. From this they review concepts that pupils are less secure in and where pupils are confident, in order to deepen pupils' understanding further. Although this is now the norm in most subjects, a small proportion of teaching staff do not challenge pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding consistently.
- Teachers' and instructors' assessment of pupils' progress is secure. The feedback they provide helps pupils to recognise how they can improve their work. However, staff do not routinely evaluate the accuracy of pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling. This has a detrimental impact on the quality of their writing.
- Teaching staff make good use of opportunities to challenge stereotypical views. They ensure that pupils have a good appreciation of a range of cultures and understand how these affect pupils as they live in multicultural 21st-century Britain.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders insist that each pupil is treated as an individual. Staff are sensitive to their needs and know each child well. The building is fully accessible and the curriculum is planned around each pupil's needs. As a result, all pupils are treated equally.
- Pupils can identify an adult they can communicate with when they are worried. They are confident that staff will help them. When staff identify that additional support is

required, they are swift to provide social and emotional health counselling or specialist help.

- Leaders ensure that pupils are provided with high-quality careers advice and guidance. Pupils benefit from work-related learning and activities which give them an insight into the world of work. Through these pupils identify careers that interest them and are clear about pathways to reach their goals.
- Many pupils benefit from following courses or receiving support from alternative providers. Providers give school leaders regular and timely reports. These are thorough and give information about pupils' attendance, their behaviour and progress. In almost all cases, pupils make strong progress in their vocational studies and personal development.
- Leaders engage external agencies to raise pupils' awareness of risks, for example regarding their sexual health and as teenage drivers. This work has been effective in helping pupils to give thought to the decisions they make and develop strategies to keep themselves safe.
- Risk assessments are in place for a wide range of activities, premises and individual pupils. For a few activities, the arrangements to reduce the likelihood of harm do not sufficiently consider pupils' individual needs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The recently revised behaviour policy is having demonstrable, positive impact on pupils' behaviour. Staff are aware of the triggers and indicators that may cause pupils to misbehave, and plan to minimise these. Staff use their training in de-escalation techniques effectively. Pupils are learning how to manage their own behaviour. As a result, the number of incidents of misbehaviour and bullying has fallen sharply.
- The use of restraint has reduced significantly. When it is used, procedures are appropriately followed. Leaders recognise that debriefs and lessons learned need to be recorded more systematically.
- Observation of pupils who are distressed demonstrates the school's new approach. Pupils are given time and space to regulate their own behaviour and in the use of de-escalation effectively by staff.
- The school is an orderly environment. Pupils are polite to staff and visitors, and conduct themselves well during the school day, including during breaks and at lunchtime. They make good use of the outdoor space and social areas.
- Some pupils use inappropriate language. This is not routinely challenged and so is often repeated.
- Pupils' attendance is below, and persistent absenteeism is higher than, that seen typically in special schools. Leaders are aware of the many reasons that prevent pupils attending school, including those regarding transport arranged by local authorities. Although there is only limited improvement, around a quarter of the pupils are attending much more regularly than they have in the past.

- Exclusions, while reducing in their number and length, persist. Just over half of all pupils have had at least one fixed-term exclusion this year. This is a marked reduction from previous years and represents an improving trend.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' progress in almost aspects of the school's curriculum is good. It is especially strong in motor vehicle studies, where pupils show a good understanding of practical aspects and the theory that underpins this. This inspires pupils to consider further training and employment in this area.
- When pupils reach the end of Year 11, an increasing proportion are successful in achieving GCSEs. They also achieve other qualifications, such as vocationally related qualifications, functional skills in English and mathematics, entry-level certificates and unit awards.
- The very few pupils who continue to the sixth form make good progress in their 16 to 19 study programmes. Study programmes include courses in English, mathematics, a vocational 'core' course, tutorials and work-related learning.
- Pupils achieve positive destinations after they leave school. In 2017, every leaver continued to further education or employment with training. This continues an improving trend since the previous inspection.
- There are no discernible differences between children looked after and other pupils.
- Expectations of pupils' academic progress in a few subjects are too low. In these areas, teachers do not ensure that pupils have sufficient depth of understanding.
- Across the school, the quality of pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling are not improving quickly enough. Teachers do not routinely help pupils to improve this aspect of their learning.

School details

Unique reference number	131455
DfE registration number	933/6211
Inspection number	10041374

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

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	1
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Cambian Education
Chair	Josh Fitzgerald
Headteacher	Nicky Teakle
Annual fees (day pupils)	£41,500–51,500
Telephone number	01823 443133
Website	http://www.cambiagroup.com/childrenservices/specialisteducationservices/esddayschools.aspx
Email address	education@cambiagroup.com
Date of previous inspection	24–26 March 2015

Information about this school

- Cambian Somerset School is an independent, co-educational day school for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- The school is owned by the Cambian Group, who provide specialist education and behavioural health services for children. The company aims to actively enable each and

every one of the people in our care to achieve their personal best, however it is defined by them or for them.'

- The majority of pupils are White British. There are more boys than girls.
- The school uses four alternative providers: Alternative Education Company, Bicton College, Reach Alternative Education and Somerset Equus Limited.
- The school's previous standard inspection was undertaken from 24 to 26 March 2015, when the school was judged to be good.
- The school is overseen by the headteacher, who took up post in January 2017.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils learning in a range of subjects. In addition, the inspector looked at pupils' work and information kept by the school about pupils' learning and progress.
- The inspector spoke with pupils and staff throughout the inspection.
- Discussions took place with the chair of the governance group, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders about specific aspects of the school's work.
- The inspector scrutinised schemes of work, pupils' individual education plans and other resources provided by the school. He also reviewed, in detail, reports and assessments from alternative education providers.
- The inspector scrutinised records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. School policies and documentation, including risk assessments, were also examined. In addition, the inspector undertook a tour of the premises.
- The inspector took into account the views of 24 members of staff who completed Ofsted's questionnaire for staff and considered the views of three parents.

Inspection team

Iain Freeland, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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